

# Lisa Bielawa

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## Note

Premiere: February 27, 2004, Pianist Andrew Armstrong and American Composers Orchestra, conducted by Steven Sloane; Zankel Hall, New York, NY  
Duration: 13'  
Instrumentation: 2(Pic)100; 2320; 2Perc, Accordion, Harp; Strings; Piano Solo,  
(A version without accordion is also available: 2(Pic) 22(Eng Hn) 2; 2320; 2Perc, Harp; 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

*Start* is the conclusion of the set of pieces that comprise the half-concert-length work *The Right Weather*, based on the above excerpt from Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*. This passage gave rise to four separate pieces, each bearing the title of one of the active verbs – Roam, Wait, Beckon, and Start. *Start* is the only one of the four that is a bona fide piano concerto, written expressly for Van Cliburn Prizewinning pianist Andrew Armstrong\* and American Composers Orchestra.

Here the emotional journey that began with *Roam* finds its fruition: We Roam, we Wait, we Beckon – and we must do all of these things, richly and with a sincere (if broken) heart, before we may *Start* again. Imagine that you and I both read a story. You think it is a love story, I think it is an adventure story. Now we tell the story to each other, only sort of listening to each other. “Wow, it almost seems like the same story as mine!” we say to each other, full of enthusiasm and without any sadness or confusion, because in each of us, the story is complete.

And it is this completeness that is at the heart of *Start*, which is a celebration of volition and readiness. It revels in flourishing details and grandeur. *Start* cherishes that kind of pianism that hears a world of nuance in the most urgent, sustained exuberance. Perhaps we sentimentalize our exile the most when we are finally leaving it behind, and so *Start* is not heedless of nostalgia. But always, the world ahead holds improbable, unfamiliar promise. It shimmers. It radiates initiative and readiness. Joy.

– Lisa Bielawa

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