

RAIN MUSIC

On the dusty earth-drum
Beats the falling rain;
Now a whispered murmur,
Now a louder strain.

Slender, silvery drumsticks,
On an ancient drum,
Beat the mellow music
Bidding life to come.

Chords of earth awakened,
Notes of greening spring,
Rise and fall triumphant
Over every thing.

Slender, silvery drumsticks
Beat the long tattoo—
God, the Great Musician,
Calling life anew.

Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr. was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1895. Son of a well-known poet and educator, he was an intelligent child, learning to read early in his life and graduating second in his class from the Louisville Central High School. He enrolled in Fisk University but was forced to leave during his second year when he, as well as his older sister Florence, contracted tuberculosis, which was then a prime killer of black Americans. The death of Florence in 1914 prompted the first poem of Cotter's, "To Florence." Cotter was to have only a little over four years as a poet; he himself died of the disease in 1919 at the age of twenty-three. Thus all of his poetry was written under the shadow of his illness. He published one sole book of poetry entitled *The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics* (1918). A few miscellaneous works were also published in magazines in the last year of his life as well as posthumously. Though his total output was small, Cotter's work shows a technical versatility and maturity uncommon in such a young writer. His poems address universal concerns such as nature, religion, love, death, and the then-current issue of the treatment of black Americans during World War I. His writing style varies widely from traditional forms to free verse. Only his premature death kept him from fulfilling the potential to which he would undoubtedly have grown.

This choral setting of the poem was first performed by the West Singers of Cherry Hill High School West (Cherry Hill, NJ) under the direction of Christine Bass on February 23, 1996 at the 1996 New Jersey Music Educators National Conference.

5
beats the fal - ling
earth drum beats the fal - ling rain;
On the dust - y earth drum beats the fal - ling rain;
drum on the dust - y earth drum beats rain beats rain beats rain
beats the beats the fal - ling fal - ling beats the beats the fal - ling fal - ling

9
rain; Now a whis - pered mur - mur,
rain; Now a whis - pered
rain; Now a whis - pered
beats rain beats rain *unis.*
fal - ling fal - ling *no breath* fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm

21

drum - sticks on an an - cient drum, beat the mel - low

tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn tn beat the mel - low

8 on an an - cient drum, beat the mel - low

on an an - cient drum drum drum drum beat the mel - low

21

25

mu - sic *mp* bid - ding life to come.

mu - sic *mp* bid - ding life to come.

mu - sic *mp* bid - ding life to come. fm fm fm fm fm fm

mu - sic *mp* bid - ding life to come. fm fm fm fm fm fm fm fm

25

29

mf Chords of earth a - wak - ened, notes of green - ing

mf Chords of earth a - wak - ened, notes of green - ing

⁸ Chords chords of earth a - wak - ened a - wak - ened, notes of green - ing

Chords chords of earth a - wak - ened chords of earth, notes of green - ing spring

29

Detailed description: This system contains measures 29-31. It features four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The lyrics are: "Chords of earth a - wak - ened, notes of green - ing" (measures 29-30) and "Chords chords of earth a - wak - ened a - wak - ened, notes of green - ing" (measure 31). The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

32

spring, rise and fall tri - umph

spring, rise and fall tri -

⁸ spring notes of green - ing spring, rise and fall and rise and fall tri -

notes of green - ing spring, rise and fall and rise and fall tri -

32

Detailed description: This system contains measures 32-34. It features four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The lyrics are: "spring, rise and fall tri - umph" (measure 32), "spring, rise and fall tri -" (measure 33), and "spring notes of green - ing spring, rise and fall and rise and fall tri -" (measure 34). The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Agitato $\text{♩} = 90$

43 *begin gradual cresc. to m. 59*

begin gradual cresc. to m. 59

p Slender, sil - v'ry drum - sticks

p Slender, sil - v'ry drum - sticks slender, sil - v'ry drum - sticks

p Slender, sil - v'ry drum - sticks slender, sil - v'ry drum - sticks beat the long tat -

begin gradual cresc. to m. 59

p Slender sil - v'ry drum - sticks

43

48

beat the long tat - too— God God

beat the long tat - too— God God

too beat the long tat-too— God, the Great Mu - si - cian God, the

beat the long tat - too— God, the Great ——— God, the Great Mu -

48

63

cal - ling cal - ling life a -

cal - ling cal - ling life a -

8 cal - ling cal - ling life a -

cal - ling cal - ling life a -

63

67

new a - new.

new new life a - new.

cal - ling life a - new cal - ling life a - new cal - ling life a - new.

cal - ling life a - new cal - ling life cal - ling life a - new.

67