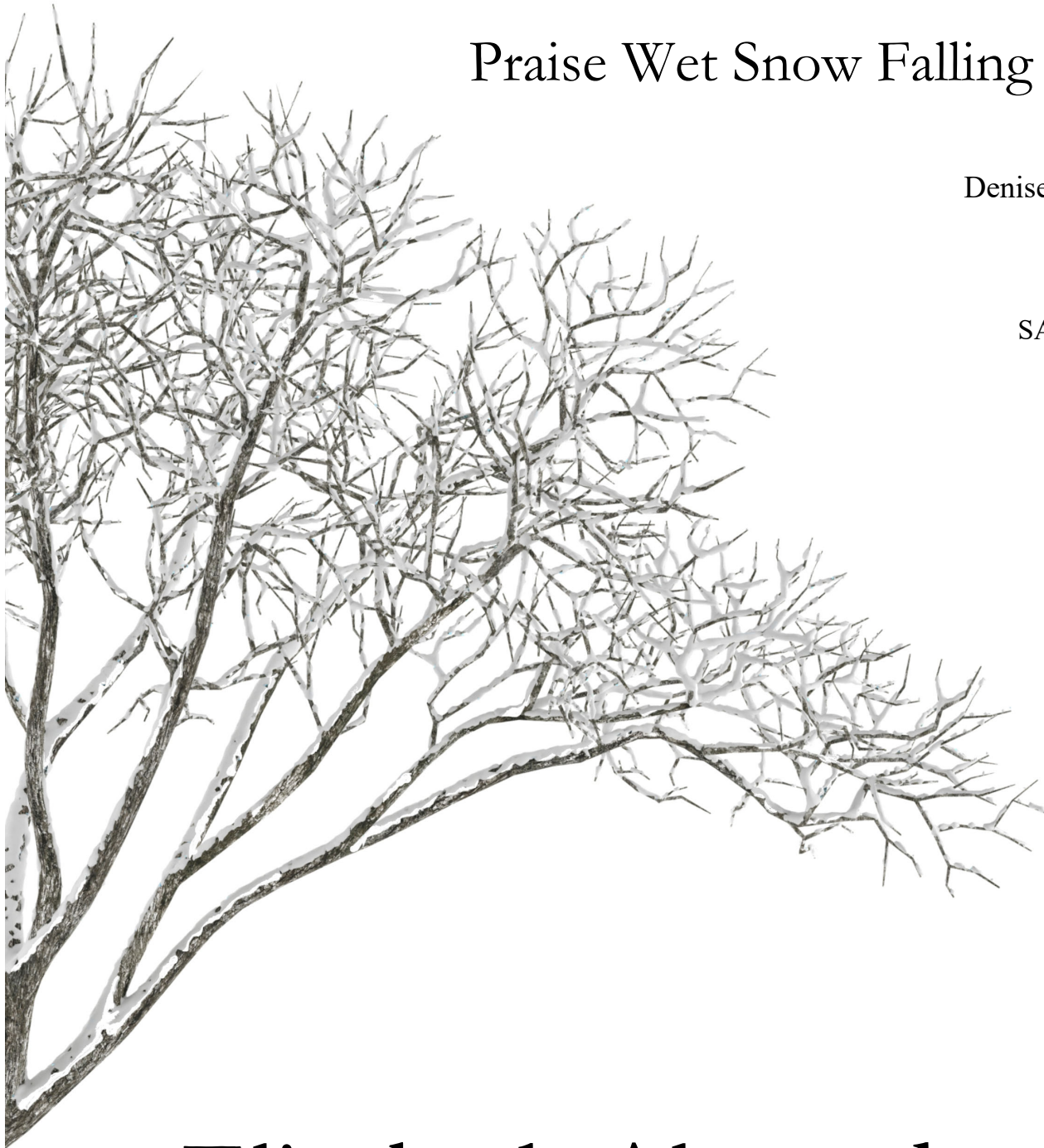


# Praise Wet Snow Falling Early

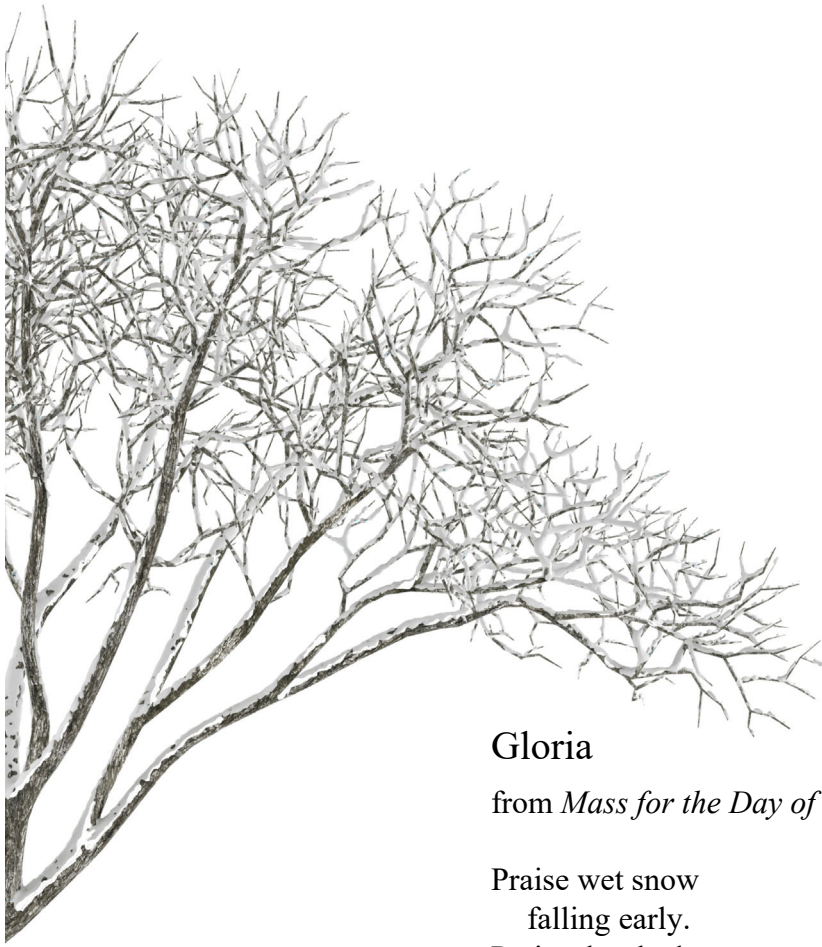
Denise Levertov

SATB, piano



# Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*



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## Gloria

from *Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus*

Praise wet snow

falling early.

Praise the shadow

my neighbor's chimney casts on the tile roof  
even this gray October day that should, they say,  
have been golden.

Praise

the invisible sun burning beyond

the white cold sky, giving us  
light and the chimney's shadow.

Praise

god or the gods, the unknown,  
that which imagined us, which stays  
our hand,

our murderous hand,

and gives us

still,

in the shadow of death,

our daily life,

and the dream still

of goodwill, of peace on earth.

Praise

flow and change, night and

the pulse of day.

Denise Levertov

for Dryden Community Choir, Rachel Dickenson conductor

# Praise Wet Snow Falling Early

SATB, piano

Denise Levertov

Elizabeth Alexander

Freely, *espressivo* (♩ = 56 - 60)

Musical score for SATB choir and piano, measures 1-6. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are shown with whole rests. The piano accompaniment features a right hand with a "gently pulsing" texture of chords and a left hand with a "lyrically" phrased line. Dynamics include *pp* and *Ped.*

Musical score for SATB choir and piano, measures 7-10. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Praise wet snow fall - ing ear - ly." The Soprano and Alto parts are marked *pp with pure tone*. The piano accompaniment features a "bell-like" texture in the right hand and a lyrical line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*.

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13

S  
Praise the sha - dow \_\_\_\_\_ my neigh - bor's chim - ney casts \_\_\_\_\_ on the

A  
Praise the sha - dow \_\_\_\_\_ my neigh - bor's chim - ney casts \_\_\_\_\_ on the

Pno

Ped.

17

S  
tile roof

A  
tile roof

Pno

Ped.

22

T  
*pp* e - ven this gray Oc - to - ber day \_\_\_\_\_ *p* that should, they

B  
*pp* e - ven this gray Oc - to - ber day \_\_\_\_\_ *p* that should, they

Pno

*bell-like*

*p*

Ped.

26

T  
8 say, have been gol - den.

B  
3 say, have been gol - den.

Pno  
Ped.

30

S  
*p* Praise the in - vi - si - ble sun burn - ing be - yond the white cold sky,

A  
*p* Praise the in - vi - si - ble sun burn - ing be - yond the white cold sky,

Pno  
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

35

S  
*mp* giv - ing us light and the chim - ney's sha - dow.

A  
*mp* giv - ing us light and the chim - ney's sha - dow.

Pno  
*mp* m.s. *p*  
Ped. Ped. 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 • 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 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 scrum 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.**

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47 *mp*

S — that which im - ag - ined us, —

A — that which im - ag - ined us, —

T — that which im - ag - ined us, —

B — that which im - ag - ined us, —

Pno *mp* *espress.*

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

50 *dolce* **ritanrdando**

S — that which im - ag - - - - - ined us, —

A — that which im - ag - - - - - ined us, —

T — that which im - ag - - - - - ined us, —

B — that which im - ag - - - - - ined us, —

Pno *dolce*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

53 **a tempo**

Soprano: *p* which stays our hand, *mp* which

Alto: *p* which stays our hand, *mp* which

Tenor: *p* which stays our hand, *mp* which

Bass: *p* which stays our hand, *mp* which

Piano: *p* Ped. Ped.

58 *mp*

Soprano: *mp* which stays our hand, our

Alto: *mp* which stays our hand, our

Tenor: stays our hand, our hand, our

Bass: stays our hand, our hand, our

Piano: *mf* Ped. Ped.

63 *with greater intensity* **mf**

S mur - - - der - ous hand, our mur - - - der - ous hand, which

A mur - - - der - ous hand, our mur - - - der - ous hand, which

T mur - - - der - ous hand, our mur - - - der - ous hand, which

B mur - - - der - ous hand, our mur - - - der - ous hand, which

Pno **mf**

Red. Red. Red. Red.

67 **ff**

S stays our mur - der - ous hand,

A stays our mur - der - ous hand,

T stays our mur - der - ous hand,

B stays our mur - der - ous hand,

Pno **ff**

Red. Red. Red.

70

S  
our mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ which stays our

A  
our mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ which stays our

T  
our mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ which stays our

B  
our mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ which stays our

Pno

*Ped.*

**rallentando**

**a tempo, meno mosso**

73

S  
mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ *lunga*

A  
mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ *lunga*

T  
mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ *lunga*

B  
mur - der - ous hand, \_\_\_\_\_ *lunga*

Pno

*Ped.*

*pp*

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

79 *p dolce*

S and gives us still,

A and gives us still,

T and gives us still,

B and gives us still, still

*p dolce*

*espressivo*

*p*

\* Ped.

86 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

S still in the sha - dow of death, in the

A still in the sha - dow of death, in the

T still in the sha - dow of death, still in the

B in the sha - dow of death, still in the

*gently*

3

(pedal each note)

Ped.

91

S  
sha - dow of death, \_\_\_\_\_ our dai - ly life, \_\_\_\_\_

A  
sha - dow of death, \_\_\_\_\_ our dai - ly life, \_\_\_\_\_

T  
sha - dow of death, \_\_\_\_\_ our dai - ly life, \_\_\_\_\_

B  
sha - dow of death, \_\_\_\_\_ our dai - ly life, \_\_\_\_\_

Pno

*lyrically*

Ped.

97

S  
and the dream \_\_\_\_\_ of good - will, \_\_\_\_\_

A  
and the dream \_\_\_\_\_ of good - will, \_\_\_\_\_

T  
still \_\_\_\_\_ still \_\_\_\_\_

B  
still \_\_\_\_\_ still \_\_\_\_\_

Pno

Ped.

Ped.

103

S  
and the dream of peace on

A  
and the dream of peace on

T  
and the dream of peace on

B  
still peace on

Pno  
Ped.

109

S  
earth.

A  
earth.

T  
earth. Praise flow and change,

B  
earth. Praise flow and change,

Pno  
Ped. Ped. Ped.

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125

S  
of day.

A  
of day.

T  
of day.

B  
of day.

Pno

Ped.

130

**rallentando**

S

A

T  
still

B  
still

Pno

## Composerly Thoughts about *Praise Wet Snow Falling Early*

In the wake of an adolescent double murder that deeply shook the small town of Dryden, NY, freelance writer and amateur musician Rachel Dickinson responded in the most sensible way possible. She founded a community choir.

Meanwhile ten miles away, I hadn't had a peaceful night of sleep in a few weeks. I was hugging my children overtight and overlong. I found myself crying while washing lettuce or putting on my shoes. When I read Rachel's essay about the choir in our local paper, I knew I had to compose a song for it.

Not just any song, of course. I told Rachel I wanted it to look at violence and still not lose faith in humanity. She wasn't entirely convinced but she too was a mom and creative artist, so she said she'd trust me.

What was I thinking? I had no idea how to write such a song. I searched for a text for weeks. Finally I came across an untitled Denise Levertov poem praising "that which stays our murderous hand." I immediately wanted to find a way to sing those words! At the same time, many things about the poem were baffling. Why is the snow "wet" and "falling early"? Why doesn't the poem just stop when it gets to "peace on earth"? And what is it with that chimney?

I decided to set the poem anyway. I began to appreciate how Levertov's momentary observation evolves into a broader meditation on transcendence and hope. Observing her gently shifting images of light, color and darkness, I abandoned "harmonic progressions" for something I called "harmonic transformations." After living with this poem for several weeks I had a realization that changed everything: *The poem was just a list of names for God.* And what a God! This was no perfect, pull-out-all-the-stops, adoration-seeker! This was a God that could be experienced through joys, disappointments and disillusionments alike. I wrote down all the names:

1. Snow (*wet, falling earlier than expected*)
2. My neighbor's chimney's shadow
3. This day (*gray, even though it should have been golden*)
4. The sun (*which we can't see*) which gives us light and shadow
5. God, or the gods
6. The unknown
7. That which imagined us
8. That which stays our murderous hand
9. That which gives us (*still, in the shadow of death*) our daily life
10. That which gives us the dreams (*still*) of goodwill and of peace on earth
11. Flow and change
12. Night and day

During the text permission process I had learned that the poem was actually titled "Gloria" but it wasn't until after the song was completed that I learned it was a movement from Levertov's "Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus." That's Thomas Didymus as in "Doubting Thomas," the guy who famously wrestled with contradiction and doubt before finding his way to some sort of faith. He's often maligned for having insufficient faith, but I'm rather fond of him. I believe he's pretty much like most of us, fumbling around looking for something we can believe in, and sometimes, miraculously, catching a glimpse of it. At least he's certainly like me.