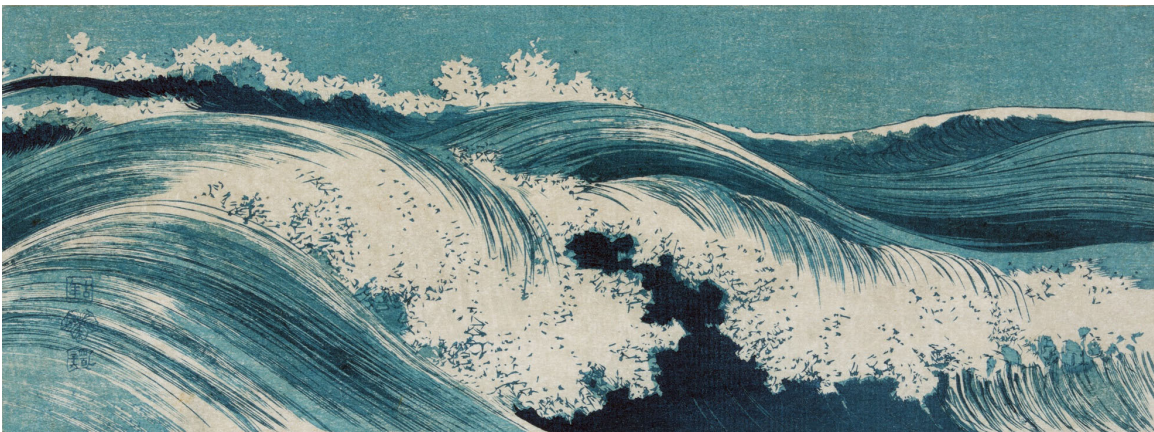


Calm the Tempests of My Heart

Søren Kierkegaard

SSA



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Calm the Tempests of my Heart

Adapted by the composer from a prayer by Søren Kierkegaard

Calm the tempests of my heart, O my God.
Calm the tempests of my heart, O my God.
Be still, O my soul, so that God may rest in thee,
Bringing peace that the world can never take away.

Lyric © 2012 by Elizabeth Alexander

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Danish philosopher and theologian, often called the “father of existentialism.” By the time Kierkegaard was 21, many of his relatives had died, including his mother and four of his siblings. Like his father, he would struggle with “melancholy” for most of his life – a condition we now refer to as depression.

Kierkegaard’s books and writings reflect his obsession with what he called “inwardness,” a realm completely separate from one’s outward demeanor and actions. Espousing what was then seen as a radical notion, he encouraged spiritual seekers to engage passionately with their emotions, especially intense emotions such as anguish. In his best known work, *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard described despair as a frequently overlooked “sickness of the spirit,” writing “Happiness is the greatest hiding place for despair.”

The words of this song were written by Kierkegaard in response to this lifelong struggle, which he here calls “the tempests of my heart.”

Composer’s Note: This song was inspired by both spiritual and practical needs. Conductor Joyce Harding was seeking a meditative response which could be sung at all of her evening church services during Lent. But as with so many volunteer choirs full of busy people, its size and makeup was apt to vary from week to week.

So I wrote *Calm the Tempests of My Heart* with maximum flexibility in mind. I crafted 2-part, 3-part, and 4-part voicings, so that it could be sung by a variety of high voice, low voice and mixed voice ensembles. Far from a rote exercise in arranging, this project gave me the chance to fashion a different character for each voicing, revealing different facets of Kierkegaard’s timeless prayer.

Several years later Lumina Women’s Ensemble began performing this song with each voicing in succession, starting with a unison statement of the melody. I liked their version so much that I wrote a new SSA version that reflects their performance.

Seafarer Press

SEA-114-00: Flexible Voicing Edition

SEA-114-01: SSA

Calm the Tempests of my Heart

Sören Kierkegaard, adapted

Elizabeth Alexander

With placidness and grace

Solo or Tutti

pp

Calm the tem - pests of my heart, O my God, Calm the tem - pests of my heart, O my

Tutti

p *ten.* *pp*

God, Be_ still, O my soul, so that God may rest in thee, bring - ing peace that the world can nev - er

2-part divisi

take a - way. Calm the tem - pests of my heart, O my God, Calm the
take a - way. Calm the tem - pests of my heart, O my God, Calm the

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 • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and serum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister 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 • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hagan, 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, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and serum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, 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 • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • 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

20

p

S I tem-pests of my heart, O my God, Be___ still, O my soul, so that

S II tem-pests of my heart, O my God, O my God, Be still, O my soul,___ so that

A tem-pests of my heart, O my God, O my God, Be___ still, O my soul, so that

23

ten. *pp*

S I God may rest in thee, bring - ing peace that the world can nev - er take a - way.

S II God may rest in thee, bring - ing peace that the world can nev - er take a - way.

A God may rest in thee, bring - ing peace that the world can nev - er take a - way.

Søren Kierkegaard's original prayer:

Calm the waves of this heart, O God;
Calm its tempests.
Calm yourself, O my soul, so that God is able to rest in you,
So that God's peace may cover you.
Yes, You can give us peace, O God,
Peace that the whole world can never take away.

Several different English translations of this prayer exist.
The translator of this version is unknown.



Cover Image: “Waves” Woodcut by Kōnen Uehara (ca. 1910)

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