



TUESDAYS @ MONK SPACE

presented by

Brightwork
newmusic

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025 8PM

HOLLOW FLAME | ON LETTING GO

WORKS BY AKSHAYA AVRIL TUCKER:

In Whose Mouth, the Stars (2021)

Eclipse Quartet

Hollow Flame (2022)

Eclipse Quartet

Variations on Care (2024)

Benjamin Richard, Bassoon

Eclipse Quartet

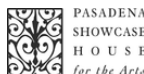
Kaisé Katé / Restless (2025, World Premiere)

*composed by Tucker, with Saavani Thigale

Saavani Thigale, Hindustani voice

Eclipse Quartet

Brightwork newmusic is generously supported in part by:





TUESDAYS @ MONK SPACE

presented by

Brightwork
newmusic

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025 8PM

HOLLOW FLAME | ON LETTING GO

WORKS BY ANUJ BHUTANI:

To the Lighthouse (2019)

Shalini Vijayan, violin

On Letting Go (2021)

Ashley Walters, cello

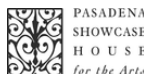
Manu (2025)

Anuj Bhutani, voice

Shalini Vijayan, violin

Jeremy Dávalos, trumpet

Brightwork newmusic is generously supported in part by:





PROGRAM NOTES

In Whose Mouth, the Stars (2021)

The story goes that when Krishna, the legendary incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was a child, he once was caught eating sand. Concerned, his mother Yashoda scolded him and cried his mouth open. There, instead of dirt, she beheld the entire universe and beyond, with all its galaxies, with every element of the earth, the weather, the human mind and its senses, her own village and she herself.

This piece was inspired by that fascinating moment, told in the Bhagavata Purana. I imagined it through in different melodic placements of Raag Charukeshi -- a raag that holds longing, tension, transcendence -- with help from the wonderful variety of timbres and ranges that these instruments produce. My goal in retelling this story, sonically, involved the manipulation of sound "perspective," the extremes of near and far -- holding both illusion and imagination.

This work was originally written for string trio. The arrangement for string quartet was commissioned by the Carpe Diem String Quartet.

Hollow Flame (2022)

This work was co-commissioned by Bagaduce Music and Carnegie Hall for Brooklyn Rider's 2022 commissioning project, 'The Four Elements,' in which commissioned works allude to earth, air, fire and water. Hollow Flame meditates on fire.

Here in California, fire is not just at the doorstep; it's burning our home. From the 2018 Camp fire, to the 2025 Los Angeles fires, 'fire season' is becoming a permanent, horrific reality in this state. Drought, wildfire, choking smoke, poor air and water quality, and all the massive personal losses due to fire... It's too much to bear. All these conditions are predicted to worsen as the planet warms: the result of our ruling classes choosing profit over human life every single day.

I started the research phase of this project in 2020/2021. An important part of that process has been my participation in "Composing Earth," a 2-year program at the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. Without being a part of this program, I'm not sure I would have been able to write this piece. It was like a book club for artists, or a support group for all the difficult feelings the climate crisis alights in us: grief, fear, anger. Researching this topic, alone at first, felt extremely isolating. But with a group, however small, we could share our experiences, and know that - no, we aren't crazy - for feeling sad, mad, or numbed, or hollowed out.

My string quartet, Hollow Flame is like a journal entry, of moments recorded over many months -- in which I try to grapple with what is happening -- the loss of so much, from ancient, old-growth forests to human lives, let alone human health and the well-being of our ecosystems. It is an attempt to understand my own numbness, my own inability to even form words when I try to talk about it.

Hollow Flame received a University of Southern California Thornton Gadye J. Moss Music Award in May 2023.



Variations on Care (2024)

Variations on Care is one in a series of works that embody the idea of “care”: from yearning to care for someone who won’t (or can’t) care for themselves; to my attempts to care for my own soul, within the limits of my chronically-ill body; to... well, imagining what our world would look like if we truly cared for everyone in our communities, and were supported, thus, in return.

The original version of this piece, for solo bassoon, was commissioned by Kara LaMoure. While listening to the finished solo piece, I began to imagine a resonant body of string sounds supporting the solo melody. This fantasy became the new version of the piece. When the bassoon calls out, the strings echo in response, like the chambers of a cathedral. In this version, what had been a meditation on care becomes a dialogue; a community in conversation about how they might better care for one another.

Kaisé Katé / Restless (2025)

Kaisé Katé / Restless is a fantasy on a bandish (short composition) by acclaimed vocalist Saili Oak, in the style of North Indian (Hindustani) classical vocal music, of the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana. In creating the piece, I worked closely with my collaborator Saavani Thigale, Saili Oak’s student, to create a structure that would allow for idiomatic improvisation within the composed string writing. The orchestration evokes a variety of colors that comprise Raag Bageshri, or at least how I hear (and feel) Raag Bageshri, with its characteristic sense of meditative yearning. The work begins with an alaap (slow improvisation), in which each note in the raag is introduced, like stars gradually appearing in the sky at nightfall. After introducing the bandish, the work increases in speed and complexity.

The Hindi text roughly translates to: "How do I spend my days and nights without my love? / Without my love I'm going crazy; / without my love, I can't live; / without them I am restless."

Text, by Saili Oak:

Kaise kate din raina

Piya bin bawari

Un bin lage na jiya

Mora nahi pare chain



PROGRAM NOTES

To the Lighthouse (2019)

“She felt... how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach.”

- Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*

On Letting Go (2021)

“As the same thing in us is living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old. For these things having changed around are those, and conversely those having changed around are these.”

- Heraclitus, ~500 BCE

Manu (2025)

Manu, currently under commission from Beth Morrison Projects, is an experimental vocal-theater work in-progress featuring myself as composer/performer/librettist, along with a small instrumental ensemble, electronics, staging and film. The title refers both to a nickname my parents gave me at birth, and to a "Noah and the Arc"-type figure in Hinduism. Through *manu*, the mythical and the personal are woven together as I embark on a journey to understand my own identity as first-generation Indian-American.



COMPOSER BIOS

Akshaya Avril Tucker (she/they) is a composer who draws inspiration from the music and dance traditions of South Asia, having trained as a cellist and Odissi dancer from a young age. Their music has been called “affirming” (The Washington Post), “a dialogue of seductive charm” (San Francisco Chronicle), and “beautiful, ruminative” (Oregon ArtsWatch). Akshaya’s music often explores meditative and gestural soundscapes, aimed at exploring personal and collective agency, in connection with disability, the climate crisis and our relationships to one another. She is currently the composer-in-residence at the Willamette Valley Chamber Music Festival and the WindSync Onstage-Offstage Chamber Music Festival, and Instructor of Composition at Interlochen Arts Camp (2025).



Akshaya has received commissions from Brooklyn Rider, Carnegie Hall, Piano Spheres, The Living Earth Show, WindSync, the Fry Street Quartet, Carpe Diem String Quartet, invoke, Thalea String Quartet, Johnny Gandelsman, Joshua Roman, Lucia Lin and many more. Her music has been performed by A Far Cry, members of the Orchestra of St. Luke’s and the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Salastina, Tallā Rouge Duo, among others. They are currently pursuing their D.M.A. in Composition at the University of Southern California.



Described as “a force multiplier with more talents than time” (PATRON Magazine), “with a special gift for taking the personal and making it universal” (Beth Morrison, Opera Wire), **Anuj Bhutani** is a quickly emerging composer, performer, vocalist, and producer whose music is “alternately celestial and dark” (John Schaefer, WNYC New Sounds), often features visceral grooves; ethereal, meditative spaces; a combination of acoustic instruments and electronics, narrative depth, and genre-fluidity. He’s won Chamber Music America’s Classical Commissioning Grant, an ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, 1st prize in Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble’s Emerging Composer Competition and Verdigris Ensemble’s ION Composer Competition among others.

Bhutani has been selected for American Composer’s Orchestra’s Earshot, NewAm Composer’s Lab, and Banff Centre’s Evolution: Classical. He earned his master’s degree at University of Southern California and his bachelor’s degree at his university of North Texas. His previous teachers have included Andrew Norman, Ted Hearne, Camae Ayewa (Moor Mother), Joseph Klein, Andrew May, Sungji Hong, Drew Schnurr, and UNT Composer-in-Residence Bruce Broughton.