

Finally On My Way To Yes

Poem by Pesha Gertler

SSATB and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

The Healing Time

Finally on my way to yes
I bump into
all the places
where I said no
to my life
all the untended wounds
the red and purple scars
those hieroglyphs of pain
carved into my skin, my bones,
those coded messages
that send me down
the wrong street
again and again
where I find them
the old wounds
the old misdirections
and I lift them
one by one
close to my heart
and I say holy
holy.

Pesha Gertler

Copyright © 1994 by Pesha Gertler. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Composer Notes: In “The Healing Time,” poet Pesha Gertler brings joy to the painful process of despair and self-acceptance. While I was composing this song, the image of going “down the wrong street again and again” brought me to tears and laughter, sometimes simultaneously.

Everyone I share this poem with sees something different in the “scars” and “coded messages.” Many members of the LGBTA choir for whom I composed this song heard their own “coming out” stories in the words. For other performers and listeners, this poem has spoken to their experiences with drug addiction, suicide attempts, self-mutilation, racial shaming, and debilitating loss. Clearly, this poem taps into a deep something about what it is to be fully human. If my musical setting enriches Pesha’s healing message in any way, I am grateful for that.

Performance Notes: The extended solo in the final pages of this song was written for a female soloist, but many choirs have chosen to use male or multiple soloists, to powerful effect. The chantlike opening notes of the solo (mm.176-189) and the brief reprise of “finally on my way” (mm.208-210) should be sung as written, but everywhere else the soloist(s) may improvise with abandon, even to the point of incorporating other phrases such as “one by one” or “again and again.”



Cover image by Victor Tonce
www.lilawa.com
Licensed by Shutterstock.

Finally On My Way To Yes

for SSATB and piano

Pesha Gertler

Elizabeth Alexander

With passion (♩ = 92)

The musical score is for a piece titled "Finally On My Way To Yes" for SSATB and piano. It is composed by Pesha Gertler and arranged by Elizabeth Alexander. The tempo is marked "With passion (♩ = 92)". The score is in 2/2 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The vocal parts are Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The piano part is for Piano (Pno). The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1-4. The second system contains measures 5-8. The third system contains measures 11-14. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting line in the left hand. The vocal parts enter in measure 1 with a whole note rest. The piano part begins in measure 1 with a half note rest. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like *mf*, *m.s.*, and *m.d.*. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." and asterisks (*).

S I

S II

A

T

B

Pno

playfully

mf

m.s.

m.d.

Ped.

Ped.

*

Ped.

5

m.s.

*

Ped.

*

Ped.

Ped.

11

m.d.

Ped.

Ped.

*

Ped.

16

16

Ped.

22

mp

Ped.

26

p

S I Fi - nal - ly on my

p

S II Fi - nal - ly on my

p

A Fi - nal - ly on my

p

T Fi - nal - ly on my

p

B Fi - nal - ly on my

murmuring

p

Ped.

32

S I way, my way, _____ my way, _____ my way,

S II way, my way, _____ my way _____ my way,

A way, my way, my way, _____ my way,

T way, my way, _____ my way,

B way, _____ my way, _____ my way,

mp

mf m.s.

Red.

37

m.d.

Red.

42 *p*

S I Fi - nal - ly on my

S II *p* Fi - nal - ly on my

A *p* Fi - nal - ly on my

T *p* Fi - nal - ly on my

B *p* Fi - nal - ly on my

murmuring

p subito

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

48 *mf*

S I way, my way, my way, my

S II *mf* way, my way, my way, my

A *mf* way, my way, my way, my

T *mf* way, my way, my way, my

B *mf* way, my way, my way, my

Red.

52

S I way, Fi - nal - ly _____ *mp*

S II way, Fi - nal - ly _____ *mp*

A way, Fi - nal - ly _____ *mp*

T way, Fi - nal - ly _____ *mp*

B way, Fi - nal - ly _____ *mp*

mf

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

rallentando

57

S I on my way to _____

S II on my way to _____

A on my way to _____

T on my way to _____

B on my way to _____

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

62 **A tempo**

spoken, half-whispered: mp

S I *yes*

S II *spoken, half-whispered: mp*
yes

A *spoken, half-whispered: mp*
yes

T *spoken, half-whispered: mp*
yes

B *spoken, half-whispered: mp*
yes

A tempo marcato

mp

sfz

Ped.

66

T *p*

B *p*

I bump in - to all the plac -

I bump in - to all the plac -

sfz

m.d.

m.s.

Ped.

70

S I

no _____ to my life

S II

no _____ to my life

A

no _____ to my life

T

- es where I said no _____ to my life

B

- es where I said no _____ to my life

(for rehearsal only)

75

T

B

p

all the un - tend - ed wounds

p

all the un - tend - ed wounds

sfz

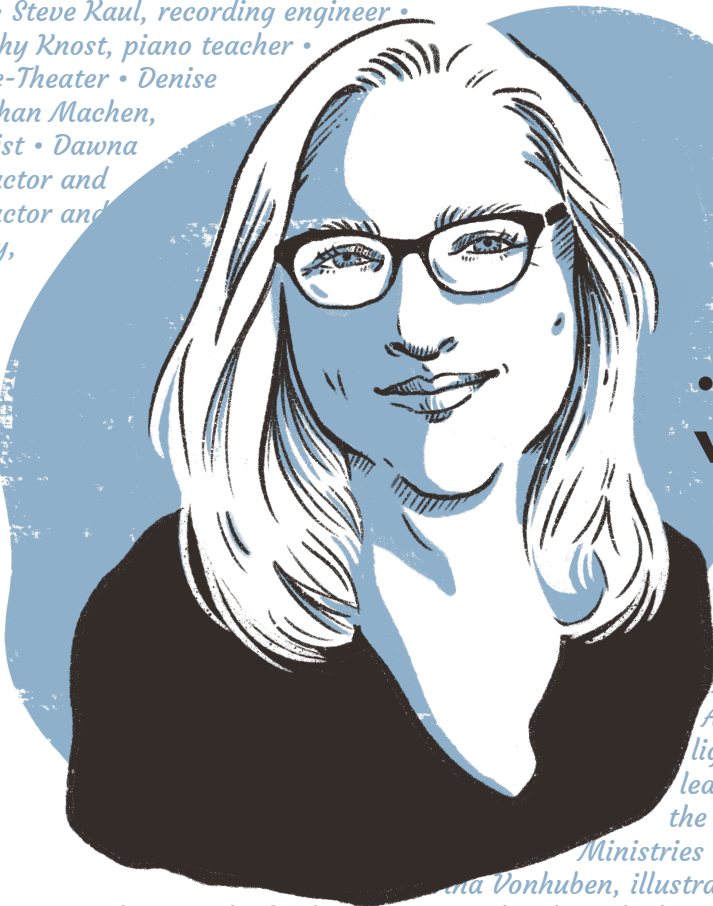
Ped. *

sfz

Ped. *

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 • Pesha 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 Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer and friend • John M. O'Brien, poet • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • George Shearing, 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
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander
www.seafarerpress.com

87

S I in - to my skin, my

S II in - to my skin, my

A in - to my skin, my

T in - to my skin, my

B in - to my skin, my

Ped.

[illegible]

The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 92-93) features a piano accompaniment with a treble clef staff containing eighth-note chords and a bass clef staff with a whole note chord marked *mf* and a *marcato* instruction. The second system (measures 94-95) continues the piano accompaniment with similar eighth-note chords in the treble and whole notes in the bass. The third system (measures 96-97) introduces three vocal parts: Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), and Alto (A). Each vocal part has a treble clef staff and the lyrics "those cod - ed mes - sag - es". The vocal parts are marked *crispily mp*. The piano accompaniment continues in the bottom two staves of this system.

92 *mf* *marcato* m.s.

94

96 *crispily mp*

S I those cod - ed mes - sag - es

S II *crispily mp* those cod - ed mes - sag - es

A *crispily mp* those cod - ed mes - sag - es

98

S I those cod - ed mes - sag - es

S II those cod - ed mes - sag - es

A those cod - ed mes - sag - es

100

S I those cod - ed mes - sag - es that send me down the wrong street a - *mf*

S II those cod - ed mes - sag - es that send me down the wrong street a - *mf*

A those cod - ed mes - sag - es that send me down the wrong street a - *mf*

T down the wrong *mf*

B down the wrong *mf*

104

S I - gain and a - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a -

S II - gain and a - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a -

A - gain and a - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a -

T street a - gain and a - gain, way down the wrong street a -

B street a - gain and a - gain, way down the wrong street a -

109

S I - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a - gain and a -

S II - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a - gain and a -

A - gain, way down the wrong street a - gain and a - gain and a -

T - gain and a - gain and a - gain and a - gain and a -

B - gain and a - gain and a - gain and a - gain and a -

Ped. Ped.

114

S I

- gain

S II

- gain

A

- gain

T

- gain.

B

- gain

crisply

mf

*

120

mf

T

those _____ cod - - ed mes - sag - es _____

mf

B

those _____ cod - - ed mes - sag - es _____

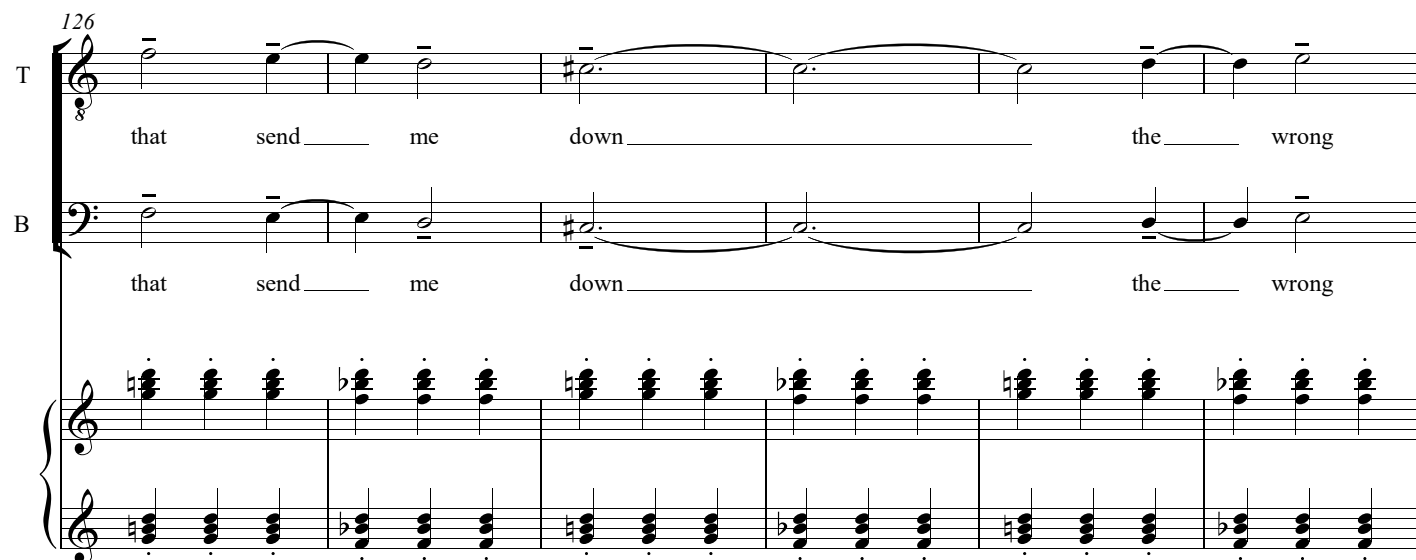
126

T

that send me down the wrong

B

that send me down the wrong



132

S I

S II

A

T

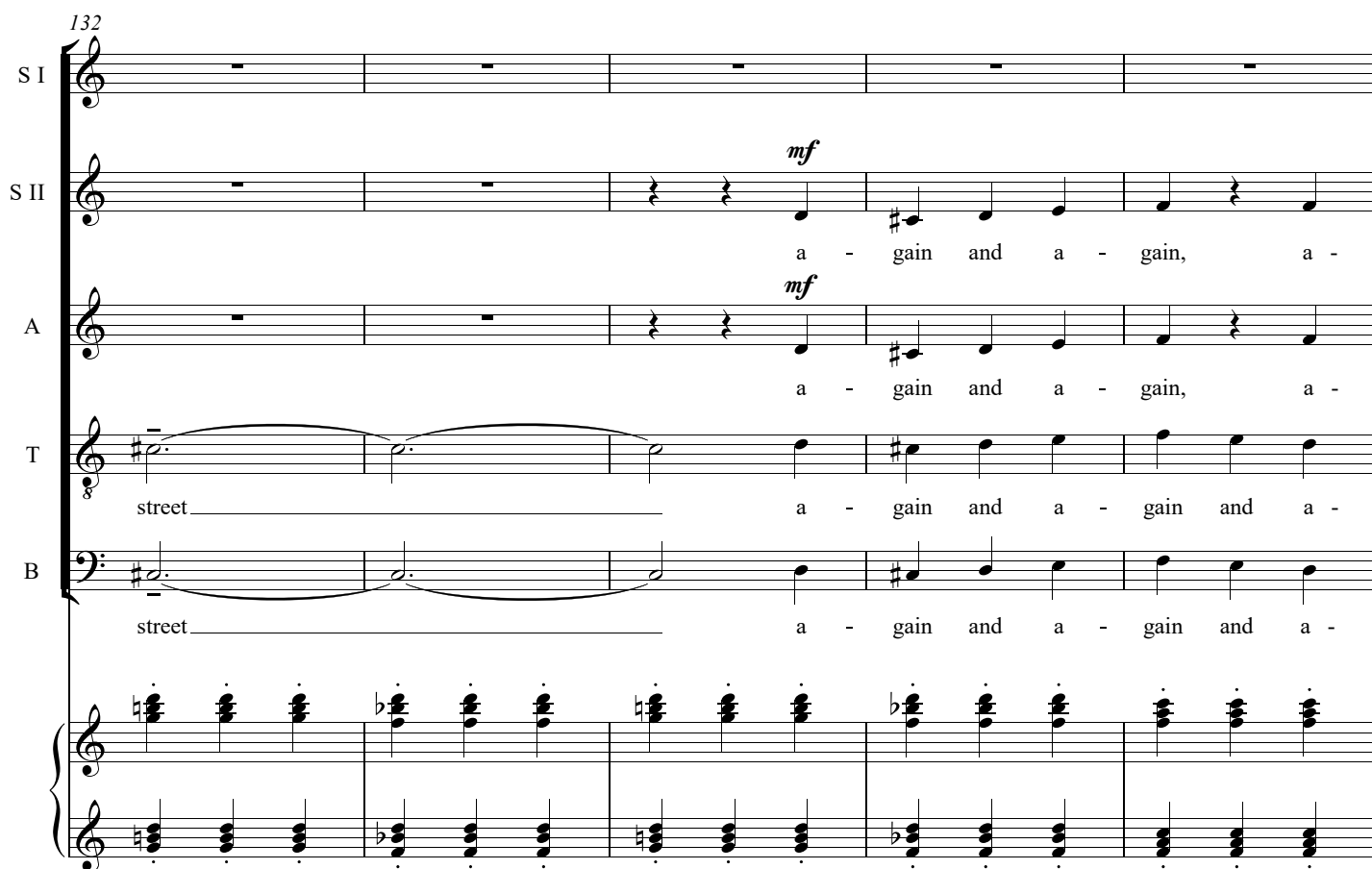
B

street a - gain and a - gain and a -

street a - gain and a - gain and a -

mf

mf



137

S I

S II

A

T

B

- gain, a - gain, a - gain where I find

- gain, a - gain, a - gain where I find

- gain, and a - gain and a - gain where I find

- gain, and a - gain and a - gain where I find

Red.

141

mf

f

S I

S II

A

T

B

down the wrong street where I find them

down the wrong street where I find them

them, where I find them

them, where I find them

them, where I find them

them, where I find them

Red.

Red.

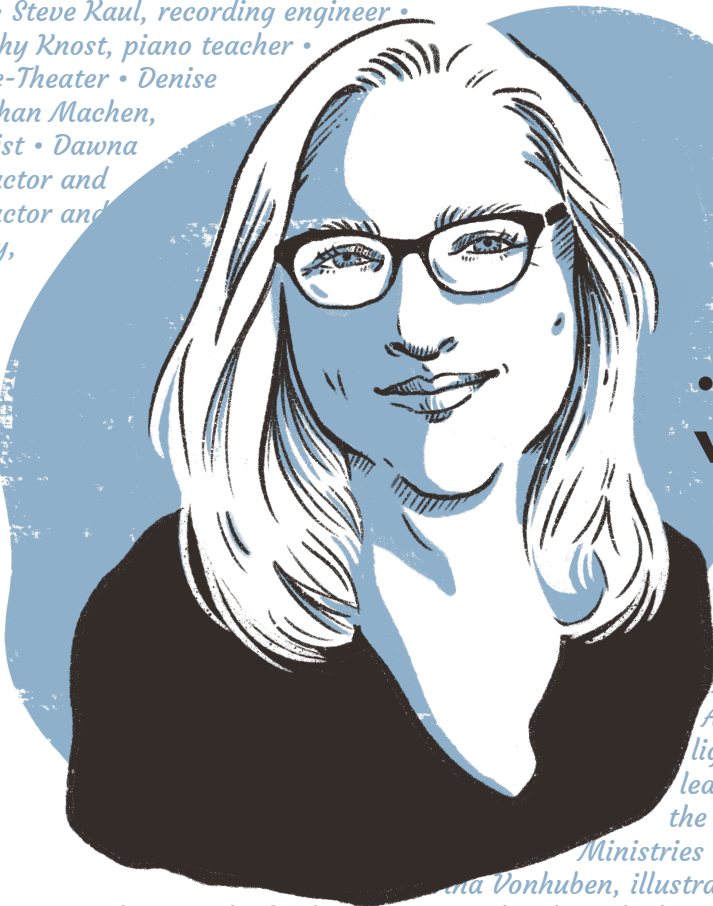
Red.

Red.

Red.

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 • Pesha 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, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer and friend • John Muir, poet • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • George Shearing, 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
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander
www.seafarerpress.com

157

S I old wounds the old

S II old wounds the old

A old wounds the old

p *pp*

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

162

S I mis - di - rec - - - tions and I

S II mis - di - rec - - - tions and I

A mis - di - rec - - - tions and I

T and I

B and I

mp *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *mp* *pp*

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

167

mp

S I lift them

S II lift them

A lift them

T lift them

B lift them

mf *p* bell-like

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

172

p

S I one by one by one by one by

S II one by one by one by one by

A one by one by one by one by

T one by one by one by one by

B one by one by one by one by

176

mp

Solo

close _____ to my heart, _____ close _____

S I

one, _____ one _____ by one, _____

S II

one, _____ one _____ by one, _____

A

one, _____ one _____ by one, _____

T

one, _____ one _____ by one, _____

B

one, _____ one _____ by one, _____

(upper chords for rehearsal only)

Ped.

Ped.

181

Solo

to my heart, and I say:

S I

one by one,

S II

one by one,

A

one by one,

T

one by one,

B

one by one,

(upper chords for rehearsal only)

Ped.

186

tenderly

Solo

ho - - - - ly

tenderly

(p)

Red.

190

S I

ho - - - - ly,

S II

ho - - - - ly,

A

ho - - - - ly,

T

ho - - - - ly,

B

ho - - - - ly,

Red.

Repeat ad libitum The examples below may be used as inspiration or as actual musical material.

Soloist improvises in a gospel style on “finally on my way,” “holy,” and/or “one by one.”

Notes for improvisation include (but are not limited to) the notes of the key signature.

Dynamics, expression, and number of repeats may vary.

194

Solo

2nd time through

3rd time through

4th time through

ho - ly,

Fi - nal - ly, fi - nal - ly, fi - nal - ly on my

way,

ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho -

ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly,

Repeat ad lib. *p*

S I

ho - ly,

p

S II

ho - ly,

p

A

ho - ly,

p

T

ho - ly,

p

B

ho - ly,

tenderly

Pno

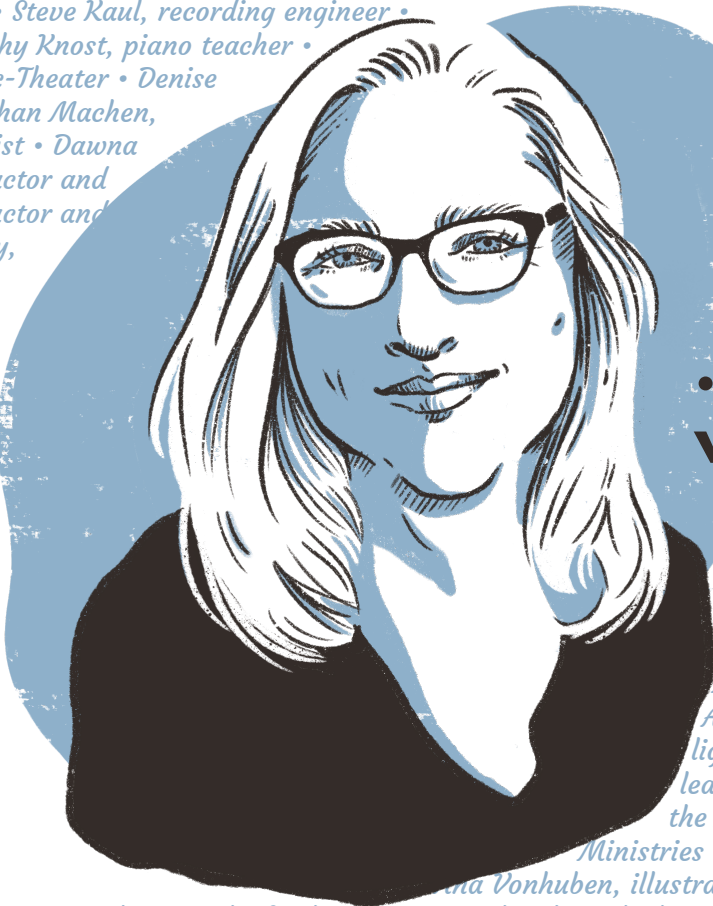
Ped.

Ossia

Ped.

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, composer and conductor • 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, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer and friend • John Muir, poet • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • Theodore Sautter, 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.**

**The rest of this piece is not available online.
(You know why.) A complete perusal copy may be
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander
www.seafarerpress.com

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