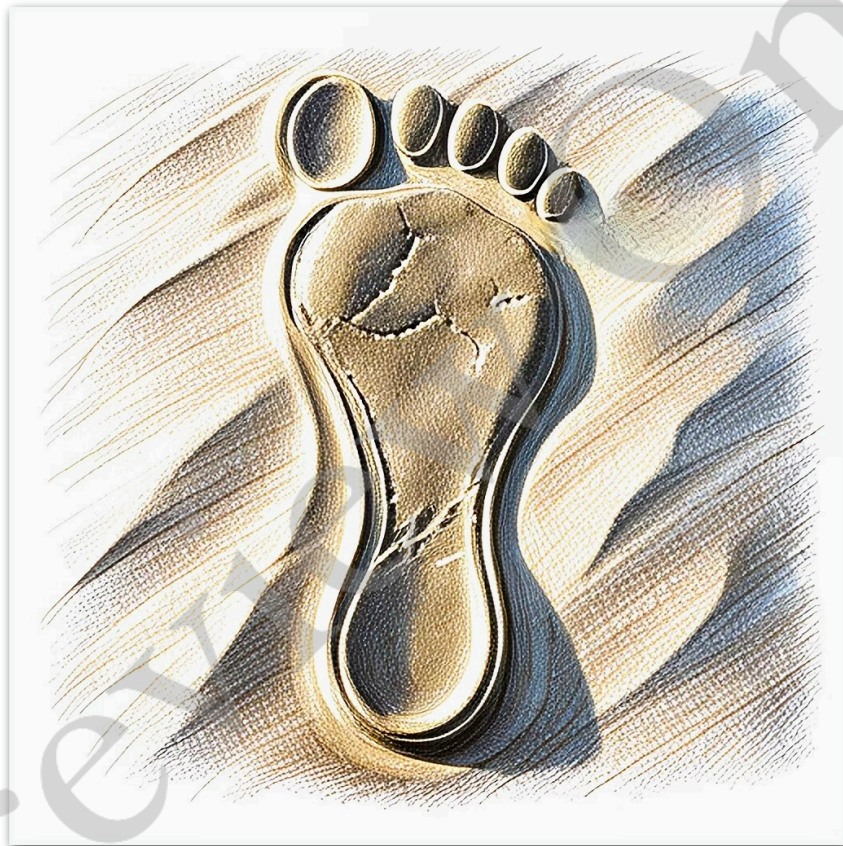


LEARN TO BEGIN, Pick

SSATB
accompanied

Learn to Begin



words and music by

James Elias Pick

Note from the Composer

Starting something new is hard. Learning a new skill or career, leaving an unhealthy relationship, graduating high school—life is full of thresholds that take great courage to cross. As I write this, my young son is learning to button his shirts. Something many of us do mindlessly every day feels insurmountable to him. I have no doubt he will soon master the skill, yet the frustration and discouragement he feels now are real—and relevant to all who stand at a threshold. When facing challenges, it is natural to react with fear, paralysis, and even shame. Despite or even amid these very real emotions, my encouragement is to take the first step. The first step is the hardest one.

Musically, the piece mirrors these strong emotions as well as the warm strength of support. For instance, an intentional lengthening of the measure accompanies the word “falling” in m. 39 and elsewhere. We may not know how long we will fall, but out of this uncertainty comes the piece’s central call: look up—out of your circumstances, past your failures, beyond your shame and fear—you are not alone. You are loved. You matter.

“You will fail” (starting at m. 85) may therefore seem out of place in a song of encouragement. But it is absolutely vital, releasing us from the pressure of perfectionism and our worth being tied to achievement. Your worth is not in the things you do, but in who you are. You—fears, failures, and all—are part of something beautiful and bigger than yourself.

This message, “You are not alone,” is illustrated in m. 85-101. In the midst of failure, a community of encouraging voices confront the fear and shame that were formerly crippling. The tenors in particular respond to uncertainty in earlier verses and reframe them with truth and clarity (compare m. 88-91 to m. 22-26; m. 92-95 to m. 55-59; m. 98-101 to m. 69-72). The montage of support culminates in the first step (m. 104). The choir cheers, “Keep on stepping!” Even so, the chance of failure remains, and m. 113-116 reveal the largest fall yet. Once again, the voices—those who have their own stories of failure and success—return to say the words we all most need to hear—and the things I want my son to know:

I'm with you. I hear you. I'm for you. I see you.

Remember. Failure is part of being human. *Listen.* Contrary to the world’s message of “You can do anything you set your mind to,” there are limits to what you can accomplish. *Look up.* This is only a moment—you have so much life to live.

Stand up. Effort does not guarantee success, but the only way to succeed is still through effort: keep trying. *Reach out.* You must try, but you do not have to try alone. *Step out.* Be bold—take the first step. And then keep on stepping.

You are not alone.

Soli Deo Gloria.

~ James Elias Pick

Visit www.jamespick.com to contact the composer or share recordings.

for my son, Matthias

Learn to Begin

(SSATB, accompanied)
Also available for SSAATBB and SATB

James Elias Pick

Semplice, poco rubato (♩ = 58)

PIANO

p

5

9

With warm assurance (♩ = 58)

mp

S
A

T
B

9

With warm assurance (♩ = 58)

mp

14

(SA or solo)
earnestly

15

Where to be-gin? It feels ov - er - whel - ming. Hard to step out

15

19

when you don't know the how. (TB or solo)
earnestly

Fear - ful to start

23

Oo Oo so you

when you can't see the end, so you

27

p (end solo)

stop, stand still, a - fraid.

p (end solo)

stop, stand still, a - fraid.

31

mf

Learn to be - gin. Take the first step. Do not fear the un -

mf

Learn to be - gin. Take the first step. Do not fear the un -

31

mf

35

known. Your strength may fail, you feel your - self

known. Your strength may fail, you feel your - self

fall - ing. But look up: you are not a -

fall - ing. But look up: you are not a -

Musical score for measures 39-41. The score is written for a vocal part (treble and bass staves) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The vocal part has lyrics: "fall - ing. But look up: you are not a -". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

42 *mf* lone. Oh Oh

42 *mf* lone. Oh Oh

42 *mf* lone. Oh Oh

42 *mf* lone. Oh Oh

Musical score for measures 42-45. The score is written for a vocal part (treble and bass staves) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The vocal part has lyrics: "lone. Oh Oh". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score is marked with a box containing the number 42 and a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte).

45

dim. *mf*

What holds you back?

dim. *dim.* *dim.* *dim.*

48

Is it their dis - ap - prov - al? — Or do you fear

mp esp. *mp esp.* *mp esp.* *mp esp.*

Oo Oo Oo Oo

48

mp

most the voice in your mind? Will you take the risk

Oo

Oo

Oo

should it cost you your name? No, you

Oh Ah No, you

Oh Ah No, you

Oh Ah No, you

60

mf *p*

stop, stand still, a - shamed. S2

mf *p*

stop, stand still, a - shamed.

mf *p*

stop, stand still, a - shamed.

mf *p*

stop, stand still, a - shamed.

mf

64

(S1)

mf

Oh, Take the first step. Do not

(S2) *mf*

(A) Learn to be - gin. Take the first step. Do not

mf

Learn to be - gin. Take the first step. Do not

mf

Learn to be - gin. Take the first step. Do not

64

mf

67

(S1)
fear the un - known. Your strength may fail, you

(S2)
(A)
fear the un - known. Your strength may fail, you

8
fear the un - known. Your strength may fail, you

fear the un - known. Your strength may fail, you

71

(S1)
feel you are fall - ing. But list - en: _____

(S2)
(A)
feel your - self fall - ing. But list - en: _____

8
feel your - self fall - ing. But list - en: _____

feel your - self fall - ing. But list - en: _____

74 *f* 75

you are not a - lone. Oh

you are not a - lone. Oh

8 you are not a - lone. Oh

you are not a - lone. Oh

f 75

77

81 *p*

p

p

p

p

81 *p* *sempre esp.*

85

p *sempre esp.*

You will fail. _____ You will fall. _____

p *sempre esp.*

Don't fear to start

89

mp
I'll be here when you call.
though you can't see the end. When you take the risk
mp *sempre esp.*
I'll be there to hold you.

93

sempre esp.
mp
Look up. Reach out.
You will fail. You will fall. *mf*
be proud of your name. Strength will re-turn.
I will help you on your way.
mp

97 *mf*

Stand up. Step

mf

Start a - gain Time heals

8 When you fall, stand a - gain.

mf

Mis - takes don't de - fine you. Stand and start a -

mf *cresc.*

100 *f*

out. So you start, stand, take a

f

all. So you start, stand, take a

f

So you start, stand, take a

f

gain. So you start, stand, take a

f

104 *ff*

step. ...keep on step - ping! Do not

ff *f*

step. ...keep on step - ping! Do not

ff *f*

8 step. Once you be - gin, keep on step - ping!

ff *f*

104 step. Once you be - gin, keep on step - ping!

(play only if needed) *mf* *ff*

108

fear the un - known. Your strength may

fear the un - known. Your strength may

f Do not fear. Your strength

f Do not fear. Your strength

111

fail, you feel your - self fall - ing. *dim.*

fail, you feel your - self fall, fall - ing *dim.*

may fail, you feel you are fall - ing, *dim.*

may fail, you feel you are fall, fall - ing *dim.*

mp

114

fall - ing. fall - ing. *mp*

fall - ing, fall - ing. *mp*

fall - ing fall - ing. *mp*

fall, fall - ing fall - ing. *mp*

117

rit. **119** *mp* a tempo

But look up. *mp*

And list - en. *mp*

Just

rit. **119** a tempo

p *mp* warmly

121

Re - mem - ber. *mf*

Re - mem - ber I'm

reach out. *mf* I hear you. *mf*

I'm with you. *mf*

124

mf *cresc.* *allarg.* *f*

I see you. ...and step out. *f*

cresc. *f*

for you. ...and stand up. *f*

cresc. *f*

...and call out. *f*

cresc. *f*

So look up. *allarg.*

128 *a tempo*

dictated *più f* *(breve)* lone. *Oh*

You are not a - lone. *Oh*

più f *(breve)* lone. *Oh*

You are not a - lone. *Oh*

più f *(breve)* lone. *Oh*

You are not a - lone. *Oh*

dictated *più f* *(breve)* **128** *a tempo*

130

[illegible]

133

molto rit.

mp

mp

mp

mp

molto rit.

mp

LEARN TO BEGIN—SSATB

Text:

Where to begin?
It feels overwhelming.
Hard to step out
When you don't know the how.
Fearful to start
When you can't see the end,
So you stop, stand still,
Afraid.

Learn to begin.
Take the first step.
Do not fear the unknown.
Your strength may fail,
You feel yourself falling.
But look up:
You are not alone.

What holds you back?
Is it their disapproval?
Or do you fear most
The voice in your mind?
Will you take the risk
Should it cost you your name?
No, you stop, stand still,
Ashamed.

Learn to begin.
Take the first step.
Do not fear the unknown.
Your strength may fail,
You feel yourself falling.
But listen:
You are not alone.

You will fail.
You will fall.
Don't fear to start
Though you can't see the end
I'll be here
When you call.
When you take the risk
Be proud of your name.

You will fail.
You will fall.
I'll be there to hold you.
I will help you on your way.
Start again.
Time heals all.
Strength will return.
When you fall, stand again.

Look up.
Reach out.
Stand up.
Step out.
Stand and start again.

So you start, stand, take
A step.

Once you begin,
Keep on stepping!
Do not fear the unknown.
Your strength may fail,
You feel you are falling,
Falling,
Falling,
Falling...

But look up.
And listen.
Just reach out.
Remember.

Remember.
I'm with you.
I hear you.
I'm for you.
I see you.
So look up.

And call out
and stand up.
and step out.

You are not alone.

~ James Elias Pick