

No Ordinary Song



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

No Ordinary Song

As we lift our voices on this day,
Many hearts are heavy with despair.
How can our lifted voices find a way
To bring us one step closer to repair?

If a wounded world we wish to heal,
We must sing no ordinary song.
Make it a cadence relevant and real,
Its every measure purposeful and strong.

Let this song our greatest hopes contain:
Well-fed children be its just refrain,
Roofs over every heartbeat be its tune,
Its harmony from peaceful cities hewn.

Sing of hope while hammering each nail.
Sing of joy while pulling every weed.
Sing to renew a covenant grown frail.
May every alleluia plant a seed.

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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.**

**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

No Ordinary Song

With forward motion

Elizabeth Alexander

Dm⁷ C/E F C/G F/A C/G F⁹ G(sus4)

1. As we

3 2 1 4 5
2 1 2 1

5 C/E F C/E C Am Em⁷

(1.) lift our voices on this day, Many hearts are heavy with de -
 (2.) wound - ed world we wish to heal, We must sing no or - din - a - ry
 (4.) hope while ham - mer - ing each nail. Sing of joy while pull - ing ev' - ry

Last Time to CODA ◊

8 F C/E Fmaj⁷ G Am⁷ C/G F C/E Eb⁹

- spair. How can our lift - ed voices find a way to
 song. Make it a cadence re - le - vant and real, its
 weed. Sing to re - new a co - ve - nant grown frail. May

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20 F C/E Eb \flat Dm⁷ G

tune, Its har - mo - ny from peace - ful cit - ies hewn. 4. Sing of

CODA Φ

Dm⁷ G Am

ev' - ry al - le - lu - ia plant a seed. May

F/A G C

ev' - ry al - le - lu - ia plant a seed.

No Ordinary Song is a complete rewriting of *As We Sing of Hope and Joy*, a hymn I wrote in the mid-90s which has been published in hymnals in the United States and England, as well as being published separately as a short choral piece. Almost as soon as I finished writing the song, I was both pleased and dissatisfied with it, for reasons I couldn't exactly understand. At first I thought the disconnect was that the music was too formal for a song about rolling up one's sleeves and doing the hard work of restorative justice. So about ten years later I wrote a new tune with a unison melody which I liked quite a bit. However, the less formal music made me immediately long for a more down-to-earth lyric, one that dug into what it really means to start healing a wounded world.

Never before had I put so many hours into writing such a small song. Every couple of years I pulled it out of the filing cabinet and banged on it for a couple of days, and it would get incrementally better in some way or another. Little by little, it became less cocksure about success. Nowhere was this more evident than in the rewriting of the valiant penultimate line, "So shall we sing together and prevail." The new line (whose last syllable also rhymes with "nail") contains a less certain but more realistic aspiration: "Sing to renew a covenant grown frail."

I also completely re-evaluated the form of the song, abandoning the traditional 4-verse form for a more modern AABA form. What a difference a bridge makes!



"Souls of Light" by Andrew Ostrovsky
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It took until 2020 for me to figure out what the core problem of the lyric was. I was almost embarrassed when I realized it. From the very first line the song divided the world up into two parts, the fortunate and the unfortunate: "As we sing of hope and joy this day, others only know of life's despair." Of course! I needed to acknowledge that we are all in this together, in the joys and sorrows, and in the problems and solutions. We are all made less whole by the broken covenant, and we are all called to the mending wall. This is the awareness that can, actually, make "every alleluia plant a seed."

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