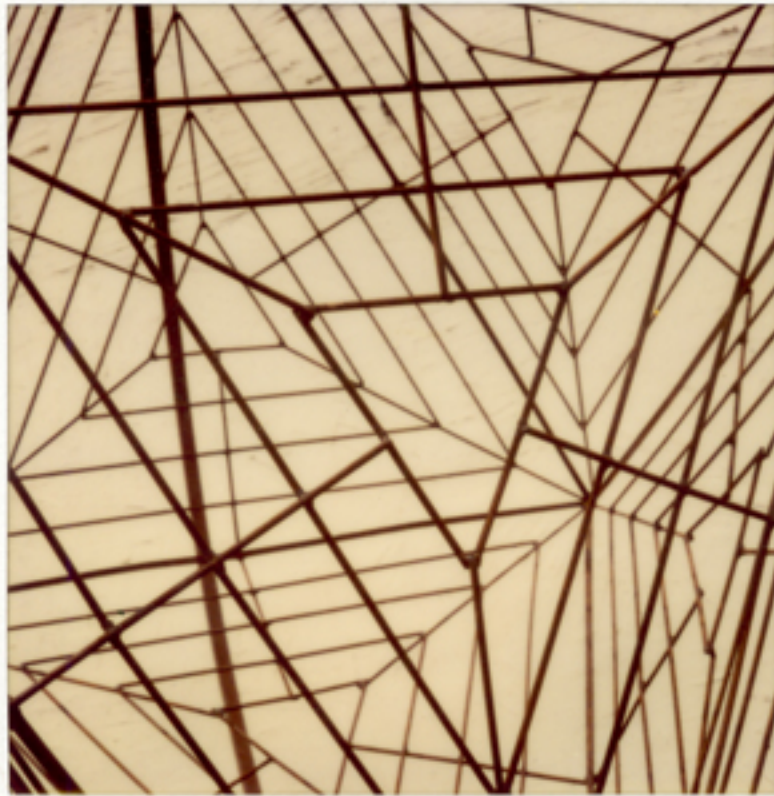


# BREATHCRYSTAL



ERIC SHANFIELD



## BREATHCRYSTAL

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2007.5 | 17'

poems by Paul Celan, translated by Pierre Joris

Soprano

Clarinet in A

Piano

Viola

C score.

After completing *Still Morning* I wanted to further explore the implications of the approach first discovered in that piece, where short poems are set to vocal melodies over a unison line of repeated musical “cells” to form a compacted song cycle.

Paul Celan has long been my favorite poet, and a setting of his work seemed overdue, especially with the appearance of excellent translations of his late work (my favorite) by Pierre Joris, so when I discovered the twenty-one poems of *Breathturn* had originally been published as a separate cycle called *Breathcrystal*, I didn't need to look elsewhere. The melancholy and fragmentation of his work seemed to call for a darker sound, so I decided to use the classic Mozartian combination of clarinet, viola and piano, which was also taken up by Schumann in the wonderful *Marchenerzahlungen* op. 132, a personal favorite.

As in *Still Morning* I tried to unify the piece by favoring certain intervals (darker and more dissonant this time) and certain rhythmic shapes (more asymmetrical this time), although this time I attempted to somewhat disguise the unison properties of the accompaniment. As I worked I found certain ideas recurring, so that something vaguely resembling rondo form began to emerge; while there is no strict structure being followed, nevertheless I tried to give the piece a sense of symmetry by suggesting earlier ideas in later songs and reprising key musical ideas in the long poem, *Eroded*, that brings the work to a final frozen stillness.

Halfway through composition Kurt Vonnegut passed away, and as he had long been one of my favorite authors *Breathcrystal* is dedicated to his memory.

BREATHCRYSTAL  
poems by Paul Celan  
translated by Pierre Joris

YOU MAY confidently  
regale me with snow:  
as often as I strode through summer  
shoulder to shoulder with the mulberry tree,  
its youngest leaf  
shrieked.

BY THE UNDEAMT etched,  
the sleeplessly wandered-through breadland  
casts up the life mountain.

From its crumb  
you knead anew our names,  
which I, an eye  
similar  
to yours on each finger,  
probe for  
a place, through which I  
can wake myself toward you,  
the bright  
hungercandle in mouth.

INTO THE FURROWS  
of heavenacid in the doorcrack  
you press the word  
from which I rolled,  
when I with trembling fists  
the roof over us  
dismantled, slate for slate,  
syllable for syllable, for the copper-  
glimmer of the begging-  
cup's sake up  
there.

IN THE RIVERS north of the future  
I cast the net, which you  
hesitantly weight  
with shadows stones  
wrote.

BEFORE YOUR LATE FACE,  
a loner  
wandering between  
nights that change me too,  
something came to stand,  
which was with us once already, un-  
touched by thoughts.

DOWN MELANCHOLY'S RAPIDS  
past the blank  
woundmirror:  
there the forty  
stripped lifetrees are rafted.

Single counter-  
swimmer, you  
count them, touch them  
all.

THE NUMBERS, in league  
with the images' doom  
and counter-  
doom.

The clapped-on  
skull, at whose  
sleepless temple a will-  
of-the-wisping hammer  
celebrates all that in  
worldbeat.

PATHS IN THE SHADOW-BREAK  
of your hand.

From the four-finger-furrow  
I root up the  
petrified blessing.

WHITEGRAY of  
shafted, steep  
feeling.

Landinwards, hither  
drifted sea-oats blow  
sand patterns over  
the smoke of wellchants.

An ear, severed, listens.

An eye, cut in strips,  
does justice to all this.

WITH MASTS SUNG EARTHWARDS  
the sky-wrecks drive.  
Onto this woodsong  
you hold fast with your teeth.

You are the songfast  
pennant.

TEMPLECLAMPS,  
eyed by your jugalbone.  
Its silverglare there  
where they gripped:  
you and the rest of your sleep—  
soon  
will be your birthday.

NEXT TO THE HAILSTONE, in  
the mildewed corn-  
cob, home,  
to the late, the hard  
November stars obedient:

in the heartthread, the  
knit of worm-talk—:

a bowstring, from which  
your arrowscript whirrs,  
archer.

TO STAND, in the shadow  
of the stigma in the air.

Standing-for-no-one-and-nothing.  
Unrecognized,  
for you  
alone.

With all that has room in it,  
even without  
language.

YOUR DREAM, butting from the watch.  
With the wordspoor carved  
twelve times  
helically into its  
horn.

The last butt it delivers.

In the ver-  
tical narrow  
daygorge, the upward  
poling ferry:

It carries  
sore readings over.

WITH THE PERSECUTED in late, un-  
silenced,  
radiating  
league.

The morning-plumb, gilded,  
hafts itself to your co-  
swearing, co-  
scratching, co-  
writing  
heel.

THREADSUNS  
above the grayblack wastes.  
A tree-  
high thought  
grasps the light-tone: there are  
still songs to sing beyond [songs to be sung]  
mankind.

IN THE SERPENTCOACH, past  
the white cypress,  
through the flood  
they drove you.

But in you, from  
birth,  
foamed the other spring,  
up the black  
ray memory  
you climbed to the day.

SLICKENSIDES, fold-axes,  
rechanneling-  
points:  
your terrain.

On both poles  
of the cleftrose, legible:  
your outlawed word.  
Northtrue. Southbright.

WORDACCRETION, volcanic,  
drowned out by searoar.

Above,  
the flooding mob  
of the contra-creatures: it  
flew a flay—portrait and replica  
cruise vainly timeward.

Till you hurl forth the word-  
moon, out of which  
the wonder ebb occurs  
and the heart-  
shaped crater  
testifies naked for the beginnings,  
the kings-  
births.

.

(I KNOW YOU, you are the deeply bowed,  
I, the transpierced, am subject to you.  
Where flames a word, would testify for us both?  
You—all, all real. I—all delusion.)

.

ERODED by  
the beamwind of your speech  
the gaudy chatter of the pseudo-  
experienced—my hundred-  
tongued perjury-  
poem, the noem.

Hollow-  
whirled,  
free  
the path through the men-  
shaped snow,  
the penitent's snow, to  
the hospitable  
glacier-parlors and -tables.

Deep  
in the timecrevasse,  
in the  
honeycomb-ice,  
waits a breathcrystal,  
your unalterable  
testimony.

# BREATHCRYSTAL

"An ear, severed, listens."

Paul Celan  
trans. Pierre Joris

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 108$

*mf*

Soprano

You may \_\_\_\_\_ con - fi - dent - ly re gale me with snow:

Clarinet in Bb

*mp*

Viola

*mp*

Piano

*mf*

9

*mf*

as of - ten as I strode through

*mf mp mf mp*

17

sum - mer shoul - der to shoul - der with the mul - ber - ry tree, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

29 BY THE UN-DREAMT

24

its young - est leaf shrieked. By the un-dreamt etched,

31

the sleep - less - ly wan - dered-through bread - land casts up the life

37

moun - tain. From its crumb you



43

knead a-new our names, which I, an eye sim-i-lar to yours on each fin-ger,

49

probe for a place, through which I can wake my-self toward you, the

arco

mf

59 INTO THE FURROWS

55

bright hung-er-can-dle in mouth.

f

61 *f*

In - to the fur - rows of hea - ven - a - cid in the door - crack

67

you press the word from which I rolled, when I with trem - bl - ing fists the

*sim.*

73

roof o - ver us dis - man - tled, slate for slate, syl - la - ble for syl - la - ble,

79

*f* for the cop - per - glim - mer of the

*p* *f* *p* *f*

Ped.

83

87 IN THE RIVERS

beg - ging - cup's sake up there.

*mf* *mf*

Ped.

89

*mf*

*mf* In the ri - vers north of the fu - ture I cast the net, which you hes - i - tant

*mf*

Ped.

98

ly weight with sha - dows

*p*

1/2

107

*mf*

stones wrote.

*mf*

*mfp*

*mf*

*pizz.*

*mfp*

*mf*

**117** BEFORE YOUR LATE FACE

*mf*

Be - fore your late face,

124

a lo - ner wan-der-ing be - tween nights that change me too,

131

*mf*  
some - thing came to stand, which was with us once

137

*mf*  
al - rea - dy, un - touched by thoughts.

arco

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

144 DOWN MELANCHOLY'S RAPIDS

*mp*  
Down mel - an - cho - ly's ra - pids past the blank wound-mir - ror:

152

there the for - ty stripped life - trees are raft - ed.

159

*mp*  
Sin - gle count - er - swim - mer, you count them, touch them all.

165 THE NUMBERS

*mp*  
The num - bers \_\_\_\_\_ in

*mp*  
*sim.*

171

league. \_\_\_\_\_ with the im - a - ges' - doom and count - er - doom. \_

177

*mf*  
The clapped - on skull, \_\_\_\_\_ at whose sleep - less tem - ple a

*mp* *mf* *sim.* *mp* *mf* *mp*

*mf*

185 PATHS IN THE SHADOW-BREAK

182

will - of - the - wisp - ing ham - mer ce - le - brates all that in world - beat. Paths in the sha - dow - break

*mf* *mp* *pizz.* *mf* *mp*

187

of your hand. From the four - fin - ger - fur - row

*mf*

193

I root up the pe - tri - fied bless - ing.

*mf*



200 WHITEGRAY

*mf*

White - gray of shaft - ed, steep feel - ing.

207

*mf*

Land - in - wards, hi - ther drift - ed sea - oats, blow sand pat - terns

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

non stacc.

213

*p* mezzo voce

o - ver the smoke of well - chants. An ear,

*p* molto sul pont.

*p*

8<sup>va</sup>

219

se - vered, lis - tens. *p norm.* An eye, \_\_\_\_\_ cut in

227

**233** WITH MASTS SUNG EARTHWARDS

strips, \_\_\_\_\_ does jus - tice \_\_\_\_\_ to all this. *mp* With masts \_\_\_\_\_ sung

236

earth - wards the sky - wrecks drive. \_\_\_\_\_ On - to this wood - song you hold fast with your teeth.

244

250 TEMPLECLAMPS

You are the song - fast pen - nant.

*mp*

*p* *mp*

Ped.

252

Tem - ple - clamps, eyed by your ju - gal - bone.

*mp*

*p* *mp*

258

Its sil - ver - glare there

*mp*

*p* *mp* *p* *mp*

264

where they gripped: you and the rest of your sleep - soon

Musical score for measures 264-270. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "where they gripped: you and the rest of your sleep - soon". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets. Dynamics include *p* and *mp*.

271

it will be your birth - day..

Musical score for measures 271-277. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "it will be your birth - day..". The piano accompaniment continues with the triplet pattern. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*.

278 NEXT TO THE HAILSTONE

Next to the hail - stone, in the

w tr p mf

ff mf

sim.

Musical score for measures 278-284. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "Next to the hail - stone, in the". The piano accompaniment includes trills (tr) and triplets. Dynamics include *mf*, *ff*, and *sim.* (sustained).

286

mil - - dewed corn - cob, home, to the

*p* *mf* *p*

Measures 286-291: Vocal line with lyrics "mil - - dewed corn - cob, home, to the". Piano accompaniment includes a treble clef with a trill in the first measure, a piano (*p*) dynamic, a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features triplet patterns, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment.

292

late, the hard No - vem - ber stars o - be - di - ent.

*mf* *p* *f* *mf*

Measures 292-297: Vocal line with lyrics "late, the hard No - vem - ber stars o - be - di - ent.". Piano accompaniment includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, a piano (*p*) dynamic, a forte (*f*) dynamic, and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand features triplet patterns, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment.

298

In the heart - thread,

*mf* *mf*

Measures 298-303: Vocal line with lyrics "In the heart - thread,". Piano accompaniment includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand features triplet patterns, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment.

304

the knit of worm - talk: \_\_\_\_\_ a bow - string, \_\_\_\_\_ from which

310 *mp*

**317** TO STAND

your ar-row-script \_\_\_\_\_ whirrs, ar - cher. \_\_\_\_\_

319

*mp*

To stand, in the sha - dow. of the

325

stig - - ma in the air. Stand - ing - for - no-one-and-no thing.

331

*mp*  
Un - rec - og - nized, for you a - lone. With all that has room in it,

337

**339** YOUR DREAM

e - ven with - out lan - guage. Your dream, but - ting from the watch.

344

With the word - spoor carved twelve times he - lic - ally in - to his horn. The

350

last butt\_ it de - li - vers. In the ver - ti - cal nar - row day-gorge, the up - ward po - ling

**360** WITH THE PERSECUTED

357

fer - ry: It car - ries sore read - ings o - ver. With the per - se - cu - ted in late,



362

un - si - lenced, ra - di - a - ting league. The

365

mor - ning plumb, gild - ed, hafts it - self to your co-swear - ing, co-scratch - ing, co-writ - ing heel.

368 THREADSUNS

Thr - ead - suns a - bove the grey - black wastes.

col legno

una corda through 390 ->

376

A tree - high thought grasps the light - tone:\_\_\_ there are\_ still songs to\_ be

384

**389** IN THE SERPENTCOACH

sung be - yond man - kind. In the ser-pent-coach,

393

past the white cy-press,\_\_\_ through the flood they drove you. \_\_\_

Ped.

401

But in you, from birth, foamed the o - ther spring,

The score for measures 401-407 features a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

408

up the black ray me - mo - ry you climbed \_\_\_\_\_ to the

Reo.

The score for measures 408-413 includes a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a more active accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns. The key signature remains one flat. A dynamic marking of *f* is present.

414

416 SLICKENSIDES

day. \_\_\_\_\_ Slick - - en -

The score for measures 414-419 includes a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a more active accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns. The key signature remains one flat. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *pizz.* (pizzicato).

422

sides, \_\_\_\_\_ fold \_\_\_\_\_ ax - es, \_\_\_\_\_ re - chan - nel - ing points: \_\_\_\_\_

431

your ter - rain... On both poles of the cleft - rose, \_\_\_\_\_ le - gi - ble: your out - lawed word.

439

North - true. South - bright.

447 WORDACCRETION

*mf*

Word - ac - cre - tion, vol - ca - nic, drowned out by sea - roar.

*mf*

arco

*mf*

454

A - bove, the flood - ing mob of the con - tra - crea - tures:

461

it flew a flay - - por-trait and re - pli - ca cruise

*f*

467

vain - ly time - ward. Till you hurl forth the

474

word - moon, out of which the won - der ebb oc - curs and the heart - shaped

481

cra - ter tes - ti - fies na - ked for the be - gin - nings, the kings'

488 **489** I KNOW YOU *mp*

birth. (I know you,

493 *mp*

you are the deep - ly bowed, I, the trans-pierced, am

498

sub - ject to you. Where flames a word, would tes - ti - fy for us

503

both? *p* You - all, all real.

**509** ERODED

507

I, all de - lu - sion.)

*pp*

*pp*

*Red.* \_\_\_\_\_  $\wedge$

511

*pp*

— $\wedge$  *sim.*



515

Musical score for measures 515-518. The score consists of three systems. The top system is a vocal line with a whole rest. The middle system is a piano accompaniment with a right hand playing a triplet of eighth notes and a left hand playing a sustained chord. The bottom system is a grand staff with a right hand playing a dense sixteenth-note texture and a left hand with a whole rest.

519

Musical score for measures 519-522. The score consists of three systems. The top system is a vocal line with lyrics: "E - ro - ded by the beam - wind of your speech". The middle system is a piano accompaniment with a right hand playing a sustained chord and a left hand playing a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom system is a grand staff with a right hand playing a dense sixteenth-note texture and a left hand playing a sustained chord. Dynamics include *p* and *sim.* (sustained).

523

Musical score for measures 523-526. The score consists of three systems. The top system is a vocal line with lyrics: "the gau - dy chat - ter of the pseu - do - ex - per - i - enced". The middle system is a piano accompaniment with a right hand playing a sustained chord and a left hand playing a sustained chord. The bottom system is a grand staff with a right hand playing a sustained chord and a left hand playing a sustained chord. Dynamics include *p* and *sim.* (sustained).

527

my hun - dred tongued per - ju - ry poem, the noem.

*p*

*p* *3*

*sf*

2

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

531

*p*

*f*

*p* *mf* *f*

*mf* *3*

*3*

535

Hol - low whirled, free the path through the men - shaped snow, the

*f*

*p* *f* *p* *f*

539

pen-i-tent's\_ snow, to the hos - pi-ta-ble\_ gla - cier - par - lors\_ and ta - bles.

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

vd

Detailed description: This system contains measures 539-542. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, and a double bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include piano (p) and forte (f). A 'vd' marking is present below the piano part.

543

Deep in the time - cre - vasse, in the hon - ey - comb ice, waits a breath-crys - tal,

*f* *mf*

*ff* *f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 543-546. The vocal line has lyrics and dynamics *f* and *mf*. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a sustained chord in the left hand. Dynamics include fortissimo (*ff*) and forte (*f*).

550

your un - al - ter - a - ble tes - ti - mo - ny.

*mf* *f* *non arp.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 550-553. The vocal line has lyrics and dynamics *mf* and *f*. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a sustained chord in the left hand. Dynamics include mezzo-forte (*mf*) and forte (*f*). The instruction 'non arp.' is present in the piano part.