

ELLA'S SONG

For SATB a cappella*

Duration: ca. 3:40

Words and Music by
BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

With conviction and purpose (♩ = 112)

CALL

We who - be-lieve in - free - dom - can - not rest,

Piano
(only for rehearsal)

We who be-lieve in free-dom can - not rest un - til it - comes. -

5

CALL 9

Sop. We who - be-lieve in - free - dom - can - not rest, -

Alto We who - be-lieve in free - dom - can - not rest,

Tenor We who - be-lieve in free - dom - can - not rest,

Bass We who be-lieve in free-dom can - not rest,

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RESPONSE

*Performance notes found on page 19.



We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest un-til it comes. — *Un-til —

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

13

17

— the kill - ing of black men, black moth-er's sons, -

Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo

17

17
* Cued notes are provided as a harmony part.
ELLA'S SONG – SATB

6

— is that I had — a chance — to work with peo - ple —

— doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

— doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

— doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo —

26

Pass - ing on — to oth - ers — that which was passed on — to me. —

— doo — doo doo — doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

— doo — doo doo — doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

— doo — doo doo — doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

— doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo —

29

33

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest,

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

33

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest un-til it comes.

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest.

36

8

41

To me — young peo-ple come first, they have the

rest. Doo — doo doo doo doo doo —

rest. Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

rest. Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo —

41

40

cour - age where we failed — And if I — can but shed some light —

doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo —

doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo —

doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo —

doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo

43

rest, We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not
 free-dom can-not rest, We who be-lieve in
 free-dom can-not rest, We who be-lieve in
 free-dom can-not rest, We who be-lieve in
 free-dom can-not rest, We who be-lieve in
 free-dom can-not rest, We who be-lieve in

rest un-til it comes. Not need-ing to clutch-for pow-
 free-dom can-not rest. Doo
 free-dom can-not rest. Doo
 free-dom can-not rest. Doo
 free-dom can-not rest. Doo doo doo doo

12

- er, not need - ing the light just to shine on me, ——— I need to
— doo doo doo doo doo doo ——— doo doo doo doo doo doo —
— doo doo doo doo doo doo ——— doo doo doo doo doo doo —
— doo doo doo doo doo doo ——— doo doo doo doo doo doo —
doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo —
66

be one in the num - ber — as — we — stand a - gainst - ty - ran - ny. —
— doo — doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo. —
— doo — doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo. —
— doo — doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo. —
— doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo. —
69

73

Strug-gling my-self don't mean a whole lot, I've

Doo doo doo doo doo doo

Doo doo doo doo doo doo

Doo doo doo doo doo doo

Doo doo doo doo doo doo

72

73

come to re-al-ize That teach-ing oth-ers to

doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo

75

We who be-lieve in free - dom can - not rest un - til it — comes. — I'm a
We who be-lieve in free-dom can - not rest.
We who be-lieve in free-dom can - not rest.
We who be-lieve in free-dom can - not rest.
We who be-lieve in free-dom can-not rest. —

85

89
wo-man who speaks in a voice, — and I must - be heard; -
Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —
Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —
Doo — doo doo doo doo doo doo —
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo — doo doo doo
89

89

free - dom - can - not rest,

We who - be - lieve in free - dom - can - not rest,

We who - be - lieve in free - dom - can - not rest,

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest,

We who be - lieve - in - free - dom can - not - rest,

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freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest un - til it - comes.

freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest.

freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest.

freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest.

freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest.

freely, molto rit.

We who be - lieve in free - dom can - not rest.

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Sold to Jana Ballard by J. W Pepper & Son, Inc.

PERFORMANCE NOTES **BY BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON**

“Ella’s Song” is composed in a call and response pattern. In a small ensemble, the opening line (the call) is sung by one voice, and there needs to be one voice for each line in the response section of the composition. With a choral ensemble, the ‘call’ is done by a group of singers (alto or/and tenor range) rather than as a solo or lead line.

Call – The call establishes the key and sets the mood and energy of the song for the rest of the singers. In my compositions, the melody always sits in the middle of the chord in what is usually a 5 part choral arrangement.

Response – The response answers the call. In “Ella’s Song,” part assignments should be made so that the call and response are balanced in terms of vocal power.

Attack – The first pitch of a song (or phrase) is not precisely attacked as in western classical choral singing; the opening sound is slightly scooped and slid into. There is no time allocated for this delicate effect -- it is usually not noticed by those listening, but it softens beginnings and endings.

Endings – Many phrases are ended with two or three notes as tailings; this also occurs (less frequently) in the middle of a phrase. When these do occur, they should be executed in a run with a softly blurred flourish instead of an even reading of the time allowed each note. The best guide is listening to recordings and singers.

Dynamics – I have not included dynamics in the score; each verse has a quality and an inner emotion embedded in the text and the condition that is being expressed. Without being excessive, the director is invited to open up the text of the verses and the choral refrains to bring vitality and varying energy to the performance of the song.

Range – Whenever virtuosic high soprano runs appear, they may be simplified if care is taken to maintain the integrity of the individual line. All lines should be done in African American voice. Especially, high lines should not be sounded within what is often referred as the “mask.” “Bassing” is an action -- moving as a floor or pushing against the rest of the chord. The low harmony bass lines are very important to the sound style of the music. Performers may substitute the higher octave or “point at” a low note with an air tone.

Phrasing Flexibility – If this is performed by a small ensemble with one singer for each part, the lead may take liberties (improvise) with phrasing and melody provided that the pace of the composition is maintained. If this is sung by a choral ensemble, the lead line should be sung by a section of the ensemble -- (1st altos, 1st tenors, etc.) in which case, phrasing should be performed as indicated in the score.

Harmony – All harmony lines must carry the emotional responsibility of the song; do not leave this area to the melody.