

Lisa Bielawa

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Note

Premiere: February 5, 2003, New England Conservatory Philharmonia, conducted by Dante Anzolini; Jordan Hall, Boston, MA
 Duration: 9'30"
 Orch: 3(Pic, Alto Fl) 3(Eng Hn) 3(Bass Cl) 3(C-Bsn); 4331; 2Perc; Harp; Piano; Strings (When performed as part of the 40-minute work *The Right Weather*, as premiered by American Composers Orchestra in Zankel Hall, February 27, 2004, *Roam* had the following, chamber orchestration: 2(Pic, Alto Fl) 100; 2320; 2Perc, Accordion, Harp, Piano; Strings)

"I roam above the sea,
 I wait for the right weather,
 I beckon to the sails of ships.
 Under the cope of storms, with waves disputing,
 On the free crossway of the sea
 When shall I start on my free course?"

Aleksandr Pushkin, "Eugene Onegin"
 tr. Vladimir Nabokov

This work began while I was reading Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (tr. Nabokov), which has passages of great intimacy and vulnerability, sections where the storyteller addresses the reader directly and hints at sorrows of his own, before going back to the story at hand. One of these passages (see epigraph) struck a powerful chord in me. In this passage the narrator unaccountably leaves his protagonist, as if interrupted by his own memory, to muse on his own experience as an exile. We don't know who this narrator is, or why his personal history contains such sorrows, but he occasionally gives us a window into his own humanity, and these are moments of disarming and unexpected intimacy. This passage gave rise to four separate pieces, each bearing the title of one of the active verbs – Roam, Wait, Beckon, and Start. Together these four pieces form the half-concert-length work *The Right Weather*.

There is such beauty and even strength in the part of us that stubbornly will not move on. When I read this Pushkin excerpt, which I see as a meditation on the narrator's own internal exile, I felt I had found a whole emotional world that could guide me through an extended musical journey. This journey begins with the restless sound world of *Roam*. I was aware of a roiling impatience underlying a deceptively calm, passive scene: the view from a remote cliff, overlooking an unpropitious sea.

– Lisa Bielawa

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