

Handles

SSAA, piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Handles

Words and Music by Elizabeth Alexander

You say you can't, just can't,
Just can't get a handle on a woman.
You don't know what she'll do or say;
Surprises are her natural way, this woman.
Not solely governed by her mind,
Her heart will not be left behind.
And so you tell me that you can't, just can't,
Just can't get a handle on a woman?
But before you give in to outright despair about this
Impossibly hopeless, futile, cataclysmic, and not so very great scenario,
Let me tell you something that you might not know:

There are some handles on this woman.
I got 'em here and here and here.
There are some handles on this woman.
They ain't about to disappear.
Handles, handles, handles:
Seems I get another every year.

Some of them were made for earrings to dangle on,
Some of them were made for bangles to bangle on,
Some of them were made for tattoos to tangle on,
Twang, twang, twang!
Some of them were made for combing and braiding,
Some of them were made for skipping and wading,
Some of them were made for bodacious bumpin',
Every one was made for something!

Wink and wiggle, dance and dandle,
If I jiggle that's no scandal,
If you need a helpin' handle,
Call me up; I'll understandle!



**Watch these gorgeous “cover girls”
perform Handles!
bit.ly/handles_music_video**

Handles, handles!
I've got more than one or two.
Handles, handles!
To sing about them's not taboo!
Handles, handles, handles:
They will always be right here for you.

Some of them were made for good friends to cry on,
Some of them were made for lovers to lie on,
Some of them were made for babies to latch on,
(Don't know why you're being so slow to catch on!)
Some of them are feisty. Some of them are fizzling.
Some of them are sweet. Some are sizzling.
All of them are miracles to behold!
(Gonna have more when I get old.)

Handles, handles! They're doubly-dimpled by design.
And if a someone takes advantage – whoa, whoa, whoa!
I've got a topnotch bottom line.
Make no mistake:
These handles are completely mine all mine!

Firm or floppy, flat or flexed,
I never quite know what they'll do next.
Unique right down to every fold.
After me, they broke the mold!
Every wrinkle, every scar,
Beautiful is what they are.

So don't go telling me
you can't get a handle on a woman.

Lyric © 2018 by Elizabeth Alexander

Handles

SSAA, spoken solos, piano

(♩ = 120-132) Audacious, with swung 8th notes

Music and Lyrics by Elizabeth Alexander

The musical score is written for four voices (S I, S II, A I, A II) and piano. It is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked as 120-132 beats per minute, and the mood is 'Audacious, with swung 8th notes'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for S I, S II, A I, A II, and Piano. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *mp* and a bass line with an 8^{vb} (octave below) marking. The vocal parts have rests for the first three measures, followed by a melodic line in the fourth measure. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: 'You say you' for S I and S II, and 'You say you' for A I and A II. The second system includes staves for S I, S II, A I, A II, and Piano. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The vocal parts have rests for the first three measures, followed by a melodic line in the fourth measure. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: 'You don't know' for S I and S II, and 'You don't know' for A I and A II. The lyrics for the piano part are: 'can't, just can't, just can't get a han-dle on a wo-man.'.

S I

S II

A I

A II

Piano

8^{vb}

5

S I

S II

A I

A II

Piano

mp

mp

mp

mp

You say you

You say you

You don't know

You don't know

can't, just can't, just can't get a han-dle on a wo-man.

can't, just can't, just can't get a han-dle on a wo-man.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: This is one of those songs where a certain amount of eye contact with the audience is essential, not to mention fun! I've marked a few places where this is especially effective. - EA

*Glance at your neighbor: Look at
(Maybe roll your eyes) audience:*

9

S I what she'll do or say; sur - pris - es are her na - tu - ral way, — this wo - man.

S II what she'll do or say; sur - pris - es are her na - tu - ral way, — this wo - man.

A I — — — — — this wo - man.

A II — — — — — this wo - man.

gliss.

sfz

mp

8vb

13

S I — — — — — her heart will not

S II Not sole - ly gov - erned by — her mind, — her heart will not

A I Not sole - ly gov - erned by — her mind, — her heart will not

A II — — — — — Her heart will not

lightly

marcato

18

f *mp*

S I be left be - hind. And so you tell me that you can't, just can't, just

f *mp*

S II be left be - hind. And so you tell me that you can't, just can't, just

f

A I be left be - hind.

f

A II be left be - hind.

f *mp*

22

suddenly sensual

S I can't get a han - dle, can't get a han - dle on a

suddenly sensual

S II can't get a han - dle, can't get a han - dle on a

mp *suddenly sensual*

A I can't get a han - dle, can't get a han - dle on a

mp *suddenly sensual*

A II can't get a han - dle, can't get a han - dle on a

Red.

rallentando

30

30

S I
out-right de-spair a-bout the im-pos-si-bly hope-less, fu-tile, cat-a-clys-mic, and not so ve-ry great* see-

S II
out-right de-spair a-bout the im-pos-si-bly hope-less, fu-tile, cat-a-clys-mic, and not so ve-ry great* see-

A I
out-right de-spair a-bout the im-pos-si-bly hope-less, fu-tile, cat-a-clys-mic, and not so ve-ry great* see-

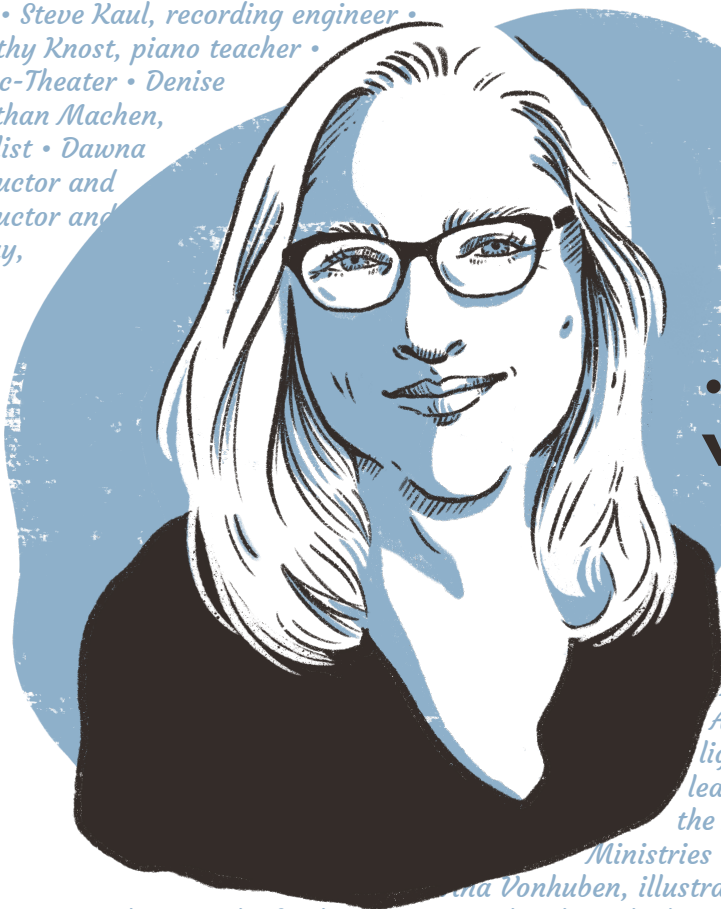
A II
out-right de-spair a-bout the im-pos-si-bly hope-less, fu-tile, cat-a-clys-mic, and not so ve-ry great* see-

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

* Do make sure the audience knows that you don't mean "a very gray scenario"!

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor and composer • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and scrum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and writer • Paul Fennell, poet and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Debra Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Mark Hakan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, printers • Martin Huby, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and scrum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Raul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus • Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, conductor, composer, social activist • Edna St. Vincent • Steve Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer • J. David Moore, composer • Millie Morin, poet • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • Theodore Sauter, poet and composer and friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

**A lot of hard work
and creativity went
into bringing this
music to you...**



**...and some of it
was even mine.**

**This page has been intentionally omitted.
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be
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Elizabeth Alexander

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A Remember: Straight rhythm, not swung!*

42 *mf* (Whoop here as desired or inspired)

S I han-dles, There are some

S II han-dles, There are some

A I han-dles on this wo-man: I got 'em here and here and here. There are some

A II han-dles on this wo-man: I got 'em here and here and here. There are some

mf

* What will happen if you swing the rhythm or rush the tempo at Rehearsal Letter A? Nothing bad really... until you reach Rehearsal Letter B. At that point your tongues will get completely tangled. Consider yourselves warned.

46

S I han-dles on this wo - man:** They ain't a - bout to dis-ap-pear..

S II han-dles on this wo - man:** They ain't a - bout to dis-ap-pear..

A I (Whoop here as desired or inspired)

A II han - dles, (Whoop here as desired or inspired)

han - dles,

** Yes, mm. 46-48 are a bit low for SII. Reinforce this line with a few altos if necessary.

50

f

S I Han-dles, han-dles, han-dles: Seems I get a - no - ther ev' - ry year.

f

S II Han-dles, han-dles, han-dles: Seems I get a - no - ther ev' - ry year.

A I Oh,

A II Oh,

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Soloists: Exclaim your lines with delight! Make sure you are positioned physically close enough to each other so that your interactions are apparent.

53

mf

Solo 1 Oh look, here's another one!

mf

Solo 2 Congratulations!

mf

Solo 3 Oooh, can I see?

mp

S I Oh

mp

S II Oh

mp

A I

mp

A II Oh

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

56 **B**

S I

S II

A I

A II

mp

Some of them were made for ban - gles to ban - gle on,

Some of them were made for ear - rings to dan - gle on,

*

58 *mp*

S I

S II

A I

A II

Some of them were made for tat - toos to tan - gle on -- twang, twang twang!*

twang, twang twang!*

twang, twang twang!*

mp

twang, twang twang!*

Ped. Ped.

* Twangin' tip: Give us a good gnarly dipthong here, and then go straight to the "ng."

60

S I

S II

A I

A II

Some of them were made for comb - in' and braid - in',

Some of them were made for skip - pin' and wad - in',

*

62

S I

S II

A I

A II

Some were made for bo - da - cious bump - in',* Ev' - ry one was made for some - thin'!_

Some were made for bo - da - cious bump - in',* Ev' - ry one was made for some - thin'!_

Oh, bo - da - cious bump - in',* Ev' - ry one was made for some - thin'!_

Oh, bo - da - cious bump - in',* Ev' - ry one was made for some - thin'!_

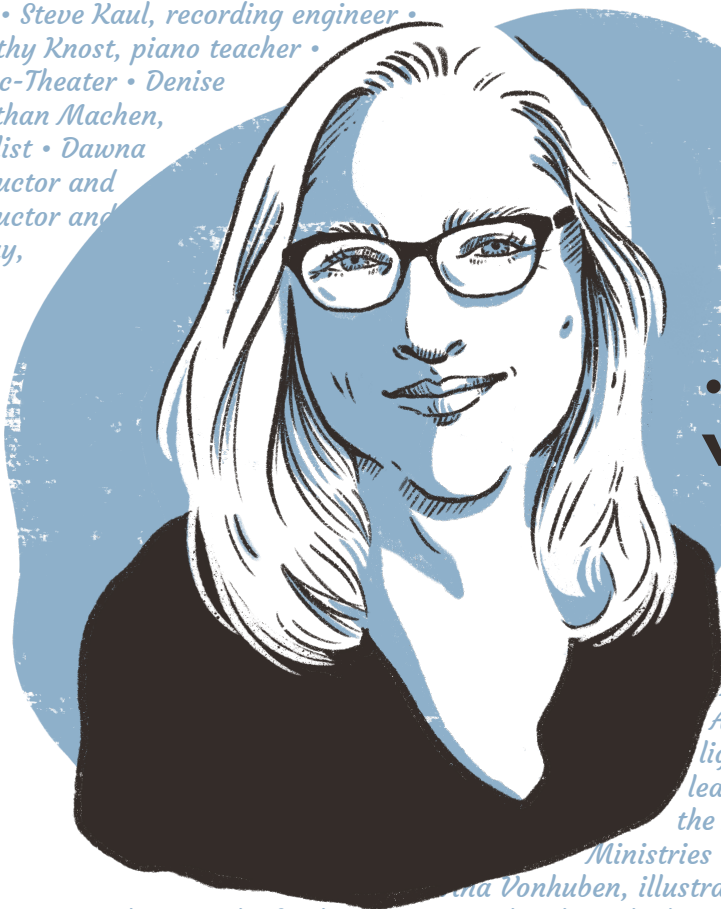
Red.

Red.

* If the choir sings "bodacious bumpin'" without demonstrating a bumplet or two, it will be a "bodacious bummer."

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**...and some of it
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70

S I help - in' hand - le, Call me up; I'll un - der - stand - le!

S II help - in' hand - le, Call me up; I'll un - der - stand - le!

A I If you need a Call me up; I'll un - der - stand - le!

A II If you need a Call me up; I'll un - der - stand - le!

74 **D**

S I *mf* Oh han - dles,

S II *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* Han - dles,

A I *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* Oh I've got more than one or two! Han - dles,

A II *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* Han - dles,

78

S I *mf* Han - dles,

S II *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* Han - dles,

A I *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* Han - dles,

A II *p* Han - dles, han - dles, *mf* To sing a - bout them's not ta - boo!_____

p *mf*

82

S I Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles: They will al - ways be right here for you.____

S II Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles: They will al - ways be right here for you.____

A I Oh,_____ They will al - ways be right here for you.____

A II Oh,_____ They will al - ways be right here for you.____

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

85

Solo 4

Spoken: *mf*

That's right. These handles are never gonna let you down!

S I

S II

A I

A II

p

Oh

p

Oh

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

88

E

S I

S II

A I

A II

mp

Some of them were made for good_ friends to cry on,

mp

3

Some of them were made for lov-ers to lie on,

mp

*

90

mf

Solo 5

Don't know why you're be- in' so_ slow to catch on!

S I

Some of them were made for ba - bies to latch on.

S II

A I

A II

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *

92

mp

S I

Some are siz - zle - ing,

mp

S II

Some are fiz - zle - ing, Some are siz - zle - ing,

A I

Some of them are fei - sty, Some are sweet,

A II

Some are sweet,

mp

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

94 *mf*

S I All are mir - a cles to be - hold.

S II All are mir - a cles to be - hold. *mf*

A I *mf* (A good place for eye contact with audience)
Gon - na have more when I get old!

A II Opt. lower octave: *mf* (A good place for eye contact with audience)
Gon - na have more when I get old!

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. *mf* *

96 **F**

S I Oh han - dles,

S II Han - dles, han - dles, Han - dles,

A I Han - dles, han - dles, They're dou-bly -dim-pled by de-sign,* Han - dles, And if a

A II Han - dles, han - dles, Han - dles, And if a

* Do put in a little extra effort into articulating "doubly-dimpled by design," in order to help the audience appreciate this lyric!

100

S I I've got a top - notch bot - tom__ line...

S II Whoa, whoa, whoa, I've got a top - notch

A I some - one takes ad - van - tage I've got a top - notch

A II some - one takes ad - van - tage, whoa, whoa, whoa, I've got a top - notch

103

S I — Make no mis - take: these han - dles are com - plete - ly mine all

S II bot - tom__ line.*_ Make no mis - take: these han - dles are com - plete - ly mine all

A I bot - tom line.*_ Make no mis - take: these han - dles are com - plete - ly mine all

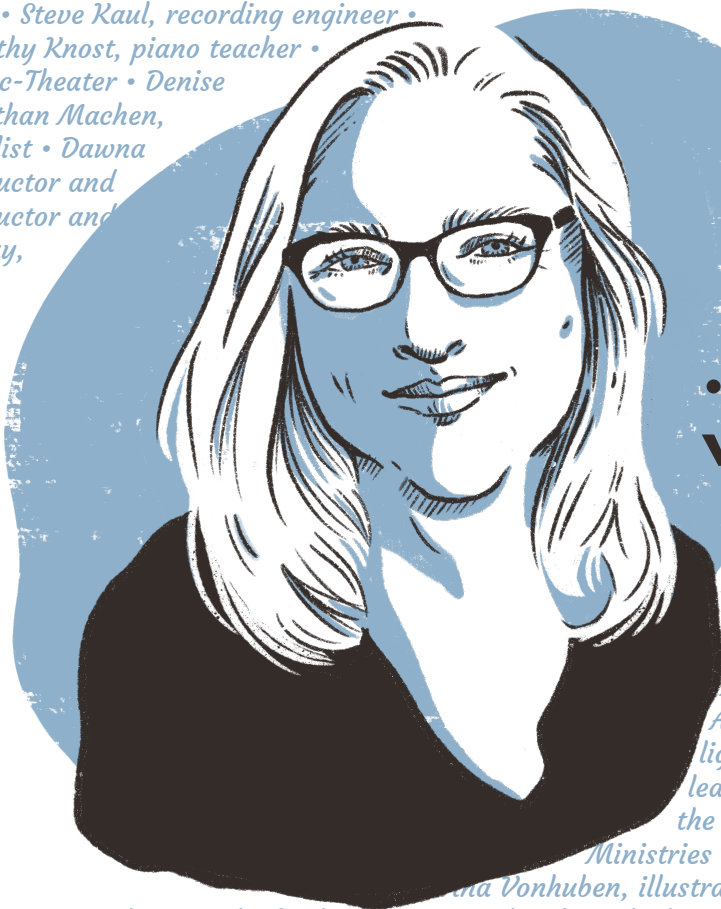
A II bot - tom__ line.*_ Make no mis - take: these han - dles are com - plete - ly mine, all

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

* The composer broke a cardinal rule in mm.102-103, and it's up to you to cover for her! The phrase "bottom line" is introduced by the first sopranos, but because of how their vocal line is written there's no way the audience will ever understand that lyric. The lower voices save the day, repeating this all-important phrase with fearless conviction and flawless articulation.

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*If your ensemble wishes to invent some "Handles Couplets" of your own,
go ahead and add one or two during this optional repeat.*

113

Solo 7

Finger Snaps

S I

S II

A I

A II

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, _

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, _

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, _

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, _

* Red. Red.

The musical score is for a choral piece titled 'Handles'. It features a Solo 7 part, Finger Snaps, and four vocal parts (S I, S II, A I, A II). The lyrics are 'Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, _'. The piano part includes a repeat sign and 'Red.' markings.

117

Solo 7

- nique right down to ev' - ry fold, Af - ter me they broke the mold!

Finger Snaps

119

Finger Snaps

S I

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles,

S II

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles,

A I

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles,

A II

Han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles, han - dles,

122

S I Han - dles, _____

S II han - dles, _____

A I han - dles, _____

A II han - dles. _____

mp

Ped. Ped.

This is an especially good place for eye contact with the audience, or with each other

124

Tutti Ev' - ry wrin - kle, ev' - ry scar, Beau - ti - ful___ is what they are.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

126 **Very slowly and freely, with heavy swing**

f

S I So don't tell me that you

S II So don't tell me that you

A I So don't tell me that you

A II So don't tell me that you

f

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

129

S I can't get a han-dle on a wo - - man._____

S II can't get a han-dle on a wo - - man._____

A I can't get a han-dle on a wo - - man._____

A II can't get a han-dle on a wo - - man._____

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

Piano ad lib. to your heart's content

Ped. Ped. Ped.

Selected Choral Music by Elizabeth Alexander

A Palette To Paint Us As We Are (Gerald Rich)
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01
SSA, piano • SEA-014-02

Beware the Winter Settin' In (Alexander)
SATB, Celtic band, opt. children's choir • SEA-139-00

Blessed Be the Flower That Triumphs (Boblett)
SATB • SEA-078-00

Cherish Your Doubt (Alexander)
SATB, piano • SEA-063-01
SSAA, piano • SEA-063-02

Die Gedanken Sind Frei (German protest song, arr.)
SATB, piano • SEA-087-00

Do Not Leave Your Cares at the Door (Norman Naylor)
SATB • SEA-071-00

Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm (Yehuda Amichai)
SATB • SEA-026-01

Faith Is the bird that feels the light (Tagore)
SSA • SEA-068-00

Fighting Over What We Believe (Alexander)
SATB, soloists, piano • SEA-099-01

Finally On My Way To Yes (Pesha Gertler)
SSATB, piano • SEA-019-00

Folks, I'm Telling You (Langston Hughes)
SSATB, piano • SEA-027-00

Glen Song (Scott Bates)
SSATB, piano • SEA-025-00

Handles (Alexander)
SSA, piano • SEA-148-00

How To Sing Like a Planet (Alexander)
SATB, piano • SEA-105-01

If You Can Walk You Can Dance (Zimbabwean Proverb)
SAB, piano, claves • SEA-022-03
TBB, piano, claves • SEA-022-05
SSA, piano, claves • SEA-022-06
SATB, piano, claves • SEA-022-07

Immortal Love (John Greenleaf Whittier)
SATB • SEA-017-00

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly (Polish carol, arr.)
SSA • SEA-020-00

Jump! (Ray Bradbury)
SSA, string quartet • SEA-090-00

Kindling (Alexander)
SATB, chamber ensemble • SEA-123-00
SATB, piano • SEA-123-09

Let it Matter (Alexander)
SSA, piano • SEA-125-03
SATB, piano • SEA-125-04

No Other People's Children (Alexander)
1-4 part choir, soloist, piano • SEA-141-03

...or a musician (Philip Dacey)
SATB, orchestra • SEA-007-00

A Palette To Paint Us As We Are (Gerald Rich)
SA, piano • SEA-014-00
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01

Praise Wet Snow Falling Early (Denise Levertov)
SATB, piano • SEA-015-00

Reasons for the Perpetuation of Slavery (Alexander)
SSAA • SEA-091-00

Same Birds (David Allen Evans)
SATB • SEA-128-00

Song of Kabir (Kabir)
SATB • SEA-119-00

The Gate is Open (Sister Peronne Marie Thibert)
SATB • SEA-097-01

They Have Freckles Everywhere (Alexander)
SSAA, piano • SEA-076-00

To Make a Prairie (Emily Dickinson)
SSA, piano • SEA-016-00

We Lift Up Our Hearts (Richard Fewkes)
Unison children's choir, SATB, piano • SEA-021-00

We Remember Them (Sylvan Kamens, Jack Riemer)
SATB, piano • SEA-083-01

Where there Is Light in the Soul (Chinese proverb)
SAB • SEA-070-00
SATB • SEA-070-01
SSA • SEA-070-02
TBB • SEA-062-03

When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled (Thurman)
SATB • SEA-062-00
TTBB • SEA-062-02
SSAA • SEA-062-04
SATB, flute • SEA-062-05

Why I Pity the Woman Who Never Spills (Prefontaine)
SSAA • SEA-058-00