

ASK

ART SONG

Music by

DANIEL

MEHDIZADEH

Poetry by

JESS

AZEVEDO

EAST CHAMBER
MUSIC

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Program Notes: “Ask” is a compelling new art song, commissioned by the talented soprano Maghan McPhee and generously supported by the Ontario Arts Council. Composed in June 2025, this work captures a powerful and evocative sense of yearning. It speaks to that intrinsic human desire for something more, a feeling that often lies just beneath the surface of our everyday lives.

Poetry:

Everything surmounting ,
bellies full beyond the fast,
I turned my eyes to craters
since I didn't know who to ask.

No one else was counting,
all the stars that I surpassed,
so I whispered up “oh mother moon,
how long this too shall last?”

Nothing ever answered,
but I await the night,
the tidal pulling in my chest
when bringing things to light.

With everything surmounting,
arms carried by the past,
my mind can now escape me
since I know who to ask.

Jess Azevedo, April 2024

Duration: 6 minutes



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Performance Notes:

Pianist's Opening

The pianist begins by playing numbers 1 through 7.

Soprano and Piano Duet

The soprano and piano then perform together:

- The pianist plays the number associated with the soprano's bar (from the vocal score), using the pedal to carry resonance forward.
- Immediately after, the soprano sings her bar.
- This pattern continues: the pianist plays the next rehearsal mark number for the soprano's subsequent bar, and then the soprano sings.
- This proceeds until the end of the soprano's numbered sections.

Outro

Following the soprano's final note, the pianist performs the outro. It begins loudly (*f or ff*) with number 7, moves to number 3 at *mf*, and then transitions into number 2 played twice, fading out constantly. The pedal must be held down throughout this entire section, ensuring continuous resonance as the piece undergoes a continuous fade, slowing down, and losing momentum, becoming increasingly distant, reflective, and spaced out.

Soprano's Entrances

The soprano has flexibility with their entrance:

- They can begin singing immediately after the pianist completes their phrase, or a note or two before.
- Crucially, the soprano should always carry their last note into the pianist's next section (except when there's a rest). They can choose to cut this hold short or sustain it longer.
- The pianist should always enter with chords while the soprano is singing her last note, either on or slightly after her note begins (except when there's a rest).

Pianist's Dynamics and Interpretation

The pianist should interpret the passage with their own emotional build-up and momentum, collaborating closely with the singer. While there are no specific dynamic markings in the score, the pianist should play each lettered theme from A through D with distinct dynamic levels:

A should generally be the loudest, perhaps *mf*.

B should be slightly less, perhaps *mp*.

C should be delicate at *p*.

If there is a D theme, then C should be quite loud, perhaps *f*, and D quite soft at *p*.

On a larger scale, the pianist's interpretation of repeated chords (A & B) can gain or lose intensity over time. Similarly, reflectional notes (C & D) might fade with each repetition, like distant stars, or, at times, be harsh and reactive. While the soprano often takes the lead in emotional and expressive dynamics, the pianist can also dictate by creating a specific setting or mood, with the ultimate interpretation evolving as the musicians play off each other in the moment.

ASK

Commissioned by Maghan McPhee
Funded by the Ontario Arts Council

Poetry by
JESS AZEVEDO
April 2024

Music by
DANIEL MEHDIZADEH
June 2025

♩ = 80

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

a b c c c d c d c d c c

8 8 8 8 15 15 15

sim. rit. f pppp

Red. **Outro: 7...2.....3.....3.....**

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1 **2**

Eve - ry - thing sur - moun - ting,

3 **4** **6**

bellies full beyond the fast. I turned my eyes to cra - ters

7 **5**

since I didn't know who to ask.

1 **2**

No one else was counting, all the stars that I sur - passed

3 **4**

so I whispered up "oh mother moon, how long this too shall last?"

5 **1** **6**

Nothing ever answered, but I await the night,

3 **7**

the tidal pulling in my chest when bringing things to light.

5 **1** **7**

With everything sur-mou - n - ting, arms carried by the past,

6 **3**

my mind can now es-cape me since I know who to ask.



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**For performers who prefer a more aligned and traditional layout,
see next page for the Piano Vocal Score**

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Piano Vocal Score

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JESS AZEVEDO
April 2024

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DANIEL MEHDIZADEH
June 2025

♩ = 80

1

1

Eve - ry - thing

2

sim.

2

sur - moun - ting,

3

3

bellies full beyond the fast

4

4

I turned my eyes

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6

6

to cra - ters

7

7

since I didn't know who to ask.

5

5

1

1

No one else was counting,

1

2

all the stars that I sur - passed _____

8

3

3

so I whispered up "oh mother moon, —

8

4

4

how long this too shall _____ last?"

5

5

1

a b c

8

1

Nothing ever answered,

6

c d

15

8

6

but I await the night,—

3

c

8

3

the tidal pulling in my chest

7

c

15

15

7

when bringing things to light.

5

5

1

a b c

1

With everything sur-mou - n - ting,

7

15 c

7

arms carried by the past,

6

15 c d

6

my mind can now es-cape me

3

8

3

since I know who to ask.

rit. - - - -

Outro: 7...2...3...3.....

f *pppp*

Red.

7

15

15

2

8

sim.

3

8

3

8

About the composer: Described as a “hypnotic masterwork” by Daniel Vnukowski of Classical Jukebox Radio, Daniel Mehdizadeh’s music captivates audiences worldwide. Holding a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Composition from the University of Toronto, Mehdizadeh’s works are revered for their intricate, unpredictable, and haunting qualities. Based in the Greater Toronto Area, he is currently the music and choir director at Stouffville United Church, having completed a successful three-year tenure as composer-in-residence for the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. With a renewed focus on chamber, vocal, and choral writing, his music continues to gain international recognition, with performances at major festivals across Europe and North America. Featured on CBC and Classical Jukebox Radio, his music appears on multiple commercial recordings released by Akashic Classics and distributed by Universal Music Group. For more visit www.danielmehdizadeh.com

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