



Jack Van Zandt

a chaos of light and motion

Stacey Fraser, soprano

A Chaos of Light and Motion (2019)

Text by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. **A Chaos of Light and Motion** 6:10
2. **The Painted Veil** 7:37
3. **Weave the Dance on the Floor of the Breeze** 3:33
4. **The Atmosphere of Human Thought** 5:16

Stacey Fraser, soprano
Nadia Shpachenko, celeste and ensemble director;
Sara Andon, flutes;
Cynthia Fogg, viola;
Yuri Inoo, vibraphone;
Alison Bjorkedal, harp;
Alastair Edmonstone, piano;
Cory Hills, marimba and chimes.

Three Arias from On the Shores of Eternity (2020-22)

Text by Rabindranath Tagore

5. **The Understanding** 7:41
6. **A Dance Beyond Death** 8:43
7. **The Stars Look On** 6:25

Stacey Fraser, soprano
Jane Rigler, alto flute
Jack Van Zandt, electronics, synthesizers, samplers, sound designs, electric guitar

Two Character Songs from The New Frontier: An Atomic Age Jazz Opera (2018)

Libretto by Jill Freeman (BMI)

Arranged for soprano, piano, vibraphone and bass

8. **Half Life: The Ghost of Ethel Rosenberg** 6:18
9. **The New Frontier: Home fallout shelter saleswoman** 4:49

Stacey Fraser, soprano
Nadia Shpachenko, piano;
Yuri Inoo, vibraphone;
John Kennedy, bass;
Jack Van Zandt, bongos.

>56:55<



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A Chaos of Light and Motion (2019)

Text by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. A Chaos of Light and Motion
2. The Painted Veil
3. Weave the Dance on the Floor of the Breeze
4. The Atmosphere of Human Thought

The reason Shelley the poet appeals so much to Jack Van Zandt the composer is the synthesis of influences in his work. Van Zandt's composing style is very much the same, combining elements of science, math, philosophy, visual art theory (especially Klee and Escher), and often, music that he loves from ancient traditions and cultures outside his own, including Native American, Indian, Japanese, Indonesian and Equatorial African.

Shelley's works were marked by many interests and influences—especially science, mathematics and philosophy, including Hinduism and Buddhism—and were often a mash-up of numerous ideas of the time. The text of the title song, extracted from his drama *Hellas*, is a wondrous evocation of the scientific achievements of the Age of Reason and explores the crossroads of science and spirituality.

The Gothic Romantic style of much of Shelley's poetry, including the sonnet *The Painted Veil*, often contained references to his many intellectual influences, along with phantasmagoric imagery in a highly atmospheric spiritual context, to make a universal philosophical point or observation. Also typical of Shelley the dramatist, his sonnet tells a story that takes the reader on a journey, not unlike a miniature version of Dante's great allegory, *The Divine Comedy*, where the narrator relates his experiences wandering through the world beyond life, or the great sagas of Hindu myth. In this case, Van Zandt was struck by the similarities between the Shelley poem and the spiritual texts of some of the epic Hindu vocal works of Indian classical music. On one level, the musical setting is essentially a raga, and is based on a commonly used modal scale of that tradition. Van Zandt also asks the vocalist to imitate some of the ornamental idiosyncrasies of raga singing. The ensemble instruments take the functional place of Indian musical instruments, including performing shruti (drones) and tala (rhythmic cycles).

The third song, *Weave the Dance on the Floor of the Breeze*, is an allegory of the natural world taken from *Prometheus Unbound*. The rhythmic flow of the setting is controlled by a common Indian tala, 4+4+2+1+2+1. Van Zandt tips his hat to Stravinsky with this setting, including references to *Les Noces*, *The Soldier's Tale* and Russian folk melody.

The final song, *The Atmosphere of Human Thought*, is also a tribute to the memory of legendary American composer Lou Harrison, who was instrumental in bringing Indonesian gamelan music to the attention of American audiences. The text is taken from *Prometheus Unbound*, and takes the listener on a Buddhist-inspired journey to a floating, ethereal world where ideas and thoughts become conscious spirits. The percussion instruments of the ensemble become a kind of gamelan orchestra that the soprano floats over, accompanied melodically by the bass flute and viola.

I. A Chaos of Light and Motion
(From Hellas prologue)

*The Curtain of the universe
Is rent and shattered,
The splendour-winged worlds disperse
Like wild doves scattered.*

*Space is roofless and bare,
And in the midst a cloudy shrine,
Dark amid thrones of light.
In the blue glow of hyaline
Golden worlds revolve and shine.*

*In flight
From every point of the Infinite,
Like a thousand dawns on a single night
The splendours rise and spread;
And through thunder and darkness dread
Light and music are radiated,
And in their pavilioned chariots led
By living wings high overhead
The giant Powers move,
Gloomy or bright as the thrones they fill.*

*A Chaos of light and motion
Upon that glassy ocean.*

There is silence in the spaces—

II. The Painted Veil
(Sonnet)

*Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and
drear.*

*I knew one who had lifted it—he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.*

III. Weave the Dance on the Floor of the Breeze
(Chorus, Prometheus Unbound, Act IV)

*Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.*

*Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.*

*But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.*

IV. The Atmosphere of Human Thought
(Chorus of Spirits from Prometheus Unbound)

*From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed morality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!*

Three Arias from **On the Shores of Eternity** (2020-22)

A dramatic madrigal

Text by Rabindranath Tagore

1. The Understanding

2. A Dance Beyond Death (The Stream of Life)

3. The Stars Look On

These three arias come from Van Zandt's two-hour dramatic madrigal, *On the Shores of Eternity*, a multimedia work that pays homage to the form pioneered by Claudio Monteverdi in the 17th century. It uses digital music and video technology to take the audience on an ethereal journey contemplating human existence. The work—scored for soprano soloist, vocal ensemble, dancers, digital instruments and sound designs, small ensemble, and video—sets specially chosen texts by the Bengali Hindu poet and Nobel Literature Prize winner (1913) Rabindranath Tagore that explore the twilight zone between life and death in arias, polyphonic choral pieces, soundscapes and extended dance pieces.

1. The Understanding

(including Shiva's Fiery Dance, Chandra's Moon Dance and Pas de deux)

*When I think of ages past
That have floated down the stream
Of life and love and death,
I feel how free it makes us
To pass away*

2. A Dance Beyond Death

The flow of Life

*The same stream of life that runs through my veins
Runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measure.*

*It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth
In numberless blades of grass,
Breaking in waves of leaves and flowers.*

*The same life that rocks the cradle of birth and death
In the ocean of eternal existence.*

*My life is made glorious by touching this world
And my pride is from knowing
That the life-throb of ages dances in my blood at this moment.*

3. The Stars Look On

*The day will come
When the sight of the earth will be lost
I will take my leave in silence
As the stars look on.*

*I know the sun will rise again
The hours will still bring pleasure and pain
In heaving waves.*

*When I think of the end, time crumbles
I see by the light of death
That the lowliest existence is rare
And the worst moments are precious.*

*What I longed for will be set aside
The things I pursued in vain--
Let them pass
Let me turn
To things I overlooked
And carelessly threw away
To possess them truly until they are mine
As the stars look on.*

Two Character Songs from **The New Frontier: An Atomic Age Jazz Opera** (2018)

Libretto by Jill Freeman

1. Half Life

2. The New Frontier

The New Frontier is an operatic music theater monodramedy that is inspired by Van Zandt's and Freeman's California school years of the 1950s and 60s against the background of the threat of nuclear annihilation and how it affected our everyday lives, and those of everyone in our families and communities, as well as North American culture. In the opera, a woman alone in an underground fallout shelter after a nuclear war imagines herself to be a series of characters, real and fictional, from the Atomic Age. Arranged in a version for soprano with piano, vibraphone and bass, the characters portrayed in these two songs are the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg and a home underground fallout shelter saleswoman. The musical influences for the work are American jazz masters of the period, such as Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Eric Dolphy. Literary influences for the opera come from the Beat poets, Kurt Vonnegut, Samuel Beckett, the French Existentialists, and the political theater of Piscator and Brecht.

1. Half Life

Character: The ghost of Ethel Rosenberg
tells her story.

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

Was the hardest part.

Death was easy,

Over and done.

I looked out at the blood red sun

Closed my eyes

And let them take me.

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

Was the hardest part.

Death was easy,

Over and done.

Tell me what I did

To be taken

From my children,

Such tiny children!

Did I kill?

Did I torture?

Did I maim?

I remember nothing

I see no gun,

no bloody knife—

I hear no screams...

I know this:

I was a good Jewish woman,

Who loved her children

I was a mother,

And who kills a mother?

A good Jewish mother?

All I remember is:

Waiting

a large clock ticking

My sons

in my heart

Like heavy weights growing

Oh God!

*And if I did nothing wrong
Who shall I haunt?*

2. The New Frontier

Character: Underground fallout shelter
saleswoman.

*Are you cool?
Are you hip, Clyde?
Are you jammin'
to what's happenin'
On the inside?*

*Now you can live the New Frontier,
Oooh the New Frontier
We got the goods you want right here,
No need to fear that New Frontier.*

*Are you with it?
Are you down Shirl?
Are you glistenin'
just from listenin'
To the Man, girl?*

*He's talkin' 'bout the New Frontier,
Oooh the New Frontier.
We got the goods you want right here,
No need to fear that New Frontier.*

*Is you Squaresville?
Or is you hep, Ted?
Now you can stay alive,
Not Red,
Band Shouts with Vocal: And not be Dead, Fred!*

*Oh when the bombs start fallin',
And you hear Mister Khrushchev's callin',
No need to despair,
'Cuz you be safe right there.*

*With your family all in
Your heaven under ground.*

*We swear this ain't no jive,
Now you can stay alive,
Band Shouts: And not be Red, Fred!*

*See you just run right down,
To heaven underground.*

*It's full of games and treats,
And all you need to eat.*

*And it's safe and sound
There in your New Frontier.*

*Just pack your chips and beer
For fifty-seven years
In your New Frontier!*

Jack Van Zandt, composer, electronic instruments

Jack Van Zandt (b. 1954) is a Grammy-winning veteran Los Angeles and Ireland-based composer of music for concerts, streaming platforms, television and film, and multimedia presentations. He studied composition at UC Santa Barbara with Thea Musgrave and Peter Racine Fricker, and in England with Alexander Goehr at Cambridge University, where he was Goehr's teaching and musical assistant from 1978 to 1985, and with Peter Maxwell Davies at the Dartington College of the Arts. He is a teacher, music education program designer, writer, concert curator and producer, and frequent lecturer on various musical subjects.

He was co-winner of the Best Classical Compendium Grammy Award in 2020 for pianist Nadia Shpachenko's CD *The Poetry of Places* with his piece for piano and electronics, *Sí an Bhrú*, inspired by Ireland's Neolithic monument at Newgrange. His concert music has been performed all over the world and his music composed for TV has appeared on numerous broadcast, cable and internet networks, including Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, HBO, AMC, Discovery, Apple +, Oxygen, History Channel, E Channel, National Geographic, and the BBC.

Van Zandt's most recent premieres include the works on this album as well as *The New Frontier: An Atomic Age Jazz Opera*, with a libretto by Jill Freeman, written for soprano Stacey Fraser; *Strange Loops* for the Villiers String Quartet (UK); *La Nuit Étoilée: A Nocturne after Van Gogh* for harp, piano and string orchestra, for Seattle Chamber Orchestra with harpist Alison Bjorkedal and pianist Nadia Shpachenko; and his work for large orchestra, *From th'Ethereal Skie*, which received its world premiere by the UCLA Philharmonia during the 2024 Hear Now Festival.

Van Zandt's book with British composer Alexander Goehr, *Composing a Life: Teachers, Mentors and Models*, was published by Carcanet (UK) in 2023. He is a BMI-affiliated composer and his concert works are published by Composers Edition in Oxford, UK.



For more information, links and scores:

jackvanzandt.com

composersedition.com/jack-van-zandt

Stacey Fraser, soprano

Stacey Fraser has been described as having a “wonderfully controlled soprano voice” by Alex Ross in The New York Times, and “an astonishing presence” by the San Diego Union-Tribune. The Canadian soprano’s eclectic musical interests have made her much in demand on international operatic, concert, and theatre stages across the United States, Canada, Asia and Europe. Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times has described her rendition of Berio’s *Sequenza III* as “a seamless aria, sure of musical direction while missing none of the humor or the frightening shocks of horror.” Credit highlights include the title role in *Miss Donnithorne’s Maggot* by Peter Maxwell Davies; the starring role in a music art film titled *Still Life After Death* by Los Angeles-based filmmaker Sandra Powers; the premiere of Jack Van Zandt’s monodrama written for her, *The New Frontier*, and director/producer of *Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass and Robert Wilson. Fraser is a core member of the LA-based critically acclaimed Brightwork ensemble and Director of Opera Theatre/Professor of Music at California State University San Bernardino.



staceyfraser.com

Jill Freeman, libretto and cover art

Jill Freeman is a singer-songwriter, librettist, poet and visual artist. She most recently received a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to produce her one-act opera, *The New Frontier*, based on the Cold War with composer Jack Van Zandt, written for and performed by soprano Stacey Fraser. Her solo album *Songs about Sex and Depression* received rave reviews and resulted in placements of her songs in several motion pictures. One of these is a featured recording by EMI artists “Once Blue” of her song “Kisses Good” in Touchstone Pictures “Mister Wrong,” starring Ellen Degeneres. Jill’s songs and singing voice have been heard in many films and television shows. She also enjoyed collaborating with blues guitar legend Robben Ford for his release “Keep on Running.” In her most recent album, *A Handmade Life*, Jill used traditional folktales as a springboard into the dark pool of her own psyche, inviting listeners to embark on their own inner journey. *A Handmade Life* brings together some of LA’s finest musicians to create a unique sonic landscape on this sometimes earthy, sometimes not-of-this-earth, collection of 13 songs which portray the artist’s journey through an enticing world of shadow, eventually leading to light and home. Jill continues to write and perform with her husband, songwriter/producer Joel Wachbrit.



jillfreeman.com

jillfreemanart.com

Nadia Shpachenko, piano and celeste, ensemble leader

“Gifted and versatile pianist” (San Francisco Chronicle) and Grammy Award winner Nadia Shpachenko enjoys bringing into the world things that are outside the box—powerful pieces that often possess unusual sonic qualities or instrumentation. Nadia’s concert highlights include recitals at Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall, Piano Spheres, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Green Umbrella and Chamber Music Series; she has also performed with orchestras in Europe and the Americas. An enthusiastic promoter of contemporary music, Shpachenko has premiered more than 100 works.

Described as “powerful... impressive... haunting” (Gramophone), Nadia’s Reference Recordings album *Invasion: Music and Art for Ukraine* features premiere recordings of music by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Lewis Spratlan and art by numerous Ukrainian artists, with 100% of proceeds donated to Ukraine humanitarian aid. Nadia’s 2019 Reference Recordings album *The Poetry of Places*, featuring premieres of architecture-inspired works, won the Best Classical Compendium Grammy Award. On February 23, 2024, Nadia released Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov’s *Postludium No. 3* with cellist Matt Haimovitz on Penatone to commemorate the two-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. She can be heard on seven other internationally released albums of world premieres.

Nadia Shpachenko holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Southern California. Her principal teachers included John Perry, Victor Rosenbaum and Victor Derevianko. Born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, she is a Steinway Artist, Schoenhut Toy Piano Artist, and professor of music at Cal Poly Pomona University.

nadiashpachenko.com

Alison Bjorkedal, harp

Hailed by the LA Times as “a force field unto her own, yet joined in something bigger,” Alison Bjorkedal is a passionate ambassador for the harp and a Grammy Award-winning specialist in performing the music of Harry Partch.

Performances include San Francisco Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Los Angeles Opera, National Ballet of Canada, Seattle Chamber Orchestra, and Tongyeong Festival of South Korea. She is active in the motion picture and television industry with recordings for artists and composers such as Madonna, Sia, Michael Giacchino, Andrea Datzman and more.

Born and raised in Kennewick, WA, Alison received harp performance degrees from University of Oregon and University of Southern California. She is harp faculty at California Institute of the Arts, Occidental College and Pomona College.

alisonbjorkedal.com

Jane Rigler, alto flute

Jane Rigler, flutist/composer, creates music influenced by nature, movement, languages and dreaming. She has received numerous awards like the Japan-US Friendship Creative Artist Fellowship, the Fulbright award, an NEA Arts Projects grant, and residencies at Civitella Ranieri, Ucross, Hambidge, Harvestworks and Montalvo, among others. She is a certified Deep Listening® facilitator, a Post-Trauma Growth Coach and former Associate Professor at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs where she taught flute, creative compositional notation procedures, multisensorial listening methods, computer music, improvisation, Deep Listening and other interdisciplinary collaborative courses. Her work now extends to facilitating creative expressions and well-being through sound, expanding into presentations and group facilitation. She focuses on community building and nervous-system regulation through music and sonic experiences. This journey has led to collaborative ventures with cultural entrepreneurs, scientists and therapists, culminating in innovative programming and producing events that resonate with underserved audiences and communities alike.

janerigler.com

John M. Kennedy, bass

Composer and bassist John M. Kennedy's music has been described as "coming out of contemporary music and the Jazz tradition from multiple eras" (James Newton). His work has been presented at June in Buffalo, the Hear Now Festival, three World Saxophone Congresses, and concerts and recitals on four continents. ASCAP, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Composers Forum and Meet the Composer have recognized and supported his work with grants and awards. As a double bassist he performs regularly in orchestral, chamber and jazz groups in LA, and as a soloist he premiered a series of works by William Roper. In 2017, he coached a rare Maltese performance of Terry Riley's *In C* while a Fulbright Scholar in Malta, and in 2021 his teaching was recognized with the President's Distinguished Professor Award at Cal State LA.

johnmkennedy.net

Sara Andon, flutes

Sara Andon is an international soloist and recording artist known for her ravishing tone and deeply engaging musical interpretations. She has performed all over the world with top-tier orchestras and frequently records with the Hollywood Studio Symphony on countless TV, video game and film scores.

She has recent solo recordings honoring two legendary composers: *Cinema Morricone: An Intimate Celebration* for flute and piano released on Sony Classical, and *John Williams Reimagined* for flute, cello and piano on Warner Classics.

Ms. Andon is principal solo flutist of the Los Angeles-based Brightwork Newmusic Ensemble and Redlands Symphony, and is the Artist Teacher of Flute at the University of Redlands Conservatory of Music and Idyllwild Arts Academy.

sara-andon.com

Yuri Inoo, vibraphone

Dr. Yuri Inoo is a musician and educator in the Los Angeles area. She has performed and collaborated with a wide variety of artists including Yo Yo Ma, John Williams, Steve Reich, Morten Lauridsen, Andrew Norman, Andrea and Matteo Bocelli, Michael Giacchino, Alan Menken, Christina Aguilera, OK Go, and members of NEXUS. She can be heard on movie soundtracks, such as Disney's *Encanto*. An advocate for new music, she performs in numerous new music ensembles such as Brightwork, Jacaranda, Wild Up and Hear Now.

Yuri holds teaching positions at Occidental College, University of Redlands, and Idyllwild Arts Academy. She is the Principal Percussionist with Redlands Symphony, and an active freelancer with other regional orchestras and chamber ensembles in Southern California.

She studied under David Rosenthal at San Francisco State University, and under Erik Forrester at University of Southern California where she received Masters and Doctorate degrees in Percussion Performance.

Alastair Edmonstone, piano

An advocate of modern music, Alastair Edmonstone has collaborated with leading composers such as Jonathan Harvey, Lee Hyla, Huck Hodge, and Gunther Schuller. Notable performances include the Seattle premiere of Luciano Berio's *Sonata per pianoforte solo*, the Boston premiere of Gunther Schuller's *Grand Concerto for Percussion and Keyboards*, which he recorded for Naxos records, and over a dozen performances of Olivier Messiaen's legendary piano cycle *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* throughout the USA, Canada and Europe.

As chamber musician, Edmonstone has performed with members of the Baltimore and Boston Symphony Orchestras, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (UK), Cleveland Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Opera Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Orpheus Orchestra and Canadian Brass.

A native of Perth, Scotland, he is a graduate of the University of Washington (DMA), New England Conservatory (MM, GD) and Birmingham Conservatoire (BMus). Since 2016 he has been Keyboard Collaborative Artist and Music Director of Opera Theater at California State University, San Bernardino.

Cory Hills, chimes and marimba

Multi-percussionist, composer and Grammy Award-winning artist Cory Hills thrives on breaking down musical barriers through creative, interdisciplinary projects. An advocate of new music, Hills has individually commissioned and premiered over 150 new works for percussion. Hills is the creator of Percussive Storytelling, a program that brings classical music and storytelling to kids in low-income communities. The program recently marked its 1,200th performance and has reached more than 250,000 children in ten countries. Hills has released two award-winning albums ("The Lost Bicycle," and "Drum Factory"), and three children's books (*The Lost Bicycle*, *Beatrice and the POGs*, and *Beatrice and the Search for the Orb*). Through Percussive Storytelling, Hills was named as the inaugural Gretsch Fellow in Children's Music at the Fred Rogers Center for 2021-2022, as well as a recipient of a 2022 Individual Artist Fellowship through the California Arts Commission.

Percussive Storytelling:

splatboombang.com

Cynthia Fogg, viola

Cynthia Fogg has performed on viola and violin with a wide variety of organizations including Emmanuel Music, Monadnock Festival, Pasadena Symphony, Ojai Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, and the Almont and Euphoria ensembles, and appeared as guest violist with the acclaimed Kronos and Alexander quartets. Ms. Fogg has recorded chamber music for Naxos, Bridge, Opus One, Cambria, Klavier, and Innova, as well as soundtracks for motion pictures and television. She has taught at Pomona College and Pasadena Conservatory of Music.

CREDITS

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