

## Four Ill-Tempered Swans

*Four Ill-Tempered Swans* explores several different ways of using the bass clarinet quartet. The first movement focuses on two pairs of instruments moving in parallel motion set off against one another, the second on all four instruments moving together in rich, resonant harmony, while the third movement is largely a structured improvisation in which each part is doing its own thing in a wild cacophony of sound, until they all together at the very end.

The title was inspired by a composer friend of mine in San Francisco who liked to call my bass clarinet “the swan.” Though my first-hand experience of swans is limited, my understanding is that while they appear to be beautiful, elegant creatures, they can actually be quite ornery and aggressive. This seems a fitting parallel to the bass clarinet, which, though it can and does play quite beautifully at times, always seems to have an inner wild animal waiting to escape.