

Jump!

A sonic saga of falling and flying

Ray Bradbury

SSA, narrator and string quartet



Elizabeth Alexander

Jump!

“Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.”

-Ray Bradbury, from an interview in the Brown Daily Herald, March 24, 1995

Composer’s Note: The musical parameters given to me by Northfield Youth Chorus were few and open-ended, exactly the kind of commission which offers a composer both structure and freedom: a treble choir, a handful of auxiliary instruments of my own choosing, and the following theme: “To remember and renew.” From the first instant, my imagination ran wild. I considered the sounds of history and change: Minnesota’s big woods, main streets, factories, wind farms...

However, the idea for this piece “took off” for me later on, while I taking a trip on an airplane. “What comes between remembrance and renewal?” I mused. “In the end, what makes authentic renewal happen?” As I looked down at the clouds from my seat on the plane, I remembered Ray Bradbury's pithy quote about taking risks: “Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.” Ah, I thought. Leaps of courage. Blind faith. Guts.

In the end, I surprised myself (and the choir!) by not setting Bradbury’s entire quote to music. In fact, the choir only sings the single word, “jump.” Within this tiny word lies a plethora of phonetic possibilities, sounds like “j,” “uh,” “um,” and of course, the final “p.” Using only these vocal building blocks, I created a sonic landscape tracing Bradbury's journey from solid ground to thin air, as the chorus considers, hesitates, jumps, falls — and finally flies!

Elizabeth Alexander spent her childhood in the Carolinas and Appalachian Ohio, the daughter of a minister and a piano teacher. Her passion for language and music is reflected in her catalogue of over 100 songs and choral works, which have received nearly twenty national and international awards, and received over a thousand performances. She has also been the recipient of grants, awards and fellowships from the Jerome Foundation, New York Council on the Arts, Wisconsin Arts Board, National Orchestral Association, International League of Women Composers, and American Composers Forum. Reviews of her music have referred to “the close personal resonance between the composer and the words,” as well as her music’s “delicacy and sincerity,” “elegance,” and “freshness within a well-known language.”



Her composition teachers included Jack Gallagher at The College of Wooster, and Steven Stucky, Yehudi Wyner and Karel Husa at Cornell University, from which she received her doctorate in music composition. Alexander lives in St. Paul, MN, where her frequent commissions include works for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles and solo musicians.

Conductor’s Score:

Seafarer Press - SEA-090-00 - \$5.00/copy

Choral Score with piano reduction:

Seafarer Press - SEA-090-01 - \$2.75/copy

String Parts may be downloaded at:

www.seafarerpress.com/works/jump.html

“Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.”
- Ray Bradbury. Reprinted from an interview in the Brown Daily Herald, March 24, 1995.

Commissioned by Northfield Youth Chorus, in celebration of its 50th Anniversary.

Jump!

3-part treble choir, narrator and string quartet

Ray Bradbury

Elizabeth Alexander

Part 1: In which our heros contemplate the jump.

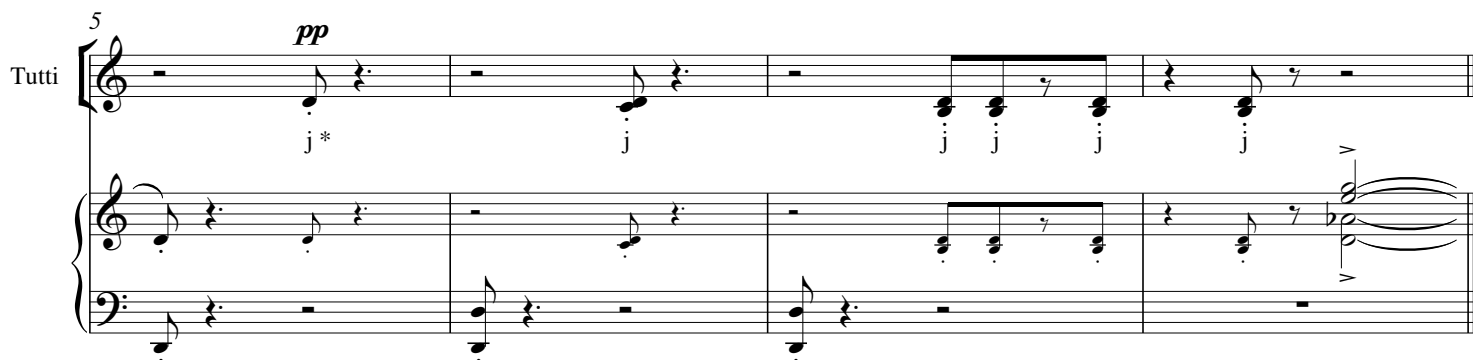
for rehearsal only

(♩ = 120)



Tutti

pp

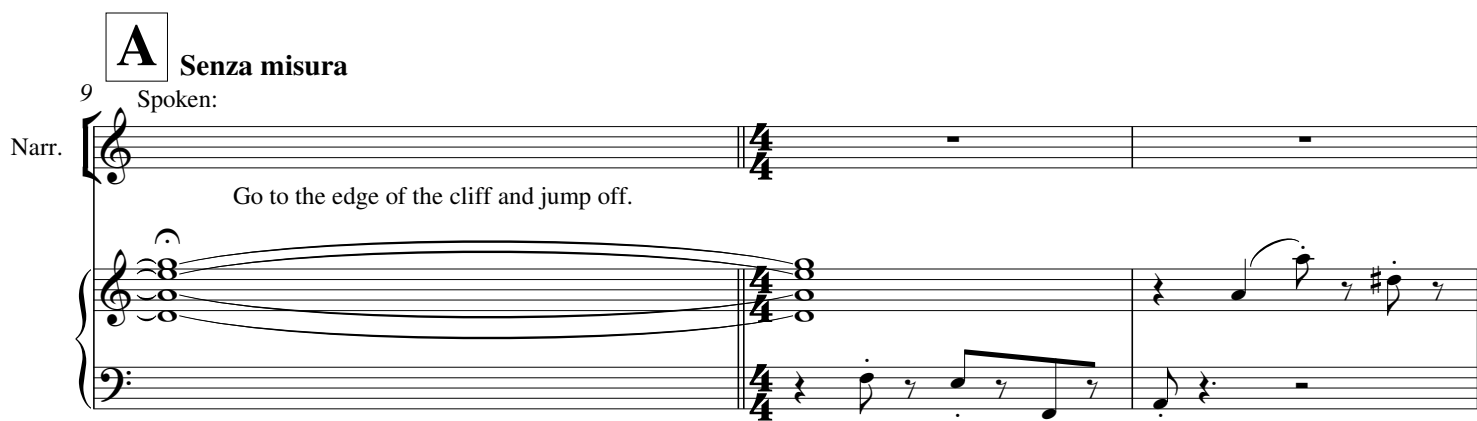


A Senza misura

9 Spoken:

Narr.

Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off.



* All of the lyrics are derived from the word “jump,” so each individual word component, or “phoneme,” should be pronounced as it is in the complete word. The “j” which begins the piece is a voiced consonant (as in “jump”), so it will have pitch, but it doesn’t contain much of the “uh” vowel yet.

** Cue-sized notes in string parts indicate optional chorus doubling.

12 *(pp)*

Tutti

17 **B** Senza misura

Narr.

Build your wings on the way down.

22

Tutti

p *mf*

27

Tutti

p *molto cresc.* *mf*

j j j j juh_ juh_ juh_ juh_ juh_ juh_

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet ◦ Margaret & George Alexander, parents ◦ Yehuda Amichai, poet ◦ Bjorn Arneson, generous web designer ◦ Scott Bates, poet ◦ Abbie Betinis, composer/colleague ◦ Dennis Blubaugh, music dealer ◦ Michael deVernon Boblett, poet ◦ Ray Bradbury, writer ◦ Norbert Capek, visionary ◦ e. e. cummings, poet ◦ Philip Dacey, poet ◦ Emily Dickinson, poet ◦ Evelyn Dudley, poet ◦ Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister/writer ◦ Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer ◦ Richard M. Fewkes, writer ◦ Peshia Gertler, poet ◦ Richard S. Gilbert, minister/writer ◦ Jack Gallagher, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Gerike, proofreader ◦ Steve Harper, technical advisor ◦ Steve Hawkins, generous web designer ◦ Edie Hill, composer/colleague ◦ Langston Hughes, poet ◦ Mark Humphrey, piano technician ◦ Karel Husa, composer/teacher ◦ Kalidasa, poet ◦ Garrison Keillor, storyteller ◦ Denise Levertov, poet ◦ George Ella Lyon, poet ◦ Jonathan Machen, artist ◦ Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet ◦ J. David Moore, composer/colleague ◦ Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet ◦ Gerald Rich, poet ◦ Carl Sandburg, poet ◦ King Sigismund III, religious reformer ◦ Steven Stucky, composer/teacher ◦ Rabindranath Tagore, poet ◦ Howard Thurman, civil rights leader/writer ◦ John Greenleaf Whittier, poet ◦ Theodore S. Lockering Williams, poet ◦ Daniel Winter, pianist/teacher ◦ Nancy Wood, poet ◦ Yehudi Wyner, composer/teacher ◦ Paul Adams, technical advisor

A LOT OF HARD WORK & CREATIVITY WENT INTO BRINGING THIS MUSIC TO YOU...

...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.



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D A tempo

mf with more determination

45 Tutti

juh — juh juh juh — juh juh juh juh juh juh juh juh

(arco) *mf*

mf

49 Tutti

juh — juh — juh — juh juh juh,

f

f

52 Tutti

um

gliss.

mp

54 Tutti

um

gliss.

mf

E

Part 3: In which our heroes come close to deciding that jumping off a cliff is a seriously bad idea.

57

I *p*
um, * um, um, um, um,

II *p*
um, * um, um, um,

III *p*
um, * um, um,

p subito

Ped.

* Choir goes to the "m" immediately.

61

I *p*
um, um, um,

II *p*
um, um, um,

III *p*
um, um,

fp

Ped.

65

I um, um, um, um,

II um, um, um,

III um, um, um,

Ped.

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G Grand Pause.....and then....

84 Tutti *mf*

juh juh juh juh

mf

Ped.

Senza misura One by one, completely unsynchronized, individual singers slide down from the top of their ranges, tapering off on a mid-range note. This is a scary moment, of course, but it's also exhilarating!

Begin this effect with 3-4 singers, then add more and more.

Singers continue entering on high notes, sliding down to mid-range notes

87 Tutti *f*

(ah) * (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah)

Part 5: In which our heros' wings make their appearance, as foreshadowed in measure 17.

H

88 *mp* ethereal, of course

ah

mp ethereal, of course

ah

mp ethereal, of course

ah

Tutti *mp*

mp

* When choral singers sing a "short u" sound, as in "jump," they usually emphasize its open quality, singing more of an "ah." For most of this song, it's preferably to sing a real "uh." But go ahead and sing a big open "ah" here, on the descent!

89 *p*

Small Group

ah (m)

ah (m)

ah (m)

One by one, singers slide down to the lower end of their ranges, beginning all new glissandos in the middle of their ranges. All glissandos finally end on D:

Tutti

(ah) (m)

p

Epilogue: In which one last hero take a courageous leap into thin air.

90 **I** Senza misura

Solo

juh (m)

Tutti

(m)

93

Tutti

Whispered: (pah!)*

* Singers are usually encouraged to maintain a perfectly composed posture after a cut-off. But in this case, you're not just a singer; you're also an actor. Your job is to convey to the audience that you're a bit exhausted, delighted and relieved. After all, you've just gotten your courage up, jumped off a cliff, aquired wings, and landed safely! What would that look like?