

# THE PROJECT OF COLLECTING CLOUDS

# Lisa Bielawa

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## Note

Premiere: June 25, 2009 at Town Hall, Seattle, WA. Commissioned by Town Hall Seattle.  
Duration: 10'  
Instrumentation: amplified chamber ensemble – cellist/narrator, violin, clarinet and percussion

In 2006, I heard poet Christian Hawkey do a strikingly memorable reading of some of his own poems. It was only after this that I spent some time getting to know his poetry through reading. Just as learning a foreign language by sound first (like a child) is different than learning it by sight, learning a poet by sound first is entirely different from encountering him/her in books. Christian's and my collaborative unit has its maiden voyage in this piece, but hopefully this is only the beginning of a new, long-lasting synergy. I find Christian's poetry to be both heart-stoppingly tender/intimate and playfully grand/heraldic. This piece was written for cellist Joshua Roman, who possesses a special charisma and whimsy but also a sweet, personal tone. These qualities are present in the work of both artists. Whence the cellist's recitation of Christian's poem *Hour* in this piece. The instruments serve as a kind of minstrel chamber band, eager to illuminate and vivify the swiftly-changing moods and colors of the poem.

– Lisa Bielawa

HOUR by Christian Hawkey

*Out of what perhaps need I  
take my place among the manufactured  
willow trees weeping in a thousand directions  
passing on our left the Project of Collecting  
Clouds is underway which way to the  
Engine Room the Personality Room  
the Room of Automatic Misting Systems  
Landfills and Instant Refills let the belt  
carry you to the Pleasure Chute  
the Sadness Chute the Chute Designed  
to Make One Feel at Home on the way to  
intermittent bursts of flames from smokestacks  
(map a city whatever way you can)  
such a beautifully run factory you have it  
makes my lungs drift together  
through the slats I could almost inhale  
an infant cloud a cloud untrained in  
thunder my eyes two water-beads  
jostled together on a leaf the Project*

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*of Recycling Monads is this way  
move quickly the trick is to  
avoid returning with the need you  
began with the desire to surrender  
slightly offscreen it's nice for a sec  
to wait here alongside you  
how long will this last as long as  
we're both riding in the same direction  
a grove of willow trees leaning in a wind  
leaning to the left the light always leans  
in both directions against us in this way  
we are happily held vertically alive*

Christian Hawkey, "Hour" from *Citizen Of*.

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