

Folks, I'm Telling You

Langston Hughes

SSATB and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Advice

Folks, I'm telling you,
birthing is hard
and dying is mean —
so get yourself
a little loving
in between.

Langston Hughes

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Composer's Note: One of the things I've always loved about Langston Hughes' poems is how he combines hard truth with deep love, creating a world in which penetrating reality and compassion coexist. The people he writes about are heartbreakingly vulnerable and infinitely resilient, often in the same breath. To my ear, his short and to-the-point poem, "Advice," cried out for edgy rhythms, complex chords, heartfelt passion, and a generous helping of the blues.

Folks, I'm Telling You was composed in 2002 for Common Chords Chorus of Ithaca, NY. - E.A.

Growing up in the Carolinas and Appalachian Ohio, **Elizabeth Alexander** gained her first love of language and music from her parents, a minister and a piano teacher. These twin passions are reflected in her catalogue of over 100 choral and vocal pieces, which have received over 20 national and international awards, and which have been performed by thousands of choirs. Her composition teachers have included Jack Gallagher at The College of Wooster, and Steven Stucky, Yehudi Wyner and Karel Husa at Cornell University, where she received her doctorate in music composition.

A recent McKnight Composition Fellow, Elizabeth lives in St. Paul, MN, where her frequent commissions include works for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles and solo musicians. In addition to composing, Elizabeth teaches little fingers to play, shamelessly encourages her teenagers' jokes, and tends her garden during the three month period in Minnesota that is not winter. She believes she has the best job in the world.

For more information about Elizabeth's music, visit www.elizabethalexander.com

Cover Art: "Play de Blues" by Aaron Douglas

After studying classical and modern art in his home state of Nebraska, Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) moved to New York City, where he became a major figure in the Harlem Renaissance. "Play de Blues" (1926) was an illustration for Langston Hughes' set of poems by the same name, published in the National Urban League magazine, *Opportunity*.

Douglas later founded the art department at Fisk University, where he taught for nearly three decades.



for Common Chords Chorus
Folks, I'm Tellin' You

Langston Hughes

for SSATB chorus and piano

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 80-88)

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system contains five vocal staves (S I, S II, A, T, B) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and includes pedal markings. The second system continues the piano accompaniment, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The third system introduces the vocal entries for Soprano I, Soprano II, and Alto, each with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics 'Folks, I'm tell - in' you,' are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment continues with a fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic. The score concludes with a double bar line.

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14

S I
I'm tell - in' you,

S II
I'm tell - in' you,

A
I'm tell - in' you,

T

B

mp
Ped. * Ped. *

16

S I

S II

A

T

B

mf sf sf sf
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped.

19

S I *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

S II *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

A *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

T *mf* Folks,

B *mf* Folks,

sf Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

22

S I Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

S II Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

A Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

T I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

B I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

sf Ped. * Ped. *

24

S I *f* birth - in' is *sfz-p* hard, and

S II *f* birth - in' is *sfz-p* hard, and

A *f* birth - in' is *sfz-p* hard, and

T *f* birth - in' is *sfz-p* hard, and

B *f* birth - in' is *sfz-p* hard, and

f Ped. (pedal with right hand)

27

S I *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

S II *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

A *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

T *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

B *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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36 *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ *f* Hard and mean, _____

S I

mp Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ *f* Hard and mean, _____

S II

mp Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ *f* Hard and mean, _____

A

mp Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ *f* Hard and mean, _____

T

mp Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ *f* Hard and mean, _____

B

Birth - in' and dy - in' _____ Hard and mean, _____

Ped. Ped. Ped.

40 *mf*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

42 *pp* So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

S I

pp So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

S II

pp So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

A

pp So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

T

pp So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

B

So get your - self a lit - tle lov - in' in be - tween, _____

Ped. Ped.

44

S I

S II

A

T

B

p

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

46

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

48

p *mp*

S II

Ooo. a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

50

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

52

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

A

p *mp*

Ooo a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

54

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

A

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

56

S I

p *mp*

Ooo a lit - tle lov - in',

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

A

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

58

S I lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

S II lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

A lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

60

S I Solo: *mf* with a little edge in the voice [slide]
Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in',

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

64

S I Tutti:
a lit - tle lov - in',

S II *mf*
a lit - tle lov - in',

A *mf*
a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

66 *mp*

T lov - in', lov - in',

p subito

Ped. *

68

T lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

B *p* Ooo *mp* a lit-tle lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

71

T Get a lit - tle lov - in',

B Get a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

73 *mf*

T Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you,

B *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

mf *gutsy*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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85

A *mp* *moanin'*
Dy - in', Dy - in',

T *mp* *moanin'*
Dy - in' is mean, Dy - - - in',

B *mp* *moanin'*
Dy - in' is mean, Dy - - - in',

89

S I *mp*
Folks, I'm tell-in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you, *port.*

S II *mp*
Folks, I'm tell-in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you, *port.*

A *mp*
Folks, I'm tell-in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you, *port.*

Solo or Tutti:

93

T *p*
A lit-tle lov-in', a lit-tle lov-in', a lit-tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

97 *mp dolce, legato*

S I So get your - self a lit - tle

S II *mp dolce, legato*
So get your - self a lit - tle

A *mp dolce, legato*
So get your - self a lit - tle

101 *Tutti: mf warmly*

T Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

B *mf warmly*
Get your - self a lit - tle lov - - - - in',

mf warmly
Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

105 *Solo: f with abandon*

S I get your-self a lit - tle bit of lov - in' in - - - be - tween, - - -

mp

109

sfz

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped.

111 Solo: *mp* darkly

B

Birth - in' and dy - in', — hard — and mean. —

mp

115

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

117

sfz *sfz* *sfz*

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

119 *mf*

S I *mf* Folks, I'm tell-in' you, — Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

S II *mf* Folks, I'm tell-in' you, — Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

A *mf* Folks, I'm tell-in' you, — Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

T *mf* Folks, — I'm tell-in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

B *Tutti: mf* Folks, — I'm tell-in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

f

Ped. Ped. Ped.

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128

S I birth - in' is hard, and

S II birth - in' is hard, and

A birth - in' is hard, and

T birth - in' is hard, and

B birth - in' is hard, and

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

Ped. (pedal with right hand)

131

S I dy - in' is mean,

S II dy - in' is mean,

A dy - in' is mean,

T dy - in' is mean,

B dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

sfz-p

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

134

S I *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' ___ Hard ___ and mean, ___ *f*

S II *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' ___ Hard ___ and mean, ___ *f*

A *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' ___ Hard ___ and mean, ___ *f*

T *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' ___ Hard ___ and mean, ___ *f*

B *mp* Birth - in' and dy - in' ___ Hard ___ and mean, ___ *f*

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.*

138

B *p* So get your - self a lit - tle

mf *f*

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *

141

S I *p* A lit - tle lov - in',

S II *p* A lit - tle lov - - - in',

A *p* A lit - tle lov - - - in',

T *p* A lit - tle lov - - - in',

B lov - - - in',

mp
Ped.

145

S I lov - in', lov - in',

S II lov - in', lov - in',

A Solo or Tutti: *mp* lov - in', in be -

T lov - in', lov - in',

B lov - in', lov - in',

mp
Ped. Ped. Ped. *

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet ◦ Margaret & George Alexander, parents ◦ Yehuda Amichai, poet ◦ Bjorn Arneson, generous web designer ◦ Scott Bates, poet ◦ Abbie Betinis, composer/colleague ◦ Dennis Blubaugh, music dealer ◦ Michael deVernon Boblett, poet ◦ Ray Bradbury, writer ◦ Norbert Capek, visionary ◦ e. e. cummings, poet ◦ Philip Dacey, poet ◦ Emily Dickinson, poet ◦ Evelyn Dudley, poet ◦ Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister/writer ◦ Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer ◦ Richard M. Fewkes, writer ◦ Peshya Gertler, poet ◦ Richard S. Gilbert, minister/writer ◦ Jack Gallagher, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Gerike, proofreader ◦ Steve Harper, technical advisor ◦ Steve Hawkins, generous web designer ◦ Edie Hill, composer/colleague ◦ Langston Hughes, poet ◦ Mark Humphrey, piano technician ◦ Karel Husa, composer/teacher ◦ Kalidasa, poet ◦ Garrison Keillor, storyteller ◦ Denise Levertov, poet ◦ George Ella Lyon, poet ◦ Jonathan Machen, artist ◦ Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet ◦ J. David Moore, composer/colleague ◦ Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet ◦ Gerald Rich, poet ◦ Carl Sandburg, poet ◦ King Sigismund III, religious reformer ◦ Steven Stucky, composer/teacher ◦ Rabindranath Tagore, poet ◦ Howard Thurman, civil rights leader/writer ◦ John Greenleaf Whittier, poet ◦ Theodore S. Lockering Williams, poet ◦ Daniel Winter, pianist/teacher ◦ Nancy Wood, poet ◦ Yehudi Wyner, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Adams, technical advisor

A LOT OF HARD WORK & CREATIVITY WENT INTO BRINGING THIS MUSIC TO YOU...

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...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.



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(YOU KNOW WHY.)

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S I *f*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

S II *f*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

A *f*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

T *f*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

B *f*
I'm tell in' you, I'm tell in' you,

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S I *ff*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell-in' you, folks!

S II *ff*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell-in' you, folks!

A *ff*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell-in' you, folks!

T *ff*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell-in' you, folks!

B *ff*
I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell-in' you, folks!