

Be Grateful, My Soul

Poem by Norbert Čapek

SSAA a cappella
OR
5-part canon

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press



Be Grateful, My Soul

On March 28, 1941, Norbert Čapek, minister of the Unitarian Church in Prague, was arrested by the Gestapo, along with his daughter Zora. They were accused of listening to foreign broadcasts and BBC transmissions. In addition, Norbert was accused of “high treason,” with several of his sermons cited as evidence.

Zora was sent to a forced labor camp, from which she was subsequently released. She visited her father in Dresden Prison on March 31, 1942, the day before his trial. Knowing it could be their last meeting, he gave her a letter and poem he had written for her.

Although Čapek was found innocent of treason, the Gestapo ignored the court’s recommendation and sent him to Dachau. He was later sent to Hartheim Castle, where he was executed in a gas chamber. Of the estimated 30,000 people killed there over the course of the war, more than 300 were ministers and priests.

Be Grateful, My Soul is a stanza of the poem Norbert Čapek wrote for Zora:

Even though a thousand times disappointed
Or fallen in the fight,
Even though faced with a world that now seems worthless,
I have lived amidst eternity.
Be grateful, my soul,
I have lived amidst eternity.

Adapted lyric reprinted by permission of Ron Fredrick
(Complete poem reprinted on the inside of the back cover.)

Composer Note: *Be Grateful, My Soul* is a meditation on the timeless ecstasy of life, despite its disappointments, cruelty and pain. The arching melody, layered upon itself again and again, creates a form that is organic and expansive, suggesting breath upon deep breath, a joy of spirit which transcends all time and circumstance.

About this publication:

- ✧ This edition presents the 5-part canon, *Be Grateful, My Soul*, in its basic canon form as well as in a 4-part “concert arrangement.”
- ✧ This song easily lends itself to processions, offertories, meditative settings, and other situations in which a flexible duration is desirable. For this reason the duration of the 4-part arrangement varies from approximately 2.5 to 4.5 minutes, depending on whether performers sing or repeat the music at Rehearsal Letter C. While there are dynamics written into the score, performers should feel free to adjust them to fit the needs of the occasion.
- ✧ The basic range of the canon is from low A to high D, with a touch of high E in the final phrase. Because high E is not a viable note for all altos, a few optional alternate pitches are provided in the 4-part arrangement.
- ✧ The final measures include a few optional low Ds for the second altos. Have fun with those!

Be Grateful, My Soul

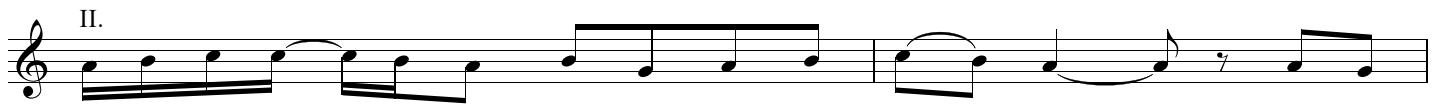
5-part Canon

Adapted from a prayer by Norbert Čapek
Translated by Zora Čapek

Elizabeth Alexander



E - ven though a thou - sand times__ dis - ap - point - ed,___ and fall - en in the fight,



E - ven though faced__ with a world that now seems worth - less,___ I have



lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be grate - ful my soul, be

*The last system of the canon is not included in this perusal score.
(You know why.)*

Even though a thousand times disappointed
Or fallen in the fight,
Even though faced with a world that now seems worthless,
I have lived amidst eternity.
Be grateful, my soul,
I have lived amidst eternity.

Norbert Čapek, translated by Zora Čapek
Edited and adapted as a lyric by Elizabeth Alexander
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Canon © 2010 by Elizabeth Alexander

Be Grateful, My Soul

SSAA a cappella

Adapted from a prayer by Norbert Čapek
Translated by Zora Čapek

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 63-69) With grace

p

Tutti

E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,

for rehearsal only

3

Tutti

E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less, I have

5

Tutti

lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be grate - ful my soul, be

*The last system of this page is not included in this perusal score.
(You know why.)*

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A

11

S
E - ven though a thou - sand times__ dis - ap - point - ed,____ and fall - en in the fight,
E - ven though a thou - sand times__ dis - ap - point - ed,____ and fall - en in the fight,

A
soul, my soul, oh my
soul, oh my soul, my

13

S
E - ven though faced__ with a world that now seems worth - less,____ I have
E - ven though faced__ with a world that now seems worth - less,____ oh my

A
soul, my soul,
soul, oh my soul, my

Be Grateful, My Soul (SSAA a cappella) - Choral Score

4

15

S
lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be
soul, my soul, oh my

A
E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,
soul, oh my soul, my

Piano accompaniment for measures 15-16.

17

S
grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have
soul, my soul, I have

A
E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less, I have
soul, oh my soul, my

Piano accompaniment for measures 17-18.

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 • Sasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael 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, 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

6

23

S E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less,_____ I have
mp
 E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed,_____ and fall - en in the fight,

A lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty.
 soul, oh my soul,_____ oh my

25

S lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be
mp
 E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less,_____ I have

A E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed,_____ and fall - en in the fight,
 soul, oh my soul,

27

S grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have
 lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be

A E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less,_____ I have
mp
 E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed,_____ and fall - en in the fight,

29

S lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty. Oh my
 grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have

A lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be
 E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less,_____ I have

Sing cue notes only if skipping Letter C:

C

For a processional, offertory, or meditative setting, you may repeat Letter C ad lib.
 For a short reprise or interlude, you may skip Letter C altogether and go straight to Letter D.

31 *mf*

S E - ven though a thou - sand times dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,
 lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty.

A grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have
 lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be

33

S E - ven though faced with a world that now seems worth - less, I have
 E - ven though a thou - sand times dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,
 lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty.

A grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have

35

S lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be

E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less, I have

mf

A E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,

lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty.

37

S grate - ful my soul, be grate - ful my soul: I have

lived a life a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, Be

A E - ven though faced_ with a world that now seems worth - less, I have

mf

E - ven though a thou - sand times_ dis - ap - point - ed, and fall - en in the fight,

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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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(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be
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Elizabeth Alexander
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44

S
soul, my soul. I have lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty,

A
soul, oh my soul. I have lived a - midst e - ter - ni -
- ty. my soul, I have lived a - midst e -
grate - ful my soul: I have lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty, oh my soul, I have

47

S
I have lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty.

A
- ty, oh my soul, my
ter - ni - ty. oh my soul, oh my soul,
lived a - midst e - ter - ni - ty. oh my soul,

Poem by Norbert Čapek

From a letter written in Dresden Prison
March 31, 1942

It is worthwhile to live
and fight courageously
for sacred ideals.

O blow ye evil winds
into my body's fire
my soul you'll never unravel.

Even though disappointed a thousand times
or fallen in the fight
and everything would worthless seem,

I have lived amidst eternity —
Be grateful, my soul —
My life was worth living.

He who was pressed from all sides
but remained victorious in spirit
is welcomed into the choir of heroes.

He who overcame the fetters
giving wings to his mind
is entering into the golden age of
the victorious.

Translation by Zora Čapek
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