

A black and white photograph of a rocky coastline. Two dark, craggy rock formations frame a narrow gap, looking out onto a calm sea under a cloudy sky. The text is centered over the horizon line.

JEFFREY HOLMES

May The Bridges I Burn Light My Way

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Thrall (Præll), is a concertante work for piano and five players (solo piano, flute, bass-clarinete, violin, cello, double-bass) and was composed in 2014. The title comes from the Old-Norse language meaning "slave". This title can be interpreted on numerous levels including: soloist vs. ensemble; the equal tempered confines of the piano vs. the microtonal intonations of the melodic instruments; the consistently dense texture and complete lack of rests for the soloist; as well as being personally significant while the composition of Thrall was occurring. Throughout this work the piano plays constantly, except during nine "Grand Pauses" that are inserted at moments of calm as well as moments of extreme tension. The soloist alternates between six constantly developing cadenzas, interpolated within three rotating thematic elements that are presented in close succession at the very beginning of the work. The ensemble also plays material derived from these three themes, but this material is elaborated through the use of various tunings including: equal temperament (in my "flat-octave" language); equal tempered third-tone and quarter-tone divisions; and Just Intonation harmonic approximations. Structurally, the form and content are designed around rigid applications of symmetries and distorted "oval-symmetries" and carefully balanced alterations of texture involving the soloist's cadenzas and varying densities of accompaniment by the ensemble, all unified by a consistent harmonic language. Thrall is in its essence is a violent and dramatic work utilizing extreme virtuosity by both the soloist and the ensemble, and is built from a balance of structural integrity and emotional expression, that creates a dramatic and intense constantly varied landscape of sound.



Mari Kawamura – solo piano, Rachel Beetz – flute, James Sullivan – bass-clarinete, Shalini Vijayan – violin, Ashley Walters – violoncello, Kyle Motl – contrabass, Donald Crockett – conductor

Nastrond I, composed in 2006, is the first in a series of tone-poems that each depict a different region of the Scandinavian mythological underworld. These three chamber works all share motivic themes, rhythmic cycles, and large-scale forms. Nastrond I contains a wide variety of textures, timbres, and musical events, culminating in a dramatic and virtuosic climax. Programmatically, Nastrond I depicts the shore of corpses, the place of bitter cold and unending night, that is as vile as it is vast; all its doors will face north. Its walls and roof will be made of wattled snakes, their heads facing inward, blowing so much poison that it runs in rivers. This tone-poem consists of three sections, each with a programmatic designation:

1. The Sea 2. The Shore 3. The River



Shalini Vijayan – violin, Yuri Inoo – percussion

Kirurgi (String Quartet No. 2) was written in the fall of 2009, and consists of six movements that are separated by textural differences, but united through motivic unity and a consistent harmonic landscape:

- I. Funeral March
- II. Fugue 1
- III. Fantasy
- IV. Nocturne
- V. Fugue 2
- VI. Elegy

The first four movements each explore seemingly different motives, which in the fifth movement are unfolded in the reverse order and whose motivic connections are now revealed. This large-scale cyclic process is followed by a quiet movement of harmonic reflection, based on the opening material. String Quartet No. 2 is subtitled

Kirurgi (Swedish for surgery), a designation that comes from the main “limping” theme in the first Fugue, which originated in a song I composed entitled Surgery. This work journeys through a wide range of emotional territory, and was inspired by my adventures in the Swedish and Norwegian Arctic landscapes.



Lyris String Quartet: Alyssa Park – violin 1, Shalini Vijayan – violin 2, Luke Maurer – viola, Timothy Loo – violoncello

Oscularum Infame, for piano trio, was composed in the summer of 2009. This work is a combination of four main movements surrounded by three interludes, all caged within a prelude and a postlude. The main material is exposed in the prelude and various segmentations are used to generate the diverse motives that make up the movements. In between these main movements, the interludes struggle to rival the movements in both their length and expressive nature. Each of the main movements depicts a natural, elemental force: fire, air, earth, and the raging sea. Overall, this work presents a constantly varied landscape of dramatic and intense moods and images, and projects a certain spiritual battlefield...as implied by the referential title.



Shalini Vijayan – violin, Charles Tyler – violoncello, Richard Valitutto – piano

Hrith (Hrið-Móðr-Ljómi) was composed in the Fall of 2013 and is dedicated to my long-time collaborator and friend, guitarist Michael Kudirka, as a tribute to his virtuosity and artistry. This work is comprised of several sections that intersperse movements for both the ensemble and soloist, with movements for the soloist alone. Together, they project one dramatic arc that creates a fantastical journey of death, set in a Scandinavian landscape, and engages the question of afterlife:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I. Hrið | I. Onset, Attack, Storm |
| 1. Myrkr Agæti | 1. Darkness, Celebration |
| 2. Fjölkyangi | 2. Óðin's Seiðr |
| 3. Vætvang Vé | 3. Battlefield, Sacred Site |
| - Draumr: Svarti Sæ | - Dream: Black Sea |
| II. Móðr | II. Fury, Wrath |
| 4. Fylgior | 4. Spirit that Appears Before Death |
| 5. Bardagi Reiðr | 5. Battle Anger |
| 6. Hergautr | 6. Army God |
| - Draumr: Blakkr Straumr | - Dream: Dark Current |
| III. Ljómi | III. Radiance |
| 7. Vig Reifr | 7. Battle Rejoice |
| 8. Valkyrjor | 8. Choosers of the Slain |
| 9. Norner Virðing | 9. Fate, Honor |
| - Draumr: Svalbarð | - Dream: The Cold Edge |

Several devices are used to project the large-scale formal design such as a constant isomorphic rhythmic and formal talea (a number series that is reflected kaleidoscopically in the foreground, middleground, and background), the development of melodic motives, and dramatic dynamic contrasts and returns. Various types of pitch materials are used that create the harmonic language including non-octavating vertical equal temperament, microtonal divisions of equal temperament (third-tones and quarter-tones), both overtone and undertone tunings, synthetic "fake" overtone and undertone series, and inexact microtonalities such as glissandi and other noises. These various harmonic languages create multiplicities of timbre that alternate, interact, return and disappear. Microtunings occur throughout the instruments: in the "detuning" of the solo guitar from the rest of the ensemble by a specific microtonal interval, through pitch bending by most of the instruments, in the spectrum of sounds created by the percussion, and by the articulation of various overtones themselves. Overall, this work presents a constantly varied landscape of dramatic and intense moods and images, and depicts a journey through a Nordic spiritual battlefield...as a soul transcends its physical being.



Michael Kudirka – solo guitar, Tara Schwab – flute, Allen Fogle – horn, Yuri Inoo – percussion Allison Bjorkedal – harp, Tereza Stanislav – violin, Maggie Parkins – violoncello, Donald Crockett - conductor

The **Five Microtonal Studies** were written in January of 2002 for Michael Kudirka and Eric Benzant-Feldra. Throughout this work, one guitar remains tuned approximately one sixth of a tone lower than the other guitar, though each is in tune with itself. More precisely, one is tuned to the 7th partial harmonic of the other which is 31% (or 31 "cents") of a semitone lower. This relationship of tone divided into six, instead of two, is exploited in various ways.

These pieces are "studies" on many levels other than just their tuning. The first movement spends its first seven measures introducing the new intonation in simple ascending chromatic scales that are later joined by strummed or "beaten" chords that complete one 7 against 9 polymetric cycle. The second piece is a complete palindrome, and is made up only of harmonics resulting from a four-note non-octavating scale. The symmetrical center of the five studies explores imitative polyrhythms and an ascending six-note non-octavating scale. The fourth movement, aside from the strummed chords, is played entirely on the sixth string of both instruments. Only percussive articulations are used including tambora, golpe, rasgueado and "tap" harmonics. In this short study, a seven-note non-octavating scale travels through all eleven possible transpositions. The final piece in this collection recapitulates the earlier chromatic and harmonic material in an emotional climax that results from complex polymeters and micro-tonal trills.

This collection of pieces pays homage in one way or another to five of my favorite composers at that time: in Microtonal Study no. 1, the polymetric rhythmic cycles that are "phased" against one another is structurally similar to Gyorgy Ligeti's *Piano Etude No. 1*; in Study no. 2, the ostinato and harmonics are similar to the 2nd of Dusan Bogdanovic's *Five Polymetric Studies*; Study no. 3 uses non-octave scales much like those of Iannis Xenakis; Study no. 4 bears a melodic relationship to Maurice Ohana; and Study no. 5 uses a density of trills, much like those found so frequently in the music of Luciano Berio.

Each of these pieces is comprised of both micro and macro symmetries in the parameters of pitch, rhythm, form and modulatory patterns, and together the five create a larger architectural design. The important concept, however, is the exploration of new colors and timbres that are the product of intonations derived from the natural vibrations of strings.



Michael Kudirka, Brian Head

Nocturnes, for solo guitar, was written in March of 2005 for Nic Nichol. While this work uses a new and unique theoretical and harmonic system it is in many ways an homage to Frederick Chopin. In this one-movement work there are actually three nocturnes (Chopin used to publish his *Nocturnes* in sets of two or three) though not separated by the usual division of movements. Instead all three are compiled, collected and juxtaposed upon one another in a variety of ways. In addition to the obvious reference made by the title, there are numerous non-literal similarities to the music of Chopin in the parameters of form, texture, and motivic developmental procedures.



Michael Kudirka

Danzleikr was composed in 2012, for "Duo Resonances – France" (Frédérique Luzy and Pierre Bibault). "Danzleikr" (from the Old-Norse) translates to "dancing/song". I have always listened to and studied the folk music of my Nordic ancestors, and have always been influenced by the virtuosic style that features frequent microtonality and a variety of types of ornamentation. In 2012 I began composing *Danzleikr* during a long adventure throughout the central forest region and northern Arctic mountains of Sweden and Norway. While traveling, I encountered several indigenous folk fiddle players and impromptu outdoor fiddling festivals in

the remote regions of Scandinavia. These encounters led me to think of more obvious ways to incorporate stylistic aspects of this music into my personal musical language that have always been present in my music in a background manor.

In *Danzleikr* I have attempted to bring some of these background aspects to the foreground, and at times blend with my personal musical language, and at others clash with it...and this relationship is explored in a variety of ways. The 2 guitars are tuned in a microtonal tuning derived from a seventh partial harmonic, this tuning gives the piece an exotic, non-“Classical” timbre that in my imaginative world evokes a strange, unfamiliar, and undefined folk music. Simple diatonic melodic material that mimics the melodic patterns in Scandinavian fiddle music are harmonized within my “flat-octave” chromatic harmonic language. Ornamentation exists in an obvious way in the early parts of *Danzleikr*, but slowly throughout the course of the piece blends with other types of motivic material to become more consequential. And structurally, Modernist expression and formal structures are set inside standard folk forms such as a polka or waltz. There are three main movements, that collectively interpolate nine different, and sometimes recurring, sections:

- I. Grave con riposo, Allegro assai
(Gånglåt / Gammal Polska)
- II. Adagio mesto, Andante sostenuto
(Sen Polska / Nig Vals / Sen Polska)
- III. Presto lamentato, Lento caloroso
(Sorg Polska / Vallåt / Sorg Polska / Vallåt)



Michael Kudirka, Brian Head

These titles are from traditional Swedish songs and dances: the “Gånglåt” is a walking song, “Gammal Polska” is an old or ancient polka, “Sen Polska” is a sad polka, “Nig Vals” is a sailors waltz, “Sorg Polska” is a fast polka, and the “Vallåt” is a pastoral nature song or herding call.

MÅLEN ("May the Bridges I Burn Light My Way...") is a double-concerto for 2 guitars and 4 instruments (oboe, percussion, celesta/piano, 2 solo guitars, violin), and was written in the Spring of 2004 for Michael Kudirka and Eric Benzant-Feldra. This work is one long movement that is constructed of three distinct, constantly interacting themes. Each theme contains exclusive intervals, articulations, polyrhythms, symmetrical rhythmic talas, and tempos and these three themes are layered on top of one another, alternated in slow and quick successions, or obsessively dwelled upon individually, but always remain segregated in their foreground materials. The unique instrumentation creates an original combination of timbres and is organized by register to complement the 2 guitars. Throughout this work, the guitars are tuned down, one tuned approximately one-sixth of a tone lower (31 cents), and the other approximately one-third of a tone lower (62 cents). These acoustic de-tunings add to the overall timbre and pits overtone tunings against equal tempered tunings. Overall, this is a dramatic work that features loud, violent climaxes, alongside quiet, calm moments and collectively is a large, constantly changing and varied, landscape of sound.



Brian Head – solo guitar 1, Michael Kudirka – solo guitar 2, Paul Sherman – oboe
Nick Terry – percussion, Nic Gerpe – celesta/piano, Tereza Stanislav – violin
Donald Crockett – conductor



Jeffrey Holmes composes post-spectral, teleological music incorporating elements of mysticism and lyrical expression. His creative inspiration is rooted in primitive myths, transcendent legends, and dramatic elemental landscapes in their primal and violent natural states. As a traditionalist, he composes music for acoustic orchestral instruments, using standard notational methods; as a formalist, he works within a complex and unique non-octave diatonic, chromatic, and microtonal language; as a transcendentalist, he combines the inherent abstraction of sound with a greater meaning and possibility of interpretation through the use of lyricism and overt expression.

Holmes' music has been described as "Captivating... haunting and slightly disorienting." (Los Angeles Times), "Through his choice of pitch and rhythmic textures, stunning colors emerge." (The Talea Ensemble), "Interesting and musically arresting, music to be really heard and deserving of reflection." (Society of Composers, INC.), and "Extremely sophisticated, an excellent example of exquisitely crafted sound." (Percussive Notes)

Commissions, performances, and awards have come from Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, Carnegie Hall, American Composers Forum, Guitar Foundation of America, Piano Spheres, Jebediah Foundation New Music Commissions, the Talea Ensemble, JACK Quartet, Penderecki String Quartet, East-Coast Contemporary Ensemble (ECCE), Lyris String Quartet, Mark Menzies and "Inauthentica", UCLA Philharmonia, Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Los Angeles Percussion Quartet, and Duo Amantis, and soloists Nicholas Isherwood, Kirsten Ashley Wiest, Vincent Ranallo, Pierre Bibault, Tara Schwab, Michael Kudirka, and others. His works have been performed at festivals including the Darmstadt Ferienkurs für Neue Musik (DE), Los Angeles Philharmonic's "Green Umbrella" (US), Cap Ferret Musical Festival (FR), Etchings Festival (FR), the Deal Festival (UK), Hear Now Festival (FR/US), Festival de los Rosas (ME), MicroFest (US), and the Laguna Beach Music Festival (US).

Holmes' music is published by Composers Edition (London, UK), Doberman-Yppan/Les Productions d'OZ (Quebec, Canada), and Edition Svitzer (Copenhagen, Denmark), and has been recorded on MicroFest Records, and Sono Luminus, distributed internationally by Naxos.

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All Compositions by Jeffrey Holmes, BMI

Special thanks to Harvey Mudd College

Thrall, *Nastrond I*, *Oscularum Infame*, and *Hrith (Hrið-Móðr-Ljómi)* are published by Composers Edition (London, UK): <https://composersedition.com>. *Danzleikr*, *Nocturnes*, and *Five Microtonal Studies* are published by Les Productions d'OZ/Doberman-Yppan (Quebec City, Canada): <https://productionsdoz.com/>. *Kirurgi (String Quartet No. 2)* and *MĀLEN ("May the Bridges I Burn Light My Way...")* are from the Composer's manuscript: www.jeffrey-holmes.com.

