

*Four Elements* for low flutes began in 2002 with the first version of *Skywriting*, composed for my friend Karen Zocchi, a flutist and fellow student at Indiana University. At the time she was also working on Elliott Carter's *Scrivo in Vento*, which translates to "I write on the wind." This evocative phrase formed the conceptual impetus for my own small piece, which freely develops its opening melodic gesture through many changes of tempo and modal inflection. The movement was completely revised in 2004 and premiered in its current version by Abigail McKee at Rice University in Houston.

In 2009, I was asked by flutist Peter Sheridan to write a suite, including *Skywriting*, that would utilize the lowest members of the flute family, namely the alto, bass, contrabass and sub-contrabass flutes. In addition to founding the Los Angeles Flute Quartet and serving on the faculty of the University of Melbourne, Peter is one of the world's few experts on the last two instruments, which possess a haunting quality reminiscent of the cello and double bass respectively. In conceiving a unifying identity for the suite, I turned to the classical elements of earth, air, fire and water, and composed a movement for each, suggestive of their physical properties. The present version of the suite is comprised of two movements each for C flute and alto flute.

*Flickering Flame* is a short scherzo based on the intervals of a minor second and a minor third, and the octatonic scale that is a natural extension of these. *Subterranea (Cenotaph for Donald Erb)* utilizes many extended techniques, such as microtonal pitch bending and overblown harmonics. The movement is dedicated to my teacher, Donald Erb, who died in 2008 and who had paid tribute to Edgard Varese with a *Cenotaph for E.V.* in 1979. A cenotaph is a memorial for someone buried elsewhere. This movement is built upon one of Erb's favorite melodic motives, two minor seconds that oscillate around a central pitch. The last movement of the suite, *Cerulean*, takes its conception from the image of water, which is reflected by rolling, long-flowing phrases. Formally, the movement most closely resembles a kind of sonata, with the juxtaposition and development of two contrasting thematic ideas.

-Christopher Lee

Christopher Lee (b.1977) holds degrees from Baldwin-Wallace College (BM), Indiana University (MM), and Rice University (DMA). His music has been commissioned and performed by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Speculum Musicae, the California EAR Unit, Analog Arts Ensemble, VOX, 20/21 Ensemble, the Enso and Kuttner string quartets, the wind ensembles of Illinois State University, Baldwin-Wallace College, the University of Alaska-Anchorage, Ohio University, and others. *Skywriting* appears in the anthology *New Music for Solo Alto or Solo Bass Flute*, published by Southeast Missouri State University. He has taught at Rice University, The Beck Center for the Cultural Arts in Cleveland, Ohio, and The Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

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