



LUMINESCENCE

JONATHAN FITZGERALD · ELECTRIC GUITAR



1 SVART-HVÍT SKÝ Á HIMNI 8:05

Gulli Björnsson (b. 1991)

2 FOR WIEK 7:19

Alison Isadora (b. 1962)

3 AKRASIA 11:10

Victor Arul (b. 2000)

4 UNTIL IT BLAZES 6:05

Eve Beglarian (b. 1958)

LUMINESCENCE

Moses Kington-Walberg (b. 2001)

5 I. THREADS OF SUNLIGHT 2:33

6 II. WINE-DARK DEPTHS 4:54

7 III. DRIFTING CONSTELLATIONS 3:28

with Shaun Lee Chen, violin // Ashley Smith, bass clarinet

The genesis of this album came when I stumbled across the electric guitar works of Icelandic guitarist/composer Gulli Björnsson. Through his programming wizardry in Max/MSP, he transformed the guitar into something otherworldly, unlike anything I had heard before.

While I am principally a classical guitarist, I became utterly captivated by the expressive possibilities afforded by the electric guitar, especially its pairing with visual elements to create immersive multimedia works.

Gulli graciously agreed to write for me, thus sparking a commissioning project to create new works which explore the seemingly limitless capabilities of the electric guitar and electronics.

This album is the culmination of that process, featuring three world premiere recordings of works by Victor Arul (AU), Gulli Björnsson (IS) and Moses Kington-Walberg (AU), presented alongside existing compositions by Eve Beglarian (US) and Alison Isadora (NZ). They run the gamut from “traditional” and accessible, to downright frightening alien sound-worlds which are totally unrecognisable as a guitar.

The pieces by Arul, Beglarian and Björnsson were originally conceived as audiovisual works, and through a collaboration with Australian photographic artist Lyle Branson (whose artwork features throughout this booklet), we have also created visual projections for the abstract instrumental work by Isadora.

The full multimedia video for each of these works may be viewed [here](#), or by following the bonus links in the program notes following.

Jonathan Fitzgerald

SVART-HVÍT SKÝ Á HIMNI (BLACK-WHITE CLOUDS IN THE SKY) (2020)

Gulli Björnsson

Scored for electric guitar, live electronics and visuals, *Svart-Hvít Ský á Himni* was inspired by the dual nature of clouds – what at first appears beautiful and peaceful can quickly become something terrifying and destructive. Gulli writes: “The idea behind *Svart-Hvít Ský á Himni* is the beauty and terror of clouds. I wanted to capture this change; how something that initially seems safe and beautiful can turn and become something I fear. I think clouds embody this quite well. As they are forming they seem pretty and harmless but as they grow they can turn the skies black and cause torrential rains.”

One common feature among many of Gulli’s compositions is the use of complex preprogrammed live processing effects which play an integral role in creating the form and dramatic structure of the work. Using Max/MSP, Gulli developed audio effects whose parameters are automated to change in a particular way as the piece unfolds, allowing for gradual but dramatic timbral changes to the guitar (and turning it into something quite monstrous at its climax). The most aurally prominent effect is an amplitude modulator, controlled by a step-sequencer that applies a rhythmic envelope to the washy guitar sound. This results in the creation of rhythmic patterns from sound disappearing from the texture – essentially rhythmicised silence.

Gulli has also developed the visuals for this work, which feature real-time audio reactive manipulations of a short 30 second stock footage clip of moving clouds. Using Max/MSP/Jitter, Gulli has created swirling ominous dark grey cloud formations that emerge and decay against a black backdrop, and respond to the sounds of the live performance.

[Bonus video link](#)

FOR WIEK (1994)

Alison Isadora

The most “traditional” work on the album, *For Wiek*, for electric guitar with octaviser, e-bow and whammy bar, explores extremes of register and timbre. Through the use of an octave pedal, Isadora expands the range of the guitar to a full five octaves, often juxtaposing extremes of range in close succession. Similarly, timbres (*sul tasto* – the warm, round sound achieved by plucking the strings by the neck, and *sul ponticello* – the bright, metallic sound by the bridge) are precisely notated and often starkly juxtaposed. Relaxed and atmospheric, the work has a longing, wistful quality, with mildly dissonant, jazz-inspired harmonies.

While *For Wiek* was conceived as an abstract instrumental work without a visual component, Perth-based photographic artist Lyle Branson has developed a series of still images to accompany the piece.

[Bonus video link](#)

AKRASIA (2021)

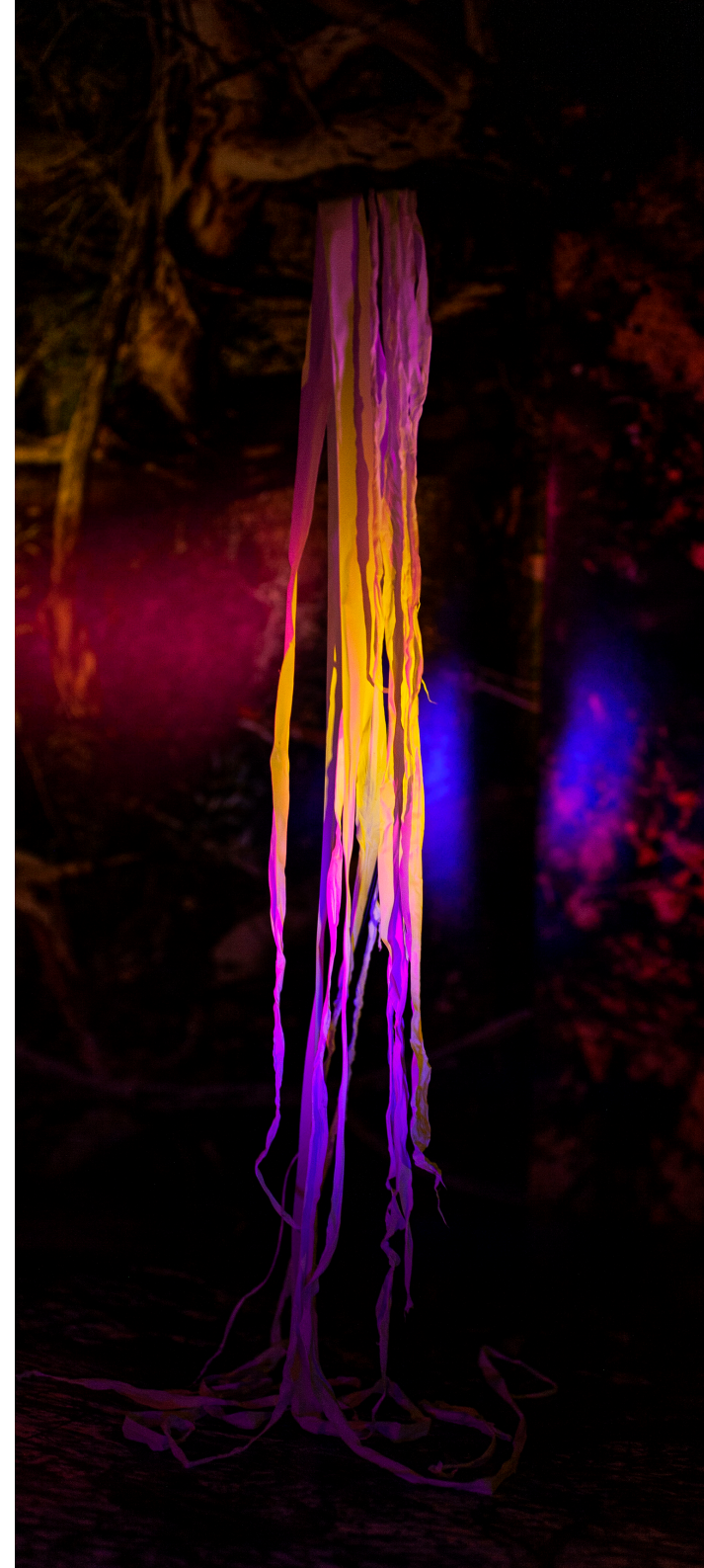
Victor Arul

Written for electric guitar, live electronic processing in Ableton, and live visuals in Max/MSP/Jitter, *Akrasia* is to my knowledge the first work for solo electric guitar and visuals by an Australian composer. The most experimental piece on the album, *Akrasia* utilises two guitars: one is played “traditionally”, while the other is laid flat on a table, prepared with alligator clips, and played at various points with a piece of twine, a metal rod, and a bass bow.

Victor writes: “*Akrasia* takes inspiration from the formal musical structures exhibited by the early American avant-garde, particularly those experiments of the musical New York School. My piece explores the ways in which the goal-directed nature of historically conventional form can be deviated from. Specifically, I am captivated in how musical goal direction can be obscured on microtemporal scales of time, but underscored on the larger, architectural level. When considering the late works of Morton Feldman for example, it was eye-opening for me to consider the striking ways musical materials were placed over multi-hour temporal bedrocks. However, I chose to apply this type of form in a significantly shorter length of time than Feldman (*Akrasia* is only around eleven minutes). My work is structured in three large sections: the outer sections are characterised by the obstreperous use of a prepared electric guitar, while the middle is distinguished through its episodic meanderings, punctuated by immobile repetitions of a dyadic monologue.”

Victor also developed the visuals for this work, which are randomly generated interactive three dimensional objects in black space. The shapes respond in real-time to the sounds of the live performance, and are directly correlated to the input amplitude – the louder the sound, the bigger and more opaque the object.

[Bonus video link](#)



UNTIL IT BLAZES (2001)

Eve Beglarian

Inspired by a line attributed to Jesus in the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, *Until it Blazes* is a minimalist work of variable duration for piano or plucked string instrument, digital delay and optional visuals. The stereo delay establishes a perpetual antiphonal polyrhythm, against which short melodic patterns are repeated. By accenting different notes within a repeating pattern, new melodies emerge from the accents, cutting against the pattern's grouping and creating yet another layer of polyrhythm. For example, if in a repeating three-note pattern every fourth note is accented, a new melody will emerge; if every fifth note is accented, a different melody will emerge. *Until it Blazes* is structured around the gradual growth and decay of these various melodic patterns, ultimately building to a climatic conclusion.

The visuals are by Cory Arcangel (b. 1978), a contemporary American multimedia artist. The video is essentially a data reduction, presenting a black and white pixellated view of a streetscape, which slowly increases in resolution over the course of the work. The pixellation creates a “sizzling” effect, visually alluding to the apocalyptic theme of a world on fire. In addition to the visual aesthetics, this choice was also practical – Arcangel wanted to make a video that could be sent easily, which in 2001 (when most people were still on dial-up internet), necessitated very small file sizes.

[Bonus video link](#)

LUMINESCENCE (2021)

Moses Kington-Walberg

Luminescence was inspired by the otherworldly bioluminescent life that inhabits the ocean depths. The title track of the album, the work won the 2021 Dorothy Ellen Ransom Prize for Chamber Composition. Moses writes: “*Luminescence* was written for Jonathan Fitzgerald, Ashley Smith, and Shaun Lee-Chen, and was premiered at the University of Western Australia. The work traverses a myriad of depictions of light and water, and seeks to translate their unique forms of interplay sonically. The eclectic instrumentation comprises an electric guitar, a second 8-string guitar (performed flat with e-bows, glass rings and a max-patch), a paper-prepared bass clarinet, and a violin in scordatura.

Inspired by the notation of George Crumb, the work explores the entanglement of extemporisation and prescription, sewing intuitive and indeterminate material within more delineated structures to create a fluid and deeply immersive score. The guitar's max patch similarly mirrors the notation, built with both fixed and randomly modulating processes. The soundworld is spectral and mercurial, with each movement studying a new interaction of water and light. Beginning with sunlight threading through ocean surfaces, through to haunting bioluminescent life drifting through dark deep-sea canyons, and concluding with warped reflection of stars and moonlight over still horizons.”



PERFORMER BIOS:

Jonathan Fitzgerald

Hailed as “a virtuosic talent in the guitar world” (X-Press Magazine), American-Australian classical guitarist Dr Jonathan Fitzgerald is a multi-award winning performer and educator, maintaining a career at the intersection of performance, teaching and research. Jonathan’s artistic interests are diverse, ranging from traditional classical guitar repertoire to experimental multimedia works for electric guitar, electronics and visual projections.

An in-demand performer, past concert highlights include performances with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Opera (Verdi’s *Otello*), radio performances for ABC Radio National, RTRFM (WA), WXXI and WCNY (New York), and solo concerts across the United States, Australia and Europe.

His playing has been recognised through numerous awards, including the Great Lakes International Guitar Competition in which he was a prize-winning finalist and winner of the “Audience Choice” award.

A dedicated educator, Jonathan serves as Chair of Strings & Guitar at the University of Western Australia’s Conservatorium of Music. He received his formal education in the United States, earning Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music.

www.jonathanfitzgerald.net

Ashley William Smith

Described as “Incandescent... a masterly display of skill and insight... as an apologist for contemporary music-making, you would search hard to find this young clarinetist’s equal” (The Age), Ashley William Smith has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout Australia, USA, Europe and Asia.

He performs regularly with ensembles including the Southern Cross Soloists and the Calder, Dover, and Australian string quartets.

He is a laureate of prizes including the APRA Performance of the Year, the Music Council of Australia Freedman Fellowship, an ABC Symphony International Young Performer Award, and a Churchill Fellowship.

A graduate of Yale University, the University of Western Australia, and a Fellow of the Australian National Academy of Music, Ashley was awarded prizes as the most outstanding performance graduate of each institution.

www.southernxsoloists.com/ashley-smith

Shaun Lee Chen

Shaun Lee-Chen is the Concertmaster of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, and holds the position of Simon Lee Artist in Residence at the University of Western Australia.

He has appeared as soloist and concertmaster with orchestras nationally and internationally, and is in demand as an artist on both Baroque and Modern violin. He has been guest Assistant and Associate Concertmaster with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

In 2015, the ABO’s album *Brandenburg Celebrates*, which included Mr Lee-Chen as a featured soloist, was nominated for an Aria Award for Best Classical Album.

www.uwa.edu.au/Profile/Shaun-Lee-Chen

COMPOSER BIOS:

Gulli Björnsson (b. 1991)

Gulli Björnsson is a guitarist and composer from Iceland whose music typically ties electronics, live instruments and visuals to experiences in nature. Gulli's music has been described as "hypnotic" (News Gazette) "a knockout – wondrously inventive" (Soundboard Magazine) and "Virtuosic, modern, occasionally discordant, but still accessible" (Classical Guitar Magazine). He has written for renowned musicians and ensembles such as: Aizuri Quartet, Sō Percussion, Iarla Ó Lionáird, New Jersey Symphony, Alarm Will Sound, Contemporaneous, Amanda Gookin, Dither, Jiji, Vicky Chow, Steve Cowan and Mirror Strings.

Gulli currently teaches Electronic Composition at the University of Kansas and holds degrees from Manhattan School of Music, Yale School of Music and Princeton University.

www.gullibjornsson.org

Alison Isadora (b. 1962)

New Zealand-born composer Alison Isadora relocated to the Netherlands in 1986 to study violin and composition at The Hague Conservatorium, and post-graduate performance theatre at DasArts in Amsterdam. She has been a performing composer or a composing performer within numerous Dutch groups including Hex, Gending, Nieuw Ensemble, the Maarten Altena Ensemble and the multi-medi duo SYNC. Her works have been performed by diverse ensembles in the Pacific, Europe and North America including Ensemble Klang, David Kweksilber Big Band, Matangi Strijkkwartet, Nederlands Blazers Ensemble, Array Ensemble (Canada) and STROMA Ensemble (NZ). As well as composing for music ensembles, Isadora also creates music-theatre performances, audio walks and installations. In recent years she has become increasingly interested in the possibilities of connecting music to other disciplines, with her works often incorporating elements of story-telling and participation while addressing social issues.

www.sounz.org.nz/contributors/1156



COMPOSER BIOS *CONTINUED*:

Victor Arul (b. 2000)

Victor is a researcher and composer from Perth, Western Australia, currently based in Cambridge, Massachusetts where he is a PhD candidate at Harvard University. Whilst Victor's broader research interests pertain to analyses of Western art music, his current predilections delve into Bourdieusian field theory, English and American rock figures associated with 1960s counterculture (particularly the Beatles, the Beach Boys, and Jimi Hendrix), and functions of human embodiment within musical environments. In terms of his upcoming compositional work, Victor is fortunate to be involved in various collaborations that will lead to performances of his works in the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, the USA, and Australia. Victor holds undergraduate degrees from the University of Western Australia and the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

www.victorarul.xyz

Eve Beglarian (b. 1958)

American composer and performer Eve Beglarian has been described as a “humane, idealistic rebel and a musical sensualist” (Los Angeles Times). A 2017 winner of the Alpert Award in the Arts for her “prolific, engaging and surprising body of work,” she has also been awarded the 2015 Robert Rauschenberg Prize from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts for her “innovation, risk-taking, and experimentation.”

Beglarian's chamber, choral, and orchestral music has been commissioned and widely performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the American Composers Orchestra, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the California EAR Unit, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, loadbang, Newspeak, the Ekmeles Vocal Ensemble and individual performers including Maya Beiser, Lara Downes, Lucy Dhegrae, and Thomas Feng.

www.evbvd.com

Moses Kington-Walberg (b. 2001)

Moses Kington-Walberg is a composer and musician based in Boorloo/Perth. He completed undergraduate studies in orchestral composition at the University of Western Australia, where he studied under Dr. James Ledger. Moses' practice resides at the intersection of composition, improvisation, and sound installation. His work indulges in experimentalism and evocation, often employing elements of graphic and indeterminate notation to generate volatile and avant-garde atmospheres.

Moses is a recipient of the Dorothy Ellen Ransom Prize and West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) Bendat Scholarship, and has had works performed by the UWA Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, Wind Orchestra, and New-Music Ensemble. He is an alumna of composer development programs with WASO, and has collaborated with a variety of groups including Strut Dance, Tone List, and Outcome Unknown. In 2021 he co-founded Resonant Fields, a collective of composers and performers concerned with showcasing experimental improvisation and connecting emerging artists with the WA improvisation scene.

www.moseskingtonwalberg.com



Recorded at the University of Western Australia
February–July 2022

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www.lylebranson.com

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