

VOX
Femina
LOS ANGELES

MADE IN LA:
Identity and Belonging
in the City of Angels

March 11, 2023 at 7 pm
First Congregational Church
of Los Angeles



Scan here for
the full program.

MADE IN LA: Identity and Belonging in the City of Angels

March 11, 2023 at 7 pm, First Congregational Church of Los Angeles
Dr. Iris S. Levine, Founding Artistic Director
Lisa Edwards, pianist

Da L'cha - Know This:

Abby Gostein

Lesili Beard, Angelica Rowell, soloists

From Behind the Caravan: Songs of Hâfez

Abbie Betinis

- I. we have come
- II. suffer no grief
- III. closer to the fire
- IV. boatpeople
- V. we have come (reprise)

Sumana Coopan Wolf, Mika Jain, Sonia Ohan, Desiree Balfour,
Bethany Encina, Cynthia Glass, soloists
Ana Maria Maldonado, cello, Sidney Hopson, percussion

In a Neighborhood in Los Angeles
(from Alarcón Madrigals Book 1)

Roger Bourland

TāReKiṬa

Reena Esmail

Lesili Beard, Mika Jain, Sonia Ohan, Classical Indian Ghungroo bells

Our Streets, A Symphony Again

Saunder Choi
Poetry by Brian Sonia-Wallace

Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles

Sigue

Ivette Herryman Rodriguez

INTERMISSION

Intersectionality

Zanaida Stewart Robles

Lyrics by Rhina P. Espaillat, Tina Chang, Amy Fogerson, and Zanaida Robles

1. Prologue
2. Bilingual
3. Lion
4. Ripe
5. Epilogue

Ana Maria Maldonado, cello, Sidney Hopson, percussion
Commissioned by VOX Femina Los Angeles

Quite Regularly Gay

Joan Szymko

Desiree Balfour, solo

Inertia

Laura Mercado-Wrights

GMCLA Aftershock

I Come From Good People

Robert Seeley

August Barringer, solo
VOX and GMCLA

Brave

Sara Bareilles/arr. Audrey Snyder

Missy Nieto, Lucio Maramba, soloists
VOX and GMCLA

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including program notes, bios and more!



Texts & Translations

Da L'cha - Know This:

Know this: that every shepherd has a tune he calls his own.
Know this: that each and every blade of grass has its own melody,
and from the song of the field, comes the shepherd's own song.
How beautiful, to hear their song to pray among them in joy.
How good.

Know this: that every person has a tune they call their own.
Know this: that one gains wisdom as one hears another's melody
and from the song of them all comes the song of the soul.
the heart is filled with longing.

From Behind the Caravan: Songs of Hâfez

I. we have come

We, to this door, seeking neither pride nor glory... we have come.
For shelter from ill-fortune, here... we have come.

Traveling along love's journey, from the borders of nothingness,
Now into states of being, all this way... we have come.

O ship of grace, where is thy anchor of forbearance?
For in this ocean of generosity, immersed in sin... we have come.

Hâfez, throw off your woolen kherqe [Sufi cloak],
for we, from behind the caravan,
with the fire of sighing "ah!"... we have come.

II. suffer no grief

Forsaken Joseph to Canaan shall return.
Suffer no grief.

Upon the thorny stalks of family grief, a rose shall bloom.
Suffer no grief...

If you desire the Way and plant your pilgrim foot in the desert,
Then if the mighty Arabian thorn make reproofs,
Suffer no grief...

Suffer no grief, suffer no grief, O heart.
Back to reason, comes this distraught head.
Suffer no grief...

O heart, despairing heart,
O! O! Suffer no grief...

There is no road that has no end.

III. closer to the fire

Last night I saw the angels beat at the door of the tavern,
The clay of Adam, they shaped and into the mould, they cast.

The churches war among themselves, forgive them;
When they could not see the truth, they beat the door of fable.

Fire, Fire! Oh! Oh!

IV. boatpeople

My heart falls from grasp. For God's sake come to my cry, O pious ones; O the pain that Love's hidden mystery should be disclosed!

Arise, arise O breeze

To ease the pain of the world, live by these words:
With friends, give kindness; with enemies, courtesy.

We are the shipwrecked. O fair breeze, arise!
So that, again, we may behold the face of the Beloved.

Behold !

V. we have come (reprise)

We, to this door, seeking neither pride nor glory... we have come.
For shelter from ill-fortune, here... we have come.

Hâfez, throw off your woolen kherqe [Sufi cloak],
for we, from behind the caravan,
with the fire of sighing "ah!"...
we have come!

Our Streets, A Symphony Again

Too early to celebrate?
By Brian Sonia-Wallace

A collaborative poem using words and memories contributed by West Hollywood residents

The sunset strip
echoes, jacarandas bloom bright
after barren months.
Our streets symphony again
wild beyond gardens,
blaze honey
disco
french horns
& orange sherbet glow.

You, dear, never stopped
being a proud march, a palm
frond in ragged wind –
yes, you curled up
in last winter's hush.
This city threads us lonely
a plastic oasis of skin
sweaty with starlight.

But now it's time for
gogo boots & guitar strings,
rooftop pools & history
between your lips
like a cold margarita
while the hot asphalt
dances.
Each of us a song:
equal parts party and protest.

Won't you walk with me?
My glam aunts, my ferocious uncles,
my frankest friends – my chosen family,
look at all we have lost.
All that survives.
We are a house
built
on bones. We are
Dancing on bones.

Scan here for the full program
including program notes, bios and more!



Sigue

Walk, traveler,
Continue walking;
Walk and do not stop,
Continue walking.

When you pass by her house
Do not tell her
That you saw me,
Walk traveler,
Continue walking.

Continue and do not stop,
Continue walking.

Do not look if she calls out for you,
Continue walking.

Remember that she is bad,
Continue walking.

Intersectionality

1. Prologue
By Zanaida Stewart Robles

Intersectionality.
A framework.
Sociocultural identity.
Discrimination.
Privilege.
You tell your story.
I find the me in you.

2. Bilingual/Bilingüe
By Rhina P Espaillat

My father liked them separate, one
there, one here (allá y aquí), as if aware

that words might cut in two his
daughter's heart (el corazón) and lock
the alien part

to what he was—his memory, his name
(su nombre)—with a key he could not
claim.

“English outside this door, Spanish
inside,” he said, “y basta.” But who can
divide

the world, the word (mundo y palabra)
from any child? I knew how to be dumb

and stubborn (testaruda); late, in bed,
I hoarded secret syllables I read

until my tongue (mi lengua) learned to
run where his stumbled. And still the
heart was one.

I like to think he knew that, even when,
proud (orgullosa) of his daughter's pen,

he stood outside mis versos, half in fear
of words he loved but did not want to
hear.

3. Lion
By Tina Chang

I chewed into the wreck of the world,
into the neckbone of the past that
pursued me. All the while, I moved
toward extinction, bearing the burden
of damage, language of the protector.

A great apocalyptic wheeze adorned
me with sand. I foraged, first to find
light dappling the leaves, then breathed
into an infinite power, feminine rust,
a coppery taste of salvage, leading me
into a canopy

of the future. My mother was a mother
of mothers, modern before she was
ancestral. She was a woman who
morphed into feline, back to her human
self before I woke each morning.

I lived not to sate my appetite but to
crush it. On my haunches, I craved what
could not be seen. I am desire. I am
survival. I sit under the tree waiting for
hunger.

4. Ripe <Text used in the music>
By Amy Fogerson

Feeling myself more than I ever have,
more attentive to each day's reality
instead of fixating on a distant dream.

And the delightful secret surprise:
finally giving myself permission to feel
more connected to and accepting of
the body I inhabit.
Youth need not view the older body
with disdain.

Truly, I have never before felt more
Complete
Succulent
Ripe

5. Epilogue
By Zanaida Stewart Robles

You tell your story.
I find the me in you.

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