



Music They Wrote

April 23, 2022 | Zipper Concert Hall

Program Notes

For twenty-five years, VOX Femina Los Angeles has been giving women voice through the performance of music. In keeping with our identity as a vital choral ensemble that contributes to our community through the encouragement of fresh compositional voices, all the works featured in this concert are recent or brand new commissions. We open with a brand new commission in celebration of our 25th Anniversary Season: *Resilient Voices*. This work by composer Christina Whitten Thomas and lyricist Marian Partee honors female artists past, present, and future.

*She took her paintbrush
And captured her self-image:
Her passion
 Her passion,
Her beauty,
 Her beauty,
Her pain.*

Resilient Voices portrays the journey of the artist - from the realization that she has something to say and share with the world, through the struggles that bring the artist to a point of self-actualization as an artistic voice in a community. "Belonging" is the artist unashamed: proud, bold, and resilient. She recognizes that she belongs to a history of great artists, and that through her art she can share her story, and that others will relate to her struggle, her pain, her joy and her dreams for a more just world. "Falling Silent" is the artist in doubt: fearing that she has lost her voice, lost her way, she mourns. A "Meditation" for solo cello follows: thoughtful, passionate, experimental. The final melodic gestures of "Meditation" pave the way for the voices to follow in "Returning" as they mimic the tune and then build upon it, changing its contour, gradually adding more and more voices. Confidence builds through the restorative love of community.

"Face and Heart" and "Lamentario" come from Roger Bourland's *Alarcón Madrigals, Book 3*. *The Alarcón Madrigals Books 2 and 3* were commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles and premiered in 2007, and they are settings of texts by bi-national poet Francisco X. Alarcón. Alarcón was born in Los Angeles, and as a child he lived in both Mexico and the United States. Alarcón's grandmother, who helped care for him and his six siblings as his parents worked in a cannery, sang songs to him that he later tried to transcribe, and when he would forget lines he would make up his own - setting him on his path to becoming a poet. "Face and Heart" and "Lamentario" are lyrical and meditative in style, dwelling on the themes of love, partnership, courage, and community: "let us arrive as children to this huge playground - the universe."

“I Want to Die While You Love Me” was commissioned by the 2013 ACDA Women’s Choir Commission Consortium, including VOX Femina Los Angeles. In this piece, composer Rosephanye Powell sets the passionate words of Harlem Renaissance playwright, writer, and poet Georgia Douglas Johnson that were published as part of her 1928 volume *An Autumn Love Cycle*. The text describes a perfect day with a beloved – one that she wishes to never be spoiled by the passage of time: “I want to die while you love me and never, never see the glory of this perfect day grow dim or cease to be.” Powell starts this piece as a duet, as if between two lovers, then allows the harmony to blossom and the emotion to intensify. The wave ultimately breaks with a gentle reminder of the lyric motto to end the piece.

“Rise Up!” by Jake Runestad was commissioned by the 2016 ACDA Women’s Choir Commission Consortium, including VOX Femina Los Angeles. This piece is a call to action taken from the speeches and writings of American women’s rights activist and social reformer Susan B. Anthony. To give the piece a propelling sense of forward motion from the very beginning, Jake Runestad writes a rising melodic motif that activates as an energetic triplet figure in the piano and grows into an echoing choral call and response. Alternating with this call is a choral anthem with impassioned words of encouragement: “Think your best thoughts, speak your best words, do your best work. There is so much yet to be done.” The triplet figure and summons to “Rise Up” return at the end of the work and closes the piece in triumph.

The second half of our concert features a live performance of Andrea Ramsey’s “Suffrage Cantata,” which was commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles and a consortium of choirs in 2020. In this multi-movement piece, Andrea Ramsey adapts texts from Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, Jovita Idár and many other voices of powerful women in the Suffrage movement to tell the story of the fight women undertook to win the right to vote in America. The first movement, “One Day, It Is Coming” begins a narrative arc that leads to the 1848 convention on women’s rights at Seneca Falls. “Failure Is Impossible” is a musical representation of the arrest and trial of Susan B. Anthony for the crime of casting a vote in the election of 1872. The voice of Ida B. Wells-Barnett is highlighted in the third movement “When a Woman Knows Her Place,” confronting the limits of white feminism in the suffrage movement. “Shall Not Be Denied” reminds us of the violent brutality that women were subjected to in the fight for suffrage as we are led into the final movement, “Forward Into Light” – much work has been done, and much work remains to be done as we continue in the ongoing fight for the rights of all people.

– Holley Replogle-Wong



Holley Replogle-Wong is a teacher, scholar, and musician. She teaches courses on film music, popular music, American musical theater, and western music history in the Department of Musicology at UCLA, and is the Program Director of the UCLA Center for Musical Humanities. She sings with various Los Angeles-based vocal ensembles, and for the occasional film soundtrack.

Marian Partee, Lyricist, *Resilient Voices*



In her creative work, Marian celebrates the courage, tenacity, and ingenuity of women. Marian's plays and musicals include: *Miss Vulcan 1939* (Red Mountain Theatre in Birmingham, AL), *Past Time* (Theatre Building Chicago), *Madwomen and Powder Puff Pilots* (UC Irvine), and *Rapunzel* (City Lights Theater Company of San Jose).

In addition to "Resilient Voices" for VOX Femina Los Angeles, Marian has collaborated with composer Christina Whitten Thomas to write "The Deceiver" for Seraphim Singers in Massachusetts, "And I Shall Sing" for Middlebury College in Vermont, "Spinning Through the Sky" for Bivins Honor Choir in Texas, and "Mother's Word" for La Cañada Presbyterian Church here in Southern California. You can learn more about this team and their work at www.martinamusic.org.

Marian earned her BS from Northwestern University, where she studied Theatre and Creative Writing for the Media, and her MFA in Acting from California Institute of the Arts. As a performer, Marian has appeared in over forty plays and musicals. In addition to her artistic work, Marian serves as Assistant Director of Spiritual Formation at La Cañada Presbyterian Church. She lives with her husband, David Lamb, and their two children in La Cañada. www.marianpartee.com

Serenata Treble Choir



Serenata Treble Choir is one of five vocal ensembles at Los Osos High School. LOHS is nestled in the foothills of Rancho Cucamonga and part of the Chaffey Joint Union High School District. Under the direction of VOX Femina singer Mrs. Bethany Encina since 2014, the singers at Los Osos consistently receive superior ratings at SCVA Festivals in performance and sight reading. Serenata was invited to join the Inland Master Chorale for their 2019 performance of John Rutter's Mass for the Children, and collaborated with composer Bill Connor during the composition and premier of his pieces *From the Mountains to the Sea* (2015) and *Cool* (2018).

TRAVEL IS BACK! ENTER TO WIN AN AMAZING WEEK IN A TUSCAN VILLA FOR UP TO 4 PEOPLE

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Music They Wrote

Resilient Voices.....Christina Whitten Thomas

Text by Marian Partee

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles in celebration of their 25th Anniversary Season
World Premiere performance

Leah Metzler, cello
Jannet Galdamez, dance artist
Serenata Treble Choir, Los Osos High School
Bethany Encina, Director

- I. Belonging
- II. Falling Silent
Meditation
- III. Returning

From Alarcón Madrigals, Book 3.....Roger Bourland

Text by Francisco X. Alarcón

**Face and Heart
Lamentario**

*How sad to be a glass that never gets filled - a door that stays forever locked
A bed that feels like a casket not a bedstead - how sad to be one and never add one to two
A bird without a nest - a saint with no candlelight
To be alone and live on dreaming up embraces*

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles. Premiere performance March 2007

I Want to Die While You Love Me.....Rosephanye Powell

Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles
and a consortium of women's choruses

Rise Up.....Jake Runestad

Texts taken from speeches and writing by Susan B. Anthony

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles
and a consortium of women's choruses

INTERMISSION

Suffrage Cantata.....Andrea Ramsey
Texts by suffragettes throughout history

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles
and a consortium of women's choruses
Simone Ledward-Boseman, Narrator

1. It Is Coming
Early Women's Rights Perspectives
Lesili Beard, soloist
2. Failure Is Impossible
Illegal Voting, Arrest, & Trial of Susan B. Anthony
3. A Woman's Place
Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the 1913 Women's Suffrage
Procession in Washington D.C.
Caroline McKenzie, soloist
4. Shall Not Be Denied
The Silent Sentinels, Arrest, Imprisonment & Abuse
Desiree Balfour, soloist
Catherine Card, Michele Mulidor,
Merced Stratton, Sumana Cooppan Wolf, soli quartet
5. Forward into Light
Ratification and the Journey Forward
Bethany Encina, Sonia Ohan, Laura Pluth, soloists

Orchid Quartet: Adrienne Pope, Mona Tian, violin
Kiara Ana, viola; Leah Metzler, cello
Percussion: Eliza Kinney, Lauren Kosty
Multi-media: Helen Mendoza

Resilient Voices

A choral piece in three movements

Text by Marian Partee
Music by Christina Whitten Thomas

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles in celebration of their 25th Anniversary Season
Dr. Iris S. Levine, Founding Artistic Director

I. Belonging

TEXT

Her grandmother kept the house
And filled the little mouths
And never dreamed of more.
Her mother kept the house
And filled the little mouths
And never asked for more.
Yet she,
She knew that if she kept the house
And filled the little mouths
She would need more.

She took her paintbrush
And captured her self-image:
Her passion,
 Her passion,
Her beauty,
 Her beauty,
Her pain.

Unashamed, she proclaimed,
"This is who I am.
Art is my gift.
Art is my calling.
I belong here."

She took her chisel
And sculpted her desires:
For freedom,
 For freedom,
For justice,
 For justice,
For peace.

Through the stone, she made known
All that she had lost...
Loss of her son.
Loss of her lover.

Loss of her homeland.

IMAGE

1. Self-Portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola, 1566, Italian
2. Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting by Artemisia Gentileschi, 1638, Italian
3. Self-Portrait by Marie-Gabrielle Capet, 1783, French
4. Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird by Frida Kahlo, 1940, Mexican
5. Self-Portrait by Amrita Sher-Gil, 1932, Hungarian/Indian
6. Self-Portrait by Lois Mailou Jones, 1940, African-American
7. Self-Portrait by Georgette Chen, 1946, Singaporean
8. Hagar by Edmonia Lewis, 1875, African-American/Chippewa
9. Sojourner Truth by Tina Allen, 1997, African-American.
10. The Wretched by Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, 1902, African-American
11. The Harp by Augusta Savage, 1939, African-American
12. The Grieving Parents by Käthe Kollwitz, 1932, German
13. The Mature Age by Camille Claudel, 1913, French
14. Escape from Sodom by Antonietta Raphael Mafai, 1930's, Italian/Lithuanian

Denied the common roads,
She shaped her own path
And strode onward,
Onward, onward.
She sought friends,
She found mentors
Who embraced her genius.
After years of toil,
After years of hardship,
At last,
She was an artist of renown.

She took her camera
And snapped a potent image...
Of hunger,
 Of hunger,
Of warfare,
 Of warfare,
Of love.

With one shot, she had caught
How the world should be.
Look at our strength.

Look at our courage.

We belong here.

We belong here.

We belong here.

We belong here.

We belong here.

She told her daughters,
“There is always
More within you to discover,
More boundaries to redefine,

More alliances to build,
More injustice to defy.

I urge you, my daughters:
Search for more.”

15. El Ultimo Unicornio, Charlotte Yazbek,
1975, Mexican

16. Aspiration by Harriet Whitney
Frishmuth, 1933, American

17. Self-Portrait with Two Pupils... by
Adedaide Labille-Guiard, 1785, French

18. Self-Portrait by Suzanne Valadon, 1898,
French

19. Self-Portrait by Vivian Maier, undated,
American

20. Migrant Mother by Dorothea Lange,
1936, American

21. ... in a trench during World War I
...Helen Johns Kirtland, c1918, American

22. The Darned Club by Alice Austen, 1891,
American

23. Billy Eckstine with fans by Martha
Holmes, 1949, American

24. Female welders...Margaret Bourke-
White, 1942, American

25. Margaret Bourke-White at the
ready...1943

26. Students in a chemistry class by Frances Benjamin
Johnston, 1899, American

27. Students in a science class by
Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1899, American

28. Suffragettes by Christina Broom, 1911,
British

29. ...Duke Ellington and Friends by
Florestine Perrault Collins, 1930's, African-
American

30. The WAACs by Marie Hansen, 1942,
American

31. Allegresse by Bessie Potter Vonnoh,
1921, American

32. Women and Dog, Marisol (Escobar),
1964, Venezuelan-American

33. Group by Dame Barbara Hepworth,
1951, British

34. Estate Workers (Ceylon) by
Julia Margaret Cameron, 1875, British, born India

35. Ladder to the Moon by Georgia O'Keeffe, 1958,
American

II. Falling Silent

The stage is bare.
My home is dark.
This lean season brings
Emptiness within.
Who am I without my work?
Will I regain the life I knew,
Or must I simply take succor
From my memories?
Tedium beckons me toward madness.
In my confinement,
I have lost my strength,
My skill,
My song.
Only smoke on my breath,
ashes on my tongue.
My loves have slipped beyond my grasp.
A mournful wind invades my inner chambers,
Rattles my ribs,
And howls.
As another day fades,
My heart returns
To the voices fallen silent,
To the lights extinguished.

III. Returning

Out of the stillness,
A new life takes wing.
Out of the silence,
A tribe starts to sing.

Face to face
We talk together in this sacred place.
We speak what must be spoken
And heal what has been broken.
Rejoice!
Rejoice!

Side by side
We stand together and our fears subside.
Our voices raised in laughter,
We will not part hereafter.
Rejoice!
Rejoice!

In gratitude, we gather here.
We're blessed to draw companions near.
We taste the joy once more
That we had known before.

The painters return to the canvas.
The writers return to the page.
The dancers return to the studio.
The singers return to the stage.

Hand in hand
We walk together through our weary land.
The open road before us,
Come join our hopeful chorus.
Rejoice!
Rejoice!

Acknowledgments

A very special thank you to all our concert volunteers this evening for assisting in making this concert a stellar experience for our audience.

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VOX Femina Los Angeles is honored to recognize the individuals and institutions that generously support our organization.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY ANGELS

Susan Leary - Iris Levine & Lesili Beard - Helen Mendoza & Pamela J. Privett - Steven Neiffer & Eric Lassiter -
Joan Potter & Sharon Lilly - Lauren Schellenbach & Brenda Thompson - Rick Stamberger -
Sue Stamberger & Alma Guzman - Mary Beth & Rick West

OMNES VOCES | ALL VOICES

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