

# Songs of Youth

Chinese proverb

SAB, flute, piano and optional vibraphone

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Elizabeth Alexander

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## Songs of Youth

Elizabeth Alexander and students from Waunakee Middle School

### *I. When?*

Stretching, seeking, slumbering —

What a world of shapes and colors,  
gentle hands and lullabies.

Crawling, reaching —

Will there be a time to use my  
eager arms and open eyes?

Waiting, watching, wondering —

When?

### *II. Now!*

Sailing, soaring, running, racing,  
Speeding, sporting, cheering, chasing,  
Shouting, sharing, doing, daring —  
No more wondering when!

Working, wishing, dreaming, dancing,  
Reaching, risking, choosing, chancing,  
Growing, giving, learning, living —  
No more wondering when!

Trusting... trying... loving... crying...

Sailing, soaring, running, racing,  
Speeding, sporting, cheering, chasing,  
Shouting, sharing, doing, daring — Flying!

Now! Straightaway! At once! No delay!  
It's now or never, here and now,  
Without hesitation the moment to live is Now!

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*Songs of Youth* was commissioned in 1991-1992 by the public schools of Waunakee, Wisconsin, in honor of the dedication of a new middle school. I composed this piece in collaboration with students who would be attending the new school. In addition to celebrating their school's theme for the year, "Flight," the students decided they wanted their song to address their own continuing growth as active, thoughtful and creative individuals.

After writing two poems, the students decided what musical "building blocks" they would use to reflect the poems' characters. The first poem, *When?*, is from a young child's point of view, searching for direction and independence. When setting it to music, we used symmetric scales which had no clear tonal center: the half step/whole step scale and the half step/minor third scale. We wrote melodies which wandered aimlessly down and up, taking tiny baby steps.

In the second movement, *Now!*, we chose to feature that most decisive interval, the perfect fifth. As the words acquired a confident direction, the music took on a strong rhythmic pulse and a firmly grounded tonality, with melodies which reached ever upward. Without a doubt, this movement had to end with a bang. - E.A.

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**Elizabeth Alexander** spent her childhood in the Carolinas and southern Ohio. She received her education at the College of Wooster and Cornell University, where she earned her doctoral degree in music composition. Her music has been performed by Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, and Wooster Symphony Orchestra; by chamber music ensembles such as Sounds New, North/South Consonance and Society for New Music; and by hundreds of choirs, including Gregg Smith Singers, Plymouth Music Series (VocalEssence) and Elmer Eisler Singers. She has composed over twenty commissioned works, and has received numerous national and international awards, grants and fellowships.

For more information about her music, or to let her know about your performance of this song, visit  
[www.elizabethalexander.com](http://www.elizabethalexander.com)

# Songs of Youth

for SAB, flute, piano and opt. vibraphone

## I. When?

Elizabeth Alexander and students  
from Waunakee Middle School

**Placidly**  
(♩ = 63-66)

Flute  
Vib  
or  
Pno

*p* *mf*

*Ped.* (keep pedal depressed until change is indicated)

6

S  
A  
B  
Fl  
Vib

*p* *p* *mf*

When? When?

11

S  
A  
B  
Fl  
Vib

*p* *p* *p*

Stretch - ing, Seek - ing, Slum - ber - ing,

2

16 *p*

S What a world of shapes and col - ors

A *p* Shapes and col - ors,

B

Vib

*Red.*

20

S

A gen - tle hands and lul - la - bies,

B *p* Gen - tle hands and lul - la - bies,

Vib

24 *mp*

S Crawl - ing, crawl - ing,

A *mp* Reach - ing, reach - ing,

B *mp* Crawl - ing,

Vib *mp*

*Red.*

29 3

S *mf*  
craw - ing, reach - ing, reach - ing,

A *mf*  
reach - ing, reach - ing,

B *mf*  
craw - ing, reach - ing, reach - ing,

Vib *mf*

34

Fl *p* *mf*

Vib *p subito*

(keep pedal depressed)

39

S *p*  
When?

A *p*  
Will there be a time to use my ea - ger arms and o - pen eyes?

B *p*  
When?

Fl *p*

Vib



II. Now!

57 **With vitality**  
(♩ = 126-132)

S **spoken: p**  
Now,

Pno *mf* *p*  
Ped. \* Ped. \*

63 *mp* *mf*  
S Now, **spoken: mp** Now!  
A Now, **spoken: mf** Now!  
B Now!  
Pno *p*  
Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

69 *p*  
S Speed - ing, sport - ing,  
Reach - ing, risk - ing,  
A *p* Sail - ing, soar - ing, run - ing, rac - ing, speed - ing, sport - ing,  
Work - ing, wish - ing, dream - ing, danc - ing, reach - ing, risk - ing,  
B *p* Sail - ing, soar - ing, run - ing, rac - ing, speed - ing, sport - ing,  
Work - ing, wish - ing, dream - ing, danc - ing, reach - ing, risk - ing,  
Pno  
Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

6

75 *mf*

S  
cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,  
choos - ing, chanc - ing, grow - ing, giv - ing, learn - ing, liv - ing,

A  
cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,  
choos - ing, chanc - ing, grow - ing, giv - ing, learn - ing, liv - ing,

B  
cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,  
choos - ing, chanc - ing, grow - ing, giv - ing, learn - ing, liv - ing,

Pno  
Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

81

Pno  
*mf* *mp*  
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

85 *mp*

S  
No more won - dering when, no more won - dering when,

A  
No more won - dering when, no more won - dering when,

B  
No more won - dering when, no more won - dering when,

Pno  
Ped. \* Ped. \*



89

S  
no more won - dering when,

A  
no more won - dering when,

B  
no more won - dering when,

Pno

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

94

*p warmly*

S  
Trust - ing, try - ing,  
Lov - ing, cry - ing,

*p warmly*

A  
Trust - ing, try - ing,  
Lov - ing, cry - ing,

Fl  
*p*

Pno  
*p*

Ped.

101

S  
Trust - ing, try - ing, lov - ing, cry - ing,

A  
Trust - ing, try - ing, lov - ing, cry - ing,

Fl  
*p*

Pno  
*p*

Ped. Ped.



121

Fl

Pno

*f*

*f*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

125

S

A

B

Fl

Pno

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

Sail - ing, soar - ing, run - ning, rac - ing, speed - ing, sport - ing,

Sail - ing, soar - ing, run - ning, rac - ing, speed - ing, sport - ing,

Sail - ing, sport - ing,

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

131

S

A

B

Fl

Pno

cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,

cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,

cheer - ing, chas - ing, shout - ing, shar - ing, do - ing, dar - ing,

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

10

137

*f*

S Fly - - ing!

*f*

A Fly - - ing!

*f*

B Fly - - ing!

Fl *f*

*mf*

Pno

*mf*

*marcato*

(ossia)

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

141

S Now! Straight - a - way! At once! No de - lay! It's

A Now! Straight - a - way! At once! No de - lay! It's

B Now! Straight - a - way! At once! No de - lay! It's

Fl

*f*

Pno

*f*

Ped. \*

Ped. \*

Ped.

Ped.

145

S  
now or nev - er, here and now, with - out he - si - ta - tion the

A  
now or nev - er, here and now,

B  
now or nev - er, here and now, with - out he - si - ta - tion the

Fl  
*tr*

Pno  
Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

148

S  
mo - ment to live \_\_\_\_\_ is Now! *shouted: ff*

A  
*marcato ff* No more won - dering when Now! *shouted:*

B  
mo - ment to live \_\_\_\_\_ is Now! *shouted: ff*

Fl  
*ff*

Pno  
Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* *ff*