

The following poetic works were commissioned by Astralis Duo for Rising Water, a project examining the social, cultural, and ecological impact of sea level rise in the Gulf South due to climate change.

### **The crescent moon through the pines**

*Words and music by David Z. Durant*

The crescent moon through the pines.

Ice melts in Greenland.

Rubies are found!

Rubies are found!

Cypress are gone

From the land.

Cut for ships and houses.

The demise of the ice fields

Will swamp swamp houses.

Four planets in the western sky

At dusk.

Rubies in stone.

Ancient ice.

Arctic warm winter,

Glaciers melt.

Glaciers melt.

Rubies!

Rubies!

Rise up. Spread out, mirror.

Behind the stars. The stars.

The cryosphere is melting.

For whom do we cry,

For what,

And when?

Wind-blown soot,

Fire, dust, microbes,

And algae.

Black carbon and the peat is on fire!

Black carbon and the peat is on fire!

Black carbon and the peat is on fire!

Moulin, moulin, moulin.

Glistening, clean, and cold.

Glistening, clean, and cold.

Where is my home?

What has happened?

Hurricane, acid rain,  
tornado, flood, and lightning!

Lightening the load of lightning.

Quickening creep of sea level rise.

Quickening creep of sea level rise.

Sea level rise.

Carbon pollution.

Currents shift.

Sea up.

Price down. Price down. Price down.

Rubies, gold, oil, and science.

Rubies, gold, oil, and science.

Accelerating warming.

Accelerating warming.

Accelerating warming.

Meltwater becomes rivers

That flow into the sea.

Greenland, the largest island,

Melts and swamps

The smallest islands.

For whom do we cry?

Rubies are found!

Rubies are found!

Rubies!

Rubies!

## Before the Gathering Sea

*Text by Chris Staudinger, with collaboration on text and music by Chen-Hui Jen*

Holy moment  
still water  
paddling here with you.  
Holy water, willing crickets  
click heat lighting  
in the lantern of clouds.  
Will we -  
sea almost here -  
be floating here together  
before the gathering sea?

where we drift, holy moment,  
we are silent,  
protected from the sea  
and we see the ripple  
seeping under,  
where the river slows,  
earth granules cloud and  
earth becomes water  
before the sea  
and gardens and graveyards  
dissolve, become still water,  
stirred up in silt,  
disintegrate together  
in swirling milky clouds.

We are  
here  
still together  
holy moment  
before the sea,

where water pulses into marshes, into  
many mansions in the roots of trees.  
And silently, we see a spider  
on a perch of bark  
sense the rise of water pulse, a silent gong,  
each lift of leg:  
a vertical escape  
towards the level rings that mark  
the higher water:  
holy rings of grit.

Together  
We are here, we are  
partially submerged  
we drift,  
holy water pulsing,  
rippling shawl of forest wall  
reflected in the water  
we will remember \*  
here  
before the gathering sea.

*\* modified original text "solidify the reminder"*

## River Twentythree

*text by Geoff Munsterman, music by Ryan Harrison*

There was nothing to gut—  
surge purging the land of life.  
Even slabs scattered,  
the stabbed levee leaks like Caesar  
water from the gulf to nine miles  
from the parish line,  
snipping Plaquemines at  
the Bellechasse township sign.  
Whole towns drown.  
Jesuit Bend upended & sent  
crashing into Ironton.  
Fort Jackson's barracks jaundiced  
when sulphur ore bores  
its rusted gates. Boats like snakes  
shimmy through ruins,  
clip a church's dwindled finials.\*

The parish boss one of  
the Judge's buddies. Stogie chewed  
to brown pulp, he claims  
the land unlivable, dips digits  
in his lips to fish a ribbon of leaf.  
Old money giving grief  
makes him cancel big oil's bid  
to snag plots in rivulets.  
Strips of broken levee levitate  
like islands above chop  
as the bones of floating homes  
cling bruised to treetops.

Receding waters cough up  
churches first. Garbage gables  
wobble with rot as toppled  
belfries burp bibles buoyant  
with hymns. Boothville still  
wilting under floodwaters  
when good book pages  
from Saint Paul Baptist dissipate.

Deputize the ablebodied not  
busy picking boats gored  
on moorings or skimming  
oil fouling oyster beds  
more than normal—  
the pipeline's breach mucking  
adolescent oysters with toxins  
& oil-slicked pogies.  
Each fish oxygen deprived,  
they writhe until they die.  
The kill catastrophic, fish  
inhabit unearthed nooks  
as September sunlight  
cooks their bloated bones.  
When the first workers  
return by boat, they find  
like all storms before,  
fishermen rebuilding.

*\*The first stanza only was set to music due to length.*

## **Rising water sinking land**

*text and music by Kari Besharse*

### Part I: Lost Places

Yellow Cotton Bay, Bayou Jacquin, Oil Mine Bayou, Sullivan Bayou, Cooks Canal, Jacquines Pass, Locust Point, William's Pond, Andres' Pond, Venice Canal, Drakes Bay, Bay Pomme D'or, Little Bay Pomme d'Or, Bayou Long, Bay Cheri, Bayou La Chute, English Bay, English Bayou, Bayou Auguste, Bayou le Boon, Bay Jacqueline, Cyprien Bay, Dry Cypress Bayou, Bay Crapaud, Skipjack Bay, Scofield Bay, Fleur Pond, Tom Loor Pass, Grand Bayou Carrion Crow, Bayou Petit Liard, Bob Taylor's Pond, Bayou Tony, Manilla Village, St. Mary's Point, Isles Dernieres, Chandaleur Island, Hewes Point, North Island, Freemason Island, Curlew Island, Grand Gosier Island, Breton Island, Isle de Jean Charles, Timbalier Island, Bay la Mer, Grand Terre Islands, Bay des Ilettes, Timbalier Bay, Cassé-Tête Island, East Timbalier Island

## **Batture**

*text by Megan Burns, music by Phillip Schuessler*

listen to me, listen  
the water will take everything

the depth of water will swallow fear, cypress knees kneeling in vigils  
for safety, untack reprieve, a whole community:  
let the water come, take a deep breath  
pack as though you will never return\*

in Butte La Rose among narrow creeks  
Morgan City, listen: all that you see along the flood plain  
shunting water along the batture  
30 miles above New Orleans  
the Morganza Spillway waits to move water  
Melville, Knot Springs, Three Mile Lake  
a hesco basket is a container filled with dirt  
to build a temporary levee  
listen to me, to water

*\*The first stanza only was set to music due to length.*

## **Ghost Forests**

*Text by Lauren Slaughter, music by Jesse McBride*

Like bare hands  
Reaching

from below  
the grave, these

once-magnificent  
woods. Roots

that pulled  
from this earth

are choked now  
with salt water,

waters meant  
for a life

of fish not  
sunken seeds

and drowned  
burrows. Cold

may no longer  
come to this place

and yet the spine  
shivers

to see branches  
that could have

blessed shade  
upon your

very own children  
seem to keep reaching

for some  
right word

in some right  
language

human ears  
can hear.

Listen. This  
is the silence

of loss. Air  
does not whisper

through leaves.  
Air that touches

nothing

has nothing  
to say.

**Lullaby  
for the uranium in barrels on the banks of the Connecticut**

*Text and music by cory diane. This work was not commissioned for the Rising Water project. We are grateful to cory diane for sharing their music and their art with us.*

Last summer, while canoeing in southern Vermont, I learned of a decommissioned nuclear power plant barely down river, owned by none other than Entergy New Orleans. Surprising to no one, Entergy doesn't seem equipped to manage the decommissioning of a nuclear power plant. For years, the facility's waste has sat in limbo: in barrels, above ground, behind a meager chain link fence beside the river, thousands of miles from where it was originally mined, no word on where or when it will finally be laid to rest.

Uranium is one of the most abundant elements in existence, with trace amounts found in almost everything - rocks, water, soil, air, plants, animals. In volume, it becomes toxic to anything it could touch. Once 'enriched,' for fuel or weaponry, it becomes highly radioactive, even more unstable and dangerous.

I couldn't help but to humanize this Uranium, to think of it as deeply homesick, restless, exploited, misunderstood, captive. It never asked to leave the Earth's crust. And hopefully, for the good of the planet and those who come after us, it will never touch the Earth again. So I wrote it a lullaby.

**Plastic Fish**

*Music and words by Clint McCallum. This work is part of an earlier commission by Astralis Duo and was first performed at the Marigny Opera House June 18, 2018.*

*Plastic Fish* uses the Navajo Code Talkers Dictionary to encode the coordinates of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a continent-sized mass of human waste, composed of mostly plastic and sludge, floating in the Pacific Ocean.