

*The End Times Are a'changin'*

(2018)

for guitar solo  
(and optional multimedia)

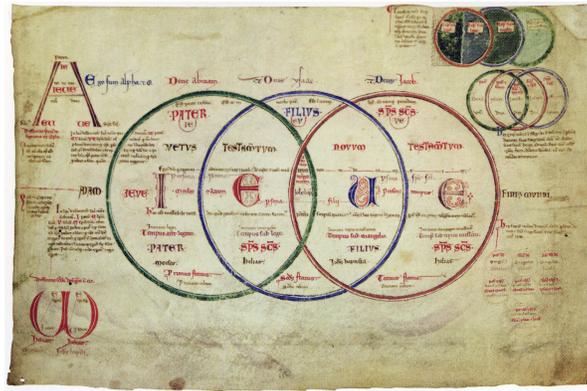
Derek Keller

# The End Times Are a'Changin'

## Fantasia on a Theme by Dylan

### Program and Performance Notes

This piece is inspired by the musicianship and intellectual interests of my colleague and dear friend, Colin McAllister. Over the last year or so, Colin has shared with me illustrations and writings by theologian Joachim di Fiore (1135-1202). Fiore's (in)famous illustrations, collected shortly after his death in the *Liber Figurarum*, are vivid and arresting in their color and detail. I am compelled by his ability to communicate his thinking about the Trinity, its epochs, and ever-impending apocalypse. In one particular illustration, he represents the triune god through three interlocking rings; epochs of the Father, the Son, and The Holy Spirit.



Fiore represents the Father, creator of nature, with a green ring. The blue ring stands for the Son, heaven-sent. The Holy Spirit's love is expressed in a red ring, which, for Fiore, was in the future, having yet to manifest. These rings have provoked and urged me to ponder the way in which we perceive ourselves this moment, in our time. The rings invoke a foreboding curiosity concerning the way in which 'it' will all end. To the question of *when?*, Fiore's illustration seems to paradoxically provide both a definitive answer, and sublimely (heretically, to some) give none at all.

When Colin asked me for a new piece, I was coincidentally revisiting the work of Bob Dylan, following his recent induction to the Nobel Laureate. The lyrics of his "The Times They Are a'Changing" are hauntingly prescient – now, in this era of rising sea levels, world-warming and world-waring, and 'strong man' politics that care not for the human race – as they were forty-plus years ago. Times are indeed "a'changin'". One era flows to the next, with *endless apocalypses*.

With these sentiments in mind, I have composed a piece, a theme and variations, the form of which can take many shapes, or paths. The performer can also present this modular work in three different ways:

- I. Solo, Stand-Alone Work (11-16 minutes): the guitarist is encouraged to play the movements in any order as long as "Theme", "Blues I", and "Blues II" are separated by other movements or improvisational material. The 'Material for Improvisation' is designed to bridge movements, or act as doorways into another movement where musical material is shared or re-contextualized. The piece can be played with breaks between movements or continuously. All 'titled' movements must be performed in their entirety over the course of the performance. The duration of the performance can range between 11 and 16 minutes, depending on the degree to which the performer wishes to integrate the improvisational material. I intend for the guitarist to take advantage of the improvisational aspects of the piece and present it somewhat differently at each performance.

- II. Solo with Audio-Visual Accompaniment (12.5 minutes): The guitarist may choose to present a video intended for accompaniment. The content of the video draws from the illustrations of Fiore. This video can be projected or sent via email or text to audience members who wish to participate with the performer in advance of the concert. All of the afore mentioned performance conditions apply, except that the music and video should begin and end within 5-10 seconds of each other.
- III. Solo with Interactive Multimedia (11-16 minutes): The guitarist, a computer musician, and willing participants of the audience can all take part in an immersive, interactive experience. Each have a role: the computer musician or the guitarist (or both) can guide a performance of the work; the audience provides the spatialized audio that sounds as accompaniment to the guitarist, and audio-visual experience to the audience. At moments throughout a performance, these roles may seem blurred, which is my intention. See below for the ways in which the guitarist and or computer musician can guide a performance:
- a. Guitarist as guide: In a predetermined or improvised way, the guitarist will shape the form of the composition and the computer musician will improvise an accompaniment for the audience to execute.
- To compose or generate this accompaniment, the computer musician will need a messaging application (such as Slack), to communicate with the audience-participants' mobile devices, and a way to project images and videos (with accompanying audio). These images and videos are available for download [HERE](#). Their content is inspired primarily by the illustrations of Fiore. Whichever messaging application the computer musician uses, they must be able to send messages to individual participants or groups. This fosters the ability to move sound around the performance space.
- The computer musician will draw and distribute image files (jpegs) and video files to willing audience participants via the messaging app. Audience members will receive these images, videos, and messages, the latter of which will direct them to watch the videos on their mobile devices (with the volume all the way up and ringers off!), and at times, stand and speak short phrases.
- The computer musician may also choose to act as a 'VJ' or video-jockey, projecting videos in an improvised way, or present the fixed length video as described in Scenario II. All image and video files must be distributed to the audience and played back before the end of a performance. The performance must be no longer than 15 minutes.
- b. Computer musician as guide: Using the system described above, the computer musician will draw and distribute image files (jpegs) and video files to both the guitarist and willing audience participants. To the guitarist, the computer musician will send images that have concise notation for the guitarist to determine what to play at any moment. To prevent lulls in musical activity, the guitarist should make use of the 'Material for Improvisation'. To audience members, the computer musician will draw and distribute image and video files (which have audio accompaniment as well). Just as described above, the audience members will receive messages that direct them to watch videos on their mobile devices (with the volume all the way up and ringers off!), and at times, stand and speak short phrases.
- c. Guitarist *and* Computer Musician as guides: If the material of the composition is well understood, there is indeed the possibility that a performance can be guided and improvised by both the guitarist and computer musician.