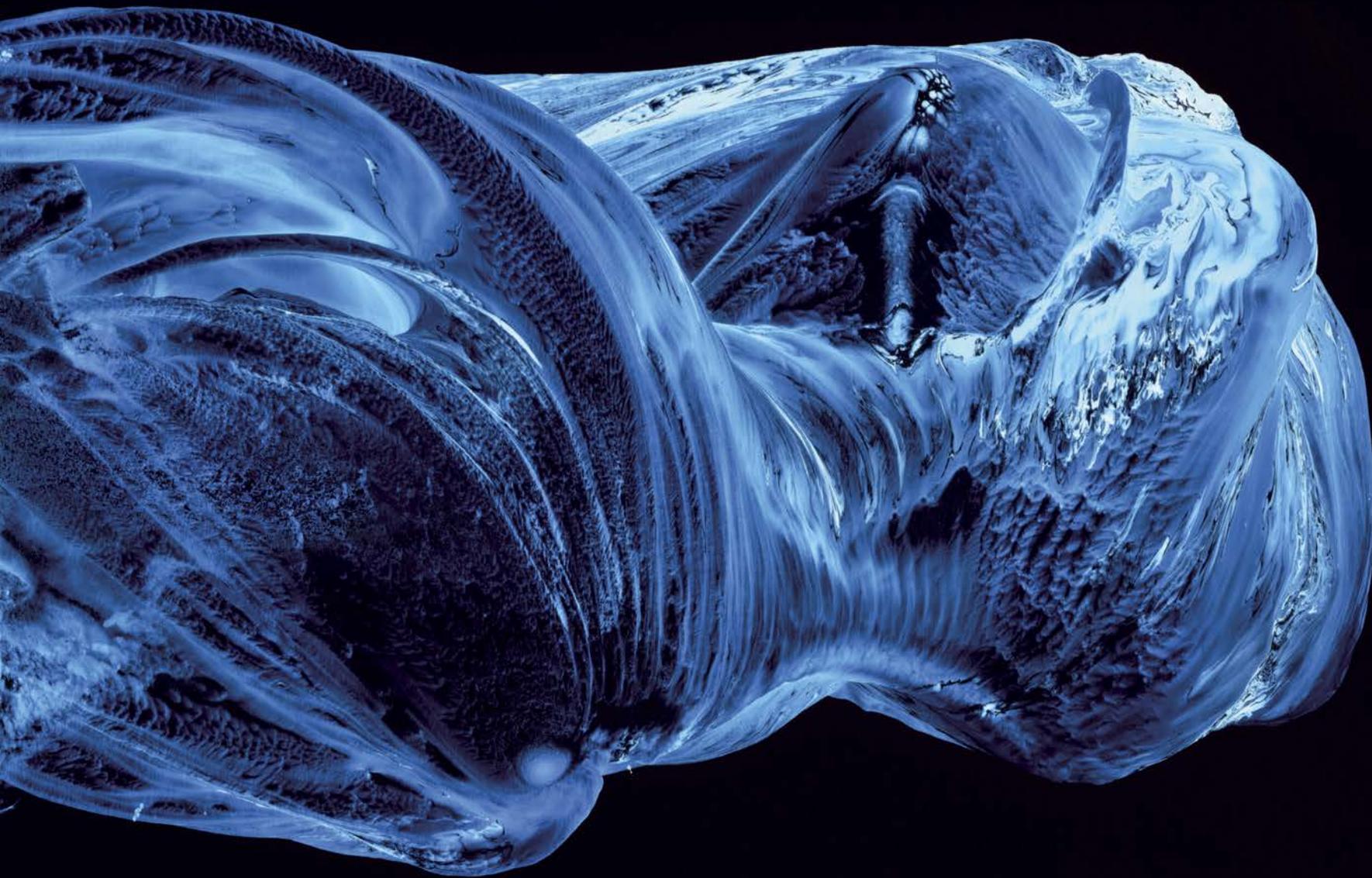
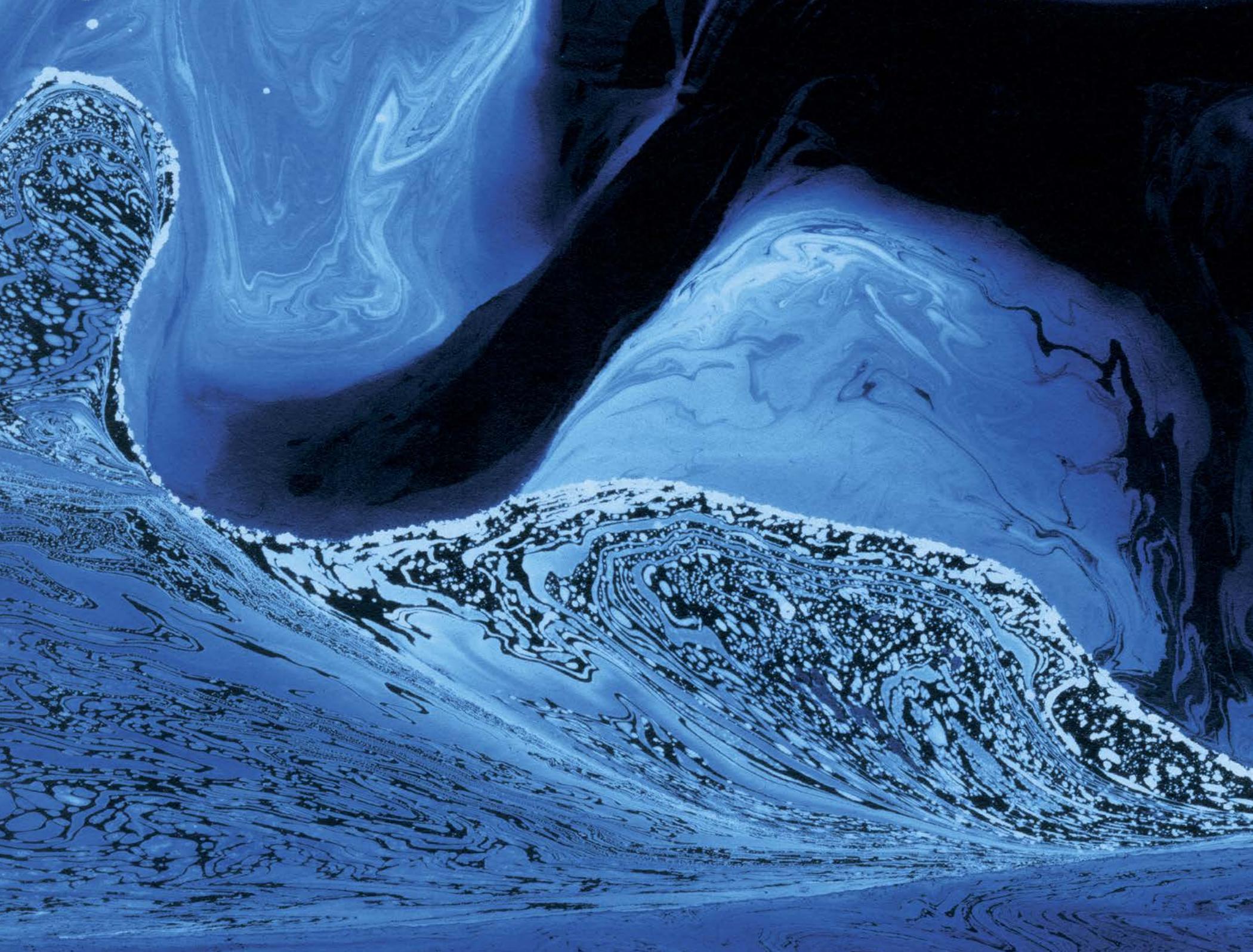


MICHAEL GORDON RUSHES





**PERFORMED BY THE RUSHES ENSEMBLE:**

**Dana Jessen, Saxton Rose, Rachael Elliott, Jeffrey Lyman, Lynn Hileman, Maya Stone, Michael Harley**



## MICHAEL GORDON RUSHES

Years ago I pursed my lips and blew into a bassoon, and felt the entire instrument buzz as I droned on the very bottom note, a B flat. I held the long conical piece of wood in my hands with admiration — it was covered with what looked like a New York City subway map of shiny metal keys running every which way. The bassoon had left and it was primal — the two reeds vibrating against each other produced a poignant and mournful sound.

It all came back to me on a cold sunny Thursday in January 2011. Five bassoonists set up in my living room. Along with 25 other bassoonists from far and wide, they had banded together and asked me to write a new piece. I'm not sure any of them imagined that my response would be an hour-long work for seven bassoons. In earlier conversations with Dana Jessen, the American bassoonist who initiated this project, I had asked to look at all the influential bassoon music written in the 20th century. Dana showed up with just a small pile of music. I felt a little bit like Magellan. I knew there were worlds to find if I could just set sail.

During that Thursday afternoon, we explored a myriad of sounds and my living room was filled with an exquisite buzzing of dark tones. I was particularly drawn to the short percussive attacks by all the bassoons in counterpoint with each other. The texture had the aural effect of a Seurat painting, and I began to write for the instruments as if they were participants in an extreme sport — a non-stop barrage of ethereal rapid-fire points of sound that seamlessly shifted from one instrument to the next. This architectural movement of sound, which runs throughout the

entire piece of music, is a technique that I first used in *Timber*, a percussion work for six amplified simantras. I imagined entering these waves of moving sound and embarking on a journey through a stark monochromatic landscape that slowly revealed its hidden colors.

The score, with tens of thousand of notes, looks a bit like an Escher drawing or a very long weaving pattern for a loom. In June 2012, in Edisto Island, South Carolina, I met with the seven bassoonists of the newly formed Rushes Ensemble. As we rehearsed, I thought that the piece had become like the thick river winding its way through the marshes and reedy growth surrounding us. I had already settled on the name *Rushes*, both for its reference to the reeds and to capture the mental state it produced. Now, with the seven bassoonists fully immersed in the music, I felt the primordial flow of sound harkening back to the very first reeds.

— Michael Gordon, NYC, January 2014



Recorded and produced by Argeo Ascani at **EMPAC** – the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY.

Recorded between September 12-14, 2012 in the Concert Hall at EMPAC.

ENGINEERS: Jeffrey Svatek, Stephen McLaughlin

COMPOSITION: Michael Gordon

Michael Gordon's music is published by Red Poppy, Ltd. and administered worldwide by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). For more information visit [michaelgordonmusic.com](http://michaelgordonmusic.com)

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BASSOONS PHOTO: Kris Qua

**MANY THANKS TO OUR ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:**

Elisabeth & Paul Babcock, Susan Bienkowski, Werner deFoe, Martha Elliott, Rachael Elliott, Robert Fink, Linda Graff, Cheryl Lew, Andres Luz, Steve Reich and Jens-Kristian Zinck.

*Rushes* was commissioned by the New Music Bassoon Commissioning Fund with generous support from the following bassoonists: Alban Wesly, Annie Lyle, Benjamin Kamins, Benjamin Coelho, Bram van Sambeek, Carolyn Beck, Christin Schillinger, Dana Jessen, David Wells, Evan Kuhlmann, Hannah Ross, Jamie Leigh Sampson, Javier Rodriguez, Jeffrey Lyman, Julie Feves, Kristin Wolfe Jensen, Lynn Hileman, Matthias Kronsteiner, Maya Stone, Michael Kroth, Michael Harley, Nadina Mackie Jackson, Nathaniel Zeisler, Peter Kolkay, Peter Van Zandt Lane, Rachael Elliott, Rebekah Heller, Richard Ramey, Robert Glassburner, Saxton Rose.

Thanks to Johannes Goebel, Argeo Ascani, Johnny Parker, Lloyd and Pam Bray, Bubba Foy, Sylvia Stoetzer, Peter Robles, Mike McCurdy, Javier Rodriguez, Rebekah Heller, Amanda Ameer, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, Suzanne Bocanegra, everyone at Cantaloupe Music, everyone at Bang on a Can, Frog and Toad.

*Rushes* is meant to be a continuous listening experience.

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