

Breath

for voice and piano

[Version 4 – Baritone / Bass]

Music by Keith Hamel

Lyrics by Olive Senior

Commissioned by the 46th Eckhardt-Gramatté
National Music Competition 2023 in voice

Duration: 8'40"

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Performance Notes

Breath is a setting of 3 poems by Olive Senior and is intended to be performed as a single work. The sound of audible breath (inhales and exhales) is a feature of the work and, when indicated in the score, the singer should make the breath sounds audible to the listener without them being too exaggerated. The exact duration of the audible breaths is somewhat flexible; the singer can take some liberties with the duration, dynamic level and quality of the breath sounds, but each should capture the character that is indicated in the score.

T is for Time Wasting

OPENING TIME

Waste time	Spend time	Save time
While away time	Devote time to	Seize time
Pass time	Ahead of time	Make time
Mark time	In good time	Keep time
At whatever time	In no time	Measure time
Lose time	On time	Timetable

Endless time	For a time	Time Sensitive
All the time	Another time	Time of one's life
Over time	In time	Time honoured
At one time	The nick of time	Time consuming
At the same time	Just in time	Time worn
Timeless	At that time	Time expired
Lifetime	Time Out	

CLOSING TIME

L is for Less

There's no vaccine for Mother Earth.
The cure is more of a withdrawal:

Less
 toxicity
Less
 extraction
Less
 plundering
Less
 consumption

A poisoned earth is squeezing us to death

Ease up.
Nature is sending out an S. O. S.

The only cure:
Less is more.

B is for Breathe

It takes one's breath away: a man dying during a pandemic
that takes away one's breath, no ventilator but one brave
spectator, recording

his last breath, his need *please*

somebody

taking the knee on the neck from men who from birth
breathed in tainted air, imbibed a foul history, burning
crosses

still smoldering

I can't breathe

like the hot breath of anger consuming the cities
we have breathed this before
this white head this
burning sensation in the throats of
The numerous ones held down and

mama

mama

I can't

Come on, George Floyd, breathe in the timeless rhythm
of Mother Earth waiting for you, for all her lost children,
for justice

I'm through

I'm through

Poems are taken from *Pandemic Poems - First Wave* © 2021 Oliver Senior and are used
with permission.

12 (long inhale) [regular but audible breathing] (exhale) (inhale) (exhale)

17 (inhale) (exhale) (inhale)

21 (gasp inhale as if surprised)

f *p* *mp* *f*

ch k t k t p d k [t] - ime [mm]

25

f

t t t time

29

t t t time Op - en - ing time

32

t t t time Waste time Spend time Save time

35

While a - way time De - vote time to

38

Seize time Pass time a - head of time Make time Mark time In

41

good time Keep time Meas- ure time Lose time

44

Waste time Spend time Save time At what- ev - er time

48

In no time Meas- ure time Lose time On time

51

Time ta ble t t t t t t t t time End - less time

55

For a time Time sen-sit-ive All the time A-noth-er time

59

Time of one's life t t t t t t t time

63

O - - ver time In time Time hon-ored

67

At one time The nick of time Time con-sum-ing

70 *mp*

At the same time Just in time Time worn

73

Time - less At that time Time ex - pired

77 *f*

Keep time Meas - ure time Lose time Waste time Spend time Save time

80

Seize time Pass time A - head of time Make time Mark time In time

84

Life time Time out Clos - ing

88

time

f (slow inhale as if taking a lot of breath)

p

smear with pedal

92

Waste time Spend time Save time Seize time Pass time Make time Mark time Lose time

mf = 132

f

94

Keep time Pause time On time In time Time Out

ff (quick exhale as if exhausted)

L is for Less

98

♩ = 84

mp slow relaxed inhale
(as if smelling
the flowers)

p (relaxed
exhale)

Musical score for measure 98. The vocal line consists of a single long note. The piano accompaniment features a series of sixteenth-note runs in the right hand, with a 'pp' dynamic marking and a '6' fingering. The bass line is mostly silent.

102

mp

There's no vac-cine ___ for Moth-er Earth. ___

Musical score for measure 102. The vocal line has the lyrics "There's no vac-cine ___ for Moth-er Earth. ___". The piano accompaniment includes a triplet in the right hand and a 'ppp' dynamic marking. The bass line has a 'p' dynamic marking.

106

The cure ___ is more of a with - - drawl:

Musical score for measure 106. The vocal line has the lyrics "The cure ___ is more of a with - - drawl:". The piano accompaniment includes a 'pp' dynamic marking and changes in time signature from 3/4 to 4/4 to 5/4 to 3/4.

109

mf

Less tox-i-c-i-ty ___ Less ___

Musical score for measure 109. The vocal line has the lyrics "Less tox-i-c-i-ty ___ Less ___". The piano accompaniment includes a 'pp' dynamic marking and changes in time signature from 3/4 to 4/4 to 3/4 to 4/4.

113

ex - trac - tion_ Less_ plun - der - ing Less_ ex - ploi - ta - tion

117

Less_ con - sump - tion_

121

A poi - soned_ earth_ is squeez - ing us_ to_ death_

125

Ease up. Na - ture_ is send - ing you_ an S. O. S. (turn into [s...] an exhale)

129

mf *p* *b₂* *p* *b₂*

The on - ly__ cure: Less is more.

p *mp* *p* *pp*

134

138

long slow inhale
(with a bit of a struggle)

B is for Breathe

♩ = 60

pedal only as necessary to maintain lines

142

mf

(audible
inhale)

It takes one's breath a - way.

145

a man dy - ing dur - ing a pan - dem - ic

148

that takes a - way one's breath, no

smear with pedal

151

ven - - til - lat - or but one brave spect - at - or, re - cord - ing

155

his last breath,

158

his need _____ please _____

f

smear with pedal

161

some - bo - dy _____

mf

p

164

tak - ing the knee _____ on the neck from men who from birth

f

167

(audible inhale)

breathed in tain - ted _____ air,

mf

smear with pedal

170

mf

im - bibed a foul his - tor - y burn - ing

p

173

f

cross - es still smould - er - ing

mf

176

f (raspy inhale)

I can't breathe

ff *mp*

smear with pedal

180

mf

like the hot breath of an - ger con - sum - ming the cit - ies

mf

183

f (raspy inhale)

we have breathed this be - fore

186

mf

this white heat this burn - ing sen - sat - ion in the throats of the

189

f *ff* *mf*

num - er - ous ones held down and

smear with pedal

192

mp *p*

ma - ma ma - ma I can't

196

f

Come on, George Floyd,

p

(lh)

(lh)

199

(audible inhale)

breathe in the time - less rhy - thm of Moth - er Earth

(lh)

(lh)

(lh)

202

wait - ing for you, for

(lh)

mf

pp

smear with pedal

205

all her lost child - ren, for just - ice

mf

mp

smear with pedal

209

meno mosso

mf

for just - ice

p

pp

smear with pedal

213

mp

(inhale)

p

(short inhale)

I'm

through

I'm

through

ppp