

Sing Me Awake

Poem by Gregory Orr

SATB, piano, and string quartet OR string orchestra

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press



This is what was bequeathed us:
This earth the beloved left
And, leaving,
Left to us.

No other world
But this one:
Willows and the river
And the factory
With its black smokestacks.

No other shore, only this bank
On which the living gather.

No meaning but what we find here.
No purpose but what we make.

That, and the beloved's clear instructions:
Turn me into song; sing me awake.

Gregory Orr

From *How Beautiful the Beloved* by Gregory Orr
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About “the beloved”

Excerpt from *Poetry Is ‘Concentrated Testimony’ of Being Human*
A profile of poet Gregory Orr
PBS NewsHour, September 30, 2013

Poet Gregory Orr rhapsodizes on a theme he has explored for nearly a decade: the “beloved,” the things we love.

Of course, what we love can change over time, he says. “It can make you crazy by...shifting from one thing to another and yet, of course, that’s also dazzling,” he told the PBS NewsHour...

The “beloved” can be any object of affection: a person, a place, a pet. And it is within those targets of love — and our relationships to them — that Orr finds meaning for his life. “Without any sense [of] the beloved, it seems to me the world goes dead, or the world goes just to self, which is even worse,” Orr said.

The original inspiration was a phrase that sprung from his imagination: “the book that is the resurrection of the body of the beloved, which is the world.” Orr envisioned a collection of all the poems and songs ever written in the history of human existence. The invisible anthology’s purpose was to serve as human testimony about “what it is like to be alive.”



Cover art:

“Swallow and Willows”
by Ella Sarini, a.k.a. Seisei
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Sing Me Awake

Gregory Orr

SATB, piano, string quartet OR string orchestra *

Elizabeth Alexander

With awe (♩ = 84)

S
A
T
B

Pno I

Pno II

legato sempre
pp
una corda
Ped.
poco a poco tre corde

marcato
ppp

4 * Piano II part should be sufficient for most rehearsals. Piano I part contains gestures which may be valuable to choristers to be aware of.

I

II

mp *pp*
mp *pp*
poco a poco una corda

7

I

II

poco a poco tre corde

9

I *mf*

II *mf*

11

I *p*

II *p*

poco a poco una corda

A

14

S *p*
This is what was be - queathed

A *p*
This is what was be - queathed

II

17

S — to us:

A — to us:

I *mf*

II *mf*

poco a poco tre corde

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 17 through 19. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) have the lyrics "to us:". The instrumental parts include Violin I, Violin II, and Piano. The Violin I part features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes with accents, marked *mf*. The Piano part has a steady accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the bass line, also marked *mf*. The instruction "poco a poco tre corde" is written below the piano part.

20

T 8 *p* This is what _____

B *p* This is what _____

I *pp*

II *p*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 20 through 22. The vocal parts (Tenor and Bass) have the lyrics "This is what". The instrumental parts include Violin I and Piano. The Violin I part has a melodic line with accents, marked *pp*. The Piano part has a steady accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the bass line, marked *p*.

23

T
was be - queathed to

B
was be - queathed to

II

26

T
us: *mf*

B
us: *mf*

I

II

28

I

II

30 *mf*

S This is what _____ was be - queathed _____

A This is what _____ was be - queathed _____

T This is what _____ was be - queathed _____

B This is what _____ was be - queathed _____

I *mf*

II *mf*

33

S _____ to us. _____

A _____ to us. _____

T _____ to us. _____

B _____ to us. _____

I

II

36

I

II

B

38

S *p* This earth__ the be -

A *p* This earth__ the be -

T *p* This earth__ the be -

B *p* This earth__ the be -

I *f*

II *f* *p*

Ad.

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 • 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 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.**

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47

S
us, to us.

A
us, to us.

T
us, to us.

B
us, to us.

II

Lead.

49

mf

S
This is what was be - queathed to

mf

A
This is what was be - queathed to

mf

T
This is what was be - queathed to

mf

B
This is what was be - queathed to

II

mf

Lead.

51

S us: This is what was be -

A us: This is what was be -

T us: This is what was be -

B us: This is what was be -

II *Ped.* *Ped.*

54

S queathed to us,

A queathed to us,

T queathed to us,

B queathed to us,

II *Ped.*

56

II *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

C

59

S *mp*
No oth - er world but this one:

A *mp*
No oth - er world but this one:

II *mp subito*
Ped. Ped. Ped.

62

S *mp*
No oth - er world, No oth - er world but

A *mp*
No oth - er world, No oth - er world but

T *mp*
No oth - er world, No oth - er world but

B *mp*
No oth - er world, No oth - er world but

II *mp subito*
Ped. Ped. Ped.

65

S
this one

A
this one, but this one:

T
this, but this one: Wil - lows and the

B
this one, but this one: Wil - lows and the

II

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

68

T
riv - er and the fac - t'ry with its smoke - stacks.

B
riv - er and the fac - t'ry with its smoke - stacks.

II

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

71

S
No oth - er world but this one: Wil - lows and the riv - er and the

A
No oth - er world but this one: Wil - lows and the riv - er and the

II

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

74

S smoke - stacks black. No oth - er

A smoke - stacks black. No oth - er

T No oth - er

B

II

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

mf

D

76

S shore, no oth - er shore, no oth - er

A No oth - er shore, no oth - er

T shore, no oth - er shore, no oth - er

B No oth - er shore, no oth - er

II

Ped. Ped. Ped.

mf

79

S
shore, _____

A
shore, _____

T
shore, _____ On - ly this

B
shore, _____ On - ly this

II
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

81

S
On which the liv - ing

A
On which the liv - ing

T
bank on which the liv - ing gath - er, On which the liv - ing

B
bank on which the liv - ing gath - er, On which the liv - ing

II
Ped. Ped. Ped.

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90 **E**

mp

T No oth - er mean - ing but what we find here. _____

mp

B No oth - er mean - ing but what we find here. _____

II *mp*

Ped. *Ped.*

93 *mp*

S What we find here,

mp

A What we find here,

T _____ No oth - er pur - pose but what we

B _____ No oth - er pur - pose but what we

II *Ped.*

96

S *mf* What we make here. No mean - ing — but what we (Opt. reinforcement of alto melody)

A *mf* What we make here. *marcato* No mean - ing — but what we

T *mf* make, what we make, what we make.

B *mf* make, what we make, what we make.

II *mf*

Ped. *Ped.*

99

S *marcato* No mean - ing — but what we find, — but what we make.

A find — here, — no pur - pose — but what we make.

T No pur - pose — but what we make.

B No pur - pose — but what we make.

II

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.*

102

S That, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

A That, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

T That, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

B That, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

II *f*

Ped. *Ped.*

104

S struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

A struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

T struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

B struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

II *f*

Ped. *Ped.*

106

S
struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

A
struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

T
struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

B
struc - - tions, and the be - lov - ed's clear in -

II
Ped. Ped.

108

S
struc - - tions: _____

A
struc - - tions: _____

T
struc - - tions: _____

B
struc - - tions: _____

II
Ped. Ped.

F

110 *ff*

S Turn me in - to song,

A Turn me in - to song, in - to

T Turn me in - to song, in - to

B Turn me in - to song, in - to

II *ff*

And.

112

S Sing me a - wake.

A song. Sing me a - wake.

T song. Sing me a - wake.

B song. Sing me a - wake.

II

And.

114

S Turn me in - to song,

A Turn me in - to song,

T Oh, turn me in - to

B Oh, turn me in - to

II *And.*

116

S Sing me a - wake. Sing me a -

A Sing me a - wake. Sing me a -

T song. Sing me a - wake.

B song. Sing me a - wake.

II *Péd.*

118

S
wake, _____ sing me a -

A
wake, _____ Sing me a - wake, _____ sing me a -

T
_____ _____ _____ Sing me a -

B
_____ _____ _____ Sing me a -

II
Ped.

120

S
wake, _____ *mf* Sing me a -

A
wake, _____ *mf* Sing me a -

T
wake, _____ _____ _____

B
wake, _____ _____ _____

II
Ped.

122

S
wake. _____

A
wake. _____

T
mf
Sing me a -

B
mf
Sing me a -

I
mp

II
mp
Ped.

124

S
p (hauntingly, like an echo)
Sing me a -

A
p (hauntingly, like an echo)
Sing me a -

T
wake. _____

B
wake. _____

I

II
Ped.

126

S
wake.

A
wake.

T
mp (hauntingly, like an echo)
Sing me a -

B
mp (hauntingly, like an echo)
Sing me a -

I

II

Leg.

128

S
p
Sing me a -

A
p
Sing me a -

T
wake.
p
Sing me a -

B
wake.
p
Sing me a -

I

II

Leg. *Leg.*

G

130

S
wake.

A
wake.

T
wake.

B
wake.

I
p

II
p
ped.

133

I
mp *pp*

II
mp *pp*

136

I

II

139

The author of more than 10 collections of poetry and several volumes of essays, criticism, and memoir, **Gregory Orr** is a master of the short, personal lyric. His poetry has been widely anthologized and translated into at least 10 languages.

When Orr was 12, he accidentally killed his brother in a hunting accident, an event his family was never able to talk about. His mother died soon thereafter, and Orr found in poetry the transformative power of language. His near-death experience as a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the civil rights movement, in which he was jailed and severely beaten, contributes to the urgency with which his poems seek transformation. In an NPR story on his craft, Orr states, “I believe in poetry as a way of surviving the emotional chaos, spiritual confusions, and traumatic events that come with being alive.”

Orr has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. He has also been a Fulbright Scholar and a Rockefeller Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Culture and Violence, and he received the Award in Literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. *City of Salt* (1995) was a finalist for the LA Times Book Award for Poetry. He teaches at the University of Virginia, where he founded the MFA program in writing in 1975, and served from 1978 to 2003 as poetry editor of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

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TTBB • SEA-062-02
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