

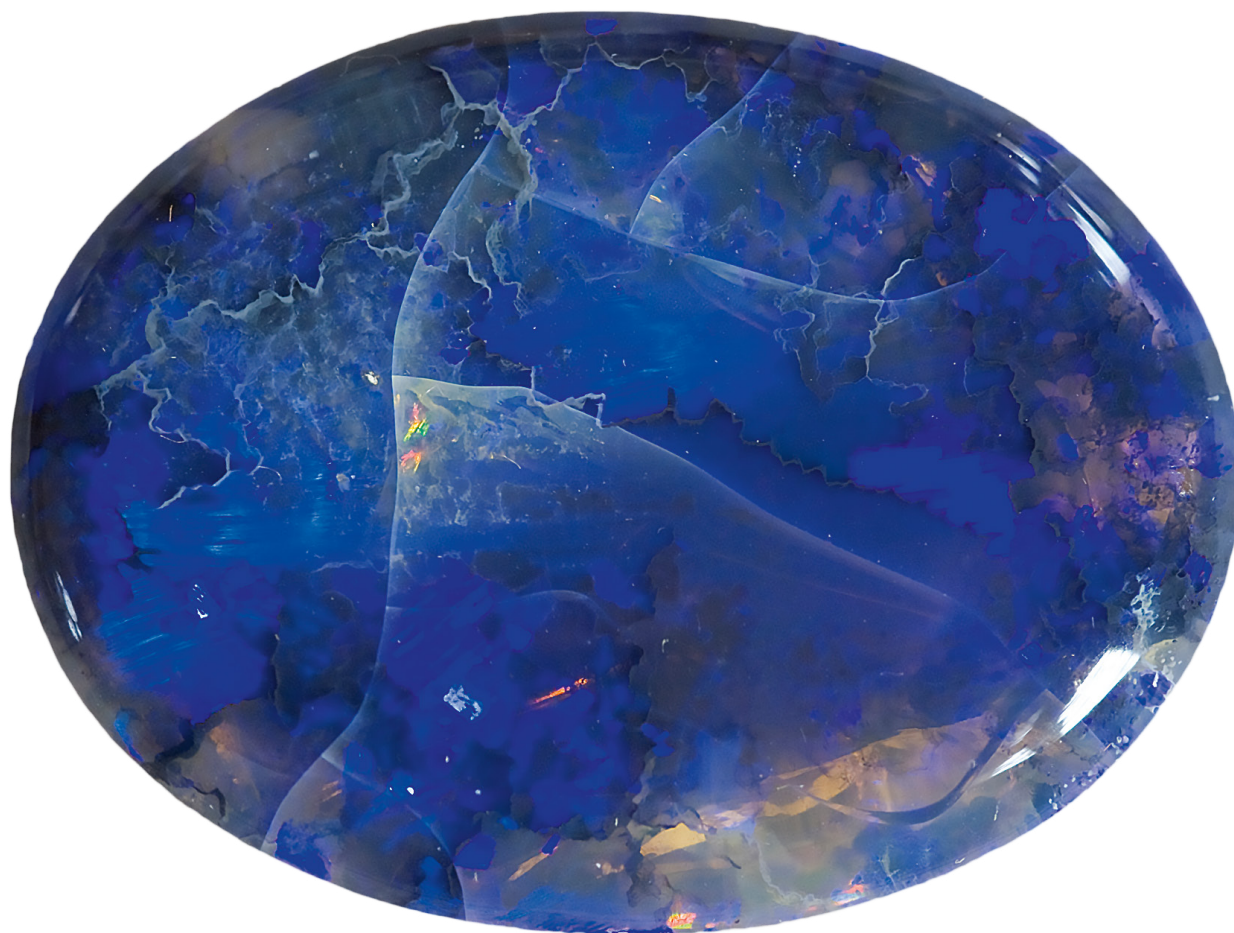


Bluetongue

Australian Guitar Quartets

CHARLTON • HOUGHTON
KATS-CHERNIN • WESTLAKE

Guitar Trek



Bluetongue

Australian Guitar Quartets

Nigel WESTLAKE (b. 1958)

Six Fish (2003)

15:25

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Guitarfish | 2:13 |
| 2 | II. Sunfish | 3:29 |
| 3 | III. Spangled Emperor | 1:16 |
| 4 | IV. Sling-Jaw Wrasse | 1:55 |
| 5 | V. Leafy Sea Dragon | 2:33 |
| 6 | VI. Flying Fish | 3:57 |

Richard CHARLTON (b. 1955)

Five Tails in Cold Blood (Guitar Quartet No. 8) (2017) *

15:02

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. Shingleback | 3:03 |
| 8 | II. Lace Monitor | 3:17 |
| 9 | III. Manta Ray Ballet | 2:53 |
| 10 | IV. Water Dragon Dreams | 2:57 |
| 11 | V. Bluetongue | 2:44 |

Phillip HOUGHTON (1954–2017)

Nocturne (1976) (version for guitar quartet, 2002)

3:19

Opals (1993, rev. 1994)

9:42

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|------|
| 13 | I. Black Opal | 2:16 |
| 14 | II. Water Opal | 4:09 |
| 15 | III. White Opal | 3:14 |

	News from Nowhere (1992)	16:39
16	I. FLUX: Being Lost In Long Grass – TRANCE: Seeing The River	7:57
17	II. DRIFT: Slow Boat to Nowhere... Stars on Night Water in the Aqua-Realm	3:02
18	III. ROCKS: The Arrival... and the Rocks Hum and Hover	5:40
19	Wave Radiance (2002) (version for guitar quartet, 2004)	6:24
	Elena KATS-CHERNIN (b. 1957)	
20	Bleached Memories (2001) *	10:05

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

Guitar Trek

Timothy Kain, Standard Guitar 1–11 13–15 19, Treble Guitar 12 16–18 20

Minh Le Hoang, Standard Guitar

**Bradley Kunda, Standard Guitar 7–15, 12 String Guitar 1–6, Treble Guitar 19,
Baritone Guitar 16–18 20**

Matt Withers, Standard Guitar 13–15 19, Bass Guitar 7–12 16–18 20, Dobro 1–6

Guitar Trek gives special thanks to the late Australian luthier Graham Caldersmith OAM for his original conception and design of the Guitar Family. This album is dedicated to both Graham and the late composer Phillip Houghton.

Thanks to Bill McIntyre for the commission of Richard Charlton's *Five Tails in Cold Blood*. Guitar Trek acknowledges the support of funds from the Australia Council, the federal government arts funding body for the commission of Phillip Houghton's *News from Nowhere*, Elena Kats-Chernin's *Bleached Memories* and Nigel Westlake's *Six Fish*.

Thanks to Richard Charlton for the loan of the Graham Caldersmith treble guitar.

Guitar Trek plays standard guitars by Greg Smallman, treble, baritone and bass guitars by Graham Caldersmith and a 12-string guitar by Jim Williams.

Thanks to the generous supporters and fans who made this album possible.

This album was supported by Creative Partnerships Australia through MATCH Lab.

CHARLTON • HOUGHTON • KATS-CHERNIN • WESTLAKE

Bluetongue – Australian Guitar Quartets

Lizards, fish, rocks and waves are not normally seen as the stuff of classical music – unless maybe that music comes from somewhere far off, like Australia.

As urbanised as we are here, nature still holds much sway and fascination, especially in the minds of our creative artists of all kinds.

Nowhere is that link and magnetic pull more evident than in the music of our dear departed friend Phillip Houghton, one of the most original and poetically imaginative guitar composers of any time. This album is both a tribute to him and a showcase for his guitar quartets. Phil's pieces form the core of a programme which also includes works by other eminent Australian composers, Nigel Westlake, Richard Charlton and Elena Kats-Chernin – all of whom are household names in classical music-loving homes here in Oz.

Just like the landscape, plants and animals, even the guitars are a bit different here. So it's no accident Guitar Trek plays Australian-made guitars, which some might say adds a kind of organic quality to the whole thing. In the beginning the group was actually formed

around the instruments. The starting idea was the late luthier Graham Caldersmith's concept of a chamber quartet of guitars that would be much like any other 'family' of instruments such as strings, wind or brass. From that came the group's four different sized, classically integrated treble, standard, baritone and bass guitars that we still play today. Any combination of four guitars is possible and regularly employed, from four standards right through to the full family, and also the occasional use of steel string guitars, depending entirely on the piece at hand, or the fun to be had, as you will hear on the album.

They say that words are best straight from the horse's mouth, and so it is that the notes below are all provided by the composers themselves, either directly or as quotes from the preface to the score.

This is Guitar Trek's seventh album since forming in 1987, and with this one we've gone truly international, so if you're ever down under be sure to drop in and say 'G'day'.

Tim, Minh, Bradley and Matt

Nigel WESTLAKE (b. 1958)
Six Fish (2003)

Being a non-guitarist, it was with trepidation that I accepted a commission from Timothy Kain to write a work for Guitar Trek in 1989, which resulted in *Winter in the Forgotten Valley*. This was my first guitar piece and has since become part of an ever-expanding repertoire of works specifically written for Guitar Trek by a wide variety of Australian composers.

Since then, Tim has been guiding me through the many mysteries surrounding guitar composition, and my works for the instrument are largely the result of his advice, encouragement and enthusiasm.

It was some 14 years after composing *Winter in the Forgotten Valley* that I was commissioned in 2003 by Australian guitar quartet Saffire, with the support of the Australia Council Music Board, to write another quartet, this time resulting in a suite of six contrasting fantasies, each inspired by the curious and exotic qualities of various sea creatures.

When assembling ideas for the piece, the aquatic nature of my subject matter seemed to cry out for some additional colours other than what were available from the standard six-string classical instruments.

Metal strings seemed an appropriate inclusion and, being a big fan of the 12 string work of Ralph Towner and the dirty, eccentric colours of the dobro resonator with its sliding bottleneck, I decided that these instruments

would provide the resources to expand my sound world sufficiently in order to bring my small menagerie of marine creatures to life.

More commonly associated with blues and folk music, these two slightly quirky instruments serve to weave a shimmering metallic glimmer around the primary melodic ideas played by the two classical guitars.

The six movements could be thought of as a collection of miniature colourwash portraits.

- I. **Guitarfish:** The guitarfish is a member of the ray family with an elongated body and a flattened head, appearing a little like a guitar. I've never seen one in the wild, but my discovery that such a fish actually existed seemed reason enough to name one of the movements after it.
- II. **Sunfish:** Sunfish live on a diet that consists of large amounts of jellyfish. Very slow moving, they are the heaviest known bony fish in the world, weighing in at over 1,000 kg and earning their name from their habit of sunbathing on the surface of the water.
- III. **Spangled Emperor:** The spangled emperor is one of the more conventional fish types amongst this collection of beasts. Known also as a snapper, these fish tend to move in schools across coral reefs and sand-bottomed flats, and are commonly seen along the coastline of

tropical northern Australia and up through the Torres Strait.

- IV. **Sling-Jaw Wrasse:** The sling-jaw wrasse is characterised by a protruding mouth that can stretch half its body length in order to catch its prey; a diet of crabs, shrimps, and small fish. The name seemed to suit the raw, bony swamp-blues character of the music.
- V. **Leafy Sea Dragon:** Undoubtedly the most exotic and beautiful of this collection, the leafy sea dragon is a sea horse found along the southern and western coasts of Australia. It is named after the long green leaf-like protrusions that cover its entire body, so it looks for all the world like a

piece of floating seaweed that is propelled through the water by a set of transparent fins.

- VI. **Flying Fish:** Flying fish can make powerful self-propelled leaps out of the water into air, where their long, wing-like fins enable them to glide for considerable distances above the water's surface. This uncommon ability is a thrilling spectacle and a natural defence mechanism to evade predators. I have seen them frequently along the east coast of Australia and always regard their appearance as a good omen.

Nigel Westlake

Richard CHARLTON (b. 1955)
Five Tails in Cold Blood (Guitar Quartet No. 8) (2017)

Five Tails in Cold Blood was commissioned by Bill McIntyre in 2017, for the 30th anniversary of Guitar Trek.

The work is in five short movements, each with the name of an Australian 'cold blooded' animal – an animal with a tail (pun intended?). Four are lizards and one is a sea creature.

While the music is not necessarily descriptive of the animals themselves, I have tried to imbue each movement with a sense of the character and gait of each. The music also has some blues elements within my 'classical pop' style.

The opening *Shingleback* exhibits a lot of scurrying in between moments of trying to outstare you! *Lace Monitor* is the most bluesy and overtly dangerous, and the third movement gives us the graceful gliding of the manta ray on the sea bottom. In the fourth movement, harmonics provide a cascade into which water dragons suddenly appear, and in the last movement the blue tongue lizard opens his mouth, (perhaps in a silent hiss) and lives up to his name!

Richard Charlton

Phillip HOUGHTON (1954–2017)

Nocturne (1976) (version for guitar quartet, 2002)

Nocturne was originally a piano piece written in 1976, a year after the guitar duet *The Mantis and the Moon*, and two years after I started composing in 1974. So it's a very early piece. In 2002 I made a version for Guitar Trek for four guitars, not knowing if it would work or not. In the original piano score I had written a little poem to go with it:

'A beach at dawn
there roams a man
of pale-blue water ...
of pale-blue sand'

Opals (1993, rev. 1994)

The music was inspired by opals themselves and also by *Opal Spirit* (1993), a painting by Australian artist Lyndall Gerlach which brilliantly captures the colour of opal and the colour and spirit of the land in Australia where opal is found.

The black opal is a stone of fantastic colour. Against a dark matrix, electric purples, blues and greens predominate, refract and collide in a fiery rainbow of splinters of brilliant light. Found in black opal is the 'harlequin chequerboard' which describes block patterns of colour which I 'heard' as block patterns of sound. This led me to mark on the score of *Black Opal* 'like a big kalimba'.

You could say opal is made from water, and in the second movement I imagined a

kaleidoscope of floating colours. *Water Opal* was also inspired by *Circe Invidiosa* (1892), a painting by John Waterhouse in which mythological enchantress Circe is depicted holding a crystal bowl of emerald water and casting a spell.

Set against a white matrix, the lighter colours of white opal are brilliant and translucent. Evident in this stone is an effect known as 'pinfire' (glittering points of reds and greens) and the 'rolling flash' which describes the effect of layers of colour that ripple abruptly and sparkle when the stone is moved. In *White Opal* I attempted to represent the 'rolling flash' in layers of cross rhythms. The mood of the movement is bright and bustling.

The opal is the national stone of Australia. *Opals* is dedicated to Lyndall Gerlach.

News from Nowhere (1992)

Nowhere: 'a non-existent or unknown place' / in ancient times, also used to mean Utopia

This work was inspired by a book and a journey. The book, a socio-political fantasy (published in 1891) by William Morris called *News from Nowhere*, planted the seed. The journey, a trek that I undertook into Australia's Far North-East rainforest regions, provided the impetus to begin writing the music. It all seemed interconnected ... a response to nature. Elements

of jazz, rock and ambient music and the indigenous music of certain cultures (especially the music of Australia's Indigenous people, the North American Indians and the music of Africa and Asia) have influenced this piece – as has the humble everyday tuning fork, plus a certain set of Egyptian wind-chimes that break the silence in a particular house in Sydney on windy days.

As well as employing the full guitar family of treble, standard, baritone and bass guitars, the piece also calls for seven tuning forks (tuned in A, C, D and E) which are used in the *TRANCE* section of the first movement as an extension of harmonics to produce a kind of glassy/watery surface. At the end of the last movement, *ROCKS*, coins are used to imitate the mocking laughter of the nature spirit said to inhabit Witches Falls at Mt Tamborine in South-East Queensland.

This work was written with assistance from the Australia Council's Performing Arts Board, and was commissioned by Tim Kain for, and on behalf of the Australian ensemble, Guitar Trek.

Wave Radiance

(2002) (version for guitar quartet, 2004)

Wave Radiance has no melody. It is more like a 'sonic event', where 'halos of overtones' create an atmospheric resonance. At its heart

is a stillness, a morphing or transition of colour, texture and dynamic, where the exchange of sonority becomes like a ballet for the players' hands.

One image that inspired the music was a deep, dark ocean with all kinds of exotically coloured creatures and jellyfish floating silently in and out of view ... drifting like luminous clouds of evanescent colour and light, in a black void, suspended in time and space.

Originally written in 2002 for two guitars, in 2004 I made this four-guitar arrangement for my friends in Guitar Trek.

Phillip Houghton

Bleached Memories (2001)

Bleached Memories was written upon a commission from Guitar Trek and out of the many rich mixes of sound and texture that the four different guitars in this ensemble are capable of producing, I was mostly fascinated by the somewhat harpsichord-like sound, this reminding me of Baroque style and chords. And that is how the piece started, as a sequence of chords, which gradually gained in texture and eventually lead into a rag-style melody. Overall it became a fantasy-type piece which travels through different recurring motifs and times.

Elena Kats-Chernin

Guitar Trek

Timothy Kain, Minh Le Hoang, Bradley Kunda, Matt Withers

The dynamic Australian quartet Guitar Trek was formed in 1987 to launch a guitar family project which has become a major new direction of the guitar's continuing development. Audiences and critics have readily acknowledged the significance of Guitar Trek's work, and the group has been highly acclaimed for the extraordinary energy, assurance and musical quality of its playing. Guitar Trek's guitar family project has involved a unique collaboration over more than 30 years between performers, instrument makers, composers, the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Tall Poppies and most recently, Naxos. Since it began, Guitar Trek has pioneered the construction of several generations of the different-sized guitars that form the guitar family of treble, standard, baritone and bass instruments. Over the years different types of steel string guitars have also been included with many varied combinations of guitars used as the music demands. The new world of musical possibilities opened up by the guitar family's expanded pitch, sonority and colour range has given rise to a large body of newly arranged and commissioned original works. With new Australian music at its heart, Guitar Trek's broad repertoire aims to span all musical styles. The group's recordings and performances have proudly showcased the work of Australian performers, composers and luthiers over the past 33 years. Guitar Trek's performing activities have included many national and international tours for Musica Viva and performances in many of Australia's leading festivals. Overseas, the group has toured in the US, Europe and Asia.

www.guitartrek.net



Photo:
Rohan Thomson

Guitar Trek

From left to right: Minh Le Hoang, Bradley Kunda, Timothy Kain and Matt Withers

Australia's premier guitar quartet Guitar Trek reflects life in modern Australia with a programme that showcases works of immense colour and rhythmic vitality. The album includes the rich melodic and nostalgic quality of Richard Charlton's *Five Tails in Cold Blood* (including the eponymous 'Bluetongue'); the driving energy and shifting timbres of Nigel Westlake's *Six Fish* that adds the distinctive sound of the 12-string guitar and dobro to the mix; and at its heart the music of Philip Houghton, one of the most original and poetically imaginative guitar composers of our time.

BLUETONGUE

Australian Guitar Quartets

Nigel WESTLAKE (b. 1958)

1–6 *Six Fish* (2003) **15:25**

Richard CHARLTON (b. 1955)

7–11 *Five Tails in Cold Blood (Guitar Quartet No. 8)* (2017) * **15:02**

Phillip HOUGHTON (1954–2017)

12 *Nocturne* (1976) (version for guitar quartet, 2002) **3:19**

13–15 *Opals* (1993, rev. 1994) **9:42**

16–18 *News from Nowhere* (1992) **16:39**

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Elena KATS-CHERNIN (b. 1957)

20 *Bleached Memories* (2001) * **10:05**

* **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Guitar Trek

Timothy Kain • Minh Le Hoang • Bradley Kunda • Matt Withers

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 21–23 June 2019 at Electric Avenue Studios, Sydney, Australia

Producer: Timothy Kain • Engineer: Bob Scott • Editor: Matt Withers • Booklet notes: Timothy Kain, Minh Le Hoang, Bradley Kunda, Matt Withers, Nigel Westlake, Richard Charlton, Phillip Houghton, Elena Kats-Chernin

Publishers: Rimshot Music Australia **1–6**, Charlton Music **7–11**, Moonstone Music Publications **12–15** **19**, Unpublished **16–18** **20**

Cover image: *Polished black opal isolated on white* by Marcel Clemens (www.iStockPhoto.com)

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