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# Like A Seated Swan

*for viola and computer-realized sound*

*Commissioned by the Seattle Symphony*

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# 1999 Seattle Symphony Commission

## Program Note

### LIKE A SEATED SWAN for viola and computer-realized sound

While I give to all my compositions titles that possess some degree of evocative resonance, the title of this work is particularly significant. The metaphor of the human soul floating on the waters of existence - "He breathes in the waters like a seated swan" - taken from the ancient Vedic text, permeated my imagination throughout the compositional process. It is also reflected in the dual media for which the work is scored and the largely orchestral characterization of the synthesized music.

Through the incorporation of acoustic, electroacoustic and electronic sound, I have sought to create a sonic landscape with which the solo viola would interact, contrast or merge over the course of the piece. The work is structured in seven sections which become increasingly longer and more complex as they subsume recurrent melodic motifs and timbral gestures in both the viola and synthesized music. The musical drama as expressed through the two media grows in intensity and integrality arriving at a sustained climax which is only dissolved in the very last moments of the composition.

LIKE A SEATED SWAN is also intended as an homage to one of my favorite 20th century composers, Witold Lutoslawski whom I met as an 18 year-old student at Tanglewood. Utilizing a collage-like integration of both transparent and electronically-processed material from his String Quartet at particular moments in the work, I have engaged in an intimate dialogue with a composer whose music continues to inspire me. I might also add that such a revisiting of the past - a process with which all composers are consciously or unconsciously engaged - occurs in this piece in ways that can only be achieved through the use of sophisticated computer technology.

The synthesized portion of LIKE A SEATED SWAN was constructed using the following: a Capybara 320 sound computation engine running Kyma sound design software with a Power Mac G3. Additional software included Sound Hack and Deck. I thank Robert Austin for his collaboration in the production of the computer-realized sound.

**A** ♩ = 58-60

VIOLA *mp espr., gentle, unhurried*

TAPE *p*  
long sustained solo timbre (string)

VLA *poco* *sub. pp* *p* *poco mf*

TAPE (1.55) 1st orchestral gesture

VLA *poco f* *ff*

TAPE 2nd orchestral gesture 3rd orchestral gesture descending metallic glissando (ca. 18")

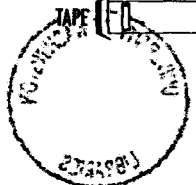
*poco piu mosso* ♩ = 68

VLA *sempre mf* intensely

TAPE (1.28) 5 descending string glissandi (1.40) water sounds

VLA *mp* *f* *mp delicately*

TAPE (2.05) long chord, gradual spectral change



**B**  $\text{♩} = 60-62$

VLA *sub. p* lirico

3 6 poco *mf* 3

TAPE (2.33) violin motif string quartet music

VLA

3 5 3 6 poco rit. *piu p* 5 spiccato 6

TAPE (string quartet music continues)

VLA *legatissimo*

3 ca. 12' con sordino 3 poco *mf* 3 *mf* 3

TAPE choral sounds || (3.48) acoustic music with water sounds

VLA *mp*

3 6 calmly *piu p* 5 6 ca. 4'

TAPE choral sounds to high solo violin note (A)

**C**  $\text{♩} = 132$   
senza sordino

VLA *sub. ff* sempre drammatico

3 3 3 5 *f* 3 *molto* 3

TAPE (4.34) timpani/high solo violin note (A)

VLA

3 3 3 5 legato, espr. *ff* 3 pizz. 3

TAPE

VLA *arco* *f* *sub. ff* sempre drammatico

TAPE

VLA *f* *molto* *legato, espr.* *ff*

TAPE

VLA *arco* *f* *pizz.* *arco*

TAPE

**D**

VLA *sub. mf* sempre crescendo e espressivo *poco a poco accel.* *a tempo* *begin slowly, poco a poco accel.*

TAPE *repeated glissando waves* *(6.03) big wave* *repeated glissando waves*

VLA *a tempo* *slower* *meno f* *p* *ca. 5"*

TAPE *3 glissando waves*

**E**

VLA *meno mosso*  $\text{♩} = 76$  *con sord.* *p* *poco* *mf*

TAPE *(6.40) string quartet music*

VIA *legato, espr.* *pp* intimately, with tenderness *subito poco accel.* *a tempo* *ca. 5"*

TAPE *choral sounds*

VIA *poco* *mf* *mp* *subito poco accel.* *a tempo* *ca. 10"*

TAPE *(8.04) snare drum - taps*

**F**  $\text{♩} = 126$  *senza sord.* *pizz.* *arco* *sub. f marcato* *f* *ff* *mp*

TAPE *(8.16) snare drum - pecks*

VIA *pizz. 3* *arco* *f espr., dim.* *mf legato* *mp*

TAPE

VIA *arco* *f* *ff* *3* *3* *6* *pizz. 3* *arco* *marcato* *f espr., dim.*

TAPE *big shimmering repeated gestures*

VIA *mf* *sub. p tranquillo* *poco rit.* *poco ad lib. e ritardando* *ca. 22"*

TAPE *(9.40) solo string, chromatic motif*

VIA *quasi, parlando* *poco rit.* *(poco ad lib.)* *cantabile, espr.* *ca. 10"*

*mp* *mf* *poco f*

TAPE (10.00) with 2nd desolate wailing sound violin motif wailing sounds/bass drum

**G** *marcato* *pizz.* *arco* *f* *ca. 10"*

TAPE (10.22) glass sounds

VIA *arco* *mf legato* *poco rit: al fine* *ca. 10"*

TAPE descending metallic glissando

VIA *poco meno mosso (♩=72)* *mp delicate, haltingly* *ca. 10"*

TAPE (11.06) high glass sounds pp multiple strings, short repeated motif (11.28) twangs begin

**H** *♩=112* *mp with urgency* *ca. 20"*

TAPE (11.33) twangs/harsh metal sounds

VLA *spiccato*  
*mf* *leggiero*  
 TAPE (12:03) orchestra sounds

VLA *accel.* *a tempo* *mf* *menf* *ff* *subito drammatico*  
 TAPE (12:38) high solo violin with glissando

VLA *pizz.* *arco*  
 TAPE

VLA *gliss.* *pizz.*  
 TAPE

VLA *arco* *ca. 12'*  
 TAPE (13:20) orchestra/drum sounds

