

# **UCLA**

## **Contemporary Music Score Collection**

### **Title**

The Boat and the Sea

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/17b3g8r1>

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### **Supplemental Material**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/17b3g8r1#supplemental>

### **Data Availability**

The data associated with this publication are in the supplemental files.



*Ky Nam Nguyen*

*The Boat and the Sea*  
*(2023)*

For Alto Saxophone, Percussion, and Live Electronics

Duration: ca. 6'20"

## Program Note

I composed *The Boat and the Sea* as a celebration of my first love. This piece is inspired by a poem by Xuân Quỳnh (1942–88), one of the most well-known female poets in Vietnam since the twentieth century. Her poem, “Thuyền và Biển” [*The Boat and the Sea*], is a love letter that describes a woman’s heart through several stages of love. At first, she is a mysterious sea, so enticing yet far away. Then, as her heart grows fonder, she is like gentle ripples, but some other times, she becomes vehement waves that push the boat for no reason. And if she is ever separated from her love, all that remains in her are tumultuous storms.

In the performers' score, I quote lines from the poem at the beginning of each musical section to suggest the desired characteristics of the music.\* Several extended techniques for the alto saxophone and percussion imitate sounds from the ocean, such as winds, storms, moving sand, the seagulls' chirping, and whales' vocalization. For the electronic percussion, I use the recordings from *A Collection of Sounds from the Sea* on the website of NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)\*\* as the sound samples.

## Performance History

March 05, 2023: Recorded by Popebama Duo at Florida State University

August 21, 2023: Elected one of the final selections of the Society of Composers, Inc Super Regional Summer Mixtape

\* The original Vietnamese poem and my English translation is included in the Appendix at the end of this score.

\*\* Visit the NOAA website here:

<https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/sound01/background/seasounds/seasounds.html>.

## Instrumentation

### Saxophone:

Alto saxophone  
Ring modulator (RM)  
Superego (SE)\*

### Percussion (with superball, push broom, and mallets):

1 Bass drum  
4 Tom-toms  
4 Metals (3 performers' choices and 1 suspended cymbal)  
4 Woods (performers' choices)  
1 Drum Synthesizer\*\*

Patch 1: pads 1–6 respectively correspond with snare, hi-hats, cymbals, kick drum, straight white noise, seagulls

Patch 2: pads 1–6 respectively correspond with earthquakes, volcanic tremors, blue whales, humpback whales, fin whales, and minke whales.

The image shows three musical staves for percussion instruments. The first staff is labeled '4 Toms' and has four notes labeled 'Tom 1', 'Tom 2', 'Tom 3', and 'Tom 4' above it. The second staff is labeled '4 Metals' and '4 Woods' and has eight notes labeled 'Wood 1', 'Wood 2', 'Wood 3', 'Wood 4', 'Metal 1', 'Metal 2', 'Metal 3', and 'Cymbal' above it. The third staff is labeled 'Drum synthesizer' and has six notes labeled 'Pad 1' through 'Pad 6' above it. Each note is represented by a different symbol: a solid black dot for Toms, a solid black square for Woods, a solid black diamond for Metals, and a circle with a cross for the Drum synthesizer pads.

\* RM is followed by SE in the pedal board.

\*\* Performers can find the sound samples of Patch 2 in this website of NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration): <https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/sound01/background/seasounds/seasounds.html>. In case you are unable to import the sound samples to the drum synthesizer, import the samples into a DAW instead and trigger them with the keyboard. In general, feel free to be resourceful with your available softwares and devices.

## Performance Notes:

### Microtonal accidentals:

♭	three-quarter-tones flat	♯	quarter-tone sharp
♮	quarter-tone flat	♮	three-quarter-tone sharp

Most microtones in this composition are the results of natural multiphonics and pitch inflections.

### Multiphonics:

In this composition, the multiphonics are relatively taken from Daniel Kientzy's *Les Sons Multiples Aux Saxophones*. The numbers above the multiphonics are also their order numbers in the book. It is more important to produce the desired effects than to play the exact pitches of these multiphonics. The multiphonics chart below shows the transposed pitches.

Alto Saxophone

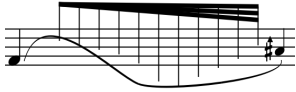
### Tempo and rhythm:

The key signature X indicates an unmetered section, in which each measure lasts for about 10–15 seconds unless otherwise noticed. In unmetered measures, the notation is spatialized, and note values (i.e. whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes, etc.) indicate only the relative duration. For example, a quarter note is relatively longer than an eighth note, but it does not have to equal exactly two eighth notes. A section with a time signature and metronome number is played approximately as written.

## Performance Notes (continued)



Play with a sharp attack and sustain the note straightly (without vibrato nor pitch inflection) until the next note.



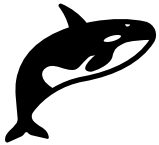
Improvise the pitches based on the the contours of the wavy or straight lines. The written notes define the departures and goals of the improvised line. Use as many microtones as possible, and try to avoid suggesting a particular scale or chord.



Fluctuate between the dynamics on the left and right sides of the two-headed arrow.



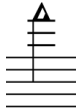
For acoustic instruments: imitate the sounds of the seagulls.



For acoustic instruments: imitate the sounds of the whales.



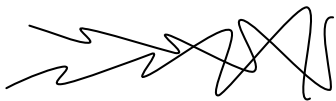
Play the lowest note possible.



Play the highest note possible.



Slap tongue



Move the mallets freely on the drum synthesizer, continuously gliding from one pad from another.

# The Boat and the Sea

Ky Nam Nguyen

"I will tell you a story," measure  $\cong 10''-5''$

*breath freely  
hum and play*

Alto Saxophone

Bass Drum

RM on

push broom

Bass Drum

*p*  $\leftarrow$   $\rightarrow$  *f*

4 Metals,  
4 Woods

Drum synthesizer

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of musical notation. It features three staves: Alto Saxophone, Bass Drum, and Drum synthesizer. The Alto Saxophone staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music consists of a melodic line with a long, sweeping slur. The Bass Drum staff has a double bar line and a circled 'X' with the text 'RM on' in a box. Below it, the instruction 'push broom' is written. The second Bass Drum staff has a double bar line and a circled 'X' with a fish icon above it. Below this staff, a horizontal line with arrows at both ends indicates a dynamic range from *p* to *f*. The Drum synthesizer staff has a treble clef and a circled 'X'.

A. Sax.

2

4 toms

push broom

*p*  $\leftarrow$   $\rightarrow$  *ff*

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of musical notation. It features two staves: A. Sax. and 4 toms. The A. Sax. staff has a treble clef and a circled '2' above it. The music consists of a melodic line with a slur. The 4 toms staff has a double bar line and a circled 'X' with the text 'push broom' written below it. Below the 4 toms staff, a horizontal line with arrows at both ends indicates a dynamic range from *p* to *ff*.

**A** "The seagulls and blue waves,"  $\cong 10''-15''$

A. Sax.

3

$\cong 5''$   
*no hum*

teeth on reed



RM on for  $\cong 5''$ ,  
then off and on quickly


To 4M4W

bow


*pppp*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *ff* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *ff*

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of musical notation. It features two staves: A. Sax. and 4M4W. The A. Sax. staff has a treble clef and a circled '3' above it. The music consists of a melodic line with a slur. The 4M4W staff has a double bar line and a circled 'X' with the text 'To 4M4W' written below it. Below the 4M4W staff, a horizontal line with arrows at both ends indicates a dynamic range from *pppp* to *ff*, with intermediate markings for *f*, *p*, and *ff*. Above the A. Sax. staff, the text 'teeth on reed' is written with a slur over the notes. A box contains the instruction 'RM on for  $\cong 5''$ , then off and on quickly'. The circled '5'' above the first note of the A. Sax. staff is also circled.

5   $\cong 7''-10''$    $\cong 10''-15''$   
*growl*  $\rightarrow$  *ord.* *50% air*  $\rightarrow$  *ord.*  
*gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*  
 A. Sax. *pp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff* *pp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*  
 4 toms *superball*  
 4 toms *p*  $\rightarrow$  *fff*

7   
 A. Sax. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*  
*pp*  
 B. Dr. *pp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*

8 **B** *key clicks*  
 A. Sax. *f*  $\rightarrow$  *f*  
 B. Dr. *mf*

9  *teeth on reed*  
 A. Sax. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*  
*sing* *Ah* *pp*  $\rightarrow$  *f*  
 B. Dr. *p* *To 4 toms* *superball* *p*  $\rightarrow$  *f* *yarn mallets* *pp*  $\leftarrow$  *fff*



100% air → 50% air

A. Sax.

4 toms

*p* → *f*

**C** "The Boat's heart brimmed with passion" ♩. = 72

singing-like

flz. or growl

A. Sax.

Dr.Synth.

To 4M4W bow

*mf* → *f* < *mf*

SE: Gliss on

*p* → *f* < *p* → *fff* *p*

Patch 2 Delay on

14

A. Sax.

4M4W

B. Dr.

*ff* → *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

*p* → *mf* → *n* *p*

*bisbigliando*

18

A. Sax.

B. Dr.

4 toms

*ff* *p*

RM off SE: Freeze on

push broom

**D** "On gentle moonlit nights" ♩. = 72  
*singing-like*

A. Sax. *mp* *f* *mp* *gliss.*

4 toms *f* *p* 4M4W

A. Sax. *f* *p* *mf* *pp* *ord.* *100% air—* *gliss.*

4M4W *pp* *f*

A. Sax. *f* *mf* *ord.* *tr*

Dr.Synth. *pp*

Patch 1: Delay on

A. Sax. *gliss.* *bisbigliando* *pp*

Dr.Synth.

A. Sax. *ff* *gliss.*

Dr.Synth.

**E** "The Sea vehemently rushed the Boat"

*molto accel.....*  
*circular breathing*

A. Sax. *p* *4*

Dr.Synth. *ppp* *fff*

SE: Freeze off

Patch 2

A. Sax. *5* *molto rit.*

Dr.Synth. *ppp* *fff* *ppp*

A. Sax. *bisbigliando* *≅ 3"*

Dr.Synth. *fff* *p* *ff* *ppp*

A. Sax. *≅ 10"-15"* *100% air* *harmonics ft.*

Dr.Synth. *X*

**F** "Only tempests within me would brew,"  $\cong 10''-15''$

growl **7**

A. Sax. *p*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *f*

Dr.Synth. RM on SE: Gliss off, Delay on

A. Sax. *p* *ff* *p*

Dr.Synth.

scream growl

A. Sax. *fff* *p*

Dr.Synth.

A. Sax. *ff* *n* gliss.

Dr.Synth.

The Boat and the Sea

53

A. Sax. 12

B. Dr.

To Dr.Synth. Dr.Synth.

Patch 2

54

A. Sax. 6

4 toms

4M4W

Dr.Synth.

55

A. Sax. 3

4M4W

teeth on reed

scream

## Appendix

Below is the original poem by Xuân Quỳnh and my English translation.

### *Thuyền và Biển–Xuân Quỳnh*

*Em sẽ kể anh nghe  
Chuyện con thuyền và biển:*

*“Từ ngày nào chẳng biết  
Thuyền nghe lời biển khơi  
Cánh hải âu, sóng biếc  
Đưa thuyền đi muôn nơi*

*Lòng thuyền nhiều khát vọng  
Và tình biển bao la  
Thuyền đi hoài không mỏi  
Biển vẫn xa... còn xa*

*Những đêm trăng hiền từ  
Biển như cô gái nhỏ  
Thầm thì gửi tâm tư  
Quanh mạn thuyền sóng vỗ*

*Cũng có khi vô cớ  
Biển ào ạt xô thuyền  
(Vì tình yêu muôn thuở  
Có bao giờ đứng yên?)*

*Chỉ có thuyền mới hiểu  
Biển mênh mông nhường nào  
Chỉ có biển mới biết  
Thuyền đi đâu, về đâu*

*Những ngày không gặp nhau  
Biển bạc đầu thương nhớ  
Những ngày không gặp nhau  
Lòng thuyền đau - rạn vỡ*

*Nếu từ già thuyền rời  
Biển chỉ còn sóng gió”*

*Nếu phải cách xa anh  
Em chỉ còn bão tố.*

### **The Boat and the Sea**

I will tell you a story  
About the Boat and the Sea:

“Since an unknown time,  
The Boat listened to the Sea  
The seagulls and blue waves  
Guided the Boat to many places.

The Boat’s heart brimmed with passion,  
And the Sea’s love was immense.  
Tirelessly the Boat sailed on,  
Yet the Sea remained so far, far beyond.

On gentle moonlit nights,  
The Sea was a little girl,  
Whispering out her heart and soul  
Like lulling waves that lapped the Boat.

Sometimes, without reasons,  
The Sea vehemently swept the Boat  
(Because, since ancient times of old,  
Has Love ever stood still?)

Only the Boat could see  
How tremendous was the Sea  
Only the Sea could know  
Where the Boat would go.

The days they were apart,  
The Sea’s hair turned silver with longing.  
The days they were apart,  
The Boat’s heart broken with aching.

If the Sea were apart from the Boat,  
All she would have left is storms.”

If I were ever torn from you,  
Only tempests within me would brew.