

# *Jump!*

*A sonic saga of falling and flying, with words by Ray Bradbury*

SSA, narrator and string quartet



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Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

## 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

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**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!

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**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.

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### 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](http://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 heroes contemplate the jump.

Vln I *pizz. mp*  
 Vln II *pizz. mp*  
 Vla *p gliss.*  
 Vc *pizz. mp*  
 Tutti *pp* *j\**  
 Vln I *pizz. \*\* arco (h) sfz*  
 Vln II *pizz. arco sfz*  
 Vla *pizz. arco sfz*  
 Vc *arco sfz*

\* 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.

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**A**

Senza misura

Spoken:

Narr. *Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off.*

Vln I *make bow changes unobtrusive*

Vln II *make bow changes unobtrusive*

Vla *make bow changes unobtrusive*

Vc *make bow changes unobtrusive*

*chop bow: ▢*

*pizz.*

*mp*

*gliss.*

*arco*

*gliss.*

Tutti *(pp)*

Vln I *pizz.*

Vln II *arco*

Vla *pizz.*

Vc *pizz.*

*arco*

*sfz*

*sfz*

*sfz*

**B**

Senza misura

Narr. *Build your wings on the way down.*

Vln I *arco*

Vln II *espressivo*

Vla

Vc

22 *p* *mf*

Tutti

Vln I *gliss.* *pizz.*

Vln II arco

Vla

Vc *pizz.* arco

27 *p* *molto cresc.* *mf*

Tutti

Vln I arco

Vln II *mf*

Vla *mf*

Vc *mf*

30 *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *arco* *Senza misura* *very slow glissando...* *sfz*

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc



**D** A tempo

45 *mf* with more determination

Tutti

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

col legno battuto

Vln I

*f* pizz.

Vln II

(arco) *mf* pizz.

Vla

(arco norm.) *mf* col legno battuto

Vc

*mf* *f*

49 *f* slightly faint of heart

Tutti

juh — juh — juh — juh juh juh, um

arco norm. pizz.

Vln I

*f*

Vln II

arco (arco) *f*

Vla

arco (arco) *f*

Vc

arco norm. *mf* *f*

53

Tutti

um

*gliss.*

arco

*mp*

*f*

*mp*

*f*

Sul C

*mp*

*f*

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

57

**E**

*p*

I

um, \*

um, um, um, um,

II

*p*

um, \*

um, um, um,

III

*p*

um, \*

um, um,

Vln I

sul pont.

*p subito*

Vln II

sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

*p subito*

Vla

*p subito*

sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

Vc

*p subito*

sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

*p subito*



61

I *p*  
um, um, um,

II *p*  
um, um, um,

III *p*  
um, um,

Vln I *mp*  
arco norm.

Vln II *mp*  
arco norm.

Vla *mp*  
arco norm.

Vc *mp*  
arco norm.

*fp*  
sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

*fp*  
sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

*fp*  
sul ponticello - a punta d'arco

*fp*

65

I  
um, um, um, um,

II  
um, um, um,

III  
um, um, um,

Vln I arco norm.

Vln II *mp*  
arco norm.

Vla arco norm.

Vc arco norm.

8

69 *mf* ever more deeply conflicted *f* *ff*

I  
um, um, um,

II  
um, um, um,

III  
um, um, um,

Vln I  
*mf* *f* *ff*

Vln II  
*mf* *f* *ff*

Vla  
*mf* *f* *ff*

Vc  
*mf* *f* *ff*

73

Vln I  
*mf* *molto cresc.*

Vln II  
*p*

Vla  
*p*

Vc  
*p*



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

*mf*

Tutti

juh \_\_\_\_\_ juh \_\_\_\_\_ juh \_\_\_\_\_ juh \_\_\_\_\_

Vln I

arco norm.

*mf*

*gliss.*

Vln II

*mf*

Vla

*mf*

*gliss.*

Vc

*mf*

### 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!

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

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

87 *f*

Tutti

*gliss.*

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

Vln I

*f*

Vln II

*f*

Vla

*f*

Vc

*f*

\* 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!

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

**H**

88

*mp* ethereal, of course

Small Group

*mp* ethereal, of course

*mp* ethereal, of course

ah

ah

ah

Tutti

*mp*

Vln I

con sord. e non vibrato

*mp*

Vln II

con sord. e non vibrato

*mp*

Vla

con sord. e non vibrato

*mp*

Vc



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

90 **I** Senza misura

Solo

Tutti

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc

pizz. e senza sord.

juh - - - - (m)

gliss.

(m)

93

Tutti

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc

Whispered:

(pah!) \*

dolce

dolce

dolce

\* 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?