CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTH RIDGE

BREATHE.

FOR QUINTET

An abstract submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Music in Composition

BY

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ABSTRACT

BREATHE.

FOR QUINTET

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Master of Music in Composition

“\textit{I am this shortness of breath.Disconnected, I view myself as separate parts of a whole. While the shapes of lines flow in circular motions, I am grasping and searching for stability, connectedness, and flow. But I am deprived. Irregular pulses of varying rhythmic durations jolt me, and I speed up and down trying to find the balance of rhythm and time in relation to the ensemble; to my whole. I feel like an artist’s paintbrush that is constantly being dipped into different colors, and painted onto a canvas with varying brush strokes, lengths, and speeds. With each different rhythmic layer, texture, or color added to this canvas, I feel I am always in transformation, like an organism undergoing evolution. My perception is constantly masked as I continue to try on the ever-changing rhythms, textures, and colors.”} – program notes, Patrick Gutman

\textit{Breathe.} is a journey of the transformation of the breath. It is the process of going from complexity, irregularity, and density to simplicity, stability, and unity. The breath in this piece of music is presented both literally and figuratively. Each instrument or player
is part of the whole, the oneness or unity of the breath, and as the piece transforms the
players begin to synchronize with one another until ultimately they reach this
connectedness through the physical act of breathing together. The overall concept of the
piece is the transformation or transition from a state of instability and irregularity of this
breath, to the smoothness and simplicity of synchronized, continuous deep breathing. To
achieve this transformation musically, the piece undergoes development in three primary
ways: rhythm, timbre, and texture.

The breath or the act of breathing, is used both symbolically and literally in this
piece. Each section of the piece can be viewed as an aspect of breath—at some points
irregular, unsteady, gasping, while at other times calm, smooth, and enriching. The first
aspect of breath can be viewed in the shapes of the lines. From the opening measure there
are shapes and focused directions in four of the five instruments. Sometimes the direction
is straight up or down, while other times it arcs and cycles. The overall texture of the
opening section contains lines that are constantly shifting directions so that one does not
know whether they are breathing on an in breath (ascending), or an out breath (descending).
Peaks and valleys are always changing and the overall effect becomes
somewhat like a rollercoaster, where you are pulled and tugged in every which way
possible without feeling like one has landed somewhere stable. The listener is
immediately emerged into this state of apparent chaos, instability and panic in the breath.

The shapes of the lines have much importance throughout the entire piece, often
continuing cycles of scalar patterns which form the basis of many of the textures in the
piece. The phrase lengths are irregular and never constant or the same. One phrase might
be two beats long, and then the next phrase five beats long. This constant change in
phrase length keeps this instability and irregularity, which ultimately leads to a deeper appreciation of the transformation of the lines towards the end of the piece. To contrast the scalar runs that represent inhales and exhales of breaths, there is repetition on single notes to create this stasis and lack of motion, or a state of panic in the breath. In the opening this can be seen in the horn and the cello. The runs revolve around these static pitches and gives the illusion of movement, and yet at the same time feels as if there is something holding it all back from constantly moving forward. The runs typically all share a pitch class set, or set of intervallic patterns which each instrument plays and passes off to one another. Examples of these scalar shapes of runs and the repetition of single notes can be seen from the opening until Rehearsal F, where there is the first big change of texture. As the piece continues these opening textures begin to combine with new material so that the piece is always continuing to evolve, grow, and transform into something fresh and new.

Additionally, to further this idea of instability or irregular breathing within phrases, often they are cut off almost abruptly and then greeted with silence. Brief moments of silence occur throughout the piece at ends of phrases or sections to help give the listener and the players a glimpse of stillness. It is a brief pause of reflection to allow what was played before to sink in and to try to hold on and capture this quiet moment of stillness as best as one can. However, I purposely take away much silence and pause until the end of the piece to not only push along the development of material, but to also allow for a deeper sense of satisfaction with the physical act of deep breathing that comes at the end of the piece.
To contrast the scalar and repetitive musical figures/phrases in the piece, there are moments such as in sections F and G where there are slow and long phrases on a minimal amount of notes, representing deep breathing that has been denied for the first part of the piece. At F there are deep sustained notes from the bass clarinet and cello that shift between playing in unison on a single note and playing a quartetone apart from each other. The listener almost gets the sense of relief from the constant flux of pulse, but above the low sounds are irregular pulses on a static pitch from the flute and later the violin. The instability and irregularity of the pulses keeps the tension and idea of lacking air apparent, and to heighten this the violin player is instructed to breathe in randomly to literally create the sound of gasping for breath—continuing the denial of full and deep breathing.

Lastly, in regards to the idea or concept of breath in this piece, there is something to say about the technical difficulty of the piece. There are lots of very fast passages that are very difficult for players to play, and at times it almost gives the feel that certain parts are unplayable. There is intent behind the technical aspects of performing the piece. To visually see the performers play so many notes and gasp for air helps further this idea of breath and the denial of that breath. Visually seeing the bass clarinet player at rehearsal A playing all the pitches and gasping for air, gives a more realistic and tangible feeling of the need to breathe. This draws in the audience to focus on the journey that the player themselves are going through physically and technically, which helps continue to immerse the audience deeper into the piece.

Rhythm has a very important role in this piece. From beat one of the piece until measure 222, no player ever plays the same rhythm ever with anyone else. The ensemble
never plays anything in unison or together rhythmically until they begin to have synchronized breathing at measure 222. The piece contains many polyrhythms because different rhythmic strata add to the instability and complexity of the breath that is needed. Primary sections of this can be seen in the opening until rehearsal F and rehearsal I through rehearsal K. These sections are generally at a faster speed. In looking at the opening one can see how there are patterns of four, five, six, and seven all against one another. This constant speeding up and down within each part relates back to the instability of the breath. On the larger scale, the texture creates this fluidity that is intangible and one feels that they are immersed into chaos.

There is also a constant denial of pulse throughout the piece. I never wanted anyone to be able to feel a beat with this piece. The goal was to be unpredictable and unsteady so that it can undergo transformation by the end into something beautiful and stable. In looking at the opening the horn player plays the repeated static notes while the other instruments are playing some sort of scalar run pattern. However, this pulse is erratic, never falling into any specific pattern. The effect is of course irregularity and a sense of panic. By constantly hiding or avoiding any sort of rhythmic patterns in this piece, there is a denial of pulse and thus a lack of stability.

Another way to avoid a pulse is to break down the rhythms into slower speeds so that time seems to stop, and with it all rhythmic pulse as well. The manipulation of time is an aspect of this piece, and rhythm is a big supporter of this. Sections F and G are prime examples. Slow glissandos and irregular rhythmic pulses on a single pitch seem to create this stasis and stillness, while overhead is the sporadic pulsing from the repetitive
single pitch bobbing along. In these sections once again the instruments never line up to play a rhythm together as they are continuously offset with one another.

The climax at rehearsal M is a big moment in the piece, because from the often dense polyrhythmic textures emerges this section where everything interlocks. There are still polyrhythms occurring which delays the satisfaction of rhythmic unity in that regards. However, the feeling is one of synchronization where each player seems to be working towards the whole, realizing how his or her line fits in with the ensemble. At rehearsal M the climax is reached in a complexity of densely polyrhythmic lines, and the ensemble works together to slowly break down the interlocking patterns into disjointed and disjunct rhythms and pitches. It is as if for a brief moment the ensemble worked together much like a clock does, and then beginning at measure 199 slowly but surely that clock begins to run out of battery and the rhythms and intense interlocking begins to break down. The breath is needed now as the body has over exerted and exhausted itself. It is time to breathe. Slowly the rhythms up to measure 222 begin to synchronize as the pitches transform themselves into syllables, which form into the phrase “just breathe.” In this last section of the piece, the players begin to change the rhythmic complexities into steady, regular and unified patterns by speaking the words “just breathe” together and breathing deeply with one another. The end of the piece has not only unison rhythms and words, but the pulse is simple and on the beat so that the message can be presented clearly. The transformation is complete as the ensemble breathes in and out together in the last two measures. The beauty of this section is that in many ways I have been able to also give breath back to the listener. Subconsciously and even consciously for some individuals, the listener does breathe with the performers and feels the same sense of
satisfaction and gratitude for the breath as the performers do. In this way, I have been able to unite and connect the performers with the audience and myself, the composer.

Timbre plays an important role in the transformation of color in this piece. The quality of the sounds that are being performed are very important and undergo transformation as well. Timbre in this piece can be seen as “colored-breath.” While more dense and chaotic sections such as the opening give us an array of colors, there is contrast within the slower and thinner sections as well. For example, beginning at letter F there is a blend between the cello and the bass clarinet. Here, the breath is represented by low, deep tones that sustain and pulse throughout the section. Timbre is a primary focus here as it is the blending of the tones that I am interested in at this part of the piece. While a section like the opening shows the contrast of timbres from each instrument, with the phrasing and ranges of the instruments creating heightened contrast, in this section it is the merging of tones and timbres that creates interest. Keeping the pitches a quartetone apart keeps just enough differentiation so that the listener can subtly perceive two different tones.

The idea of blending timbres and creating colors continues in sections such as G and J. At measure 153 there is a resonance idea where an instrument will attack a pitch at a forte, and the resonance that comes from that attack is heard softly underneath from a different instrument. Playing with the listener’s perception of what one initially hears and the resonance or end result thereafter helps keep the music interesting, colorful, and visually stimulating, as what we are seeing and hearing might not match initially. Additionally, in section J there is an aleatoric passage where the players are given a set of pitches to play randomly at half pitch and then play ordinary the written pitches
thereafter. The idea here is the blending of timbres within a strict pitch range to then clear and distinct timbres when the written pitches are played. This constant blend and contrast is a key aspect in regards to timbre, and plays a transformative role in the piece.

The spoken syllables and words can also be viewed as a focus on timbre. In this case, not only are the individual voices affecting the timbre of the sound, but the attacks of each syllable also create different timbres. The syllables undergo transformation from mere vocal sounds to ultimately the phrase “just breathe” at the end of the piece. The sections with the syllables have a strong focus on the hardness or softness of each syllable, and often alternate between hard attacks such as “kuh” and softer attacks such as “shhh.” It is the syllabic quality of the spoken words here that creates the musical interest and focus point.

I would like to end the discussion by talking about the construction of different textures to create form in the piece. The piece is not constructed thematically or even motivically, but rather texturally. Form comes through the contrast of different textures, and the transformation of these textures. The opening until F consists of rhythmic vigor and intensity, and through often an additive rhythmic process the textures morph and develop. The next section of F, G, and H consist of slower and thinner textures where the blends of timbre become a primary focus. Sections I and J take the opening textures and fragment the scalar lines, becoming more disjoint and irregular. This section transforms slowly into the spoken syllables, a sound world that had not yet been introduced in the piece. The syllables at this time make no sense in terms of a coherent phrase, and are a seed for the syllables that come back towards the end of the piece which forms the phrase “just breathe.” Section M consists of the strict interlocking of rhythms which had not
occurred yet in the piece, and the texture slowly breaks down and transforms into deep continuous breathing. It is the shifting of these textures and its musical components of rhythm and timbre that create contrast and development in this piece.
Patrick Gutman

Breathe.
For Flute, Clarinet/Bass clarinet, Horn, Violin, Cello

Duration: appx. 12 minutes

2013
Program Notes

I am this shortness of breath.Disconnected, I view myself as separate parts of a whole. While the shapes of lines flow in circular motions, I am grasping and searching for stability, connectedness, and flow. But I am deprived. Irregular pulses of varying rhythmic durations jolt me, and I speed up and down trying to find the balance of rhythm and time in relation to the ensemble; to my whole. I feel like an artist’s paintbrush that is constantly being dipped into different colors, and painted onto a canvas with varying brush strokes, lengths, and speeds. With each different rhythmic layer, texture, or color added to this canvas, I feel I am always in transformation, like an organism undergoing evolution. My perception is constantly masked as I continue to try on the ever-changing rhythms, textures, and colors

Yet with each new section and texture I develop in, I discover more of myself. At times even if brief, I find moments of stability, calmness, and alignment with the ensemble. I begin to understand that I am the whole, that I am each part, and with this clarity suddenly we interlock, caught in a strict mechanical cycle of chaos. Now more than ever I cannot breathe, and so in defense we breakdown-crumbling, transforming, and changing colors. I realize I am like the butterfly that escaped the cocoon. I have been transformed, connected back to my essence-back into the oneness of breath.
Notes

1. Flute and Clarinet:
   Key click as fast as possible, creating irregular groupings of random pitches. Include brief moments of rest and flutter tongues.
Horn:
   Blow air through the horn and make key click noises as fast as possible. Have rhythms be random and varied. Include brief moments of rest and flutter tongues.
Strings:
   Use col legno behind the bridge to play irregular groupings of random pitches. Include brief moments of rest.

2. Flute and Clarinet:
   Play the pitches so that a small audible pitched sound is produced. Play as fast as possible with no rests except to quickly breathe. As you play the written pitches move to full pitch at the end of the fragment, then return back to playing the random pitches at ½ pitched sound.
Strings:
   Randomly finger the pitches as fast as possible. Play sul ponticello when you arrive at the written pitches, and then return back to playing the random pitches with your fingers only.

3. Flute and Clarinet:
   Play given pitches randomly as fast as possible. Create irregular groupings and brief moments of rest. Play pitches so that a small audible ½ pitched sound is produced. When you arrive at the x note head, quickly breathe in through your instrument, and then continue playing the boxed pitches. Play written pitches as they occur.
Strings:

Play given pitches randomly as fast as possible with sul ponticello. Create irregular groupings and brief moments of rest. When you arrive at a X note head, quickly breathe in loudly and then continue to play the boxed pitches. Play written pitches as they occur.

4. Flute and Clarinet:

Play given pitches randomly as fast as possible. Create irregular groupings and brief moments of rest. Play pitches so that a small audible ½ pitched sound is produced. When you arrive at the X note head, speak the syllable and then continue playing the boxed pitches at ½ pitched sound. There are 3 inflections to be used when speaking the syllables. The top line is a high inflection, the middle line is a medium inflection, and the bottom line is a low inflection.

Horn and Strings:

Play given pitches randomly as fast as possible. Create irregular groupings and brief moments of rest. When you arrive at the X note head, speak the syllable and then continue playing the boxed pitches. There are 3 inflections to be used when speaking the syllables. The top line is a high inflection, the middle line is a medium inflection, and the bottom line is a low inflection.

5. At letter L:

Flute:

Upon first time playing use ½ pitched sound beginning at PPP and cresc. to a P. Upon repeat play ordinary and cresc. to a FF. at letter M.

Bass clarinet:

Upon first time playing use the sub tone effect to create a soft ½ pitched audible sound beginning at PPP and cresc. to a P. Upon repeat, play ordinary and cresc. to FF at letter M. When
indicated play a split multiphonic sound using the given pitch, creating a harsh and loud noise.

Horn:

Upon first time playing blow and key click the indicated pitches and rhythm, but do not make audible pitched sound. Upon repeat, play at $P$ with open horn and cresc. to $FF$ at letter $M$.

Strings:

Upon first time playing use sul ponticello beginning at $PPP$ and cresc. to $P$. Upon repeat play arco and cresc. to $FF$ at letter $M$.

6. After playing your pitch, follow the indicated breathing direction until you play your next pitch or given syllable. It should be a continuous motion of breath, either in or out. As it progresses towards the end, the rate of breathing should slow down into deep breaths. Up arrow means breath in, down arrow means breathe out. Breathe in or out through your instrument always. Strings breathe in or out using your mouth.
**Syllable Pronunciation**

Bb = As in “Boy”
Cha = As in the beginning of “CHArge”
Chk = As in “check”...skip the “e” and go straight to the “ck” sound
Ffft = As in “Foot” without the “oo”...close to the “T” sound
Hah = As in “HAWk”
Jj = the sound of the letter “J”
Kah = As in “CAught”
Kaht = As in the word “caught”
Kuh = As in “Cut”
Ree = As in “READ”
Ssht = As in “SHooT” without the “oo”...close to the “T” sound
Ssss = As in “Snake”
Ssst = As in “STOP”
Tah = As in “TOm”
Tsss = As in the last syllable of “parenTS”
Tt = The sound of “T”
Tuh = As in “TOngue”
Zaht = As in “thought” if you replaced it with a “Z” in the beginning
Breathe.
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chaotic $\lambda = 104$

Flute
Clarinet in B
Horn in F
Violin
Violoncello

bow as smooth as possible
bow as smooth as possible

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Flute
Clarinet in B
Horn in F
Violin
Violoncello

bow as smooth as possible
bow as smooth as possible
gaining momentum $q = 88$

B.C. switch to cl.

D flat.

Vln.

$\text{mp}$

Fl.

Hn.

Vc.

$\text{mp}$
\textbf{E}

\textit{chaotic} \( j = 110 \)

\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & \quad f \quad mp \quad f \quad mp \\
\text{Cl.} & \quad mp \quad f \\
\text{Hn.} & \quad mf \\
\text{Vln.} & \quad mp \quad f \\
\text{Vc.} & \quad mf \\
\end{align*}

69


mp  mp  mp  mp  mp  mp  

load key clicks, barely audible blowing

p  p  p  p  p  p  

load key clicks, barely audible blowing

kiss/smack

col legno

col legno

mp
breathe in loudly, keep rhythm random till m. 106
switch to bass cl.

74
mp

ord.

5

6

ord.
breathe as needed

sul tasto

ord.

Fl.
Cl.
Vln.
Vc.

sfz mp
chk
chk
chk
chk

mp

p

fp
fp
fp

ppp
p

ppp
p

pp

sul tasto
continuously gliss between notes till m.97

simile
1. blow 1/2 air, fast random key clicks
breathe in loudly, keep rhythm random till m. 126

Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.

sfs mf sfs mf sfs mf sfs mf
chk chk mp sfs mp
chk chk
sfs mp

rall.
q = 72

101

108
blow into instrument in wave-like patterns

flute

clarinet

horn

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola

violin

viola
Quickly breathe into instrument.

Blow/pulse into instrument.

Poco accel.

Bow as smooth as possible.
J = 90

2. play randomly, as fast as possible, with 1/2 pitch

move from air to pitch

\( \frac{1}{2} \) pitch

move from air to pitch

finger only

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.

sul p.
3. play pitches randomly, as fast as possible, 1/2 air
slow $\approx 63$

4. play pitches/rhythm randomly, as fast as possible, 1/2 air
spoken
L growing more and more \( \text{Bez.} = 88 \)

5. 1x, 1/2 air...2x end.

\[
\text{Fl.} \quad \text{B.Cl.} \quad \text{Hn.} \quad \text{Vln.} \quad \text{Vc.}
\]

\[
\text{split multiphonic sound}
\]

\[
\text{1x key clicks/blowing...2x stopped open}
\]

\[
\text{sul p 1x...arco 2x}
\]
6. follow breathing patterns until your next pitch
continue breathing pattern until next breath mark