

# The Eternal One

*A tender portrait of the divine*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

low voice and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

# The Eternal One

for low voice and piano

Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
Adapted from "The Oversoul"

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 60-63) With love

*p* 3

It comes to the

*bell-like*

*p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

5

low - ly, It comes to the sim - ple, It comes to whom - ev - er will put off\_ what is

3 3 3

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

8

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

for - eign or proud. It comes as in - sight, It comes as ser -

3 3

*magical*

3

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

10 *mf* *p*

-en - i - ty, It comes as gran - deur, With - in us the

*mf* *p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

13

soul of the whole, With - in us the wise, wise

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

16 *mp*

si - lence, With - in us the u - ni - ver - sal beau - ty to which

*mp*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

19 *with ecstasy*

ev' - ry part and par - ti - cle is e - qual - ly re - la - ted: the E - ter - nal

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

23

*p*

One. When it

*p più animato*

*ped.* *ped.*

25

*mp*

breathes through our in-tel-lect, it is gen - ius.

*mp*

*ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

27

When it breathes through our will, it is

*ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

29

*mf*

vir - tue. When it

*mf*

*ped.* *ped.*

31

flows through our af - fec - tion, it is love, \_\_\_\_\_ it is

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

33

love, \_\_\_\_\_ it is love, it is

*mp*  
*mp delicately*  
Ped. Ped.

35

love, for - ev - er and

*poco rallentando* *mf*  
Ped. Ped. Ped.

37

ev - er, for - ev - er and ev - er. There is no

*a tempo* *mf*  
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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 scrum 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 scrum 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

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## The Eternal One

It comes to the lowly,  
It comes to the simple,  
It comes to whomever will put off what is foreign or proud.  
It comes as insight,  
It comes as serenity,  
It comes as grandeur.  
Within us the soul of the whole,  
Within us the wise silence,  
Within us the universal beauty  
To which every part and particle is equally related:  
The Eternal ONE.

When it breathes through our intellect, it is genius.  
When it breathes through our will, it is virtue.  
When it flows through our affection, it is love.

Forever and ever, forever and ever,  
There is no ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens.  
Within us the soul of the whole,  
Within us the wise silence,  
Within us the universal beauty:  
The Eternal ONE.

Lyric distilled from Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "The Over-soul"  
Adapted lyric copyright 2010 by Elizabeth Alexander

### Composer Note:

I was initially wary about setting a Ralph Waldo Emerson text, not because he wasn't a compelling thinker and writer but because his essays were so intense. As with many writers of the time, his sentences were long, winding and dense. Metaphor followed metaphor, leaving me gasping for air.

But I kept thinking I'd find just the right text if I looked hard enough! Emerson was so compelling! One of the few people in early America who was familiar with Buddhist and Sufi philosophies, he thought of God as neither patriarchal nor judgmental but instead, all-embracing and benevolent. This divine presence, which he called the "Over-soul," flowed through the mind and spirit of every living being, not rigid but in constant flux.

When I finally came across a direct and approachable excerpt from Emerson's essay "The Over-soul" I ecstatically set it to music. It was performed by a terrific baritone at a music conference and I thought all was well.

Alas, I discovered a few weeks later that *the excerpt itself had been greatly adapted!* I immediately began correcting altered words and phrases back to the original text, but there was one correction that I could not bring myself to make. In an attempt to render Emerson's writing gender-neutral, the editors had changed all references to "man" and "his" to "us" and "our" — an intimate, first-person voice. Here, God was understood as a presence endowed with infinite benevolence, beauty, and unity with all beings. And I found that understanding to be breathtakingly beautiful.



Cover Image:

"Tree of Life"  
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## Selected Vocal Music by Elizabeth Alexander

**A Garret of Old Playthings** (Carl Sandburg)  
high voice, piano • SEA-028-00

**A Love Like That** (Hafiz/Ladinsky)  
low voice, piano • SEA-094-00  
medium voice, piano • SEA-094-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-094-02

**Die Gedanken Sind Frei** (German protest song, arr. Alexander)  
Vocal Duet: low voice, high voice, piano • SEA-087-01

**Grace** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice, piano • SEA-127-00  
medium voice, piano • SEA-127-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-127-02

**I Write This Poem Out of Darkness** (George Ella Lyon)  
Vocal Trio: SSA, flute, violin, piano • SEA-024-01

**I'll Tell You a Story, then...** (Nancy White)  
low voice, piano • SEA-069-00  
medium voice, piano • SEA-069-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-069-02

**Infant Holy, Infant Lowly** (Polish carol, arr. Alexander)  
Vocal Trio: SSA a cappella • SEA-020-00

**Jo!** (The Edict of Torda)  
Vocal Trio: SSA a cappella • SEA-092-00

**My Aunt Gives Me a Clarinet Lesson** (Gregory Djanikian)  
soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion • SEA-053-00

**No One Gets a Program** (Dutch proverb, Elizabeth Alexander)  
Vocal Duet: low voice, medium voice, piano • SEA-095-07

**Oath Taking** (Opal Palmer Adisa)  
high voice, piano • SEA-073-00

**On the Edge of the Water** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice, piano • SEA-083-00

**Sleep Song** (Ann Silsbee)  
low voice, piano • SEA-61-00  
medium voice, piano • SEA-061-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-061-02

**The Eternal One** (Ralph Waldo Emerson)  
low voice, piano • SEA-093-00  
medium voice, piano • SEA-093-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-093-02

**The Gospel Isn't Written in the Bible Alone** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice, piano • SEA-082-00  
medium-high voice, piano • SEA-082-02

**Trouble in a Minnesota Town** (Neal Bowers)  
medium voice, piano • SEA-047-01  
high voice, piano • SEA-047-02