

# How To Sing Like a Planet

SATB and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*



# How To Sing Like a Planet

*“Scientists now say the planet itself is generating a constant, deep thrum of noise.  
No mere cacophony, but actually a kind of music, huge, swirling loops of sound,  
a song so strange you can't really fathom it, so low it can't be heard by human ears...”*

- Mark Morford, from “How To Sing Like a Planet,” San Francisco Chronicle, April 23, 2008

Let everything unfold in its own time.  
Accept what's beyond your control.  
Revel in simple harmonic motion.

Turn.  
Rotate.

Get charged up.  
Be weak. Be strong.  
Don't fight friction.  
Vibrate sympathetically.  
Don't be afraid to get into a groove.

Let gravity have its way with you.  
Revolve around something luminous.

*Wheel, whirl, slide, collide,  
Circle, cycle, amble, gambol –  
Resonate, radiate, innovate, renovate,  
Oscillate, fluctuate, circumnavigate –*

Bloom periodically.  
Hunker down when you must.  
Wobble from time to time without apology.

Know that annihilation's possible any time,  
But expect a bright tomorrow's coming anyway.

Elizabeth Alexander

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**Composer's Note:** *How To Sing Like a Planet* was inspired by a news article by the same title, written by gregarious San Francisco Chronicle columnist Mark Morford. Using a recent science report as a springboard, Morford spun out a delicious riff about the irrepressible music that the earth makes just by being itself. His glorious, over-the-top phrases described "...all sorts of curious tonal phrases that bounce around the mountains and spin over the oceans and penetrate the tectonic plates and gurgle in the magma and careen off the clouds and smack into trees and bounce off your ribcage and spin over the surface of the planet in strange circular loops." Wow, I thought. Could *we* sing that kind of music?

While I didn't actually set Morford's words to music, his unfettered imagination and provocative title got me off and running. In addition to that, I had some other sources of inspiration. My son Oliver (who had studied earth science more recently than I had) helped me remember principles like harmonic motion and oscillation, as well as the four basic planetary forces: gravity, electricity, weak force and strong force. I also gleaned wisdom from my yoga teacher Paul Busch, whose radical notions include the convictions that 1) gravity is our friend and 2) wobbling is nothing to be embarrassed about.



**Cover image:**

"May 30th, 2016 (Day 762)"

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[www.derekthedeliman.tumblr.com](http://www.derekthedeliman.tumblr.com)

# How to Sing Like a Planet

SATB and piano

(♩ = 44-50) Alive!

Elizabeth Alexander

S  
A  
T  
B

*thoughtfully, meditatively*

Piano

*p*

*pp*

*pp*

Let ev' - ry - thing un - fold in its own time.\_\_\_\_

Let ev' - ry - thing un - fold in its own time.\_\_\_\_

(Cue-notes are for rehearsal or reinforcement)

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

*Ped.* *Ped.*

14

S Ac - cept what's be - yond your con - trol.

A Ac - cept what's be - yond your con - trol.

T

B

*p*

*p*

*p*

3 3 4 1 3 1

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

[illegible]

24 *pp*

S and turn, turn, turn, turn,

A *pp* and turn, turn, turn, turn,

T *pp* and turn, turn, turn, turn,

B *pp* and turn, turn, turn, turn,

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

29 *p subito*

S turn, turn, turn, turn, rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate!

A *p subito* turn, turn, turn, turn, rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate!

T *p subito* turn, turn, turn, turn, rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate!

B *p subito* turn, turn, turn, turn, rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate!

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. \*

33 *mp*

S *mp*  
rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate! rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo -

A *mp*  
rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate! rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo -

T *mp*  
rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate! rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo -

B *mp*  
rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - tate! rō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo - ō - oo -

*mp*

*Red. \**

36

S  
ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō - wō

A  
ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō - wō

T  
ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō - wō

B  
ō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō - wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō!\_\_\_ wō-wō - wō - wō



**A**

(♩ = 100-104) (Double-time)

40

S *f* wō!

A *f* wō!

T *f* wō!

B *f* wō!

*mf* *sfz*

46

S Clap: *mp* Be weak. Be strong,

A Clap: *mp* Be weak. Be strong,

T *mp* Get charged up. Be weak. Be strong,

B *mp* Get charged up. Be weak. Be strong,

*mp* *sfz* *mp*

Pianist may play mm. 46-48 with different hand positions and fingering; one possibility is given here.

52

S Don't (t) fight (t) fric - tion. Whee! *Solo or small group: **f*** *gliss.*

A Don't (t) fight (t) fric - tion. *Solo or small group: **f*** *gliss.*

T Whee!

B Vi - brate sym - pa - the - tic - ally. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* *gliss.*

58 *mp*

S Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a groove, \_\_\_\_\_

A *mp* Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a

T

B

*mp*

62

S Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a groove, \_\_\_\_\_

A groove, \_\_\_\_\_ Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a

T *mp* Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a groove, \_\_\_\_\_

B *mp* groove, \_\_\_\_\_ Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a

66

S Don't be a- afraid to get in - to a groove, \_\_\_\_\_

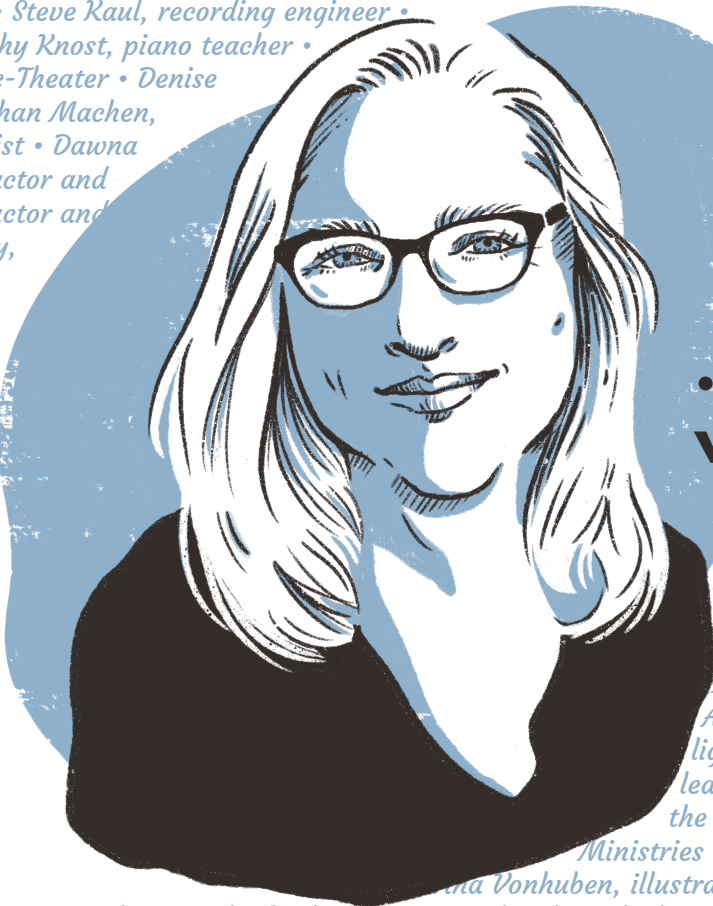
A groove, \_\_\_\_\_ Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a

T Don't be a- afraid to get in - to a groove, \_\_\_\_\_

B groove, \_\_\_\_\_ Don't be a-fraid to get in - to a

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



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

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80

S *gliss.* woove!

A *gliss.* woove!

T *gliss.* woove!

B *gliss.* woove!

*p* Let

*p* Let

*Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* *Ped.*

**B**

86

S *p* Re -

A *p* Re -

T gra - vi - ty have its way with you.

B gra - vi - ty have its way with you.

*p* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

94

S  
volve a - round some - thing lu - mi - nous, *mf*

A  
volve a - round some - thing lu - mi - nous, some - thing lu - mi - nous, *mf*

T

B

4

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

102

S  
Wheel, whirl, slide, col - lide, cir - cle, cy - cle, am - ble and gam - bol\* and

A  
Wheel, whirl, slide, col - lide, cir - cle, cy - cle, am - ble and gam - bol\* and

T  
*sfz* Hu(m)\*, thru(m), thru(m),

B  
*sfz* Hu(m), thru(m), thru(m),

*full, resonant*

*mf*

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

\* ...or is it "gamble?" Hmmm...

110

S *sfz* *sfz*  
flow! \_\_\_\_\_ Hu(m), \_\_\_\_\_ Thru(m), \_\_\_\_\_

A *sfz* *sfz*  
flow! \_\_\_\_\_ Hu(m), \_\_\_\_\_ Thru(m), \_\_\_\_\_

T *mf*  
re - so - nate, ra - di - ate, in - no - vate, re - no - vate, os - cil - late, fluc - tu - ate, cir - cum - na - vi - gate,

B *mf*  
re - so - nate, ra - di - ate, in - no - vate, re - no - vate, os - cil - late, fluc - tu - ate, cir - cum - na - vi - gate,

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

**C**

118

S *f*  
Bloom \_\_\_\_\_ per - i - o - di - cally, \_\_\_\_\_

A *f*  
Bloom \_\_\_\_\_ per - i - o - di - cally, \_\_\_\_\_

T *f*  
Bloom \_\_\_\_\_ per - i - o - di - cally, \_\_\_\_\_

B *f*  
Bloom\* \_\_\_\_\_ per - i - o - di - cally, \_\_\_\_\_

Ped. *f* opt. Ped.

126

T  
Hun - ker down \_\_\_\_\_ when you must.

B  
Hun - ker down \_\_\_\_\_ when you must.

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

134 *mf*

S  
Wob - ble from time to time with out a - po - lo - gy! \_\_\_\_\_

A  
*mf*  
Wob - ble from time to time with out a - po - lo - gy! \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*  
Ped. Ped.

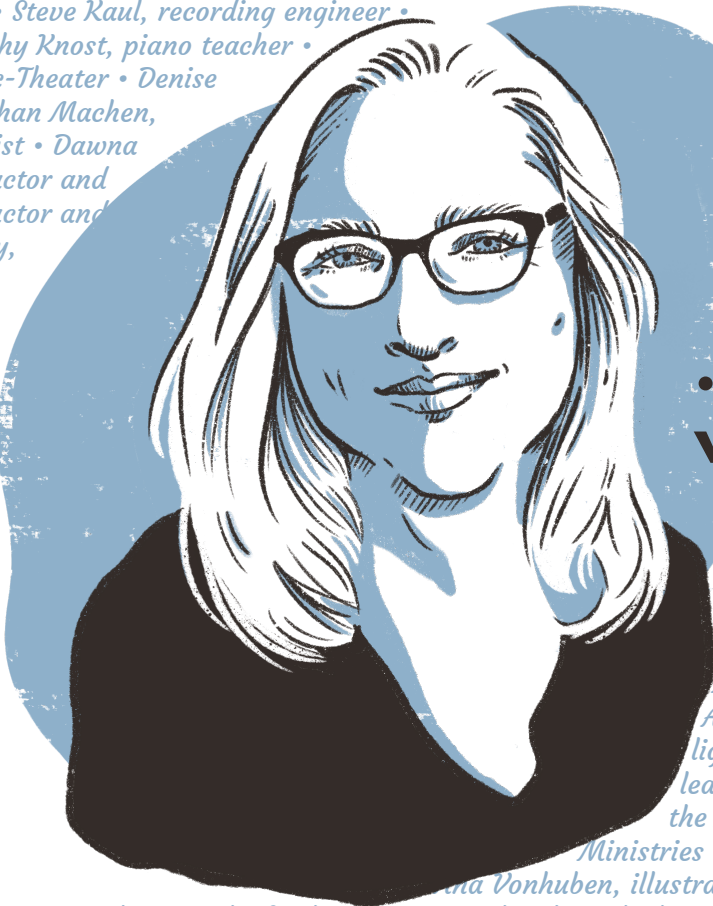
142

*mp*  
Ped. Ped. Ped.



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Alt.  
Pno.

\* Yes, altos, you have the hardest line here. It is also the coolest. I know you can do it! -E.A.

S

174

S an - y - way!

A an - y - way!

T an - y - way!

B an - y - way!

Red.

178

S an - y - way!

A opt. div.  
an - y - way!

T opt. div.  
an - y - way!

B an - y - way!

Red.

## 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