

Oath Taking

Opal Palmer Adisa

high voice and piano

Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press
www.seafarerpress.com

Oath Taking

used to be
the word spoken
lived like the multi-colored butterfly
that hovers over a nectar-laden tree
every word
was a nail
driven with force
into wood
to say it was to make
it come through
and if perhaps
you didn't value what you spoke
the priestess would come around
hold up her mirror
to help you remember
the spirit of your words
and every time
you moved a hand
jerked a neck or
stretched from your rib-cage
a sharp nail-stabbing pain
would remind you
not to speak lightly
your words would reflect
from the mirror that was your soul
you would know then
the consequences of speaking idly
you would be reminded
that speaking
is a noble act
a gesture of respect
that we insignificant beings
offer to the life force

Opal Palmer Adisa

“Oath Taking” from *Leaf of Life*, copyright 2000 by Opal Palmer Adisa, published by Jukebox Press: Oakland, CA. Used by permission of the author.

Commissioned by Carol A. Harris, for Robert C. Ruud for his birthday.

Oath Taking

Opal Palmer Adisa

medium-high voice and piano

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 108-112) *murmuring*

Piano introduction, measures 1-6. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The right hand features a melodic line with chords, and the left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Pedal markings (Ped.) are present at the end of measures 1, 3, and 5.

Musical system 1, measures 7-12. The vocal line begins at measure 7 with the word "O" and continues with a long note. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Pedal markings (Ped.) are present at the end of measures 7, 9, and 11. A *p* *mournfully* dynamic marking is placed above the vocal line at measure 7. A *Gm7* chord marking is placed above the piano right hand at measure 9.

Musical system 2, measures 13-18. The vocal line continues with the words "O used to be,". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Pedal markings (Ped.) are present at the end of measures 13, 15, and 17. A *Gm7* chord marking is placed above the piano right hand at measure 13.

Musical system 3, measures 19-24. The vocal line continues with the words "used to be, used to be the". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Pedal markings (Ped.) are present at the end of measures 19, 21, 23, and 24. A *mp* dynamic marking is placed above the piano right hand at measure 21.

2 25

word spo - ken lived like the mul - ti - col - ored

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

29 *mf*

but - ter - fly that ho - vers o - ver a nec - tar la - den tree.

brightly

Ped. Ped. Ped.

33 pushing forward little by little --- *accelerando poco a poco* - - - - -

p darkly

Used to be,

p

darkly

Ped.

38 *accel.* - - - - - ($\text{♩} = 112-120$) *mf*

ev - 'ry word was a nail

Ped. Ped.

42

driv - en with force in - to wood. To say it was to make it come through.

Ped. Ped.

46

with greater intensity

O used to be. And if per-haps you

Ped.

51

f

did - n't val - ue what you spoke, if you

marcato

f

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

55

did - n't val - ue what you spoke, the

marcato

Ped. * Ped. Ped. * 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 ◦ Peshia 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 Tilton, 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...



...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.

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 ◦ Peshia Gertler, poet ◦ 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 Tilton, poet ◦ Daniel Winter, pianist/teacher ◦ Nancy Wood, poet ◦ Yehudi Wyner, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Adams, technical advisor

THIS PAGE HAS BEEN INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

(YOU KNOW WHY.)

**A COMPLETE PERUSAL COPY MAY BE PURCHASED
FROM ELIZABETH ALEXANDER AT**

Seafarer Press
www.seafarerpress.com

75 (♩ = 112-120)

ev - 'ry time you moved a hand jerked a neck or stretched from your

mf

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

rib-cage a sharp pain, a nail-stab - bing pain would re -

f

f (m.d.)

* *Ped.* * *Ped.*

mind you not to speak

mp

Ped. (keep pedal depressed)

light - - - ly. Your

mp *p*

Ped. *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 ◦ Pasha 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. Wicketing Williams, poet ◦ Daniel Winter, pianist/teacher ◦ Nancy Wood, poet ◦ Yehudi Wyner, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Adams, technical advisor ◦ 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 ◦ Pasha Gertler, poet ◦ 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

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



...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.

THIS PAGE HAS BEEN INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

(YOU KNOW WHY.)

A COMPLETE PERUSAL COPY MAY BE PURCHASED FROM ELIZABETH ALEXANDER AT

Seafarer Press
www.seafarerpress.com

107 E/D

you would be re - mind - ed, re -

110

mind - ed that speak - ing is a no - - ble act,

114

re - mind - ed that speak - ing is a

118

ges - ture of re - spect that we

of - fer, _____ in - sig - ni - fi - cant be - ings we, _____ we

freely *mf*

of - fer to the force, _____ we of - fer to the force of

A tempo (♩ = 100-108)

mp darkly

life. _____ O _____

rallentando *p*

O _____

Elizabeth Alexander spent her childhood in the Carolinas and Appalachian Ohio, the daughter of a minister and a piano teacher. Her passion for language and music is reflected in her catalogue of over 100 songs and choral works, which have received nearly twenty national and international awards.

Reviews of her music have referred to “the close personal resonance between the composer and the words,” as well as her music’s “delicacy and sincerity,” “elegance,” and “freshness within a well-known language.”

Performers of her music have included instrumental ensembles such as Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, North/South Consonance, Society for New Music, and Sounds New; solo singers such as Ruth MacKenzie, Bradley Greenwald and Janet Youngdahl; and over 1000 choirs, including VocalEssence, Elmer Iseler Singers, Gregg Smith Singers, New York Virtuoso Singers, Cornell University Chorus, MUSE, San Francisco Gay Mens Chorus, Anima, and the entire student body of Waunakee Elementary School.



Among her composition teachers were Jack Gallagher at The College of Wooster, and Steven Stucky, Yehudi Wyner and Karel Husa at Cornell University, from which she received her doctorate in music composition. She has received awards, grants and fellowships from the Jerome Foundation, New York Council on the Arts, Wisconsin Arts Board, National Orchestral Association, International League of Women Composers, and American Composers Forum.

Alexander lives in St. Paul, MN, where her frequent commissions include works for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles and solo musicians. She reads voraciously, 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 her music, CDs, commissions and current projects, visit:

www.elizabethalexander.com

Art Songs of Elizabeth Alexander

* The Eternal One (Ralph Waldo Emerson, adapted)	SEA-093-00
Die Gedanken Sind Frei (16 th c. German protest song, arr.) [<i>duet</i>] alto, baritone, piano	SEA-087-01
A Garret of Old Playthings (Carl Sandburg) soprano and piano	SEA-028-00
I Write This Poem Out of Darkness (George Ella Lyon) SSA trio, flute, violin, piano	SEA-024-01
* A Love Like That (Hafiz, translated/adapted by Daniel Ladinsky)	SEA-094-00
* I'll Tell You a Story, then... (Nancy White)	SEA-069-00
Jó! (The Edict of Torda) SSA trio or ensemble	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 (Riff on a Dutch proverb) [<i>duet</i>] low voice, medium voice, piano	SEA-095-07
* Oath Taking (Opal Palmer Adisa)	SEA-073-00
On the Edge of the Water (E. Alexander) low voice, piano	SEA-083-00
So Many Corners (Rose Ausländer) soprano, piano	SEA-040-00
So Many Corners (Rose Ausländer) soprano, chamber orchestra	SEA-040-01
* Sleep Song (Ann Silsbee) soprano, piano	SEA-061-00
* The Gospel Isn't Written In the Bible Alone (E. Alexander)	SEA-082-00
Three Rose Auslander Songs (R. Ausländer) soprano, strings, percussion	SEA-040-05
Trouble in a Minnesota Town (Neal Bowers) baritone, piano	SEA-047-00

** Titles without specific voice type exist in multiple voicings (low, medium and high).*

*For a complete catalog of vocal, choral, piano, chamber and orchestral music,
including recordings and score excerpts, visit:*

Seafarer Press
www.seafarerpress.com