

# Breath

for voice and piano

(Version 2 – Mezzo soprano / Alto)

Music by Keith Hamel

Lyrics by Olive Senior

Commissioned by the 46<sup>th</sup> 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

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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

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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	

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### 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.

# Breath

Music: Keith Hamel

Lyrics: Olive Senior

for voice and piano

(Version 2 - low female voice D4 - F#5)

## T is for Time Wasting

♩ = 96

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of three staves: voice, piano right hand, and piano left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 96. The first measure is a whole rest in the voice part. The second measure contains a quarter note 't' with an accent (>) and a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a sixteenth-note fingering '6'. The third measure is a whole rest in the voice part. The fourth measure contains a quarter note 't k' with an accent (>) and a fermata. The piano accompaniment continues with the same arpeggiated figure. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves: voice, piano right hand, and piano left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 5 is a whole rest in the voice part, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic and the instruction '(slow audible inhale)'. Measure 6 is a whole rest in the voice part. Measure 7 is a quarter note 't' with an accent (>) and a fermata. Measure 8 is a quarter note 'mm' with an accent (>) and a fermata, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment is mostly silent, with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand in measure 8, marked with a sixteenth-note fingering '6'. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Musical score for the third system, measures 9-12. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves: voice, piano right hand, and piano left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 9 is a quarter note 't' with an accent (>) and a fermata, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 10 is a quarter note 'ime' with an accent (>) and a fermata, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 11 is a quarter note '(m)' with an accent (>) and a fermata, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 12 is a whole rest in the voice part, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a sixteenth-note fingering '6'. A triplet of sixteenth notes is marked with a '3' in measure 11. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

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

pp

17 (inhale) (exhale) (inhale)

mp

21 *f* (gasp inhale as if surprised) *p* *mp* *f*

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

pp

25 *f*

t t t time

mf

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

*p* *f*

44

Waste time Spend time Save time At what - <sup>3</sup>ev - er time

*mf* *mp*

48

In no time Meas-ure time Lose time On time

*p*

51

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

*f* *f* *mp*

55

For a time Time sen-sit-ive <sup>3</sup> All the time A-noth-er time

59

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

63

*mf* O - - ver time *f* In time Time hon - ored

67

*mf* At one time The nick of time Time con - sum - ming

70 *mp*

At the same time Just in time Time worn

73 *f*

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 *ff*

Life time Time out Clos - ing

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

time

*f* *p*

smear with pedal

92 *mf* = 132

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

*f*

94 *ff* (quick exhale as if exhausted)

Keep time Pause time On time In time Time Out

*ff*

(quick exhale as if exhausted)

# L is for Less

slow relaxed inhale  
(as if smelling  
the flowers)

(relaxed  
exhale)

98

♩ = 84

*mp*

*p*

Musical score for measures 98-101. The vocal line consists of rests. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand with sixteenth-note runs, marked with a *pp* dynamic. The left hand has a simple bass line. Measure 101 ends with a 3/4 time signature change.

102

*mp*

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

*ppp*

*p*

Musical score for measures 102-105. The vocal line has lyrics: "There's no vac-cine \_\_\_ for Moth-er Earth. \_\_\_". The piano accompaniment continues with the melody from the previous system, now marked with a *p* dynamic. Measure 105 ends with a 3/4 time signature change.

106

The cure \_\_\_ is more of a with - - drawl:

*pp*

*p*

Musical score for measures 106-108. The vocal line has lyrics: "The cure \_\_\_ is more of a with - - drawl:". The piano accompaniment continues with the melody, marked with a *p* dynamic. Measure 108 ends with a 3/4 time signature change.

109

*mf*

Less

tox - ic - i - ty \_\_\_

Less \_\_\_

*pp*

*p*

Musical score for measures 109-112. The vocal line has lyrics: "Less tox - ic - i - ty \_\_\_ Less \_\_\_". The piano accompaniment continues with the melody, marked with a *p* dynamic. Measure 112 ends with a 4/4 time signature change.

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. (s...) (turn into an exhale)

129

*mf* *p*

The on - ly cure: Less is more.

134

**B is for Breathe**

138

long slow inhale  
(with a bit of a struggle)

♩ = 60

*p* (light and lyrical)

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

*mp* (audible inhale) *f* *mp*

smear with pedal

151

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

155

his last breath,

*mf* (audible inhale)

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 - bided 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

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

*mf*

all her lost child - ren, for just - ice

*mp*

smear with pedal

*meno mosso*

209

*mf*

for just - ice

*p*

*pp*

*smear with pedal*

213

*mp*

(inhale)

*p*

(short inhale)

I'm

through

I'm

through

*ppp*