

Only a Couple Fishes

SA children's choir and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Only a Couple Fishes

SA, piano

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 80) **Brightly**

Unless indicated, the left hand is played legato in the Latin sections, without sacrificing rhythmic precision

5

9

All *mp*

1. Long a - go_ five thou - sand peo - ple head - ed out_ in - to the wil - der - ness.
2. To and fro_ they passed a bas - ket, but dis - cov - ered when they looked with - in:

13

All

Lis - ten - ing to_ a wise_ man and fol - low - ing where he led. When their
On - ly a cou - ple fish - es, and on - ly five loaves of bread. The a -

* Commissioned underwritten by the American Composers Forum with funds provided by The Otto Bremer Foundation

17

All

bel - lies start - ed rum - bl - ing, some peo - ple start - ed grum - bl - ing till the
- mount was tru - ly hum - bl - ing, mo - rale was quick - ly crum - bl - ing, but they

21

All

mf

wise man o - pened up his arms and said:
prayed to - - ge - ther as the wise man said:

25

All

A

As we share what we have with each oth - er, Let us sing out joy - ful - ly,

33

All

May a - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude; then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

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.**

**This page has been intentionally omitted.
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

Elizabeth Alexander

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53

All

Sud - den - ly there_ was plen - ty, and ev'-ry - one there was fed. There was

57

All

so much that_ was e - di - ble; the feast - ing was_ in - cre - di - ble; and so

61

All

f

much left o - ver that the peo - ple_ said:

65

All

D *mf*

As we_ share what we have with each oth - er, Let us sing_ out joy - ful - ly,

73

S
May_ a - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude; then to_ gen - er - os - i - ty.

A
May_ a - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude; then to_ gen - er - os - i - ty._____

81

S
As we_ share what we have with each oth - er,

A

Keep the accompaniment incisive and rhythmic to the end of the song!

85

S
 Let us sing out joy - ful - - ly,
 As we share what we have with each oth - er,

A

89

S
 May a - - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude;
 Let us sing out joy - ful - - ly,

A
 As we share what we have with each oth - er,

93

S then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

May a - - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude;

A Let us sing out joy - ful - - ly,

As we share what we have with each oth - er,

E

If you wish, you may invite the audience to sing along with first soprano part. Repeat as desired.

97

S As we share what we have with each oth - er,

then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

A May a - - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude;

Let us sing out joy - ful - - ly,

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109

S
then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

A
May a - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude;

Let us sing out joy - ful - ly,

As we share what we have with each oth - er,

113

S
then to gen - er -

A
then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

May a - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude; then to gen - er -

Let us sing out joy - ful - ly, May a - bun - dance

Ped.

Keep pedal depressed until end of piece. Even though the singers' melody parts are lyrical, keep piano part articulated and alive!

119

S
- os - i - ty.
then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

A
- os - i - ty.
lead to grat - i - tude; then to gen - er - os - i - ty.

mp

125

S
pp
then to gen - er - os - i - - ty.

A
pp
then to gen - er - os - i - - ty.

A
pp
then to gen - er - os - i - - ty.

A
pp
then to gen - er - os - i - - ty.

p

8va

Song of the Five Thousand is the canonic chorus of the children's choir piece, *Only a Couple Fishes*, whose full text gives the context for the prayer of abundance, gratitude and generosity:

Long ago, five thousand people headed out into the wilderness,
Listening to a wise man,
And following where he led.
When their bellies started rumbling,
Some people started grumbling,
Till the wise man opened up his arms and said:
“As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity.”

To and fro they passed a basket, but discovered when they looked within:
Only a couple fishes, and only five loaves of bread.
The amount was truly humbling;
Morale was quickly crumbling,
But they prayed together as the wise man said:
As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity.”

Overflowing baskets started coming forth before their very eyes:
Suddenly there was plenty, and everyone there was fed.
There was so much that was edible;
The feasting was incredible,
And so much left over that the people said:
“As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity.”

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Composer Note: In this timeless story the mysterious source of the bounteous food is never named. Do the overflowing baskets come from a divine source after the wise man expresses gratitude? Or is there another possible source, more human but no less miraculous? It was important to me that my retelling ask this question, but not answer it.

Also, writing the lyrics of this song was a blast! Some of my rejected lyrics were just as funny as the ones I kept. For example, here are some of my alternate versions for the third and fourth lines of verse 2:

While the shortfall was explainable, a feast was unattainable.
This was all that was available. The amount was hardly scalable!
The amount was truly comical. It was hardly economical!
The amount was truly laughable, but the wise man still stayed affable.
The amount was quite forgettable. What a shortfall! How regrettable!

These couplets still crack me up, but in the end I had to go with lyrics that told the story best. - E.A.