

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

SSAA a cappella

lyrics by Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, and Marcia Taylor

traditional Appalachian
arr. J. David Moore

N.B. grace notes preceding always ON the beat

Slow bluegrass trio (♩ = 52)

Soprano 1
Soprano 2
Alto

Will the cir - cle be un - brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, There's a

5
S1
S2
A

bet - ter home a - wait - in' if we try, Lord, if we try.

Quick Gospel Quartet Tempo (♩ = 104)

9
S1
S2
A

I was sing - ing with my sis - ters, I was sing - ing

13

S1 with my friends And we all can sing to- geth - er, 'cause the cir - cle

S2 And we all can sing to- geth - er, 'cause the cir - cle nev - er

A with my friends And we all can sing to- geth - er, 'cause the cir - cle

17

S1 *mf* nev-er ends. cir - cle be un - brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, There's a

S2 ends. Oh, will the cir - cle be un - brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, There's a

A *unis.* *mf* nev-er ends. cir - cle be un - brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, There's a

22

S1 bet - ter home a - wait - in' if we try, Lord, if we try.

S2 bet - ter home a - wait - in' if we ~~try~~ try, Lord, if we try. I was

A bet - ter home a - wait - in' if we try, Lord, if we try. nev

26 *mp*

S1 I was born down in the val - ley where the sun re -

S2 born down in the val - ley where the sun re - fused to shine

A1 *mp* I was born down in the val - ley where the sun re -

A2 *mp* I was born down in the val - ley where the sun, where the sun re -

29

S1 fused to shine But I'm climb - ing up to the high - land,

S2 But I'm climb - ing up to the high - land, gon - na

A1 fused to shine But I'm climb - ing up to the high - land,

A2 fused to shine But I'm climb - ing up to the high - land, gon - na

32 *mf*

S1 gon - na make that moun - tain mine! cir - cle be un -

S2 make that moun - tain mine! Oh, will the cir - cle be un -

A1 *mf* gon - na make that moun - tain mine! cir - cle be un -

A2 *mf* make, gon - na make that moun - tain mine! Will the cir - cle

+ clap

35

S1
brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, — There's a —

S2
brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, — There's a —

A1
brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, — There's a

A2
be — un - brok - en by and by, Lord, by and by, —

38

S1
bet - ter home a - wait - in' in the sky, Lord, — in the

S2
bet - ter home a - wait - in' in the sky, Lord, — in the

A1
bet - ter home a - wait - in' in the sky, Lord, in the

A2
There's a bet - ter home a - wait - in' in the sky, Lord, in the

Tempo I°

41

S1
sky, — in the sky, Lord, in the sky. —

S2
sky, — in the sky, Lord, in the sky. —

A1
sky, — in the sky, Lord, in the sky. —

A2
sky, — in the sky, Lord, in the sky. —

clash

gliss.

The hymn "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" first appeared in the 1908 *Alexander's Gospel Songs*, with words by Ada Ruth Habershon and music by Charles H. Gabriel. The hymn was substantially reworked (and the lyrics of the verses replaced) by A.P. Carter for The Carter Family in 1935 and experienced a popular renaissance when it was released by The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in 1972.

The updated lyrics in this arrangement were written by folk singers Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, and Marcia Taylor, and printed in the marvelous folk song resource *Rise Up Singing* (ed. Peter Blood, ©1988 Sing Out Corporation). These lyrics were requested by Dr. Cathy Roma and the MUSE Women's Choir of Cincinnati for a concert celebrating the city's Appalachian cultural heritage in 2001.

The arrangement makes use of two traditional vocal ensemble styles, the bluegrass trio (unapologetically inspired by Dolly Parton's rendition of "Seven Bridges Road") and the gospel quartet. Maintain a bright, full, joyful, unaffected tone throughout.

Original Text

There are loved ones in the glory,
Whose dear forms you often miss;
When you close your earthly story,
Will you join them in their bliss?

Refrain:

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, by and by?
In a better home awaiting
In the sky, in the sky?

In the joyous days of childhood,
Oft they told of wondrous love,
Pointed to the dying Savior;
Now they dwell with Him above.

You remember songs of heaven
Which you sang with childish voice,
Do you love the hymns they taught you,
Or are songs of earth your choice?

You can picture happy gath' rings
'Round the fireside long ago,
And you think of tearful partings,
When they left you here below.

One by one their seats were emptied,
One by one they went away;
Here the circle has been broken—
Will it be complete one day?

~ Ada R. Habershon

1935 Text

I was standing by my window,
On one cold and cloudy day
When I saw that hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away

Refrain:

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, Lord, by and by?
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

I said to that undertaker
Undertaker please drive slow
For this lady you are carrying
Lord, I hate to see here go

Oh, I followed close behind her
Tried to hold up and be brave
But I could not hide my sorrow
When they laid her in the grave

I went back home, my home was lonesome
Missed my mother, she was gone
All of my brothers, sisters crying
What a home so sad and lone

We sang the songs of childhood
Hymns of faith that made us strong
Ones that mother Maybelle taught us
Hear the angels sing along

~ A.P. Carter