

The background of the entire image is a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of a series of interlocking, irregular white lines that form a mesh-like structure. The spaces between these lines are filled with a deep blue color, which has a slightly grainy, painterly texture. In the center of the image, there is a dark, almost black, irregular shape that resembles a nebula or a galaxy. This central area is filled with a vibrant, multi-colored glow, transitioning from bright yellow and orange at the bottom to a cooler blue and purple at the top. Small, white, star-like specks are scattered throughout the dark central area and the blue background.

Volti

Robert Geary, Artistic Director

the color of there
seen from here



Robert Geary, Artistic Director
Singing Without a Net for 40 Years

Forrest Pierce

1. Gratitude Sutra 13:10

Tonia Ko

From Ivory Depths

2. I. Monday 4:03
3. II. Tuesday 3:57

Robin Estrada

4. Cæli enarrant 9:28

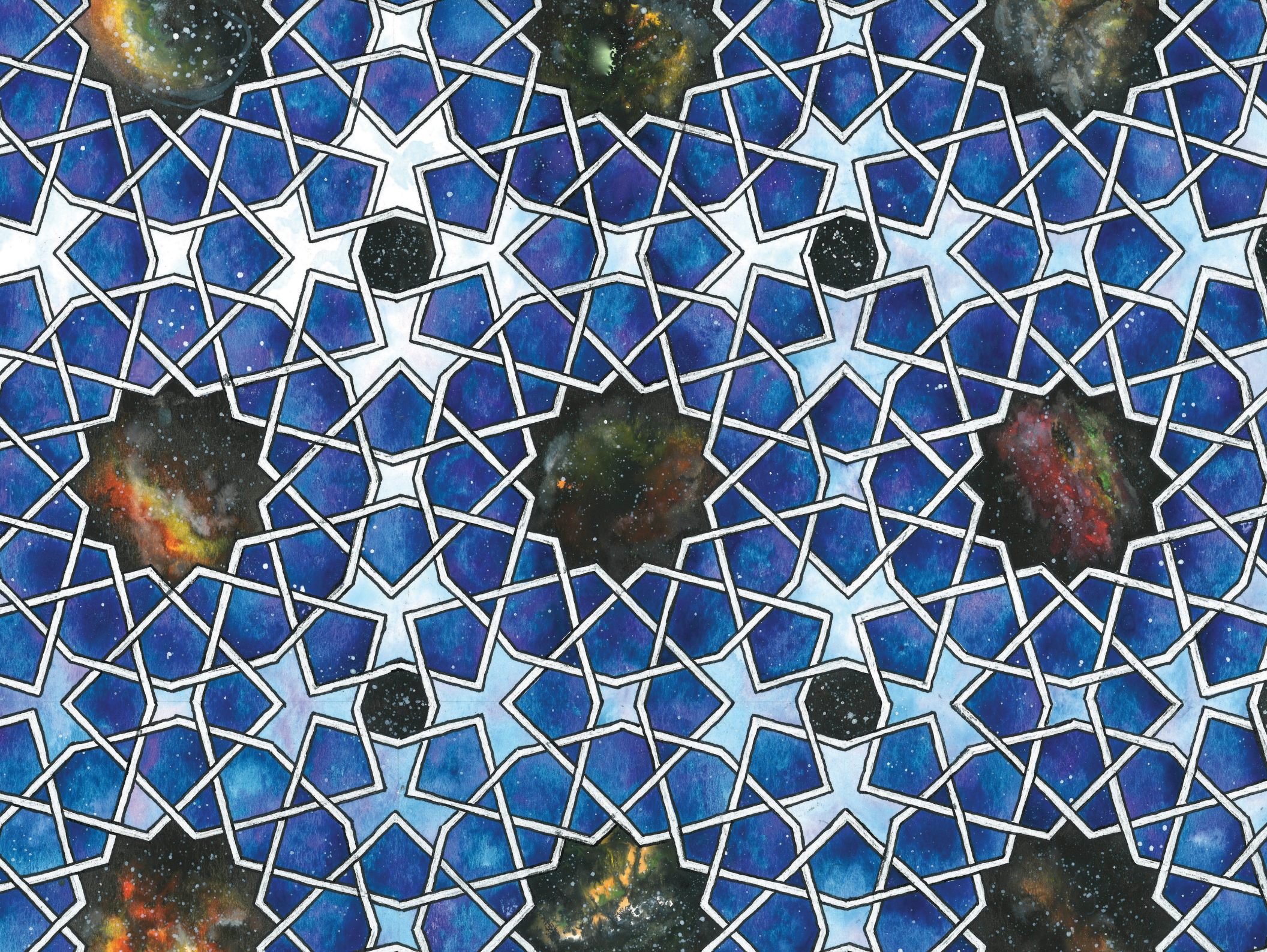
Mark Winges

5. All Night 12:44

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

6. The Blue of Distance (Tolumos mėlynumas) 13:16

—56:40—



Forrest Pierce (b. 1972)

1. **Gratitude Sutra** (2013) 13:10

Soloists: Jeff Bennett, Emily Ryan Kusnadi, Yuhi Aizawa Combatti, Ben Barr

Tonia Ko (b. 1988)

From Ivory Depths (2016)

2. **I. Monday** 4:03
3. **II. Tuesday** 3:57

Soloists: Rachel Rush, Samuel Faustine, Cara Gabrielson, Monica Frame, Ben Barr

Robin Estrada (b. 1970)

4. **Cæli enarrant** (2016) 9:28

Soloists: Celeste Winant, Philip Saunders, Peter Dennis, Andrea Mich

Mark Winges (b. 1951)

5. **All Night** (2013) 12:44

*Soloists: Michael Eisenberg, Emily Ryan Kusnadi, Colby Smith,
Yuhi Aizawa Combatti, Cole Thomason-Redus*

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė (b. 1973)

6. **The Blue of Distance (Tolumos mėlynumas)** (2010) 13:16

Soloists are listed in order of appearance.

Volti

Robert Geary, conductor

Volti is an ensemble of 16 to 24 singers. The music on this album was recorded in five sessions between November 2013 and May 2018. Singers were drawn from the following roster:

Soprano

Caitlin Tabancay Austin, Kelly Ballou, Lindsey McLennan Burdick, Yuhi Aizawa Combatti, Alice Del Simone, Lauren Eigenbrode, Shauna Fallihee, Cara Gabrielson, Alice Ko, Cecilia Lam, Andrea Mich, Colby Smith*, TJ Togasaki, Christa Tumlinson

Alto

Danya Clevenger, Monica Frame*, Emily Ryan Kusnadi, Sharmila G. Lash, Rachel Rush*, Celeste Winant

Tenor

Ben Barr, Will Betts, Joshua Diamant, Michael Eisenberg, Samuel Faustine, Julian Kusnadi, Ben Laboy, Roderick Lowe, Tim Silva, Jacob Thompson, Eric Tuan, Jeffrey Wang

Bass

Jeff Bennett, Joel Chapman, Sidney Chen, Peter Dennis, E.E. "Chip" Grant IV, Jefferson Packer, Philip Saunders*, Cole Thomason-Redus

* Singers appearing on all tracks



Volti's professional singers, under the direction of Robert Geary, are dedicated to the discovery, creation, and performance of new vocal music. The ensemble's mission — to foster and showcase contemporary American music and composers, and to introduce new vocal music from around the world to local audiences — has led to performances of a vast amount of new music and to the commissioning of more than 100 new works.

Hailed by *San Francisco Classical Voice* as "undoubtedly the finest collection of new music singers we have," Volti is entering its fifth decade of exploration and innovation. Nationally recognized as a pioneer in new vocal music, Volti is the only group to have won the prestigious ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music seven times, a testament to the fresh perspective and new voices the group brings to life. In addition to commissioning, performing, and recording on its own, Volti is an active collaborator with groups including the Kronos Quartet, ODC/Dance, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and has been presented by Cal Performances, Bard Music West, and Festival Napa Valley, among others.

Attending a Volti concert is like visiting a contemporary art gallery, stimulating the mind, the imagination, and the heart.



Robert Geary, founder and Artistic Director of Volti, the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival, also serves as Artistic Director of the San Francisco Choral Society. Geary's multi-dimensional commitment to the choral arts over more than 40 years has led him and his choirs to national and international prominence. His dedication to today's choral music has encouraged the careers of several leading composers and has led to nearly 200 new works. He has conducted and served as a clinician in dozens of countries, and his choirs have performed at numerous conferences and festivals across the United States and around the world. Geary has prepared his choirs for some of the world's leading conductors, and they have performed on radio and television and for operas, orchestras, and music festivals nationally and internationally. His choirs can be heard on recordings with many labels, including Other Minds, Harmonia Mundi, Koch International, Swiss International Radio, Ablaze, and innova.

Gratitude Sutra (2013)
Forrest Pierce (b. 1972)

Farhad Forrest Pierce is an American composer, poet, and student of the mysticism of sound and music. Raised in eastern Washington State, his music often reflects the vast emptiness of that high desert landscape. Composer of many dozens of works for voices, he enjoys working with texts by the world's great mystical poets of all faith traditions. He serves as faculty at the University of Kansas, where he teaches composition and counterpoint, as well as at the Cortona Sessions for New Music in Cortona, Tuscany. His work has been performed by renowned professional ensembles and soloists, as well as by small church choirs and enthusiastic amateurs. Winner of the Barlow Prize, among others, his long-ago teachers were Dominick Argento, Stephen Paulus, and Don Freund. At one time or another a student of piano, cello, tango, and Hindustani classical music, and still a student of Inayati Sufism, Pierce drinks espresso and leads Sufi Dancing and Zikr in Lawrence, Kansas. Pierce's music is published at musicspoke.com.

During a period of grief, I found myself unable to compose. The work I had been attempting, a setting of St. Francis of Assisi's *Cantico delle Creature*, required too much praise, too much *bhakti*, too much presence for me in my empty, hollow condition. I found myself thinking of my homeland in the West, and the otherworldly high granite of alpine wilderness, whose essence is so powerfully embodied in the writing of Gary Snyder. A poem from Snyder's collection *Turtle Island*, "A Prayer to the Great Family," opened a sunlit window onto the same universe of beauty extolled by St. Francis, through words of simple gratitude. The choral work that emerged became a kind of sutra for me, a discourse on the generous beauties that sustain us on this voyage around the sun.

— Forrest Pierce

Prayer for the Great Family

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day—
and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf
and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind
and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Air, bearing the soaring Swift and the silent
Owl at dawn. Breath of our song
clear spirit breeze
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brothers, teaching secrets,
freedoms and ways; who share with us their milk;
self-complete, brave, and aware
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers;
holding or releasing; streaming through all
our bodies salty seas
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Sun: blinding pulsing light through
trunks of trees, through mists, warming caves where
bears and snakes sleep—he who wakes us—
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Great Sky
who holds billions of stars—and goes yet beyond that—
beyond all powers, and thoughts
and yet is within us—
Grandfather Space.
The Mind is his Wife
so be it.

after a Mohawk prayer

— Gary Snyder

Text by Gary Snyder, from *Turtle Island*, ©1974 by Gary Snyder.
Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

From Ivory Depths (2016)

Tonia Ko (b. 1988)

Tonia Ko's music is guided by explorations into texture, physical movement, and the relationship between melody and memory. She has collaborated with leading soloists and ensembles across a variety of media—from acoustic concert pieces to improvisations and site-specific sound installations. Recipient of numerous accolades including a Guggenheim Fellowship, Ko's music has been lauded by *The New York Times* for its "captivating" details and "vivid orchestral palette," and performed at venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, and the Kennedy Center, and at the Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Ko holds a DMA from Cornell University. She served as the 2015–2017 Composer-in-Residence for Young Concert Artists and is the 2018–19 Postdoctoral Researcher at the Center for Contemporary Composition at the University of Chicago. Ko was chosen to participate in Vorti's Choral Arts Laboratory program, through which *From Ivory Depths* was commissioned. For more information, visit toniako.com.

"Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday." (Virginia Woolf, *Modern Fiction*, 1919)

Virginia Woolf's ability to highlight the extraordinary and beautiful amidst a "normal" setting is an artistic practice that I aspire to. Her groundbreaking short stories could perhaps be likened to visual collages—the stream-of-consciousness style quickly shifts the reader's attention from one vivid image to another. In my reading of the short story "Monday or Tuesday," I was struck by the structural recurrence of a few images: the color white, an expansive sky, and a wave-like movement of opening and closing.

Thus, these two movements are very interconnected and similar in many ways, even sharing texts. I was interested in finding places where the imagery of these two textual fragments collide, dramatizing their overlap as well as deviations from each other. The overall trajectory of the entire piece is that of fragmentation—a chorale, set in near slow-motion, progresses until it dissolves into muttered noises. An alto voice remains alone at the conclusion of each movement, as if narrating the linear, yet lilting motion of time even as the swirling images around her come to a pause.

— Tonia Ko

I. Monday

White and distant, absorbed in itself,
endlessly the sky covers and uncovers,
moves and remains.

II. Tuesday

From ivory depths
words rising shed their blackness,
blossom and penetrate.

The sky veils her stars;
then bares them.

— *Virginia Woolf*

Text excerpted from Virginia Woolf's short story "Monday or Tuesday" (1921)

Choral Arts Laboratory

Started in 2003, Volti's Choral Arts Laboratory is a commissioning and residency program aimed at American composers under the age of 35. Composers selected for the program take part in workshops to develop a new composition, working directly with the Volti singers in rehearsal. Composers then consult with Robert Geary and Volti's resident composer Mark Winges throughout the process of finishing the piece, which is then premiered at a Volti concert during the regular season.

In addition to Tonia Ko, Volti's Choral Arts Laboratory composers include Peter Knell, Robert Patterson, Eric Lindsay, Amy Beth Kirsten, George Lam, Ruby Fulton, Ted Hearne, Matthew Barnson, Francisco Cortés Álvarez, Dan Visconti, Melissa Dunphy, Ryan Brown, LJ White, Jack Hughes, and Danny Clay.

Cæli enarrant (2016)
Robin Estrada (b. 1970)

Robin Estrada ranks among the bold and innovative talents in Philippine contemporary music composition. The melding of Western forms with Southeast Asian musical styles in Estrada's works accentuates the finesse and fire of the region's cultural diversity, evoking a unique sound that brings Asia to the world of contemporary art music. Named a Quimson Fellow by the Asian Cultural Council, Estrada has also received several awards, recognitions, and commissions, and has collaborated with various ensembles as composer-in-residence.

Cæli enarrant is inspired by and a reflection on the current socio-political climate in the United States and around the world. Terrorist attacks, gun violence, hate crimes, bullying, and many other heinous and horrific events have drawn me to use text that may hopefully guide us to how we should relate and interact with each other. The Golden Rule—whatever you desire others do to you, you shall also do to them—taught in the Catholic faith and in several other faiths, is such a simple maxim, and yet society manages and opts to do otherwise.

The opening alludes to a call-and-response style of prayer familiar in several traditional and indigenous Asian cultures. The second section utilizes interlocking melodies which create a sense of organized chaos. I applied this compositional technique because it literally illustrates that the success of the music will rely on how well-synced the singers are with each other; in the same way, communities' success will rely on how "in tune" individuals are with one another. Concluding the piece, it is with hope that the reflective and meditative quality of the third section, with two soloists singing over the choir's open intervals, will serve as a mantra, inspiring people to treat others as they themselves would want to be treated.

— Robin Estrada

Psalm 18:2–5

Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum eius adnuntiat firmamentum.
Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam.
Non sunt loquellæ, neque sermones, quorum non audiantur voces eorum.
In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum, et in fines orbis terræ verba eorum.

*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.
Where there is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;
Yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Psalm 18:8–10

Lex Domini immaculata, convertens animas; testimonium Domini fidele,
sapientiam præstans parvulis.
Justitiæ Domini rectæ, lætificantes corda; præceptum Domini lucidum, illuminans oculus.
Timor Domini sanctus, permanens in sæculum sæculi; judicia Domini vera, justificata in semetipsa.

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.*

Psalm 18:15

Et erunt ut complaceant eloquia oris mei, et meditatio cordis mei in conspectu tuo semper.
Domine, adjutor meus, et redemptor meus.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

Matthew 7:12

Omnia ergo quæcumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, et vos facite illis. Hæc est enim lex, et prophetæ.

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

All Night (2013)

Mark Winges (b. 1951)

Mark Winges has been resident composer/advisor for Volti since 1990. He was also composer-in-residence for the San Francisco Choral Artists in the 2012–13 season. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, he is a graduate of the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and San Francisco State University, and has studied at the Musikhögskolan in Stockholm, Sweden, with composer Arne Mellnäs.

Gramophone magazine has characterized his music as “stylistically adventurous in setting, but strongly beholden to conventional means.” *San Francisco Classical Voice* describes him as “a composer with the skill and self-confidence to write music that is clear, direct, and at times even simple, but not at all simple-minded.” He has had residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Fundación Valparaíso, and the Ragdale Foundation.

Recent works include *Last Ditch Fight of the Wish* (for the Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir), the concerto *Breath & Hammers* (for pianist Blaise Bryski, the Cornell Wind Symphony, and conductor James Spinazzola), and *Leaves from Diana’s Tree* (for soprano Shauna Fallihee and the Empyrean Ensemble). For more information, visit markwinges.com.

The poetry of Gustaf Sobin (1935–2005) is a recent (2012) discovery of mine. I find his use of language—rich, dense, and sparse, all at the same time—absolutely gripping. I had the awkward pleasure of finding many poems that appealed to me, and had some difficulty settling on specific poems to set.

My approach in *All Night* was to write music that mirrors/shows what the poems *are* and what the poems *do*, rather than what they *say*. I believe that these poems were so complete on their own that adding a musical commentary too closely tied to the word meanings would be superfluous. Rather, I wrote music to reflect how the poems unfold and their underlying mood and how their stanzas are laid out on the page, and to provide a counterpoint to the sounds and flow of the fertile language in the poems.

The individual stanzas of Sobin’s “Fugues: All Night the Neolithic” all share a similar tone and visual format. Reflecting that, the music is cast as a set of variations so that there is a corresponding connection in the music. In between stanzas are unrelated music, using either phonemes that have no meaning, or, in between stanzas four and five, the poem “Provençal Night.” My intent was to set

up musical contrasts and use formal elements that heighten the poetry and create an aural journey that is richer than just words or just abstract choral sound would provide on their own.

The poems are presented below the way they are set in the music, with “Provençal Night” inserted after the first four stanzas of “Fugues: All Night the Neolithic,” and then continuing with the remainder of the first poem.

— Mark Winges

Fugues: All Night the Neolithic [Stanzas 1–4]

all night the neolithic
as if blew through your dreams: in long,
heron-bone hairpins, nestled in that thicket
that's no one's hair, no
one's odors, but the cellulated night's
dense honey.

already, the poem, basking in
its idol of syllables, exists in a
future you'd never, otherwise, have
known. yes, you who wrote it, read it, now, in the
very midst of an instant that's endlessly
drawing itself under.

there where a ladder
lay propped against the brittle, winter boughs, you'd
murmur the planets, wouldn't you, hiss
'saturn' as you lobbed the tangled, the
extraneous, brought your knuckles
eye-level with each, freshly pruned branch.

already, your new desk's
piled high with books, articles: you
who'd pillage history for its
lost dicta, abolished alphabets, for a
door left open, occasionally, on so much
thin, fibrous draft.

Provençal Night

. . . all night the wind, incendiary
lapped at the
stars, set them wobbling within their deep
phos-
phorescent sockets. no, nothing's too far if it

draws, in-
volves you: takes you past this
fist-
ful of viscera into such in-

commensurable displays. who are you, anyway, if
not the night's
mock
musicologist: he
who'd intuit chord, crescendo and resolve out of so

many swirling
pin-
wheels of fire. yes, out of those

cold smouldering cauldrons – fuschia, turquoise and
bronze – interpolate the bars of
some all-but-

for-
gotten measure. for you're nothing, really, but the
empty receptacle
of everything you're not. gather, then and,
in
gathering, orchestrate. pluck Persei and
Polaris,
Betelgeuse and
Bellatrix. For there, only there, in

that basketful of
breath, might the notes, still

molten, strike vibrant and
resonate, so doing, against the shallow ribs of your
yet in-
credulous flesh.

Fugues: All Night the Neolithic *[Stanzas 5–6]*

eliminated image but only, each
morning, for its
 fresh scaffolds, hair streaming metallic
 from the forehead backwards, catching on the
 bars, struts, cross-pieces of so much sheer
 evanescence.

worshipped only
what you'd failed to obliterate, efface in so
 many rhythmic layers from the
 glassy plates of the hallucinatory, oh
 limb working limbs in a
 shimmering thicket of whispers.

— Gustaf Sobin

From *Collected Poems*, Talisman House, 2010. Copyright © 2010 by the Estate of Gustaf Sobin by permission of Andrew Joron and Andrew Zawacki, literary executors for Gustaf Sobin.

The Blue of Distance (Tolumos mėlynumas) (2010)
Žibuoklė Martinaitytė (b. 1973)

Described by WQXR as a “textural magician,” Žibuoklė Martinaitytė is a New York-based Lithuanian composer whose works explore the tensions and longings of identity and place. She creates sonic environments where musical gestures emerge and disappear within transparencies and densities of sound layers.

Her *A Thousand Doors to the World* was commissioned by the Lithuanian Radio to celebrate Vilnius being named the Culture Capital of Europe in 2009. The premiere was broadcast by Euroradio to an audience of four million. Her U.S. commissioners include the MATA, Look+Listen and Other Minds festivals; the Barlow Endowment; and Volti. Martinaitytė has received residency fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Aaron Copland House, the Millay Colony, Harvestworks, Djerassi, and the Cité des Arts (Paris).

Her solo CD *Horizons* was released by LMIC in 2017, and the album of chamber music *In Search of Lost Beauty* will be released by Starkland in 2019. For more information, visit zibuokle.com.

The Blue of Distance was composed while Martinaitytė was in residence at the Copland House, New York, as a recipient of the Aaron Copland Award. It also received the 2017 Sylvia Goldstein Award. The world premiere performance took place on October 25, 2010, at the GAIDA Festival in Vilnius, Lithuania, by the choir Jauna Muzika, conducted by Vaclovas Augustinas.

When searching for the lyrics for this choral piece, I encountered an alluring phrase, “the blue of distance,” in Rebecca Solnit’s book *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. It remained just a poetical-philosophical hint since the text itself doesn’t get utilized in my piece at all. Instead, the function of the lyrics is given to a set of speech sounds—mostly humming or the sung open vowels “a-e-i-o-u.” In one part of the piece these vowels-letters appear as chords, and they determine the succession of entrances of choral voices and their interrelationships.

— Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

"The world is blue at its edges and in its depths... that color of horizons, of remote mountain ranges, of anything far away. The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not. And the color of where you can never go. For the blue is not in the place those miles away at the horizon, but in the atmospheric distance between you and the mountains... Blue is the color of longing for the distances you never arrive in, for the blue world..."

— Rebecca Solnit

From *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, © 2005 Rebecca Solnit.
Reprinted with the permission of the author.



CREDITS

Produced by Lolly Lewis, Robert Geary, Mark Wings, Sidney Chen, and Barbara Heroux

Tracks 1, 4, 5, and 6 recorded November 2013 to May 2018 by Lolly Lewis at Saint Ignatius Church, San Francisco, CA

Tracks 2 and 3 recorded May 2017 by Alberto Hernandez at Fantasy Studios, Berkeley, CA

Mastered by Piper Payne at Neato Mastering, Oakland, CA

Artwork: *The Dreame of Scipioun* by Jacob Thompson

Then shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,
At regard of the hevenes quantite;
And after shewed he him the nyne speres,
And after that the melodye herde he
That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,
That welle is of musyk and melodye
In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

— Geoffrey Chaucer, from “The Parlement of Foules”

Photo credits: Arif Hasyim (Robert Geary), Barbara Heroux (Volti)

Gratitude Sutra by Forrest Pierce was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University for the BBC Singers, the Latvian Radio Choir, and Volti.

From Ivory Depths by Tonia Ko was commissioned for Volti through Volti’s Choral Arts Laboratory program.

Cæli enarrant by Robin Estrada and *All Night* by Mark Wings were commissioned by Volti.

The Blue of Distance (Tolumos mėlynumas) by Žibuoklė Martinaitytė was commissioned by GAIDA Festival, Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Blue of Distance (Tolumos mėlynumas) by Žibuoklė Martinaitytė is a co-recipient of Copland House’s 2017 Sylvia Goldstein Award, which is proud to support, in part, this premiere recording of the work.

Volti thanks Rebecca Solnit for the use of her phrase, “the color of there seen from here,” for the title of this album.

We are grateful to Robin Estrada, Tonia Ko, Žibuoklė Martinaitytė, Forrest Pierce, and Mark Winges for the unique and compelling music they've composed. We are proud to record this music and make it available to you. For forty years Volti has been commissioning and performing new choral music with a look toward the innovative and adventurous. It is our hope that you will find this music as satisfying to listen to as we find it to perform.

— Robert Geary, the Singers, and Board of Directors of Volti

Robert Geary, *Artistic Director*
Barbara Heroux, *Executive Director*
Mark Winges, *Composer in Residence*
Sidney Chen, *Artistic Advisor*



Board of Directors
Richard J. Collier, *President*
Kathy J. McMahon, *Vice President*
Suzanne S. Rush, *Secretary*
Mary Anne Shattuck, *Treasurer*

Emily M. De Falla
Catherine Heagerty
Elizabeth W. Jones
Tim Silva, *Singers' Representative*

Volti
P.O. Box 15576 San Francisco, CA 94115
415.771.3352
info@voltisf.org
www.voltisf.org

Innova Director, design: Philip Blackburn
Operations Director: Chris Campbell
Publicist: Tim Igel
Innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation.
innova.mu