

MEREDITH HALL

Soprano

BRAHM GOLDHAMER

Piano

FRACCTURES

Frank Horvat

IAM
—WHO—
MAM
RECORDS



COMPOSER'S NOTES

Fractures is an expansive song cycle that draws its inspiration from the environmentally detrimental practice of hydraulic fracking. The genesis of this project can be traced back to 2016, when I was delivering a presentation on environmental music at the Canadian New Music Network Forum in Ottawa. After that event, I discovered the newly published FRACTURE anthology—a rich collection of essays, poems, and narratives that delve into the pressing issue of fracking in America. This discovery of texts became the driving force behind this creative endeavour.

Teaming up with my collaborator, soprano Meredith Hall, we curated lyrics from writers hailing from the US and Canada, some of whom have been directly affected by fracking. My goal was to ensure that each song possessed its unique narrative, yet collectively, the cycle weaved a compelling story, presenting different perspectives. As a result, you'll find a diversity of styles and themes, with recurring motifs of fire and water serving as integral threads that unify the work.

Fracking often lingers on the periphery of discussions surrounding energy options, given the perception that natural gas offers a 'cleaner' alternative to other fossil fuels. However, delving deeper reveals the staggering resources and chemicals required for fracking, as well as its heart-wrenching impact on both the land and the communities residing near these operations. Through this song cycle, I aspire to humanize this issue by sharing varying perspectives and stories.

— Frank Horvat, 2023

PERFORMER'S NOTES

Today's headline reads, "World inching ever closer to a great fracture". I brood on the oncoming climate catastrophe, the self-interest and indifference that shapes so much global decision-making and I, too, feel fractured.

Perhaps our planet has already passed the tipping point. Fear whispers "Why bother?". For all its passion and poignancy, can environmentally-inspired art like *Fractures* serve as anything more than a well-intentioned footnote to the coming apocalypse?

Yet I must hope, for I have children and care passionately about their future. Despite the grim headlines, there are countless humans striving to make real and positive change through hard work and creative thinking. Frank Horvat is one of them.

Frank's music draws from his deep convictions and his mission to shine light on environmental issues. Sensitive, beautiful, inventive, and powerfully emotional, the *Fractures* cycle resonates with humanity. Each carefully chosen, thought-provoking poem is a window into some way that fracking affects human lives. Inhabiting these individual stories, being the first voice to sing Frank's creations, has been a great honour for me. *Fractures* has opened my heart and mind. I hope it may do the same for you.

I am profoundly grateful for the generosity of the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and FACTOR; for the wisdom and patience of my brilliant musical collaborator, Brahm Goldhamer; for the kindness of friends Tabassum Sakhawat, and Wendy and Andrew Donaldson; and especially for the unfailing, loving support of my husband, Bernard Farley, and our children, Robert and Arianna.

— Meredith Hall, 2023

MEREDITH HALL soprano



MEREDITH HALL (soprano)

Canadian soprano Meredith Hall delights audiences with her “lustrous sound and fluent legato” (San Francisco Chronicle) and “bravura musical performance matched by a riveting sense of the dramatic” (Boston Globe).

Ms. Hall has performed the title roles of numerous operas including: Monteverdi's L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA (Houston Grand Opera); Handel's PARTENOPE (Göttingen Handel Festival, Germany); Rameau's ZÉPHYRE (Philharmonia Baroque, San Francisco); Purcell's DIDO AND AENEAS (Apollo's Fire, Cleveland); Rauzzini's PIRAMO E TISBE (Capella Savaria, Hungary), and Handel's SEMELE (Handel and Haydn Society, Boston).

Concert highlights include Benjamin Britten's LES ILLUMINATIONS (Talisker Players, Toronto), Aaron Copland's POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON (Memphis Symphony), and Respighi's IL TRAMONTO with the St. Lawrence String Quartet.

Ms. Hall has sung the oratorio masterworks of Bach, Handel, Schubert and Mozart with renowned organizations such as the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Les Violons du Roi, Tafelmusik, and the Toronto Symphony.

Toronto audiences have enjoyed Ms. Hall's performances in Rameau's HIPPOLYTE ET ARICIE and Handel's ORLANDO for VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert, as well as Pamina in THE MAGIC FLUTE, and Zerlina in DON GIOVANNI for Opera Atelier, with whom she also performed Susanna in THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, in Tokyo. She has sung leading roles in historic venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, the Palace of Versailles, and the Opera Comique de Paris.

A proud Newfoundlander, Ms. Hall's first love is folk music. With Ensemble La Nef of Montréal she has created many projects which build on her Celtic roots, including 3 CD'S and a folk masque entitled “The Maid of Newfoundland”. SACRUM MYSTERIUM, her Christmas concert and with Apollo's Fire (Cleveland) has received rave reviews and toured to sold out audiences across the United States.

She regularly tours and performs with her husband, guitarist Bernard Farley.

BRAHM GOLDHAMER (piano)

Brahm Goldhamer is one of Toronto's most experienced and respected accompanists and vocal coaches. He has performed across Canada, the U.S. and Europe, and is in great demand as a recital collaborator with some of Canada's most celebrated soloists. For thirty-eight years he was a faculty member of the Royal Conservatory of Music and the Glenn Gould School, where in addition to his studio coaching and classroom teaching, he was the principal répétiteur of the Spring Opera Program. His performances include work with Opera in Concert, Toronto Operetta Theatre, CBC's Music Around Us, the Elora Festival, Debut Atlantic. He was nominated for a Dora Award for Best Musical Direction following his work with Comus Music Theatre.

Mr. Goldhamer worked in Italy as music director and vocal coach in a variety of educational settings and summer music festivals, including “Oberlin at Casalmaggiore” and “Flagstaff in Fidenza.” For forty years he worked as choral director at various Toronto synagogues.

FRANK HORVAT (composer)

Multi-genre composer, Frank Horvat, weaves stories with his melodies, harmonizing emotions and captivating audiences around the globe. With an uncommon ability to transcend boundaries and connect deeply with the human spirit, his compositions take us on an exhilarating journey through the depths of emotion. Horvat is one of the most inventive songwriters to come out of the contemporary scene in Canada (WholeNote Magazine).

Frank Horvat explores a myriad of themes, ranging from love to the environment and mental health. In a world that moves at breakneck speed, his music serves as a sanctuary, inviting audiences to pause, reflect, and find solace. With each note, he shares deeply personal stories, while leaving ample room for listeners to contemplate their own. Horvat has carved a niche for himself among today's composers, wearing his fragile heart on his sleeve (CBC Classical).

Horvat's music has graced over twenty albums, showcasing his versatility across labels such as ATMA Classique, Azul Music, Leaf Music and Centrediscs. Delve into his latest projects at frankhorvat.com.

ACADEMY AWARDS OF EXPENDABLE

(words by Susan Truxell Sauter, excerpt from poem)

This text serves as an ideal choice for an opening song, as it skillfully portrays grandiose and vivid imagery, all the while employing a sardonic tone to deliver a striking commentary on the intricate relationship shared between society and the oil and gas industry.

Applause now.

Raise your bedecked arms
bedazzled with Tiffany
diamond time baubles, watch
over collapsed ground,
throw back black
water toasts, etch the effluvia
onto your creamy, downy skin,
drip into your fluffed crevasses,
your Ralph-Laurened satined gowns.
Finish your Marcellus martinis.

I want to thank the titans of industry,
my producers, the consumers, the
stunning script,
the neighbors who sold out,
the directors of apocalypse. I share
this award with all, including the
tongue-tied board members who sat at the table
of the largest mining disaster
in recent history. And, for you,
the audience so adorned,
let me thank: fur-bearing animals
for dying, the canaries too,
as our oxygen thins worldwide.

SEDUCTION

(words by Mary Heather Noble, excerpt from original text)

After the extravagance of the first song, I aimed for this second one to adopt a lighter, friendly feel. It narrates the tale of a charming young man employed by Big Oil, paying a visit to a landowner in his quest to persuade them to permit fracking on their property – a classic 'making-a-deal-with-the-devil' narrative.

Young man sitting on your mother's flowered couch, polite and respectful. Talking about your future, security and the wealth of opportunities to come. Though you barely know him, you are taken with his outsider accent, his pressed polo shirt with the company logo over his heart. The way he folds his long fingers around your mother's chipped coffee mug, as the steam from the brew dances all around his lips-which keep assuring you that it will be safe. He uses words like exploration and independence. He speaks of recovery in a way that means returning to a healthy state of being.

You'll remember those moving lips when the trucks come rumbling hour after hour, again and again, and the midnight light from the drill passes through your bedroom curtains, the clanging and pounding invading the silence of your room. You'll remember those promises as you try to ignore the chemical veil and swallow the anxiety seeping into your well. You won't know what they are taking till you unlock the gate and let them in, forcing, drilling, injecting God-knows-what into God-knows-where, you'll think you're doing this for your future. You'll be fooled by the softness of what they promise. There's a persistent sting to innocence lost, a trace of diesel in the air.

DIGGING

(words by Michelle Donahue, edited poem)

The first of three epic songs within the cycle, I wanted this one to build dramatically, symbolizing the profound transformation we experience on our life journey – a progression from viewing life with innocent childlike wonder to wielding the formidable ability to unleash widescale devastation.

As a child I shoved my hands in dirt, I unearthed
worms, watched their writhing bodies.

I studied each segment, I gave them names, genders,
I imbued life to such creatures.

I learned and uncovered what was beneath.
Now our explorations have expanded:

Dinosaur bones, decayed, prehistoric
plants turned thick black & settled deep.

We create horizontal veins, pump water,
high pressure, to extract the black fuel,

I look at the earth's horizon, the red of flesh,
splashed, bone yellow, the sun threatening
to slip beneath that edge.

Now: a pumpjack, drilling rig
oil moved from rock pores to wells.

Once, I held a worm in my palm, its head severed
by metal shovel, my inexpert hand.

It jerked and jerked.
I kept waiting for it to stop.

AN ORBITAL TOUR OF CITIES AT NIGHT

(words by Rachel Morgan, edited poem)

This tender and contemplative song establishes a link between the energy we routinely utilize in our daily lives and the methods employed to generate it. I aimed for the song to adopt a subtly poignant tone, mirroring the unassuming little actions within a household, while lamenting the harm inflicted by the production of the energy we often needlessly consume.

Lividity of light
tells what gas man burns to prolong
the day. One lamp left on, so dark
homes are not entered. An email
fills the bedroom, a floodlight's sleep.
Even from distance, a fishing boat's
All-'round white light anchors to space.

In the fracking fields burn-off glows.
It's true the wheat glows.

EARTH ELEGY

(words by Stephanie Schultz, from *Earth Elegy* section III)

This contemplative song delves into the profound impact that fracking exacts on our physical well-being and mental health.

What water do we have left?
Just the kind that lights on fire
and whose scent can make us pass out.
The kind that is no longer H₂O.
It burns our brains and lungs
and changes who we are.
It gets us thinking,
It gets us thinking about wants and needs,
the here and now and not the future,
the here and now and not the future.
It alters our senses and rids us of any we had before.
We start to think this fracking is okay.

LULLABY IN FRACKTOWN

(words by Lilace Mellin Guignard)

A vulnerable and heartfelt song that paints a picture of a mother's comforting embrace as she reassures and consoles her young child. In this lyrical canvas, childlike innocence and imagery harmonize with the poignant reality that the child's father, an oil and gas worker, finds himself in a necessary role to provide for their family.

Child, when you're sad put on your blue shoes.
You know that Mama loves you lollipops
and Daddy still has a job to lose.

So put on a party hat. We'll play the kazoos
louder and louder from the mountaintop
and dance the polka with pink kangaroos,
dolphin choirs singing "flip-flop, flip-flop."
Hey, Daddy still has a job to lose —

Don't be afraid. Close your eyes,
because today our suns have flared and dropped.
Tomorrow when you wake, put on your blue shoes.

Eat a good breakfast. Be good in school.
Good boys go to college goody gumdrops
One day too you'll have a job to lose.

Waste trucks clatter by as the gray bird coos.
Flames pour forth when the faucet's unstopped.
Child, when you're sad put on your blue shoes.
For now, Daddy still has a job to lose.

AG LAND

(words by Wayne Mennecke, edited poem)

This song serves as a character study of a 'roughneck' oil and gas worker, quietly seated in a bar. The narrator watches this person with a sense of admiration, although their fascination is layered with complexity. As a result, the song's rhythm alternates between a flirtatious swing beat and a somber, steady meter to capture the intricate allure of the scene.

The gentleman
roughneck seated
at the bar
wears crude oil
under his cuticles
and after days
of throwing tongs,
tool pushing deep discoveries
from beneath the
North Dakota wheat,
finally wraps himself
'round a cold Coors Light.

The Bakken shale oil
pervades underground,
converting the blue
and brown wide open space
into impromptu trailer parks—
home base for extra pairs
of steel-toed boots and
coveralls.

An earthy sigh
through brown
afternoon
teeth is felt in his heavy grunt

and storms of rare periodicity
severe with rain
drench the leather hills
with a geographic tongue

tagging the rich territory
and the cold smell
of clotted earth
on ev'ry inch
of this man's being.

PROPHECY

(words by Mark Trechok, edited poem)

As the second of three epic songs in the cycle, this song commences with a triumphant piano fanfare reminiscent of the grandeur found at an Olympic opening ceremony. As the voice joins in, it delivers a stately anthem, albeit tinged with a subtle mockery that mirrors the polished corporate image often projected by the oil and gas industry. Gradually, the song takes on an ominous and foreboding tone, vividly describing the harsh realities of the destruction wrought by Big Oil. The piano steadily escalates in intensity, embracing dissonance to convey the horrors of this devastation. The song concludes with a macabre twist on the earlier prideful anthem, its tone solemn as it quotes a biblical verse that forewarns of an apocalyptic future, offering a chilling reflection on the world's trajectory.

North of the lake the Colossus of Oil
holds aloft a fireball of gas
like an Olympic torch wafting sulfur
to salute the record-breaking pumpers.

Midnight, the trucks still rumbling
down the two-lanes,
gas flares in the distance like untended bonfires,
six, no seven to the west,
no time to let our gaze linger,
we roll through diesel-powered traffic
past colossus and its eternal flame.

Headlights appear in our lane.
We slow to the shoulder
like subjects curtseying, obeisance.

At the end of the Bible,
it says "night shall be no more."
They will need no light of lamp or sun."

FOR MY DAUGHTER

(by Michelle Regalado Deatruck, from poem of the same name)

This is another song that portrays a mother's deep contemplation, this time focused on the weighty consequences her actions may inflict upon her child's future. She grapples with the enduring impact of her choices, should she persist in neglecting the environment in the present.

When I sweat in a Midwest January
and wish to God it was a hot flash but know
it's greenhouse gasses.
Uranium seas rained on by iodine skies.
Sunday drives, see the Kalamazoo shimmer
spills of bitumen, kills of brown trout,
dioxin wells irrigate the emerald fields,
farmhouses where fracking flames
flow from kitchen taps. I think of you then, grown
old long after I'm gone, and wonder what you'll
remember--
that day last September, cold apples
and clear water, still-sweet grass, and the paper
plates, plastic cups, how we threw away
the whole green and generous world
and left you there.

SHIFT

(words by Wayne Mennecke, edited poem)

This is the second comprehensive musical character study within the cycle, though this time it centers around a fellow science enthusiast and friend. In the first half of the song, we celebrate their remarkable sense of discovery and intelligence. However, as the song progresses, a palpable shift occurs. Some time later, we observe our subject's demeanor darken,

SHIFT (cont'd)

their once vibrant joy for life diminished. Why? It is the melancholic consequence of their current occupation, working for Big Oil, and the profound toll it exacts on the human spirit.

We meet in the garage
At his lab, a bench of broken projects and rough drafts.

The self-taught paleontologist shows
how to make resin casts of dinosaur bones.

He uses towers of Legos
Framing a fossil within the bricks.

then pours silicon,
viscid like melted cheese

down into the column. Four hours later
the bone is released from the negative

and color tinted resin mixed with catalyst
is poured into silicon mold.

In four minutes the resin hardens
as a perfect copy of the original fossil.

This he imparts on us
educator to educators

volunteer to volunteers
inventor to disciples.

We meet at the bar years later.
He works the Bakken dark pools now

trading fossils for fracked oil, a guaranteed payday
plying at towers, extracting cores

fracturing shale,
still an agent of discovery

SHIFT (cont'd)

detached from career
family and ex-wife.

Our group glorifies new dig sites,
chats up current paleo research

and future publications,
but tonight he sits

curing with surrender
at the bar's edge

eyes searching out rapture
in an open-faced grilled cheese
sandwich.

IT WAS AN OCTOBER DAY

(words by Christine Pennylegion, edited poem)

I saw this emotional verse as an ideal follow-up to the second song, *Seduction*. It poignantly captures the prevalent experience of landowners who, after striking deals with Big Oil to permit fracking on their land, find themselves betrayed, violated, and in financial hardship. The vocals in this lament are profoundly heartfelt and unrestrained, while the piano accompaniment remains sparse, allowing the haunting emptiness of the situation to fully resonate.

It was an October day
you pulled me out of the group,
suggested an alternate route,
broke my heart as casually
as you'd toss a quarter to a beggar.

It was an October day
here's me, walking you home,
holding out my begging-bowl
for some crumb of your affection.

It was an October day
here's you, blithely unseeing.

HOMELAND SECURITY

(by Alison Hawthorne Deming, from poem of the same name.
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The final epic song in the cycle encapsulates the devastation wrought by extracting oil from the earth while resolutely asserting the necessity of military discipline to safeguard this plunder. The music resonates with an unwavering sense of pride, underscoring the belief that our magnificent planet is a treasure to be cherished and preserved.

Finding my way
into the fray over fracking—
wild card it seems now that
I've gone so far out into space.
No one wants to hear again
about flaming faucets
exploited towns and the
heartland riddled with quakes
water poisoned and stuck back
in the ground to find its way home.
Space might be the only way
to see what kind of sky we need,
how the Great Carbonation
is flipping the way
Earth does or doesn't do life.
We say "blue marble" we say
"Mother Earth" we say "home."
The astronaut says "Beautiful."
Earth from space says "Keep me."
Homeland Security means
leave it in the ground. Lock it up
with soldiers standing guard
cover it with grassland and trees.

We say "blue marble" we say
"Mother Earth" we say "home."

PHOENIX RISING

(words by Kathleen Burke, excerpt from poem)

This serves as the epilogue to the cycle. It foresees a world destroyed by flames. Is it a foreshadowing of a future yet to come, or have we already arrived at this dire juncture? Instead of succumbing to sorrow over this outcome, this piece offers a serene reflection on the prospect of ecological and spiritual rebirth—a way for humanity to move forward.

The world I knew, burned down
I marked my forehead with ash, in sacred remembrance
delve into my soul, into my soul

Like some archeologist, searching for deeper truths
Amid the glory and ruin of this flesh
colourful lives strewn along the ground

Those whose hearts have been broken by loss
And love that remains long after death or most tender caress
Fabled & anonymous sorrows that salt great oceans and seas

To become the phoenix rising
Ember eyes aglow, fire in the heart
Winged warrior, carry my tribe forward,
From its very start.

SONGS

(music by Frank Horvat)

- 01 **ACADEMY AWARDS OF EXPENDABLE** [2:58]
words by Susan Truxell Sauter
- 02 **SEDUCTION** [3:05]
words by Mary Heather Noble
- 03 **DIGGING** [4:22]
words by Michelle Donahue
- 04 **AN ORBITAL TOUR OF CITIES AT NIGHT** [2:19]
words by Rachel Morgan
- 05 **EARTH ELEGY** [3:09]
words by Stephanie Schultz
- 06 **LULLABY IN FRACKTOWN** [4:17]
words by Lilace Mellin Guignard
- 07 **AG LAND** [3:26]
words by Wayne Mennecke
- 08 **PROPHECY** [5:48]
words by Mark Trechok
- 09 **FOR MY DAUGHTER** [3:36]
words by Michelle Regalado Deatrick
- 10 **SHIFT** [4:50]
words by Wayne Mennecke
- 11 **IT WAS AN OCTOBER DAY** [3:24]
words by Christine Pennylegion
- 12 **HOMELAND SECURITY** [3:32]
words by Alison Hawthorne Deming
- 13 **PHOENIX RISING** [4:23]
words by Kathleen Burke

FRACTURES



MEREDITH HALL soprano
BRAHM GOLDHAMER piano

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