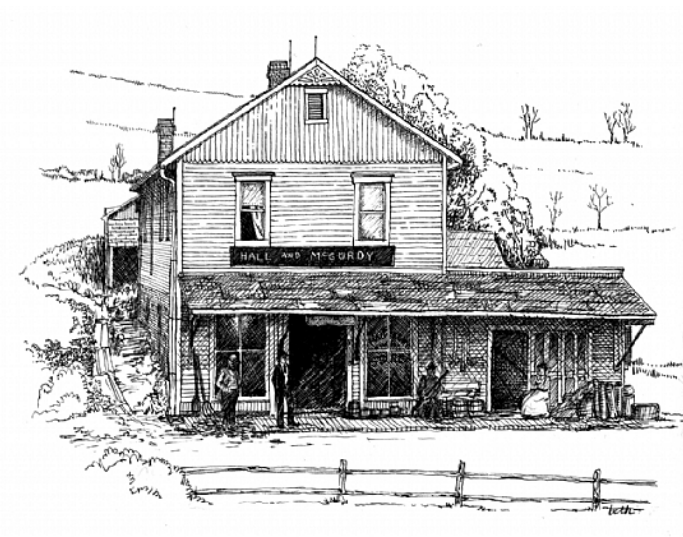


# Tomorrow, God Willing

Garrison Keillor

TTBB a cappella



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# Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

# Tomorrow, God Willing

## Composer's Note

When Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus asked me to write a new piece in honor of their 10th Anniversary, I gave some thought to the setbacks, successes, perseverance, joy and blind faith which the past decade had surely offered them. In response to this, I proposed an unconventional text: a short quote by Garrison Keillor, with which he ended one of his weekly monologues on *A Prairie Home Companion*.

As Keillor's story unfolds, the main character is unexpectedly presented with a challenging life situation, and he finds he has no idea how to respond. Looking back at the end of the day, he realizes he didn't handle the situation with a great deal of grace — in fact he dealt with the situation rather clumsily — but he is not sure what he could have done differently. Weary and disoriented, he reminds himself that this challenge will still be here tomorrow, and that — like it or not — he will undoubtedly be offered many more chances to figure out how to deal with it. Keillor leaves the listener in mid-quandary, holding out this simple, universal blessing:

*We do the best we can.  
We do the very best we can, and tomorrow, God willing,  
we get to wake up and try again.*

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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 gently reminds her students to curve their fingers, 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](http://www.elizabethalexander.com)

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### Cover Image: "Hall and McGurdy's Store" by Beth Dix

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Artist and quilt designer **Beth Dix** makes her home in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

To see more of Beth's drawings, as well as quilt designs, watercolors, oil paintings and scratchboard, visit [www.bethdixart.com](http://www.bethdixart.com)



Commissioned by Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus,  
in celebration of its 10th Anniversary

# Tomorrow, God Willing

Garrison Keillor

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 104)

The first system of the musical score features five staves. From top to bottom: Tenor I (treble clef, 2/2 time), Tenor II (treble clef, 2/2 time), Baritone (bass clef, 2/2 time), Bass (bass clef, 2/2 time), and Piano (grand staff, 2/2 time). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 104. The lyrics 'Oh' are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment consists of a flowing melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand.

The second system of the musical score features five staves. From top to bottom: Tenor I (treble clef, 2/2 time), Tenor II (treble clef, 2/2 time), Baritone (bass clef, 2/2 time), Bass (bass clef, 2/2 time), and Piano (grand staff, 2/2 time). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: Tenor II: 'We do the ver - y best we can,'; Baritone: 'We do the best we\_ can, the best we\_ can, we do the ver - y best we can,'; Bass: 'We do the best we\_ can, we do the ver - y best we can,'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same melody and bass line as the first system.

12

Tenor I  
8 Oh the best we can,

Tenor II  
8 Oh the best we can,

Baritone  
8 Oh the best we can, the best we can,

Bass  
8 Oh the best we can,

16

Tenor I  
8 and to - mor - row, God will - ing, we get to

Tenor II  
8 and to - mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - - ing, we get to

Baritone  
8 and to - mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - - ling, we get to

Bass  
8 and to mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - ing, we get to

21

Baritone Solo

*mp* wake up and try\_ a - gain, — *mf* try a - gain, we do the

Tenor I

*mp* wake up, wake up, wake up, *mf* wake up and try a - gain. We do the

Tenor II

*mp* wake up, wake up, wake up, *mf* wake up and try\_ a - gain. We do the

Baritone

*mp* wake up, wake up, wake up, *mf* wake up and try a - gain. We do the

Bass

*mp* wake up, wake up, wake up, *mf* wake up and try a - gain. We do the

25

Baritone Solo

best we\_ can, —

Tenor I

best we\_ can, — oh, — the best we\_ can, — we do the ver - y best we can,

Tenor II

best we\_ can, — oh, — the best we\_ can, — we do the ver - y — best we can,

Baritone

best we\_ can, — oh, the best we\_ can, — we do the ver - y best we can,

Bass

best we\_ can, — oh, — the best we\_ can, — we do the ver - y best we can,



37

Tenor I  
wake up, wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, get to wake up— a - gain, and— *f*

Tenor II  
wake up, wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, get to wake up— a - gain, and— *f*

Baritone  
wake up, wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, get to wake up— a - gain,

Bass  
wake up, wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, get to wake up— a - gain,

41

Tenor I  
try, \_\_\_\_\_ and try, to - mor - row, to - mor - row, we get to *p subito*

Tenor II  
try, and try, \_\_\_\_\_ and try, to - mor - row, to - mor - row, we get to *p subito*

Baritone  
and try and try, to - mor - row, to - mor - row, we get to *f* *p subito*

Bass  
and try, to - mor - row, to - mor - row, we get to *f* *p subito*

45

*mf*

Tenor Solo

God will-ing,

God will-ing,

*mp*

Tenor I

wake up, and try a-gain, We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

wake up, and try a-gain,

We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

*mp*

Tenor II

wake up, and try a-gain, We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

wake up, and try a-gain,

We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

*mp*

Baritone

wake up, and try a-gain, We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

wake up, and try a-gain,

We get to wake up and try a-gain, we get to

*mp*

Bass

wake up, and try a-gain, We get to try and try a-gain, we get to

wake up, and try a-gain,

We get to try

and try a-gain, we get to

49

*p reverently*

Tenor I

try to - mor - row, God will - ing, We get to

try to - mor - row,

God will - ing,

We get to

*p reverently*

Tenor II

try to - mor - row, God will - ing, We get to

try to - mor - row,

God will - ing,

We get to

*p reverently*

Baritone

try a - gain to - mor - row, God will - ing, We get to

try a - gain to - mor - row,

God will - ing,

We get to

*p reverently*

Bass

try a - gain to - mor - row, God will - ing, We get to

try a - gain to - mor - row,

God will - ing,

We get to



53

Tenor Solo *mf* wake up, wake up, we get to wake up,

Baritone Solo *mf* God will - ing, we get to

Tenor I *mf* wake up, wake up,

Tenor II *mf* wake up, wake up,

Baritone *mf* wake up, wake up,

Bass *mf* wake up, wake up,

57

Baritone Solo wake up,

Bass Solo *mf* we get to wake up to - mor - row, wake up,

Tenor I wake up, wake up, to - mor - row, get to

Tenor II wake up, wake up, to - mor - row, get to

Baritone wake up, wake up, to - mor - row, get to

Bass wake up, wake up, to - mor - row, get to

61

Tenor I  
wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor II  
wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, \_\_\_\_\_

Baritone  
wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, — wake up, and try — a - gain,

Bass  
wake up, wake up, we get to wake up, — wake up,

65 *mp*

Bass  
try, try a - gain, we get to try, try a - gain, we get to

69 *mp*

Tenor I  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tenor II  
try a - gain, we get to try a - gain, try a - gain, and a - gain, and a - gain,

Baritone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Bass  
try, try a - gain, we get to try, try a - gain, we get to



81

Tenor I  
try a - gain, we try a - gain, try a - gain, and a - gain, and a - gain, we get to

Tenor II  
try a - gain, we get to try a - gain, try a - gain, and a - gain, and a - gain,

Baritone  
we try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try a - gain,  
*Basses grow increasingly uncomfortable, as they are unable to complete their phrase*

Bass  
we get to... we get to... we get to... we get to...

85

Tenor I  
*mf*  
try a - gain, try a - gain, try a - gain,

Tenor II  
*mf*  
try a - gain, try a - gain, try a - gain,

Baritone  
*mf*  
try a - gain, try a - gain, try a - gain,  
*And now they are mumbling, poor guys...*

Bass  
mm... get to... mm... get to... mm... get to...

90

Tenor I  
try a - gain, try and try\_ and try\_ and try\_ a - gain, ten. 8

Tenor II  
try a - gain, try and try\_ and try\_ and try\_ a - gain, ten.

Baritone  
try a - gain, try and try\_ and try\_ and try\_ a - gain, ten.

Bass  
mm... get to... we\_ get to *f* triumphantly

95

Tenor I  
*f* try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try, God *p dolce*

Tenor II  
*f* try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try, God *p dolce*

Baritone  
*f* try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try a - gain, we try, God *p dolce*

Bass  
try, \_\_\_\_\_ and try \_\_\_\_\_ a - gain, and a - gain \_\_\_\_\_ and a - gain we\_ try, \_\_\_\_\_ God *p dolce*

99

Tenor I  
will - ing, God will - ing, we

Tenor II  
will - ing, God will - ing, God will - ing, God will - ing, we

Baritone  
will - ing, God will - ing, God will - ing, God will - ing, we

Bass  
will - ing, God will - ing, God will - - - ing, We

103

Tenor I  
wake up to - mor - row, God will - ing, we get to

Tenor II  
wake up to - mor - row, God will - ing, we get to

Baritone  
wake up, God will - ing, we

Bass  
wake up, God will - ing, we get to

*with greater intensity*

107

Tenor I  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up, we get to wake \_\_\_\_\_ up, we get to

Tenor II  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up, we get to wake \_\_\_\_\_ up, we get to

Baritone  
get to wake\_\_ up, get to, get to wake\_\_ up, get to

Bass  
wake up, wake up, we \_\_\_\_\_ wake up, wake up, we \_\_\_\_\_

111

Tenor I  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up and get to try \_\_\_\_\_ a -

Tenor II  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up and get to try \_\_\_\_\_ a -

Baritone  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up and get to try \_\_\_\_\_ a -

Bass  
wake \_\_\_\_\_ up, and get to try \_\_\_\_\_ a -

115 *p dolce* *molto crescendo*

Tenor I  
gain. Oh,

Tenor II  
gain. Oh,

Baritone  
gain. Oh,

Bass  
gain. Oh,

120 *mf with gusto*

Tenor I  
We do the best we can, oh, the

Tenor II  
We do the best we can, oh, the

Baritone  
We do the best we can, oh, the

Bass  
We do the best we can, oh, the





131

Tenor Solo  
and to - mor - row, God will - - ing, —

Tenor I  
mor - row, — God will - ing, — we get to

Tenor II  
mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - ing, — we get to

Baritone  
mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - ing, — we get to

Bass  
mor - row, to - mor - row, God will - - - ing, we get to

135

**rallentando**

Tenor I  
try a - gain, we try, — God will - ing, — we try — a - gain.

Tenor II  
try a - gain, we try — God will - ing, — we try — a - gain.

Baritone  
try a - gain, we try, — God will - ing, — we try — a - gain.

Bass  
try a - gain, we try, — God will - ing, we try — a - gain.

# Music for Men's Voices

by Elizabeth Alexander

## **Calm the Tempests of My Heart, O God** (Søren Kirkegaard)

A meditative choral response on Kirkegaard's prayer for inner stillness and a quiet mind. This publication includes three separately conceived voicings, suitable for mixed, women's or men's choirs. *E-ME*

**2, 3 or 4-part choir (2')** ..... SEA-114-00 - \$2.00

## **If You Can Walk You Can Dance** (Zimbabwean proverb)

*Winner of Euphonia! Vocal Composition Competition*

*Commissioned by Farmington Friends of Music (Farmington, CT)*

An optimistic Zimbabwean proverb sets the stage for this contagiously joyful Latin dance. This best-seller is full of surprises, including finger snapping, an *a cappella* interlude, a wild "conversational free-for-all"!

*ME*

**TBB, piano, claves (3')** ..... SEA-022-05 - \$2.00

## **The Journey** (Evelyn K. Dudley)

*Winner of the Athena Festival Almquist Award*

*Commissioned by Cincinnati Men's Chorus*

This reflection on contemplation and resolve blends two voices: Evelyn Dudley's Southern faith and tenacity, and the composer's Appalachian roots and natural lyricism. Prominent solos occur in all voice parts. *MA*

**TTBB (6')** ..... SEA-075-00 - \$2.75

## **Tomorrow, God Willing** (Garrison Keillor)

*Commissioned by Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus of Madison, WI*

This song's unconventional lyric comes from one of Garrison Keillor's unique Lake Wobegon monologues: "We do the best we can. We do the very best we can, and tomorrow, God willing, we get to wake up and try again." This inventive song explores every aspect of this pithy text, with joy, earnestness, rhythmic vitality, and a hint of prayer. *M*

**TTBB (6')** ..... SEA-077-22 - \$3.25

## **When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled** (Rev. Howard Thurman)

*One of Creator Magazine's Annual "Honored 10"*

*TTBB Created with Willi Zwozdesky for Vancouver Men's Chorus*

A rhythmically vital setting of Howard Thurman's magnificent poem about the true "work of Christmas." Informed by South African part-writing and the rhythmic impulse of African-American spirituals, this piece lends a powerful relevance to Christmas which extends far beyond Epiphany. *M*

**TTBB (3')** ..... SEA-062-02 - \$1.75

## **Where There Is Light In the Soul** (Chinese proverb)

In this delightful setting of a timeless Chinese proverb, the five interdependent ideals of Light, Beauty, Harmony, Honor and Peace are woven together into a rich, a cappella affirmation. *ME*

**TBB (3')** ..... SEA-070-03 - \$2.00

**E = Easy**

**ME = Moderately Easy**

**M = Medium**

**MA = Moderately Advanced**

**A = Advanced**

*Seafarer Press*

## Selected Choral Music by Elizabeth Alexander

<b>April Rain Song</b> (Langston Hughes) SATB .....	SEA-006-01
<b>Before the Bread</b> (English folk prayer) SSSS .....	SEA-023-00
<b>Blessed Be the Flower That Triumphs</b> (Michael deVernon Boblett) SATB .....	SEA-078-00
<b>Cherish Your Doubt</b> (Alexander) SATB & piano / SSAA & piano .....	SEA-063-01 / SEA-063-02
<b>Climb</b> (Edna St. Vincent Millay) SATB & piano .....	SEA-059-00
<b>Dragon Dance</b> (Elizabeth Alexander) S & piano .....	SEA-001-00
<b>Die Gedanken Sind Frei</b> (15 <sup>th</sup> century German protest song, arr.) SATB & piano .....	SEA-087-00
<b>The Earth Called To My Friend</b> (Nancy Wood) SSA & piano .....	SEA-057-00
<b>Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm</b> (Yehuda Amichai) SATB .....	SEA-026-01
<b>Faith Is the Bird That Feels the Light</b> (Rabindranath Tagore) SSA .....	SEA-068-00
<b>Fighting Over What We Believe</b> (Alexander) SAB youth choir, SATB & piano .....	SEA-099-00
<b>Finally On My Way To Yes</b> (Pesha Gertler) SSATB & piano .....	SEA-019-00
<b>Folks, I'm Telling You</b> (Langston Hughes) SSATB & piano .....	SEA-027-00
<b>For So the Children Come</b> (Sophia Fahs) SATB & piano .....	SEA-010-00
<b>Glen Song</b> (Scott Bates) SSATB & piano .....	SEA-025-00
<b>Go Out!</b> (John Murray) SATB & piano .....	SEA-081-00
<b>I Write This Poem Out of Darkness</b> (George Ella Lyon) SSA, flute, violin & piano .....	SEA-024-00
<b>If You Can Walk You Can Dance</b> (Zimbabwean Proverb) SAB & piano / TTB & piano ..	SEA-022-03 / SEA-022-05
<b>Immortal Love</b> (John Greenleaf Whittier) SATB .....	SEA-017-00
<b>Infant Holy, Infant Lowly</b> (arr. Polish carol) SSA .....	SEA-020-00
<b>The Journey</b> (Evelyn Dudley) TTBB / SATB .....	SEA-075-00 / SEA-075-01
<b>Jump!</b> (Ray Bradbury) SSA & string quartet .....	SEA-090-00
<b>Life is not a Garden</b> (Alexander) SATB & piano .....	SEA-064-00
<b>May This Be a Working Alleluia</b> (Alexander) Children's choir, SATB & piano (opt. flute & trumpets) .	SEA-098-00
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<b>To Make a Prairie</b> (Emily Dickinson) SSA & piano .....	SEA-016-00
<b>Tomorrow, God Willing</b> (Garrison Keillor) TTBB .....	SEA-077-00
<b>Trust the Seeds</b> (Alexander) SATB .....	SEA-009-00
<b>We Lift Up Our Hearts</b> (Richard Fewkes) Children's choir, SATB & piano .....	SEA-021-00
<b>We Remember Them</b> (Sylvan Kamens & Jack Riemer) SATB & piano .....	SEA-083-01
<b>Where There Is Light in the Soul</b> (Chinese proverb) SAB/SATB .....	SEA-070-00 / SEA-070-01
<b>When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled</b> (Howard Thurman) SSAA / TTBB .....	SEA-062-04 / SEA-062-02
<b>Why I Pity the Woman Who Never Spills</b> (Joan Wolf Prefontaine) SSAA .....	SEA-058-00
 <b>CD: <i>Finally On My Way To Yes</i></b> — Award-winning choral works by Elizabeth Alexander .....	 SEA-CD-001