

Grace

medium voice and piano





. M. S. III.

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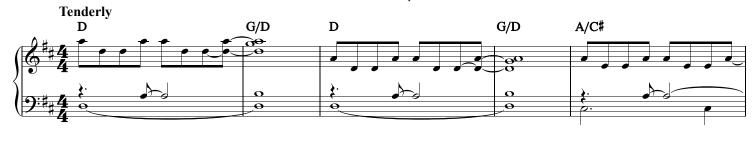
Elizabeth Alexander

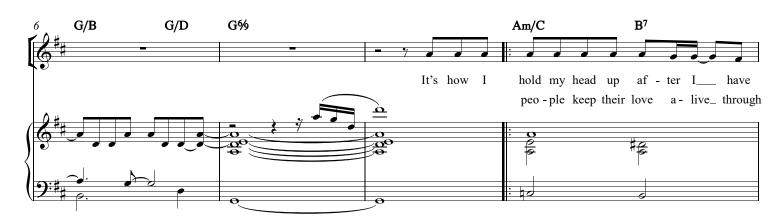
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Grace

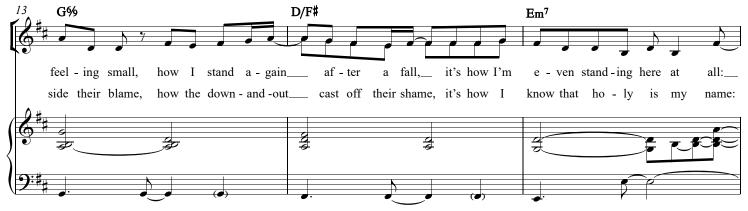
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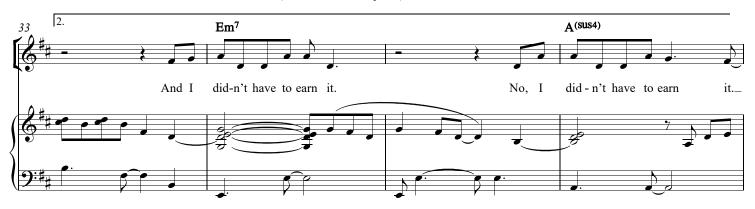


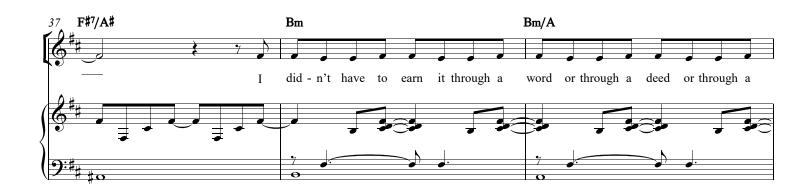




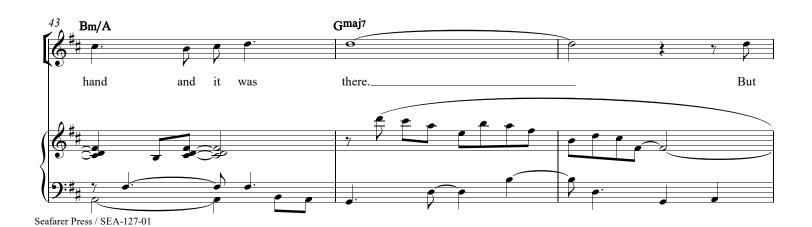












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Gerald Rich, poet • Cerl Sandburg, poet

WOIS o EVIC Portain Proposer and

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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

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Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director

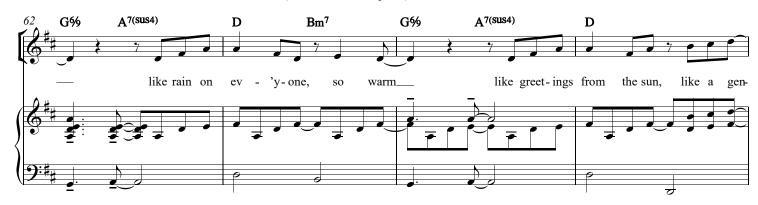
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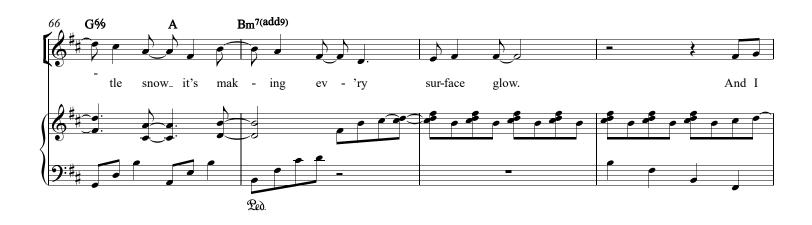
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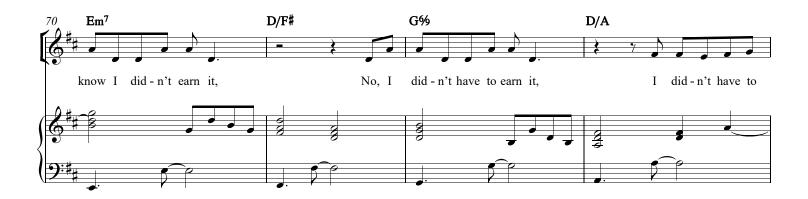
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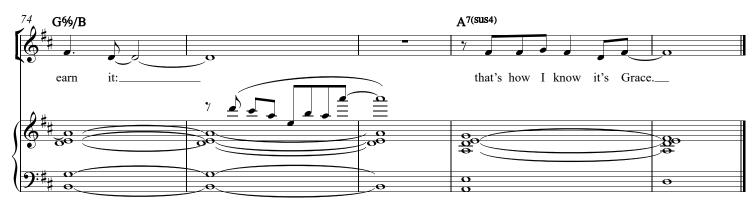
Elizabet Alexander

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander www.seafarerpress.com









Seafarer Press / SEA-127-01

Grace

It's how I hold my head up after I have missed the mark,
It's how I know I'm loved when things are dark,
It's how I stand when I am feeling small,
How I stand again after a fall,
It's how I'm even standing here at all —
Some people call it grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone,
So warm, like greetings from the sun,
Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow.
And I know I didn't earn it:
That's how I know it's grace.

It's how two people keep their love alive through thick and thin,
It's how a broken people sing again,
It's how the wounded set aside their blame,
How the down-and-out cast off their shame,
It's how I know that holy is my name —
We're all the same to grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone, So warm, like greetings from the sun, Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow. And I didn't have to earn it. No, I didn't have to earn it:

I didn't have to earn it through a word or through a deed, Or through a trial or through a creed, Or by denying what I need.
I only had to reach out my hand, and it was there.
But still it cannot take away the truths I have to face.
Oh no, that's not how it works with grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone,
So warm, like greetings from the sun,
Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow.
And I know I didn't earn it.
No, I didn't have to earn it.
I didn't have to earn it:
That's how I know it's grace.

Composer Note: It took me five years to write *Grace*. Every few months I returned to the song and eked out another couple of lines, but something essential was always missing. Grace felt infinitely immense and infinitely intimate at the same time, making it impossible for me to get my hands around this powerful concept.

The very word "grace" came with cultural baggage. Springing from the same Latin root which brought us words like "gratitude," "gratis" and "gratuity," grace is all about generosity freely bestowed, irrespective of whether that bounty has been earned. But in our time, grace has become so closely associated with Christian doctrine that many people define the word narrowly – as something bestowed only by God, and granted only to those who hold certain beliefs. I wanted my song to express how universal grace is, a gift and blessing far too precious to be limited to a chosen few.

However, my biggest challenge was that my lyrics kept making grace sound like a one-size-fits-all solution to every problem, a magical cure for disappointment and loss. I couldn't manage to balance the essential beauty of grace with the essential suffering of life. But in the aching days after the sudden and unexpected death of a young family friend, my unfinished song called to me again. This time, I wove a thread of heartbreak into the song – and I finally found a way to sing about grace in a way that was both awestruck and real. - E.A.

Songs of Elizabeth Alexander

* The Eternal One (Ralph Waldo Emerson, adapted)
Die Gedanken Sind Frei (16 th c. German protest song, arr.) [duet] alto, baritone, piano SEA-087-01
A Garret of Old Playthings (Carl Sandburg) soprano and piano SEA-028-00
I Write This Poem Out of Darkness (George Ella Lyon) SSA trio, flute, violin, piano SEA-024-01
* A Love Like That (Hafiz, translated/adapted by Daniel Ladinsky) SEA-094-00
* I'll Tell You a Story, then (Nancy White)
Jó! (The Edict of Torda) SSA trio or ensemble
My Aunt Gives Me a Clarinet Lesson (Gregory Djanikian)
soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion SEA-053-00
No One Gets a Program (Riff on a Dutch proverb) [duet] low voice, medium voice, piano . SEA-095-07
* Oath Taking (Opal Palmer Adisa)
On the Edge of the Water (E. Alexander) low voice, piano
So Many Corners (Rose Ausländer) soprano, piano SEA-040-00
So Many Corners (Rose Ausländer) soprano, chamber orchestra SEA-040-01
* Sleep Song (Ann Silsbee) soprano, piano SEA-061-00
* The Gospel Isn't Written In the Bible Alone (E. Alexander)
Three Rose Auslander Songs (R. Ausländer) soprano, strings, percussion SEA-040-05
Trouble in a Minnesota Town (Neal Bowers) baritone, piano

* Titles without specific voice type exist in multiple voicings (low, medium and high).

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