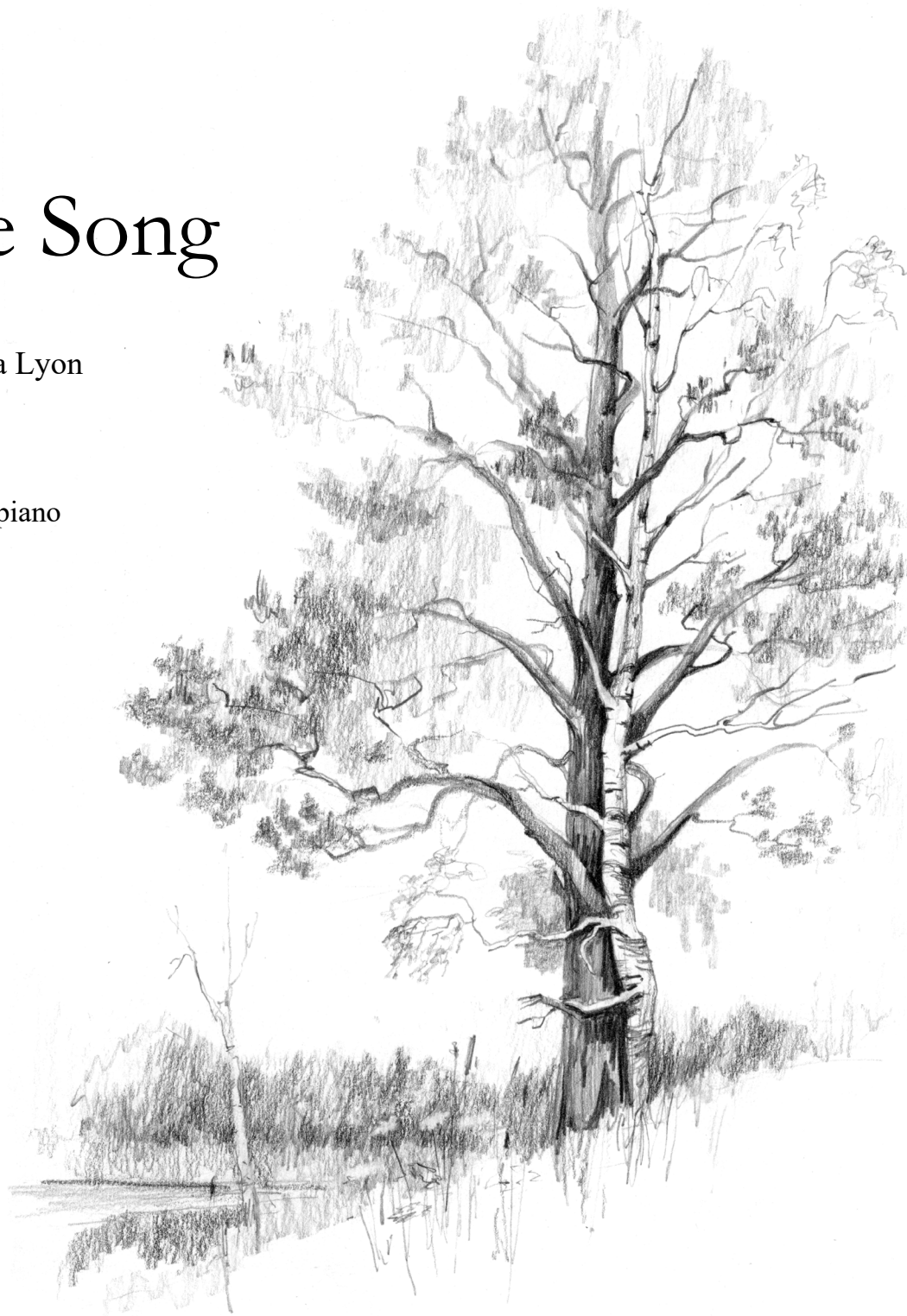


Tree Song

George Ella Lyon

SSA, cello, piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Tree Song

Roots, trunk,
branches, leaves.
As a tree gives
so it receives:
food from
the earth,
rain and sun
from the sky.
Its roots
reach deep
and its crown
rises high.
Blossoms
in spring,
fruit in
summer and fall:
home for many,
shelter for all.

George Ella Lyon

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Born and raised in the mountains of Kentucky, **George Ella Lyon** grew up with a love of poetry and music. She is as much an open-hearted poet-educator as she is a prolific writer, making her a much beloved former Poet Laureate of her home state.

Lyon has published several collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *She Let Herself Go*. Her other published books include the memoir *Don't You Remember?*, the novel *With a Hammer for My Heart*, the creative writing guide *Where I'm From*, three plays, and six novels for young readers. Lyon's numerous picture books include *ABCedar: An Alphabet of Trees* and her forthcoming book *What Forest Knows*.

Lyon is editor of *A Kentucky Christmas* and co-editor (with Leatha Kendrick) of *Crossing Troublesome: 25 Years of the Appalachian Writers Workshop*. Her work is featured in the PBS series, "The United States of Poetry."

Trees

Peach, plum, pear, prune, pine,
Poplar, persimmon,
Alder, ebony,
Elder, abba,
Champaka, cashew,
Cottonwood, yew,
Acacia, bamboo,
Maclura, mahogany, mangrove,
Cedar, cinnamon, willow, cocobolo,
Kahikatea, cacao, coffee, cashew,
Camilla, cherry, catalpa,
Tupelo, tulip,
Olive, chinaberry,
Chokecherry, mulberry, loblolly bay,
Amla, sal,
Linden, laurel, lilac, larch,
Juniper, joshua, jellyfish, bo,
Bottle tree, baobab, bunya-bunya.

Elizabeth Alexander

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Commissioned by the Twin Cities Women's Choir in memory and celebration of
the laughter and love Sue Fern brought to the world. Mary Bussman, Artistic Director

Tree Song

George Ella Lyon

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ ≈ 69-72)

The musical score is arranged in four systems. The first system includes staves for Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), and Violoncello (Vc), followed by a grand staff for Piano. The piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes fingerings 2, 1, 2. The second system features a Violoncello staff with a *p warmly* marking and fingerings 5, V, 4. The third system features a Violoncello staff with a triplet of 3. The fourth system features a Violoncello staff with a triplet of 3 and V markings. The piano accompaniment is consistent throughout, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line and a more melodic upper line with slurs and ties.

17

Vc

1 2 3 1 3 4

21 **A** *p warmly*

S I Roots, trunk, branch - es, leaves. *p warmly*

S II As a

A

Vc

gentle marcato

5 2 1 2

25

S I

S II tree gives so it re - ceives:

A

Vc

2 1 2 1 3 1

29 *p warmly*

S I
 food from the earth, _____ rain and sun from the sky. _____

S II

A

Vc

33

S I
 Its roots reach deep _____ and its crown ris - es high. _____

S II
 Its roots reach deep _____ and its crown ris - es high. _____

A
p
 Its roots reach deep _____ and its crown ris - es high. _____

Vc

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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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B

55

S I

S II

A

Vc

*mp playfully**

*mp playfully**

mp playfully

mp

playfully

5 2 1 2

pop - lar, per-
peach, plum, pear, prune, pine,

* Singers gently hand off each vocal line to the other.

59

S I

S II

A

Vc

sim - mon, al - der, e - bon - y,

el - der, ab - ba, cham - pa - ka, cash - ew, cot - ton - wood,

II

2 1 2 1 3 1 4

63

S I

S II

A

Vc

a - ca - cia, bam - boo,

yew, ma - clur - a, ma - ho - gan - y,

67

mp playfully

S I

S II

A

Vc

co - co - bo - lo, ka - hi - ka - te - a, ca -

co - co - bo - lo, ka - hi - ka - te - a,

man - grove, ce - dar, cin - na - mom, wil - low, co - co - bo - lo, ka - hi - ka - te - a, ca -

2 1 2

2 1 2

72 *mf*

S I ca - o, cof - fee, ca - shew, _____

S II _____ ca - mil - la, cher - ry, ca - tal - pa, tu - pe - lo, tu - lip, _____

A *mf* ca - o, cof - fee, ca - shew, _____ ca - mil - la, cher - ry, ca - tal - pa, tu - pe - lo, tu - lip, _____

Vc *mf*

77 *mp*

S I o - live and chi - na - ber - ry choke - cher - ry, mul - ber - ry lob - lol - ly bay,

S II _____

A *mp* o - live and chi - na - ber - ry choke - cher - ry, mul - ber - ry lob - lol - ly bay,

Vc *mp*

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89 *mp*

S I Roots, trunk, branch - es, leaves. As a

S II *mp* pop - lar, per-

A *mp* peach, plum, pear, prune, pine,

Vc *mp*

playfully

mp

5 2 1 2

93

S I tree gives so it re - ceives:

S II sim - mon, al - der, e - bon - y,

A el - der, ab - ba, cham - pa - ka, cash - ew, cot - ton - wood,

Vc II

2 1 2 1 3 1 4

97

S I food from the earth, rain and sun from the sky.

S II a - ca - cia, bam - boo,

A yew. ma - clur - a, ma - ho - gan - y,

Vc

101

S I and its crown ris - es high.

S II Its roots reach deep and its crown ris - es high. ca -

A man - grove, ce - dar, cin - na - mom, wil - low, co - co - bo - lo, ka - hi - ka - te - a, ca -

Vc

106 *mf*

S I — Blossoms in spring, ca - tal - pa, tu - pe - lo, tu - lip,

S II *mf* ca - o, cof - fee, ca - shew, ca - mil - la, cher - ry, ca - tal - pa, *mp* fruit in

A *mf* ca - o, cof - fee, ca - shew, ca - mil - la, cher - ry, ca - tal - pa, tu - pe - lo, tu - lip,

Ossia

Vc

111 *mp*

S I o - live and chi - na - ber - ry, choke - cher - ry, mul - ber - ry lob - lol - ly bay,

S II *mp* sum - mer and fall:

A *mp* o - live and chi - na - ber - ry, choke - cher - ry, mul - ber - ry lob - lol - ly bay,

Vc

115

A Solo *p* Shel - ter for

S I *p* aam - la, sal, lin - den, lau - rel, li - lac, larch,

S II *p* m, lin - den, lau - rel, li - lac, larch,

A home for man - y,

(unobtrusive bow changes)

Vc *p*

3 2 1

121 **D**

S Solo *p* Shel - ter for

A Solo all.

S I ju - ni - per, jo - shu - a, jel - ly - fish, bo, As a

S II ju - ni - per, jo - shu - a, jel - ly - fish, bo, bot - tle - tree, ba - o - bab, bun - ya - bun - ya,

A ju - ni - per, jo - shu - a, jel - ly - fish, As a tree gives so it re -

Vc *p*

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133

S I
Roots, trunk, branch-es, leaves. As a

S II
Roots, trunk, branch-es, leaves.

A
chi-na-ber-ry, Roots, trunk, branch-es, leaves.

Vc

137

S I
tree gives so it re- ceives, so it re -

S II
As a tree gives so it re- ceives:

A
As a tree gives so it re ceives:

Vc

141

S I
ceives,

S II
so it re - ceives:

A
so it re - ceives,

Vc

145

S I

S II

A

Vc

8^{va}

Composer Note:

After an early rehearsal of *Tree Song* a singer wrote me the following note: “I’m reading a book entitled *Quiet* by Susan Cain all about being an introvert in a world that prizes talkative, extroverted people. Your song resonates with some of the topics in the book...like the benefit and power that different kinds of presence and energy bring to the world.”

As for me, I’m not very introverted. To be honest, I’ve had to work hard to learn to listen well. This has involved learning to be more accepting of other people, of myself, and of the world. When doing this work I was – and still am – inspired by trees.

Trees are very good teachers. As far as I can tell, trees don’t waste any of their precious energy straining against present circumstances, but instead accept their place in the scheme of things. They aren’t giving themselves makeovers, fretting about their inadequacies, or calculating their rank in the tree hierarchy. They do not move to New York City or the Pacific Northwest when they want more out of life. They stay where they are, going about the quiet business of being. Even when the old oak tree in my backyard is clearly stressed from heat or wind or drought, it just keeps on keeping on. Some of its branches might die back or its acorns drop prematurely, but it accepts the gifts of sunlight and rain just as it does during more favorable conditions, singing its patient tree song all the while.

The generous world of trees was close to my heart when I wrote *Tree Song*. I kept my setting of the words simple and elegant, just like George Ella Lyon’s original poem. The names of over fifty trees are woven throughout, from “peach and plum” to “bunya-bunya.” And the cello and piano, two of the most exquisite instruments ever created from wood, are not located off to one side. They are nestled in the center of the singers, part of a gentle dialogue of giving and receiving.



Download a free cello part at www.elizabethalexander.com/works/tree-song

About some of the trees

Champaka /cham-pə́-kə/ A large evergreen variety of magnolia native to South and Southeast Asia, and parts of China. Its flowers have a strong scent, lending the tree one of its most evocative other names, “joy perfume tree.”

Maclura /mə-klu´-rə/ A small tree in the mulberry family, maclura is dioecious, meaning that it has male and female flowers on different plants. As suggested by one of its more common names, “Osage orange,” this tree is native to Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas.

Cocobolo /ko-kə-bo´-lo/ A tropical hardwood tree from Central America. Because of the beauty and density of its heartwood, it has been exploited as a material for such items as gun handles and musical instruments, and thus is now found primarily in forest reserves and on private plantations.

Kahikatea /kə-i-kə-tí´-ə/ Also called “white pine,” Kahikatea is the tallest of New Zealand forest trees, growing to heights of over 150 feet.

Tupelo /tu´-pi-loʊ/ The Tupelo tree is found in wet areas of North America and Asia. Its name comes from the Creek language, meaning “swamp tree.” Honey made from its flowers is so valued that beekeepers set up their hives near swamps during the tupelo bloom season.

Loblolly bay /ləb´-ləl-ē-beɪ/ A flowering tree in the tea family, native to the swamps of Southeastern United States.

Amla /əm´-lə/ Also called “Indian gooseberry,” amla is used in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine, and is closely associated with the goddess Lakshmi. It has many names all over India; “aamla” is its Hindi name.

Sal /səl/ Found in Northeast and Central India, including at high elevations in the Himalyas, sal has a variety of medicinal properties. It is important in both Buddhist and Hindu traditions; the Buddha is said to have been born under a sal tree, and images of this “tree of Vishnu” are found in Hindu art and temple architecture. Like aamla, it has many names other than its Hindi one, including shala, sarai, sargi, salwa, sakhu, sakher, shal, kandar and sakwa.

Bunya-bunya /bʌn´-jə-bʌn´-jə/ A large emergent tree of Australia’s rainforest, once common in large old-growth forests. It is now rare because of the destruction of the rainforest and because of the tree’s multi-year cycle of seed production. Also called the “bunya pine,” “bunya bunya” is its Aboriginal name.