

Break, break, break

for SATB Chorus and Piano

by

John M. Tarrh

Break, break, break

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Break, break, break
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of voice that is still!

Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Program Notes

“Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809 – 1892), the most famous poet of the Victorian age, was a profound spokesman for the ideas and values of his times.” (Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001.)

Break, break, break was written in response to the sudden death at an early age of his closest friend, Arthur Hallam. The poem is full of sudden shifts of imagery that are reflected in the musical setting. Rather than ending in resignation and acceptance, the setting ends in defiance.

Originally written for chorus (SATB) and piano, *Break, break, break* has also been arranged for large brass ensemble (5 trumpets, 5 horns, 3 trombones, euphonium and 2 tubas) divided into three groups. The first (2 trumpets, trombone and euphonium) generally represents the chorus, while the second (2 trumpets, 2 horns, trombone and tuba) and third (trumpet, 3 horns, bass trombone and tuba) provide antiphonal accompaniment.

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Vigorously, $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 90$

The musical score is arranged for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The piano part begins with a vigorous introduction in the key of B-flat major, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Break, break, break," in a strong, rhythmic pattern. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a more complex treble line with chords and melodic fragments. The vocal section starts at measure 7, with the lyrics: "break On thy cold on thy cold grey stones, O Sea!". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, providing harmonic support for the vocal lines.

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Piano

7
S
break On thy cold on thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
A
break On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
T
break On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
B
break On thy cold on thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
Pno.

14 *rit.* *mp*

S And I would that my tongue

A And I would that my tongue

T And I would that my

B And I would that my

14 *rit. molto* *mp*

Pno.

20 *mf*

S could ut - ter The thoughts that a - rise

A could ut - ter The thoughts that a - rise

T tongue could ut - ter The thoughts that a -

B tongue could ut - ter The thoughts that a -

20 *mf*

Pno.

25 *f* Vigorously, as before *f*

S — in me. Break, break,

A — in me. Break, break,

T rise in me. Break, break,

B rise in me. Break, break,

Pno. *f* *a tempo* *f*

31 Spirited *p*

S break O — well for the fish - er - man's

A break O — well for the fish - er - man's

T break O — well for the fish - er - man's boy, That he

B break O — well for the fish - er - man's boy, That he

Pno. *molto* *p*

34 *mp* *mf*

S
boy, That he shouts with his sis - ter at play! O—

A
boy, That he shouts with his sis - ter at play! O—

T
8 shouts with his sis - ter at play! *mf* O— well for the sai - lor

B
shouts with his sis - ter at play! *mf* O— well for the sai - lor

Pno.

37 *f* *rit.*

S
well for the sai - lor lad, sings in his boat on the bay!

A
well for the sai - lor lad, sings in his boat on the bay!

T
8 lad, That he sings in his boat on the bay!

B
lad, That he sings in his boat on the bay!

Pno.

Flowing, $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$

42 *mp*

S
And the state - ly — ships go on To their ha - ven —

A
And the state - ly — ships go on To their ha - ven —

T

B

Pno. *mp*

48 *p*

S
un - der the hill; But O for the

A
un - der the hill; But O for the

T

B

Pno. *p*

53

S touch of a va - nish'd hand,

A touch of a va - nish'd hand,

T *p* And the sound of a

B

Pno.

59

S *rit.* Vigorously, as before

A

T voice that is still!

B

Pno.

65 *f*

S Break, break, break At the foot_ of thy crags, O

A Break, break, break At the foot_ of thy crags, O

T Break, break, break At the foot_ of thy crags, O

B Break, break, break At the foot_ of thy crags, O

Pno. *f*

71 *mp*

S Sea! But the ten - der grace of a day_ that is

A Sea! But the ten - der grace of a day_ that is

T Sea!

B Sea!

Pno. *sfz* *molto* *mp*

76 *mf* *mf* *f*

S dead Will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back to

A dead Will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back to

T Will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back to

B Will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back will ne-ver come back to

Pno. *mf* *mf* *f*

80 *ff*

S me. Break, break, break! _____

A me. Break, break, break! _____

T me. Break, break, break! _____

B me. Break, break, break! _____

Pno. *ff*