



Horizon Line
Robert Honstein

Spanning over a decade of creative work, the pieces on this album reflect my dual fascination with the string quartet and the concept of landscape. These works represent years of collaboration with cherished colleagues and dear friends. For their commitment, insight, and dedication, I am forever grateful.

I have always been drawn to nature—not just as a source of wonder, but also as a place of fear, discomfort, and even irritation. Nature is a blank slate; it is a neutral space that nonetheless serves as a mirror to our own quest for meaning. This paradox lies at the heart of the “pastoral.” While the pastoral in art is often a byproduct of urban longing—a desire to escape man-made structures—in this collection, I search for a new understanding of the concept. Here, the pastoral becomes a psychological space, bound only by projections of our mind.

In this paradigm, the Horizon Line represents the limit of our vision: the point where immediate surroundings meet the infinite, and the known meets the unknown. Whether drawn by the fluorescent ceiling of a sprawling warehouse or the frozen edge of the Arctic tundra, the horizon orients us, allowing us to situate ourselves within the landscapes we inhabit.

Continuous Interior

In *Continuous Interior* (2022), the metallic tones of the vibraphone blend with the flickering resonances of the quartet to evoke an “urban pastoral.” The vast, climate-controlled expanses of modern life—shopping malls, transit hubs, silent warehouses—engender a new kind of sublime. We feel the grotesque artificiality of these spaces, yet we are struck by a sense of awe as we lose ourselves in their immense scale.

Bergamot Quartet and Abby Fisher navigate the work’s pulsing contours with relentless precision, drawing out shifting lines and harmonies across synthetic landscapes. Here, the horizon is fixed and artificial, yet it still offers a strange and meditative allure.



The Great Marsh

With *The Great Marsh*, we arrive at a more traditional pastoral. Completed in 2016, the music adopts a lyricism reminiscent of early landscape painters, evoking the organic fragility of an estuarial ecosystem along Boston's North Shore. Moving away from the metallic interiors of the previous work, this piece returns to nature as a source of poetic solace, stillness, and rejuvenation.

Performed with elegance and power by Jacques Lee Wood, Alyssa Wang, Beste Tiknaz Modiri, and Kiyoshi Hayashi, the quartet sketches the marsh's life cycle across four movements: the raucous energy of *Salt Hay*, the heavy stillness of *Mudflats*, the delicate song of the *Seaside Sparrow*, and the undulating power of the *Estuary*.

Arctic

Finally, the album turns toward the extremes of the North. Inspired by the photography of Chris McCaw, *Arctic* pushes the pastoral sensibility to its breaking point. We leave the warm embrace of the marsh's tidal waters and enter a vast, unyielding tundra defined by extremes of weather, exposure, and light.

Fueled by the fearless Mivos Quartet, the relentless, bright energy of *Midnight Sun* stands in stark contrast to the bleak chill of *Polar Night*. Composed in 2013, this is the oldest work on the album and, in many ways, represents the beginning of my fascination with the string quartet. Here, the horizon becomes absolute—a sublimation of our identity into the vast, indifferent landscape.

—Robert Honstein

TRACKS 1–3

Performed by Abby Fisher and Bergamot Quartet
(Ledah Finck, Sarah Thomas, Amy Tan, Irene Han)

Recorded June 25, 2023

Bunker Studio, Brooklyn, NY

Engineered, Edited, Mixed by Mike Tierney

TRACKS 4–7

Performed by Jacques Lee Wood, Alyssa Wang,
Beste Tiknaz Modiri, and Kiyoshi Hayashi

Recorded January 15, 2025

Futura Recordings, Boston, MA

Engineered, Edited, Mixed by Mike Tierney

TRACKS 9–10

Performed by Mivos Quartet (Olivia De Prato,
Joshua Modney, Victor Lowrie, Mariel Roberts)

Recorded June 13, 2015

Oktaven Audio. Yonkers, NY

Engineered, Edited, Mixed by Ryan Streber

TRACKS 1–7

Produced by Mike Tierney and Robert Honstein

TRACKS 9–10


Produced by Ryan Streber and Robert Honstein

Mastered by Ryan Streber

Design by Greystudio

Artwork by Chris McCaw, *Sunburned GSP#487*

Liner Notes by Robert Honstein



roberthonstein.com
newfocusrecordings.com
© & © 2026 Robert Honstein,
All Rights Reserved.