

10/5972L

SATB and Piano



**LORENZ**  
PUBLISHING CO.

# Wade in the Water

ARRANGED BY  
**Lloyd Larson**

**Usage:** General

**Also available:**

Downloadable Accompaniment MP3 (e99/5254L)

SATB Part-dominant Rehearsal MP3s (e99/5255L)

**Scripture references:**

Joshua 3; Isaiah 51:10–13

### From the Arranger

*Wade in the Water* is known as an African American jubilee song, meaning it was created and first sung by black slaves. The spiritual is associated with the Underground Railroad, a network that helped free American slaves. It is believed to have been regularly used by Harriet Tubman, the abolitionist, who made a remarkable thirteen trips to the South to free over seventy slaves. She would sing *Wade in the Water* to warn slaves to get off the trail and into the water to prevent their scent from being tracked by dogs used to hunt them down.

The phrase “wade in the water” can be interpreted as a metaphor for baptism or cleansing or purification. The message also encourages finding spiritual liberation and freedom in the midst of struggles, a profound interpretation when considering the hardships of slavery experienced by a people who gave birth to the song. Crossing bodies of water is a central part of the story of slaves throughout history. Old Testament Israel began its escape from Egyptian bondage with the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. After forty years of wilderness wandering, they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. Africans traveled across the ocean to an unfamiliar land in slave ships to a very uncertain future. The Ohio River was the dividing line between living as slaves and living as freed people.

It is generally believed that the refrain for *Wade in the Water* is rooted in John 5:2–9. In Jerusalem, there was a pool of water near the Sheep Gate called Bethesda. Many disabled people would lie near it believing that when the water was stirred (or as the King James Version says it, was “troubled”), if they could be the first one into the pool, they would experience healing from their infirmity. The gospel of John references one man by the pool of Bethesda who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years before Jesus stopped one day and healed him.

Howard Thurman (1899-1981), who served as Dean of the Chapel at Howard University, offered this insight into this passage: *“For slaves, the troubled waters meant the ups and downs of life. But within the context of the troubled waters of life, there are healing waters, because God is in the midst of turmoil.”* Thurman’s observation is valid for all of us: *“Do not shrink from moving confidently out into the choppy seas. Wade in the water, because God is ‘troubling’ the water.”*

—Lloyd Larson

# Wade in the Water

3

SATB and Piano

African American Spiritual

Arranged by **Lloyd Larson**

Tune: WADE

African American Spiritual

*Soulfully, freely* ♩ = ca. 72

The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a piano introduction in 4/4 time, marked *mf* and *holding back*. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The vocal parts enter at measure 3. The Soprano (SA) and Tenor (TB) parts are marked *mf* and *moving forward*. The piano accompaniment continues with a *moving forward* dynamic. At measure 7, the tempo and dynamics change to *holding back*, and the time signature changes to 2/4. The piano accompaniment also changes to *holding back*.

*mf* *holding back*

3 SA *mf* *moving forward*

Wade in the wa - ter, wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren.

TB *mf*

*moving forward*

7 *holding back*

Wade in the wa - ter, God's gon - na trou - ble the

*holding back*

© 2025 Lorenz Publishing Company, a division of The Lorenz Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Reproduction of this publication without permission of the publisher is a criminal offense subject to prosecution.

THE CCLI LICENSE DOES NOT GRANT PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY THIS MUSIC.

Steady tempo ♩ = ca. 100

10

wa - ter.

*mp*

Detailed description: This block shows the vocal line for measures 10, 11, and 12. The music is in G major and 2/4 time. Measure 10 has a half note G4. Measure 11 has a half note G4. Measure 12 has a whole rest. The dynamic is *mp*. There is a crescendo hairpin over measures 10 and 11.

Steady tempo ♩ = ca. 100

*mp*

Detailed description: This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 10, 11, and 12. The right hand has a melody starting on G4 in measure 10, moving to A4 in measure 11, and then a descending line in measure 12. The left hand has a simple bass line. The dynamic is *mp*.

13

*mp*

Wade \_\_\_\_\_ in the

Detailed description: This block shows the vocal line for measures 13, 14, and 15. Measure 13 has a whole rest. Measure 14 has a whole rest. Measure 15 has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. The dynamic is *mp*.

Detailed description: This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 13, 14, and 15. The right hand has chords and a melody. The left hand has a bass line. The dynamic is *mp*.

16

wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_ wade \_\_\_\_\_ in the wa - ter, chil - dren.

Detailed description: This block shows the vocal line for measures 16, 17, and 18. Measure 16 has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. Measure 17 has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. Measure 18 has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. The dynamic is *mp*.

Detailed description: This block shows the piano accompaniment for measures 16, 17, and 18. The right hand has chords and a melody. The left hand has a bass line. The dynamic is *mp*.

19 *mp*

Oh, wade in the wa - ter, \_\_\_

Wade \_\_\_ in the wa - ter, \_\_\_

21 *mel.*

God's gon - na trou - ble \_\_\_ the wa - ter. \_\_\_

23

See that host all dressed in white, \_\_\_

25 *mp* *mp*

The

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

27

lead - er looks like the Is - rael - ite,

29 *mp*

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

31 *mf*

Wade \_\_\_\_\_ in the wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

Oh, wade in the wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_

33

wade \_\_\_\_\_ in the wa - ter, chil - dren.

oh, wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren.

35

Oh, wade in the wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_

Wade \_\_\_\_\_ in the wa - ter, \_\_\_\_\_

37

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

39

*mf*

If

41

you don't be - lieve I've been re - deemed,

43 *mf*

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

*mf*

Just

45

fol - low me down to Jor - dan's stream.

47

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

*mf*

Come,

49 *mel. f*

Wade in the wa - ter, wade, oh, wade in the wa - ter,

51

wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren. oh, wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren.

53

Oh, wade in the wa - ter, Wade in the wa - ter,

55

God's gon - na trou - ble the wa - ter.

57

*ff*

Wade in the wa - ter, wade in the

*ff*

60

wa - ter, chil - dren. Oh, wade in the wa - ter, Wade in the wa - ter,

63

God's gon - na trou - ble, — He's gon - na trou - ble, —

65

*rit.* God's gon-na trou-ble — the wa - ter. *fff a tempo*

68

God's gon-na trou-ble — the wa - ter. —