

# Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie

For TTB Choir, two Soloists, and String Bass\*

Attr. to Huddie Ledbetter

Arr. by Robert Jones

Allegro ♩ = 110

Bass

*mp*  
in a walking style

H.C.

4 *claps\*\**

Bass

even 8ths

H.C.

7 8 9

Bass

H.C.

10 11 12 *continue hand claps*

Bass

*tutti unison*

13 *mp* 14 15

TTB

Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

Bass

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system shows the Bass line (bass clef, 4/4 time) starting with a melody marked 'mp' and 'in a walking style'. The H.C. part (Hand Claps) begins at measure 4 with a clapping pattern. The second system continues the Bass line and H.C. part. The third system shows the H.C. part continuing and the Bass line. The fourth system shows the H.C. part continuing and the Bass line. The fifth system shows the TTB part (TTB clef) with lyrics: 'Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter'. The Bass line continues throughout.

Also available in SSA, P1604; SAB, P1631, and SATB, P1675.

\*A separate Bass part is available as a free download at [www.PavanePublishing.com/freedownloads](http://www.PavanePublishing.com/freedownloads)

\*\*Clapping in this piece uses a high tone (finger tips on palm) and low tone (full hand).

P1730

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16  
TTB  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,  
Bass

19  
TTB  
Ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. \_\_\_\_\_  
Bass

21  
T. 1  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter,  
T. 2  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter,  
B.  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter,  
Bass

24  
T. 1  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,  
T. 2  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,  
B.  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie, \_\_\_\_\_  
Bass

*all tacet clapping*  
*mf*

27 28 29 *mf*

T. 1  
Ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. Syl - vie come a -

T. 2  
Ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. Syl - vie come a -

B.  
Ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. Syl - vie come a -

Bass

30 31 32

T. 1  
run - nin', buck - et in her hand.

T. 2  
run - nin', buck - et in her hand.

B.  
run - nin', buck - et in her hand.

Bass

33 34 35 36

T. 1  
"I need a lit - tle wa - ter, fast as I can."

T. 2  
"I need a lit - tle wa - ter, fast as I can."

B.  
"I need a lit - tle wa - ter, fast as I can."

Bass

37 *claps* 38 39 *continue hand claps...*

H.C.

T. 1  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

T. 2  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

B.  
Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

Bass

40 41 42

T. 1  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,

T. 2  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,

B.  
now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie, —

Bass

43 44 45 *f* 46

T. 1  
ev-'ry lit-tle once in a while. — "Can't you see me com-in'? —

T. 2  
ev-'ry lit-tle once in a while. — "Can't you see me com-in'? —

B.  
ev-'ry lit-tle once in a while. — "Can't you see me com-in'? —

Bass

47 48 49

T. 1  
Can't you see me now?" "I need a lit - tle

T. 2  
Can't you see me now?" "I need a lit - tle

B.  
Can't you see me now?" "I need a lit - tle

Bass

50 51 52

T. 1  
wa - ter ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while."

T. 2  
wa - ter ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while."

B.  
wa - ter ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while."

Bass

*mf*

53 *claps* 54 55

H.C.  
claps

Bass

56 57 58

H.C.  
claps

Bass

59 60 61 62

H.C.

Bass

63 64 65

H.C.

Bass

66 67 68

H.C.

Bass

69 70 71

H.C.

\*Solo 2  
*mp*

\*Solo 1  
*mp*

Bring it in a buck-et, Syl - vie.

Bring it in a buck - et, Syl - vie. Bring it in a buck-et

T. 1  
*mp*  
Ooo

T. 2  
*mp*  
Ooo

B.  
*mp*  
Ooo

Bass

\* Improvisation encouraged. Notes provided are merely suggestions.

72 73 74

H.C. 

*f* Bring it in a buck-et now. Syl - vie, now. Bring it in a buck - et, Syl - vie,

T. 1 *f* Ooo

T. 2 *f* Ooo

B. *f* Ooo

Bass *f*

75 77 *all tacet clapping*

H.C. 

*f* ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. "Can't you hear me

*f* ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while. "Can't you hear me

T. 1 *f* Ooo "Can't you hear me

T. 2 *f* Ooo "Can't you hear me

B. *f* Ooo "Can't you hear me

Bass *f*

78 79 80

“Can’t you hur-ry

“Can’t\_ you hear\_ me call - in’?\_

T. 1 call - in’?\_ Can’t you hur-ry now?”

T. 2 call - in’?\_ Can’t you hur-ry now?”

B. call - in’?\_ Can’t you hur-ry now?”

Bass

81 82 83 84

now?”

T. 1 “I need\_ a lit-tle wa - ter\_ ev-'ry lit - tle once in a while.”\_

T. 2 “I need\_ a lit-tle wa - ter\_ ev-'ry lit - tle once in a while.”\_

B. “I need\_ a lit-tle wa - ter ev-'ry lit - tle once in a while.”\_

Bass



85 *claps* 86 87

H.C.

T. 1 *p*  
 Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

T. 2 *p*  
 Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

B. *p*  
 Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter

Bass

88 89 90

H.C.

T. 1  
 now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,

T. 2  
 now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie,

B. *p*  
 now. Bring me lit - tle wa - ter, Syl - vie, —

Bass

For Review Only

91 92 93

H.C.

T. 1  
ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while, — ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while,

T. 2  
ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while, — ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while,

B.  
ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while, — ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while,

Bass

94 95 *all tacet clapping* 96

**Slower**

H.C.

T. 1  
*p*  
— ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while.

T. 2  
*p*  
— ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while.

B.  
*p*  
— ev - 'ry lit - tle once in a while.

Bass

*Bass ad lib*

## *Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie*

**Performance Notes:** *Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie*, is a traditional field holler usually attributed to folk and blues singer Lead Belly, because of how frequently he performed the song. Lead Belly's real name was Huddie William Ledbetter. This choral arrangement includes minimal stylistic suggestions beyond the 'even 8ths' at measure 5. The choice was made to create space for the conductor to alter textures, to add slides and fall-offs in the vocal parts, and to make personal choices about when to use choreography and string bass accompaniment. A strong bassist with improvisational skills can add to the depth of the ensemble sound with an 'in the pocket' feel that can be quite special. Diction should be altered moderately, with percussive consonants such as 't' in 'little' changed to a 'd' sound, 'liddle,' and 'wahdu' for 'water.' Contractions such as 'can't,' should be sung with an unvoiced or stopped 't.' The visual and rhythmic attraction of adding body percussion to performances of *Sylvie* can have great appeal to the singers and the audience. Several online videos are available for assistance with clapping/slapping patterns. The vision of a sizeable number of singers, smiling and utilizing synchronized flowing gestures, results in a soothing vibe that is sure to capture the audience's heart.

**The Song's Collector:** **Huddie William Ledbetter (c.1885-1949)**, better known as Lead Belly, was born on Jeter Plantation, a farm in Mooringsport, Louisiana and died in New York City of Lou Gehrig's disease. He was an internationally-known folk singer, song writer and guitarist, often called the "King of the Twelve-String Guitar." At one point in his career he formed a duo with the legendary Blues musician Blind Lemon Jefferson. His impoverished upbringing and the violent events of his later life led to his imprisonment for murder in Texas in 1917. According to the story, Lead Belly was released in 1925 after writing a song for then Governor Pat Neff requesting a pardon. In 1930, he was incarcerated again for attempted murder, this time in Louisiana. It was there that folklorists Alan and John Lomax discovered him while they were collecting prison songs for the Library of Congress. Alan and John made a recording of Lead Belly's theme song, *Good Night, Irene*; on the other side Lead Belly sang a new ballad asking Louisiana's Governor Oscar Allen for a pardon. Once again he gained his freedom through his music.

Lead Belly recorded for a variety of labels, including Folkways. Like the music of many other Black folk and blues artists, much of his repertoire was made famous by white performers, including the Weavers, a group that sold 2 million copies of his song *Goodnight Irene*. When Lead Belly was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio in 1988, Pete Seeger, noted folk singer, activist, and member of the Weavers, spoke in his honor. In 1970, Lead Belly was inducted posthumously into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

When Alan Lomax asked Lead Belly about *Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie*, Lead Belly explained that he heard his Uncle Bob singing this field holler to his wife, Sylvie, as he plowed the fields, asking her to bring him the water bucket. The song became one of forty-eight of Lead Belly's published songs. *Sylvie* has been recorded by multiple artists, including Harry Belafonte, Pete Seeger, the Waitin' Jennys, and Sweet Honey in the Rock. In performance, Lead Belly was known to take time to explain to his audiences the background of songs such as *Sylvie* in an effort to help them better understand the rural South.

**Note:** Biographical information sources –

the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, <https://www.rockhall.com/inductees/lead-belly>

and the Songwriters Hall of Fame, [https://www.songhall.org/profile/Huddie\\_Ledbetter](https://www.songhall.org/profile/Huddie_Ledbetter)

**The Arranger: Dr. Robert Jones** is Professor Emeritus of Choral Music at the University of Dayton in Ohio, where he conducted the University Chorale and Choral Union, taught choral conducting and choral methods for Music Education majors, supervised student teachers, and composed and arranged music for ensembles. He also advised and continues to advise student-directed a cappella groups. Dr. Jones has served as an adjudicator, guest conductor, soloist, and clinician in the East and Midwest regions of the United States. He was also Minister of Music at Grace United Methodist Church in Dayton and artistic director of MUSICA!, a semi-professional vocal chamber ensemble based in Southwestern Ohio. His articles and music reviews have been published in state, divisional, and national publications, including the American Choral Directors Association's *Choral Journal*, Chorus America's *The Voice*, and *The Catholic Music Educator*. Dr. Jones has served on the Boards of the Ohio Choral Directors Association and the American Choral Directors Association's Central Division.

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