



Music Review – *Seal Mother* for Alto Flute by Portland-based Composer [Lisa Neher](#) (2021, 5 minutes, D.C. al Platypus Publishing Company)

Reviewed by GPFS Member BJ Nicoletti



Seal Mother, for alto flute by Lisa Neher – (6'53") Lisa

Neher is a Portland-based mezzo-soprano, composer and actor. She has written several compositions for voice and several different instruments, including Chamber Operas. Of special note, she also has written pieces for students of voice and/or piano. (Artwork left, from composer's website.)

She has written two other works for flute: [Night Songs for Moths for solo piccolo](#); and, [Reach Out for solo flute](#). Both pieces are worth listening to and playing. Her complete list of composition can be viewed here – [Neher Catalog](#).

Like many of Lisa's compositions, this reviewer would say this composition is influenced by her vocal love and talent. This piece calls upon the performer to create sea sounds, whisps and long lines of yearning, keeling - "Seal Mother envisions a selkie in her seal form, swimming not too far offshore, watching her children from a distance. Lyrical melodic lines express her love and longing for her children, while undulating motives evoke currents of water and grief. The embellishments are inspired by Irish whistle ornamentation such as cuts and taps. The piece ends with a reinvention of the Scotts ballad The Great Selkie, a tragic folksong about a Selkie father and his son who are killed by humans while in seal form." (Lisa Neher)

This beautiful piece is most suitable to more advanced players because of the varied meters, musicality demands, modest technical runs, full use of all three octaves of the alto flute, and extended techniques of vocal sounds and pitch bending. The melodic themes are hauntingly beautiful. Performance instructions in the score provide simple and clear advice on how to effectively perform the pitch bends and “airy tone” elements which are meant to depict crashing waves and wind on the beach.

This piece is best programmed within the concert setting (not background music for gigs) and would be especially effective in an outdoor setting. Learn more: <https://www.lisanehermusic.com/seal-mother.html>

The piece, along with Lisa’s two other works for flute, can be heard on Rose Bishop’s recent album release, *Diversions*, which is also reviewed in this issue of *The Portland Piper*. Listen to *Seal Mother* through the link below. The recording can also be found on Lisa’s webpage and through common streaming services such as iTunes. Rose delivers a nuanced alto flute performance and a sympathetic message.

Listen here:

<https://www.rosebishopflute.com/diversions-cd>

More about Lisa Neher:

<https://www.lisanehermusic.com/biography.html>





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 We are the proud and grateful recipient of an
 Oregon Arts Commission Small Operating Grant in
 the amount of \$2,240.

Proposing Score
 Ends down a perfect 4th

Seal Mother

Lisa Neher (ASCAP)

♩ = 60 Senza Misura **♩ = 52 - 54 Rubato**

spectral, crashing waves or beach winds *haunting*

ord. ord. pitch bend starting on beat 2 (sim.)

to Flute

sh*---->a----> cha*---->

mf < > **mf** < >

Airy tone. Start sound with no tongue.
 Transition from air tone (open circle)
 to full tone (filled in circle) and back

5 *tr* ord. *tr* ord.

sh---->a----> cha---->

mf < > **pp** < > < > **mf** < > **p** < >

78 (sim.) **A Tempo**

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

79

83 5 seconds (approx).

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