THESE LABORED BREATHS

Jeff Weston

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Committee:
Christopher Dietz, Advisor
Elainie Lillios
Christopher Dietz, Advisor

these labored breaths, for chamber ensemble, is inspired by two mining fires near the Ohio/West Virginia border. The first of these disasters happened at the Powhatan Coal Mine on July 5, 1944. Of the 190 men in the mine, 66 died. One of those men, Ralph Vilkoski, scrawled a letter in a notebook. The letter, found two months after the fire with Vilkoski’s charred body, detailed the miner’s wishes for his family and a final farewell. The second letter utilized in the piece was found with Martin Toler, Jr.’s body on January 3, 2006 at the Sago Coal Mine. Of the 13 men in the mine, only 1 survived. Found next to Toler Jr.’s body was an insurance form with the text “Tell all I see them on the other side. It wasn’t bad, I just went to sleep. I love you” scrawled in pencil. Excerpts from these texts are found throughout movements two and three of the composition.

Research and analysis of traditional song, instrumentation and musical practices of the region inform the work’s overall style. Although facets of Appalachian music are blended into the musical languages of the piece, careful consideration was taken to avoid mere propagation of the traditional musical material.
INSTRUMENTATION

**Bass Clarinet in Bb** (Doubling on Piano Accordion)

**Alto Saxophone in Eb**

**Percussion 1**: Concert Bass Drum, Dampened Kick Drum, Musical Spoons, Triangle, Glockenspiel

* Implements: Hard Concert Bass Drum Mallet, Triangle Beater, Metallic Glockenspiel Beater Wrapped in Dr. Scholl’s Moleskin

**Percussion 2**: Medium Tom, Hi-Hat Cymbals, Vibraphone

* Implements: Drum Stick, Soft Vibraphone Mallets (2)

**Percussion 3**: Clapping, Stomping, Piano Accordion

* Implements: Clogs or Hard Soled Shoes on Wooden Platform/Stage

**Soprano** (Doubling on Clapping and Stomping)

* Implements: Clogs or Hard Soled Shoes on Wooden Platform/Stage

**Piano** (Doubling on Chromatic Harmonica in C)

**Contrabass** (Doubling on Chromatic Harmonica in C)

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**PERCUSSION LEGEND**

Player 1:
- Triangle [Tr.
- Spoons [Sp.
- Kick Drum [K.D.
- Bass Drum [B.D.
- Glockenspiel [Glock.

Player 2:
- Medium Tom [M.T.
- Hi-Hat Cymbal [H.H.
- Vibraphone [Vib.

Player 3:
- Clap [Cl.
- Stomp [St.
- Accordion [Ac.]
PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Harmonica (2 Required):

Pitches used in this piece range from F3- E4. The harmonica used to compose this piece was the Hohner Super Chromonica 270 in the key of C, which is the most common chromatic harmonica. This model is therefore recommended for performance, though not required. Figure 1 is global for the majority of 12 hole chromatic harmonicas in the key of C. Please note that the slide for both harmonicas should be out for the duration of the piece.

![fig. 1: Chromatic Harmonica in C Instructional Pitch Chart](image)

Piano Accordion (1 Required):

Pitches used range from F3 to A6. The Victoria Piano Standard (figure 2) was used in the composition of this piece. This model of accordion is therefore recommended for performance, though not required. Please note that the only left hand button required is the air button (movement iii, measure 171). The air button operates a valve that allows the bellows to open and close without the accordion making any sound other than air passing through. It is usually found on the side of the bass board, or, is the very top bass button near the thumb.

![fig. 2: Victoria Piano Standard Accordion](image)
Musical Spoons:

A frequently used instrument in the music of Appalachia, the musical spoons can be any pair of the eating utensil. Choose a pair of identical metal spoons or obtain pre-made musical spoons. Hold the bottom spoon face down between your pointer finger and your middle finger, pressing the edge of the handle lightly against your palm with your middle finger to ensure a tight grip. Hold the top spoon face up between your thumb and the middle of your pointer finger in the same hand, pressing the handle lightly to the palm with the pointer finger. Press the thumb down onto the handle for a firm grip. The bottoms of the spoons should now be lined up evenly back to back (figure 3). Hold the spoons straight, about a half-inch apart, so they make a clicking noise when they come together. Hold your other hand palm down above your leg about seven inches or so above the hand holding the spoons. Hit the spoons down on your leg, then up to your palm, getting a click with both moves. Do this back and forth a few times, holding the spoons tight enough so they don't slip. To roll (notated as grace notes within the score), spread the fingers of your empty hand wide and let the spoons bounce down each finger.

![fig. 3: Standard Musical Spoon Hold](image)

Clapping and Stomping:

“Stepping” is a common percussive element used in the music of Appalachia. Stepping is comprised of hand clapping and foot stomping, or clogging, and it is both an accompaniment to many folk songs and a solo instrument. The stepping used in this piece is fairly basic but should be done with the utmost vigor and enthusiasm. Preferably, hard soled shoes should be worn and impacted against a wooden platform/stage.
The composer wishes to thank Drs. Christopher Dietz and Elainie Lillios for their patience, guidance and support during the compositional process of this piece.
theselaboredbreaths
i.
sev'nsleepers

jeffweston

grooving and determined \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \text{c. 84} \)

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Alto Saxophone in Eb

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

Soprano

Piano

Contrabass

transposed score

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i.
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B.Cl.

A.Sx.

P1

P2

P3

S.

Pro.

Cb.

7
*Blow air out of hole number 6 = \( \searrow \)  Draw air in through hole number 3 = \( \nearrow \)

etc.
* as if on a record skip or tape loop
still and delicate \( \frac{1}{4} \approx 72 \)

Bass Clarinet in B

Alto Saxophone in E

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

Soprano

Contrabass

\* dampen during rests

\( \text{it was} \)

\( \text{it was} \)

\( \text{it was} \)

\( \text{it was} \)

\( \text{it was} \)
it was black


I just went
it was
(it was)

(2 + 3)
III.

**these labored breaths**

Contemplative \( \frac{4}{4} = 100 \)

- Bass Clarinet in B♭
- Alto Saxophone in E♭
- Percussion 1
- Percussion 2
- Percussion 3
- Piano
- Soprano
- Contrabass

*Woodwinds: Take breaths as needed, try to do so during soft dynamics

**Depress keys silently, strum lightly with fingernail of alternate hand inside of piano and depress sustain pedal until sound dies (Dulcimer-like sound).**
these labored breaths
these labored breaths

* Dampen during rests

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these labored breaths
these labored breaths
these labored breaths
Mumbling under breath with fast repetition at given pitch. Incorporate free interpretation of speed and dynamics.
these labored breaths

Singing, full voice with fast repetition at given pitch

to be where there is sunshine!
these labored breaths

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* pressing air button, slowly decrescendo to silence

(The air button operates a valve that allows the bellows to open and close without the accordion making any sound other than air. It is usually found on the side of the bass board, or is the very top bass button.)