

DT0109.1 | LEARNING TO BREATHE | TRUMBORE
SSAA CHORUS & PIANO

LEARNING TO BREATHE

SSAA Chorus & Piano
Text by Diane Thiel

d'aletrumbore
c o m p o s e r



DIANE THIEL is the author of twelve books of poetry and nonfiction. Her latest poetry collection, *Questions from Outer Space*, appeared in 2022 (Red Hen Press) and received the 2023 Independent Press Award. Her work has appeared widely in publications such as two Best American poetry anthologies, including *Best American Poetry 2023*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Harvard Review*, *Poetry* and is reprinted in over sixty major anthologies. Thiel received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Brown University. A Regents' Professor at University of New Mexico, her awards include PEN, NEA and Fulbright Awards. Thiel has traveled the world with her young family, working on literary and environmental projects. dianethiel.net



DALE TRUMBORE is a Los Angeles-based composer and writer whose music has been called “devastatingly beautiful” (*The Washington Post*) and praised for its “soaring melodies and beguiling harmonies deployed with finesse” (*The New York Times*). Trumbore's compositions have been performed widely in the U.S. and internationally by the Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW ensemble, Conspirare and the Miró Quartet, Los Angeles Children's Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Modesto Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, and Phoenix Chorale. She has written extensively about working through creative blocks and establishing a career in music in essays and in her first book, *Staying Composed*. Learn more about Trumbore's music and writing at daletrumbore.com.

LEARNING TO BREATHE

I grew up holding my breath.
It was something I could do.
As a child, I could dive ten fathoms down
for that sand dollar
or something else that looked like treasure.
I could swim the length of an Olympic pool
and back underwater, and further,
always pushing it further,
training my lungs to let me stay longer.
In my home, I often felt I had no power,
but there was power

in being able to always push it further.

When I later learned to deep-sea dive
I had to go against
that inclination to hold my breath.
For me, there was significant adjusting,
as a body of water meant
to get down there and back up
in the short time that I had.
I had to learn to breathe steadily,
the main rule, never hold it.
At first, I had to say it in my mind
Never hold your breath.

But once I learned, I loved belonging

to that world, while also being alien to it,
first through the wrecks on both coasts, then
volcanos under Santorini, looking for Atlantis,
and later the perspective from down under,
the side glance of the sea turtle appearing
on the barrier reef, gliding over its expanses
and losses.

Breathing steadily, adjusting carefully
to changes in depth, even back on land,
breathing, even in the surge of the unknown,
breathing, always remembering to

just keep breathing through it.

Diane Thiel

“Learning to Breathe,” from *Questions from Outer Space* (Red Hen Press, 2022).

PROGRAM NOTE

Diane Thiel's text for *Learning to Breathe* describes a significant difference between swimming underwater and scuba diving. In the latter, holding one's breath is not only discouraged, but can actually be harmful to one's lungs because of the pressure difference that occurs with changes in depth.

I read Thiel's poem as not only a vivid depiction of learning to swim and scuba dive – though of course, it's that, too – but a suggestion for how to live when everything we know is changing. There's a reason, when life becomes complicated, that we often say we feel we're "underwater." When we're stressed, our tendency is to take shallow breaths, forgetting that deep breaths can help relax the nervous system. Thiel's poem encourages us to "just keep breathing through it" – to look around and breathe steadily through our changing landscapes, through terrifying experiences and miraculous ones.

This piece was commissioned by the Washington State University Choirs and Palouse Choral Society, Dean Luethi and Matthew Myers, Conductors, for the 2024 WSU Festival of Contemporary Artists in Music.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

As the meter changes between simple and compound time, the eighth note should remain consistent throughout.

Marked breaths (inhalations & exhalations) should be natural: perceptible to the audience, but unforced.

A dashed line means carry through the phrase; don't take a breath.

For the piano part:

- Boxes indicate a brief gesture that should be repeated for as long as is indicated by the following arrow. Notes within boxes should be played first as written, then in any order, rippling, ebbing and flowing gently between the speed of 16th notes and 8th notes.
- A greyed-out rest in an aleatoric measure indicates duration only. Rippling notes should continue through this greyed-out rest.

Commissioned by the Washington State University Choirs and Palouse Choral Society,
Dean Luethi and Matthew Myers, Conductors, for the 2024 WSU Festival of Contemporary Artists in Music.

Learning to Breathe

for SSAA chorus & piano

Text by Diane Thiel

Music by Dale Trumbore

Unconducted; ♩ = ca. 100 with rubato

Chorus: [inhale]

Piano

f *pp* *mf*

Chorus: [inhale]

*Notes within boxes should be played first as written, then in any order; rippling quickly; ebbing and flowing gently between the speed of 16th notes and 8th notes at random.

5

Piano

f *pp* *f*

Chorus: [inhale]

Conducted (♩ = ca. 100)

8

S. *mf* I grew up hold-ing my breath. It was some-thing I could do.

A. *mf* I grew up hold-ing my breath. It was some-thing I could do.

Chorus: [inhale]

Piano

f *pp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

Learning to Breathe

12 Slower; ♩ = ca. 80
mp

S. As a child, I could dive down or

A. As a child, I could dive ten fathoms down for that sand dollar or

Pno. *mp pp mf pp*

17 *mf*

S. some-thing else_ that looked like treas-ure... I could swim the length of

A. some-thing else_ that looked like treas-ure... I could swim the length of

Pno. *mf p mf*

21 *f* *mf*

S. an O - lym-pic pool and back un - der - wa - ter, and fur - ther,

A. an O - lym-pic pool and back un - der - wa - ter,

Pno. *f*

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Learning to Breathe

40 *mp* **poco accel.** ♩ = ca. 84

S. power in be - ing a - ble to al - ways push it fur - ther.

A. power in be - ing a - ble to al - ways push it fur - ther.

Pno. *p* *mf* *p*

44 *f* *pp* *mf* *pp* 3 *Red.*

47 *f* *mp* 3

51 *p* *p* Sopranos may omit the B if it's out of range

S. When I lat - er learned to deep - sea dive I

A. When I lat - er learned to deep - sea dive I

Pno. 51

55 *mf*

S. had to go a-against that in- cli - na - tion to hold my breath.

A. had to go a-against that in- cli - na - tion to hold my breath. *mp* For

Pno. *mf* *p*

59

S. as a bod - y of wa - ter

A. *Alto 1s may double Sopranos*
me, there was sig - nif - i - cant ad - just - ing, as a bod - y of wa - ter

Pno. *p* *mf* *pp* *mf* 3

63

S. meant to get down there and back up in the short time that I

A. meant to get down there and back up in the short time that I

Pno. 3

67 **rit.** ♩ = ca. 44

S. had.

A. had.

Pno. *pp* **rit.** *rippling gradually slows to a complete stop* *mf*

Red.

70

Pno. *p* *mf* *p*

73 *mp* *mf*

S. I had to learn to breathe stead-i - ly, the main rule, nev-er hold_ it.

A. I had to learn to breathe stead-i - ly, the main rule, nev-er hold_ it.

Pno. *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

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Learning to Breathe

93 *pp* *pp* *mf*

S. first on both coasts, then vol - ca - nos un - der San - to - ri - ni,

A. first through the wrecks on both coasts, then vol - ca - nos un - der San - to - ri - ni,

Pno. *pp* *mf* *p*

98 *mp* *mp*

S. look - ing for At - lan - tis, and la - ter the per - spec - tive from down

A. look - ing for At - lan - tis, and la - ter the per - spec - tive from down

Pno. *mp* sub. *p*

103

S. un - der, the side glance of the sea tur - tle ap - pear - ing on the bar - ri - er reef,

A. un - der, the side glance of the sea tur - tle ap - pear - ing on the bar - ri - er reef,

Pno.

108 *mf* **poco a poco rit.**

S. *mf* gli - ding o - ver its ex - pan - ses and los - ses.

A. *mf* glid - ing *pp* oo.

Pno. *f* *pp*

112 **In time**

S. *p* Breath - - ing stead - i - ly, *mp* ad - just - ing

A. *mp* *pp* Breath - - ing stead - i - ly, *mp* ad - just - ing

Pno. *mp* *pp* *mf*

115 *p* *mf* **poco rit.**

S. care - ful - ly to chan - ges in depth, e - ven back on

A. *p* *mf* care - ful - ly to chan - ges in depth, e - ven back on

Pno. *p* *mf* *p* **poco rit.**

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130 *p* *mf*

S. Just keep breath - ing through it

A. Just keep breath - ing through it

Pno. *mf* *p* *mf*

non rit. *p* [inhale] [exhale]

S. - - - - -

A. oo oo [inhale] [exhale]

Pno. 133 *p* [inhale] [exhale]

Conductor slowly lowers hands