

Jason V. Barabba

a declarative sentence whose message is  
that we must try harder

for Viola, Cello and Contrabass

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This piece is dedicated to the players of the Symbiosis Chamber Orchestra.

Duration – Approximately 10 Minutes

### *Program Note*

This trio was inspired by the poem "I will learn how to love a person and then I will teach you and then we will know" by Tao Lin and published in his 2008 book *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*. This is not so much a setting of the text, as a ... *reaction* ... to it. You could not do a line-by-line comparison between his words and my score.

The title is taken from the final line of the poem. I wouldn't even begin to try and summarize this work, but I felt a very immediate connection to some of his ideas. The closing paragraph is:

it was the effect of an extremely distinct sensation that 'i am the  
only person  
alive,' 'i have not learned enough,' and 'i can feel the universe  
expanding and making things further apart  
and it feels like a declarative sentence  
whose message is that we must try harder'

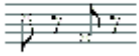
Because this work is a reaction to a complex and provocative poem, I've chosen to take advantage of some of the more unusual techniques that have been introduced for these instruments. The instrumentation choice was entirely my own, having previously written a standard violin-violoncello string trio. I wanted to take this opportunity to work with the contrabass as a full member of a chamber ensemble and also exploit my affinity for the lower string instruments. They have such a wide range of timbral opportunities which allowed me to really play with a poem that covers some very large ideas in very few words.

a declarative sentence whose message is that we must try harder is registered with ASCAP.

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## Performance Notes:

Behind the Bridge



"X" notes with "Behind the Bridge" notation, should be played on the strings between the bridge and the tailpiece. The notehead indicates the string to be used.

Tap wood with fingertip

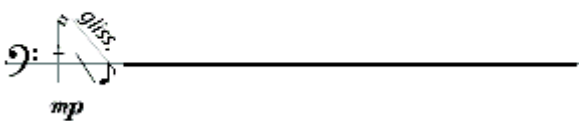


Tap on the wood of your instrument with one fingertip. Location is up to the performer, but the strings should be dampened with the other hand so that they do not resonate with the tapping sound.

In measure 67, the contrabass is instructed to twist bow on string with strong pressure. This should be done at such a level to create a creaking sound, not at any recognizable pitch. The string or strings used are up to the choice of the performer, as the pitch is not a factor in the creation of this sound.

Seagull Effect is a stopped harmonic beginning in a very high position with an octave span between the fingers. Glissando down the length of the fingerboard, without

"Seagull effect" on the E String  
Irregular Rhythm Varying ranges  
Approx. 12 Seconds



adjusting the space between the fingers (which thereby diminishes the interval). The fixed finger spacing causes higher partials of lower fundamentals to be activated as the left-hand motion continues towards the scroll, which repeatedly restarts the glissando. (credit to [www.moderncellotechniques.com](http://www.moderncellotechniques.com) for this succinct explanation).



This notation indicates an abrupt end to the note as soon as the harmonic sounds. The actual harmonic sound is not the point as much as the sound of the transition from the fundamental to the artificial harmonic.

The timed blocks in measures 83-85 and 120-124 are by-nature somewhat more flexible than traditionally metered music. The performers will need to work out their own system to communicate with each other, and they are encouraged to not fuss over specific numbers of seconds in performance. Moving from one section to the next should be by consensus, and can be instinctual. The specific seconds notated are to be used only as a guide.

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November 2011

Slow (Approx  $\text{♩} = 60$ )

Violino  
Violoncello  
Contrabasso

con sord.  
con sord.  
con sord.

*pp* *<f* *p <f* *p <f* *pp*  
*pp* *p* *<f* *pp*  
*mp*

7  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

Behind the Bridge

ord. pizz. arco  
pizz. arco arco  
pizz. arco

*mp* *p* *mf* *pp*  
*mf* *pp* *p* *mp*  
*pp*

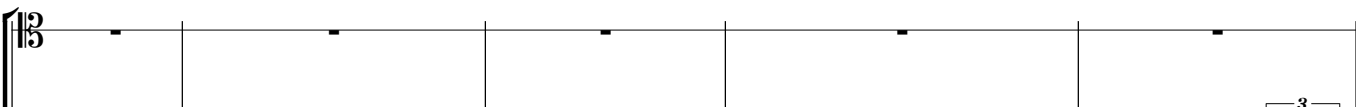
13  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

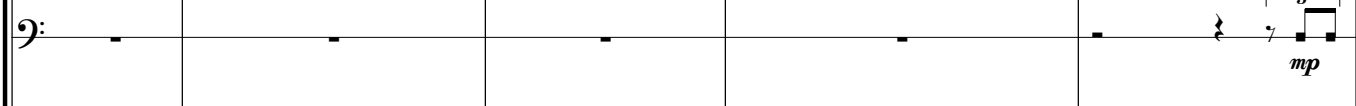
Grave (Approx  $\text{♩} = 50$ )

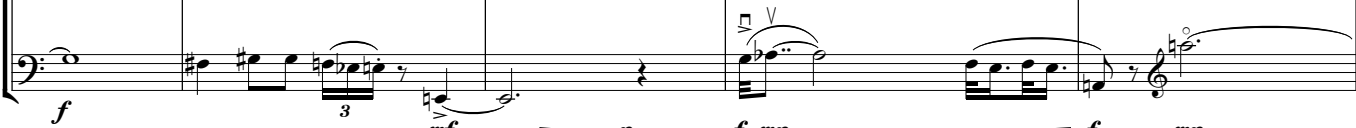
senza sord. sul pont. arco ord. Tap wood with fingertip  
senza sord. sul pont. ord. Tap wood with fingertip  
senza sord.

*ppp* *fff* *mp*  
*p* *mf* *fff* *p*  
*ppp* *f* *fff* *p* *n* *ppp*

22

Vla. 

Vc. 

Cb. 

*f* *mf* *p* *f mp* *f* *mp*

27

Vla. 

Vc. 

Cb. 

*n* *f mp* *f mp* *mf* *f* *ff* *f mp* *f* *p < f*

31 **Moderato** (Approx  $\text{♩} = 100$ )

Vla. 

Vc. 

Cb. 

*p* *f* *f* *ff* *mf*

*mf* *mf < f* *mf < f* *pp*

38 Tap wood with fingertip

Vla. 

Vc. 

Cb. 

*f* *mp* *ff* *f* *ppp* *f* *fff p*

*ff* *> f*

Behind the Bridge

45 **Grave (Approx. ♩=50)** **Allegro (Approx. ♩=120)**

Vla. *n* *mp* *5*

Vc. *ppp* *mf* *ff* *p*

Cb. *ppp* *f* *3* *mf* *3* *mp*

52

Vla. *mf* *f* *mf* *mf* *mp* *f* *p* *f* *p*

Vc. *n* *f* *p* *5*

Cb. *pp* *fff* *pizz.* *arco* *f* *3*

56

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mp* *5* *mf*

Cb. *mf* *IV gliss.* *III gliss.* *II gliss.* *f*

Highest possible note.

59

Vla. *ff* *mp sul pont.*

Vc. *ff* *mp sul pont.*

Cb. *ff*

**Slow (Approx. ♩=60)**

Behind the Bridge  
pizz.

66

Vla. *gliss.* *f* *arco* *mf* *p* *ord.* *mf* *p* *ord.*

Vc. *gliss.* *f* *pizz.* *5* *3* *3*

Cb. *mf* *sul pont.* *8<sup>va</sup>*

Creaking  
(Twist bow on string with strong pressure. Slow, irregular, creepy)

71

Vla. *sul pont.* *ord.* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *sul pont.* *ord.* *mf* *p* *f* *5* *tr* *ppp* *con sord.* *sul pont.* *p* *f*

Vc. *Tap wood with fingertip* *sul pont.* *ord.* *Tap wood with fingertip* *con sord. arco* *sul pont.* *p* *f*

Cb. *con sord.* *mf* *p* *f* *sul pont.* *ord.* *Tap wood with fingertip* *3* *p* *f* *p subito*

78

Vla. *ord.* *p* *mp*

Vc. *p* *b5*

Cb.

81

Vla. *mf* *f* *mp*

Vc. ord. *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

Cb. ord. *mp* *mf* *f*

"Seagull effect" on the E String  
Irregular Rhythm Varying ranges

83

Vla. *gliss.*

Vcl. *gliss.*

Cb. *gliss.* *mp*

<p>"Seagull effect" on the C String. Irregular Rhythm Varying ranges. Wait 5 seconds before starting. Contrabass "G" signals start of next measure. (Approx 12 Seconds)</p>	<p>Continue seagull effect as indicated. Cello "D" indicates the start of the next section</p>	<p>Continue seagull effect for approximately 5-7 seconds</p>
<p>"Seagull effect" varying between the G and D strings Irregular Rhythm, Varying ranges. Contrabass "G" signals start of next measure. (Approx 12 Seconds.)</p>	<p>Continue seagull effect as indicated for approximately 5-7 seconds</p>	<p>Hold for approximately 5-7 seconds. Viola B indicates the start of the next measure.</p>
<p>Continue "Seagull effect" on the E String Irregular Rhythm Varying ranges Approx. 12 Seconds</p>	<p>Hold for approximately 5-7 seconds. Cello D indicates the start of the next section</p>	<p>Hold for approximately 5-7 seconds. Viola B indicates the start of the next measure.</p>