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# CERDDORION

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VOCAL ENSEMBLE

*James John*  
*Artistic Director*

PRESENTS

# *Language of the Birds*



WITH GUEST ARTISTS

*Face the Music, Dr. Jenny Undercofler, director*

Saturday, March 1, at 8 pm  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Saturday, March 8, at 8 pm  
St. Michael's Church  
225 W. 99th Street, Manhattan

# CERDDORION

## **SOPRANOS**

Samantha Bassler  
Anna Harmon  
Jennifer Oates  
Jeanette Rodriguez  
Ellen Schorr  
Rebecca Schwartz

## **ALTOS**

Jamie Carrillo  
Clare Detko  
Linnea Johnson  
Cathy Markoff  
Myrna Nachman  
Gretta Wren

## **TENORS**

Ralph Bonheim  
Michael Klitsch  
Matt Perez\*  
Chris Ryan  
Grady Sullivan  
Ethan Wagner  
George Weisman\*

## **BASSES**

Jonathan Caro\*  
Peter Cobb  
Joseph Martin\*  
Jonathan Miller  
Dean Rainey  
Tom Reingold  
Larry Sutter

\*We thank these guest singers from Queens College for their assistance in *Sleep softly now*.



The members of Cerddorion are grateful to James Kennerley and the Church of Saint Ignatius of Antioch for providing rehearsal and performance space for this season.

Thanks to Vince Peterson and St. Paul's Episcopal Church for their hospitality.

Thanks to Ethan Wagner and Myrna Nachman for doubling as rehearsal accompanists this cycle. Thanks to Jennifer Oates, Myrna Nachman, Michael Klitsch, and Larry Sutter for their efforts in preparing this program.

Thanks to Veronika Krausas and Bruce Saylor for their invaluable service as judges for our second annual Emerging Composers Competition.

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## LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS

*Le chant des oyseaulx*

Clément Janequin (c. 1485–1558)



*The Blue Bird*

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)

Anna Harmon, soprano



*language of the birds*

Veronika Krausas (b. 1963)

Ellen Schorr, soprano; Cathy Markoff, alto  
Ethan Wagner, tenor; Peter Cobb, speaker

The Pannonia Quartet, from *Face the Music*  
Sophia Steger, violin 1; Emma Ike, violin 2; Javen Lara, viola; Nick Burkel, cello

### ❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

*Of Birds*

Steven Serpa (b. 1976)

*Of the Night-owl*  
*Of the Phoenix*

*World Premiere*



*Sleep softly now*

Joshua Fishbein (b. 1984)

*World Premiere*



*Die Nachtigall* (Op. 59, No. 4)

Felix Mendelssohn (1807–1847)

*March*

Theo Popov (b. 1988)

*World Premiere*

Jennifer Oates, soprano; Jamie Carrillo, alto;  
Chris Ryan, tenor; Dean Rainey, bass

*Lerchengesang* (Op. 48, No. 4)

Felix Mendelssohn



*The Turtle Dove*

Traditional English folk song, arr.  
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Chris Ryan, tenor



*Lark*

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Ralph Bonheim, tenor

## THE ARTISTS

Now in its nineteenth season, **CERDDORION** (the name, pronounced keh-DOHR-ee-on, is Welsh for “musicians”) is one of New York’s most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of two dozen mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group’s interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles. Cerddorion has also frequently commissioned new works by such composers as Paul Moravec, David Schober, Lisa Bielawa, David Lang, Elliot Z. Levine, Robert Dennis, and Julie Dolphin.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. In 2011, the men of Cerddorion sang with esteemed French organist Francis Chapelet in the second inaugural recital of the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension in New York. Past collaborations have included the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener’s all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall (with Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London’s Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; Baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

In 2006, Cerddorion performed at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, Cerddorion’s first performance on a commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes *Lamentations for a City*, which Cerddorion commissioned and performed in 2004.

Cerddorion is a proud member of the New York Choral Consortium.



**JAMES JOHN** is in his fourth season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Associate Professor and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College-CUNY, where he conducts the Queens College Choir, Vocal Ensemble, and Choral Society, teaches choral conducting, and serves as advisor to the graduate program in vocal performance. Recent professional highlights include guest-conducting the Tokyo Oratorio Society in a performance of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Tokyo’s Suntory Hall, and an invited performance by the Queens College Choir at the 2012 Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) in Providence, Rhode Island. Under Dr. John’s leadership the choral program at the Aaron Copland School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region. Past performances with the School of Music’s choral ensembles include Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, award-winning productions of Dominick Argento’s *Postcard from Morocco* and Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, requiems by Mozart and Verdi, “A Night at the Opera” with Queens College alumna Erika Sunnegårdh of the Metropolitan Opera, Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, and world premieres of works by Sidney Boquiren, Leo Kraft, Meg Collins Stoop, and others. Dr. John’s choirs have performed in many of New York’s

Where no Sun is, come, loudly in the air!  
Let ear and eye prepare truly to see and hear,  
To hear thy threefold welcome in the air,  
To see all dazzle after long despair,  
To see what none may see now,  
Singer so fair!  
O Lark, alert, O Lark alive!  
O lovely, lovely chanting arrow lark,  
Sprung like an arrow from the bow of dark  
Sing the dayrise, the great dayrise!

—Genevieve Taggard



## CERDDORION’S NEXT PERFORMANCES

Please join us on June 1 in Brooklyn or June 8 in Manhattan (at St. Ignatius of Antioch) for Cerddorion’s final program of the 2013–2014 concert season, titled “The Food of Love.” This program will feature musical settings of Shakespeare’s texts, intermingled with selected readings from the Bard’s plays and poetry, in collaboration with New York’s Shakespeare Society.

If music be the food of love, sing on!

### **The Turtle Dove**

Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone,  
And leave you for a while;  
If I roam away I'll come back again,  
Though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear,  
Though I roam ten thousand miles.

So fair thou art, my bonny lass,  
So deep in love am I;  
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,  
Till the stars fall from the sky, my dear,  
Till the stars fall from the sky.

The sea will never run dry, my dear,  
Nor the rocks melt with the sun,  
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,  
Till all these things be done, my dear,  
Till all these things be done.

O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove,  
He doth sit on yonder high tree,  
A-making a moan for the loss of his love,  
As I will do for thee, my dear,  
As I will do for thee.

### **Lark**

O Lark, O Lark, from great dark arise!  
O Lark of Light, O Lightness like a spark,  
Shock ears and stun our eyes  
Singing the dayrise, the great dayrise!  
O Lark of Light, Lark rise!  
O Believer, Rejoicer, Say,  
O Lark, alert, Rise!  
Say, before Evidence of Day, The Sun is risen!  
O Lark, alive, Rise!

prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Trinity Church Wall Street. Under his direction, the Queens College Vocal Ensemble recently released its first CD, featuring premiere recordings of partsongs by Scottish composer Hamish MacCunn, and the Queens College Choir recorded Bright Sheng's *Two Folksongs from Qinghai*, soon to be released on the Naxos label.

Dr. John's guest conducting appearances include Avery Fisher Hall's annual Messiah Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale (Virginia's only professional choral ensemble), chorus master for the Queens Symphony, regional honor choirs throughout New York State, and a recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conventions of the ACDA, and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. In Fall 2013, Dr. John returned to Tokyo to conduct Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as Guest Lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. His dissertation on Brahms's *Nänie*, Op. 82 won the Julius Herford Prize from the ACDA and will be published soon in revised form as a book by The Edwin Mellen Press. His articles have appeared in *Choral Journal*, *American Choral Review*, and Chorus America's Research Memorandum Series. In July 2011, he was appointed Editor of *American Choral Review*, and he also serves as a member of ACDA's National Research and Publications Committee.

Dr. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his current position at the Aaron Copland School of Music, he served as Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University in Boston, as Director of Choral Activities at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, and as Dartmouth College's first Conducting Fellow. He received his Master of Arts in Conducting from the Aaron Copland School of Music.



Called "a force in the new music world" by *The New York Times*, **FACE THE MUSIC** is the country's only ensemble for 18-and-under that is solely devoted to the music of living composers. In the space of nine years, Face the Music has grown from an after-school club of eight children to a massive group of more than 135 students from all over the tri-state area who convene every week to write, rehearse, and perform music together. The ensemble advances the Kaufman Music Center's commitment to contemporary music and provides unparalleled performance and education experiences for the next generation of musical leaders.

Under the direction of Dr. Jenny Undercofler, Face the Music performs nearly 35 concerts each season, in venues around the city ranging from schools to museums to concert halls. Highlights from recent seasons include performances at Lincoln Center Out of Doors, the Bang On A Can Marathon, the Ecstatic Music Festival, and the River to River Festival, where Face the Music opened for the Philip Glass Ensemble. Face the Music has collaborated with many professional artists, including the JACK Quartet, ICE, and Gutbucket. This past fall, Face the Music launched the "Kronos at Kaufman" program, which pairs the Kronos Quartet with four elite student quartets.

# THE COMPOSERS

## Steven Serpa

**Steven Serpa** (b. 1976), composer and countertenor, has earned master's degrees in music composition from the Hartt School of Music and in early music performance from the Longy School of Music. His vocal, choral, and chamber works have been performed throughout New England, the Eastern United States and Canada. His new one-act opera, *Thyrsis & Amaranth*, based on a fable by Jean de la Fontaine, was premiered by Hartford Opera Theater and was recently produced by Halifax Summer Opera.

Recent collaborations include incidental music to a stage version of *Pride & Prejudice* and dance works for choreographers in New York City and Hartford. Mr. Serpa's choral cantata *Heaven's Birds: Lament and Song* was written in collaboration with North Carolina poet Jeffery Beam to commemorate World AIDS Day for a benefit concert for the AIDS Action Committee of Boston. *Pan Episodes*, his sonata for solo flute, was performed recently in Alabama as part of the Mid-South Flute Society's conference. Upcoming projects include a piano quartet for a concert in Brooklyn curated by Bunita Marcus and a harp trio for the Rhode Island-based new music series Providence Premieres. He studied composition with Tom Cipullo in New York City and with Stephen Gryc at the Hartt School of Music.

## Joshua Fishbein

A singer and pianist, **Joshua Fishbein** (b. 1984) composes vocal and instrumental music. Currently, he is a teaching fellow and PhD candidate in Music Composition at UCLA. Mr. Fishbein's music has won awards from the American Prize, the American Choral Directors Association, BMI, the Belvedere Chamber Music Festival, the Boston Metro Opera, the Cantate Chamber Singers, the Delaware Valley Chorale, The Esoterics, the Guild of Temple Musicians, the Hollywood Master Chorale, the National Lutheran Choir, and WomenSing. His Hebrew settings have been featured by Shalsholet, the Max Helfman Institute, and the Baltimore Choral Arts Society.

Mr. Fishbein completed his master's degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM), where he won first prize in the SFCM Artsong Competition and served as assistant conductor of the Conservatory Chorus. Earning undergraduate degrees in psychology and music composition at Carnegie Mellon University, Mr. Fishbein won the Harry G. Archer Prize in orchestral composition. A native of Baltimore, Mr. Fishbein studied piano and theory at The Peabody Preparatory. His composition teachers include Roger Bourland, Paul Chihara, David Conte, Nancy Galbraith, Ian Krouse, David Lefkowitz, and Lawrence Moss. Mr. Fishbein's music is available from ECS Publishing, Transcontinental Music Publications, and directly from the composer ([www.fishbeinmusic.com](http://www.fishbeinmusic.com)).

Sollt ich mich einzeln freuen,  
wenn auch der Frühling nah?  
Doch kommen wir zu zweien,  
gleich ist der Sommer da!

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

## Lerchengesang

Wie lieblicher Klang,  
o Lerche dein Sang!  
er hebt sich, er schwingt sich in Wonne.  
Du nimmst mich von hier,  
ich singe mit dir,  
wir steigen durch Wolken zur Sonne.

—Johann Ludwig Uhland

Could I enjoy myself alone  
when Spring is so close?  
Yet if there were two of us  
it would all at once be Summer!

Translation: Emily Ezust

## Lark Song

How lovely a sound,  
Oh lark, is your song!  
It rises, it leaps for joy.  
You lift me out of here,  
I sing with you,  
We rise through the clouds sunward.

## The Turtle Dove

### Lark

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Aaron Copland

Ralph Vaughan Williams and Aaron Copland both used folk music from their home countries to create popular, national music. Vaughan Williams, often viewed as the most important British composer of his time, collected more than 800 English folksongs from English villagers and farmers in Southern England (mostly between 1903 and 1910). His familiarity with the English folksong informed many of his compositions, and he arranged some, like “The Turtle Dove.” In “The Turtle Dove,” Vaughan Williams's lush harmonies and part-writing enhance, rather than overwhelm, the beauty of this well-known tune.

Copland is best known for his populist music of the 1930s and 1940s, which has become known as his quintessential American sound, as found in his ballets *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Rodeo*, as well as in his Third Symphony. While part of his American sound stemmed from the use of American folksongs, he was interested in native and popular music that his audience would recognize. His “Lark” (1938), for example, exhibits the influence of popular music in the melodic lines and harmonies, which often outline major and minor triads, as well as in complex syncopated rhythms derived from jazz.

—Jennifer Oates



## Die Nachtigall

### March

### Lerchengesang

Composed specifically for Cerddorion, *March* sets a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The narrator ponders his solitude in the cold winter day. He dreams of a companion, whose arrival would be equivalent to the coming of summer. But the only company he has at the moment is a lone swallow, which comes to promise warmer days ahead, or perhaps deceive with false hope. The music narrates the scene through both characters' perspectives: The verses hint at the Classical Era counterpoint contemporaneous with Goethe, while the refrains mimic the songs of early spring birds.

—*Theo Popov*

We premiere *March* this evening in the form of a triptych, balanced between two of Mendelssohn's delightful partsongs: *Die Nachtigall*, also a Goethe setting, and *Lerchengesang*, to a poem by Goethe's younger contemporary Johann Ludwig Uhland.

### Die Nachtigall

Die Nachtigall, sie war entfernt,  
Der Frühling lockt sie wieder;  
Was neues hat sie nicht gelernt,  
Singt alte, liebe Lieder.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
(1749–1832)

### March

Es ist ein Schnee gefallen,  
denn es ist noch nicht Zeit,  
daß von den Blümlein allen  
wir werden hoch erfreut.

Der Sonnenblick betrüget  
mit mildem falschem Schein,  
die Schwalbe selber lüget,  
warum? Sie kommt allein!

## Felix Mendelssohn

### Theo Popov

### Felix Mendelssohn

### The Nightingale

The nightingale was far away,  
But the Spring has tempted her back again;  
She has not learned anything new,  
So sings the old, beloved songs.

Translation: Michael P. Rosewall

### March

The snow has fallen;  
it is not yet time  
for all the flowers  
to delight us.

The sun swindles us  
with a mild, false glow;  
even the swallow is lying—  
and why? because he comes alone!

## Theo Popov

After abundant exposure to Christian Orthodox music in his childhood, **Theo Popov** began his formal compositional training by studying electronic music with Paul Lansky and musical geometry with Dmitri Tymoczko. In 2010, his first opera, *Nero Artifex*, a three-act drama in Classical Latin with libretto by Mariah Min and Veronica Shi, received a full stage production at Princeton University. It presents one of history's most notorious emperors as a well-meaning but incapable ruler, a gullible dreamer, and unfortunate artist.

In May 2012, Mr. Popov's second opera, *Once Upon the Wind*, with a libretto by Kate Light, premiered within the framework of the Composer Librettist Development Program at the American Lyric Theater. In addition, he has written two puppet shows, a number of choral and orchestral pieces, art songs, chamber music, and electronic music. Mr. Popov completed his composition degree at Princeton University, where he studied with Steve Mackey, Peter Westergaard, Bill Whelan, Barbara White, Paul Muldoon, and Kofi Agawu.



## PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

### A Note From the Artistic Director

I discovered Veronika Krausas's wonderful, whimsical *language of the birds* while searching for a work that would be suitable for collaboration with the outstanding young instrumentalists of *Face the Music*, who are guest artists on our program this evening. As a long-time fan of the “beat” poets (Allen Ginsberg in particular), I was struck immediately by the quirky, often humorous fragments from poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco became a gathering place for this generation of American writers. The title of Krausas's piece sparked immediate associations with other bird-themed choral works—not the least of which was Janequin's famous *Le chant des oyseaulx*—and very quickly an entire program came together around this theme.

Since birdsong has inspired countless generations of composers, I also thought it would be interesting to incorporate this motif into Cerddorion's second annual Emerging Composers Competition, which encouraged bird-related submissions. The results were phenomenal, and tonight we are thrilled to be presenting world premieres by the three winning composers (Steven Serpa, Joshua Fishbein, and Theo Popov), drawn from a field of twenty-six entries from throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Europe. As Ferlinghetti writes, “Give your poems wings to fly to the treetops.” What better way for a poem to take flight than in song?

—*James John*

## Le chant des oyseaulx

We begin our exploration of “The Language of Birds” with Clément Janequin’s *Le chant des oyseaulx*, one of the most well-known and amusing works from the vast repertoire of 16th-century French chansons. Janequin and his contemporaries Claudin (de Sermisy) and Passereau, were the most renowned composers of chansons, sometimes viewed as the French counterparts to Italian and English madrigals, Spanish villancicos, and other popular genres that dominated secular music in this period. Many of the more than 250 chansons Janequin composed depict birdsongs, battles, street cries, and natural sounds of every sort; famous examples of these are *La guerre*, *La chasse*, and *Les cris de Paris*. Their wit, extraordinary onomatopoeic effects, and occasional satirical jabs contributed to their popularity during his lifetime and to the affection singers and audiences continue to feel for them today. While chansons comprise the majority of Janequin’s output, he also wrote two masses, at least one motet, and more than 150 partially finished psalm settings and *chansons spirituelles*.

*Le chant des oyseaulx*, arguably Janequin’s most famous chanson, is a work of some length; a lyrical refrain alternates with verses that tell the story and break into descriptive birdcalls. Unlike many simpler, homophonic chansons of the period, this four-voiced work is highly contrapuntal, and both the refrain and the secondary theme that begins each verse are imitative in texture. The refrain starts with a characteristic long-short-short rhythm of Janequin’s chansons and sometimes “sneaks” back in toward the end of a verse without any warning. Not constrained by the strophic form and homophonic texture of other chanson types, Janequin is free here to make each verse musically different and thoroughly appropriate to the various birds. The birdsongs, with their quick, syllabic text settings, become increasingly busy, sometimes culminating in comical “patter” music. Fun is also poked at less savory aspects of religion (“*Sancte Caquette*,” “*Au sermon... a saint Trotin...monstrer le tetin*”), at actual clergy (“*Guillaume Colinette*”), and at the contemptible cuckoo (“*maistre coucou... vous n’etes qu’un traistre*”), who lays his eggs willy-nilly in the nests of others. But despite this traitorous bird’s intrusion—and the minor mode of the song—the work is overall a happy testament to spring and the god of love.

—Myrna Nachman

### Le chant des oyseaulx

Reveillez vous, coeurs endormis  
Le dieu d’amours vous sonne.  
A ce premier jour de may,  
Oyseaulx feront merveillez,  
Pour vous mettre hors d’esmay  
Destoupez vos oreilles.  
Et farirariron, ferely joly.

Vous serez tous en joye mis,  
Car la saison est bonne.  
Vous orrez, à mon avis,  
Une douce musique

### Song of the Birds

Awake, sleepy hearts,  
The god of love calls you.  
On this first day of May,  
The birds will make you marvel.  
To lift you from dismay,  
Unclog your ears.  
And fa la la la la (etc...)

You will be moved to joy,  
For the season is good.  
You will hear, I advise you,  
A sweet music

## Sleep softly now

Joshua Fishbein

*Sleep softly now* sets text from an anonymous 14th-century author. The same text was also set in the first known carol in the English language. The words originally portray Mary singing softly to her newborn son; however, my setting is dedicated to my daughter, Naomi. In fact, the initial musical impulse for the piece occurred when she was a newborn, as I cared for her at night.

I altered the text slightly from the original Middle English in order for it to be more accessible to the choir and audience. I also modified the text to be gender neutral. For example, “*a kenave child*” (a male child) from the original was replaced with a gender-neutral alternative, “*an angel child*,” in order for the text to apply more broadly to a baby girl. Notable Middle English words that were retained include “*bairné*” (child), “*birdé*” (young woman), and “*of-mang*” (meanwhile). The full text is listed below.

My music reflects the form of the text with a recurring musical refrain. However, my refrain continually evolves, expanding and elaborating more and more with each repetition. The overall sound is intentionally neo-Medieval, with the addition of intricate counterpoint, varied choral textures, and a rich harmonic palette with many ambient dissonances appropriate to the 21st century. In addition to the original Medieval carol, I was also strongly influenced by a setting of the same text by contemporary New Zealand composer John Psathas. Such Medieval and modern influences combine to form a unique musical timelessness, simultaneously both old and new.

—Joshua Fishbein

### Refrain:

Lullay, lullow, lully, lullay,  
Bewy, bewy, lully, bewy,  
Lully, lullow, lully, lullay,  
Baw, baw, my bairne,  
Sleep softly now.

### Verse 1:

I saw a sweet and seemly sight,  
A blissful birde, a blossom bright,  
That mourning made and mirth of-mang.

### Refrain

### Verse 2:

A maiden mother, meek and mild,  
In cradle kept an angel child  
That softly slept,  
She sat and sang:

### Refrain



## Of Birds: Songs on Texts from Medieval Bestiaries

Steven Serpa

Bestiaries of the Medieval period are a bizarre superimposition of supposed “scientific” observation and religious philosophy. The authors of these collections list attributes of various creatures and then relate them to aspects of Christian doctrine. In my choral diptych *Of Birds*, I’ve focused on the quirky and inspiring list of characteristics for two birds, the Night-owl and the Phoenix. These two birds inhabit opposite worlds: one living in the darkness of night, while the other’s life is fueled by the sun and fire. Musically, I have brought this out in my use of modes and intervals. “Of the Night-owl” is dominated by stacking Phrygian modes onto each other, by the intervals of the minor third and the minor second, and by narrow, step-wise melodic lines. “Of the Phoenix” is comprised of the brightness of the Lydian mode, by major thirds and major seconds, and by wide leaps in the vocal lines.

—Steven Serpa

### 1. Of the Night-owl

The night-owl is a bird that loves the darkness of night. It shuns the light, flying at night in search of food. It never flies directly where it wants to go, but travels slantwise from its course. Some say that it flies backwards.

It lives in decaying walls and sets up house in ruins, often found in caves or among tombs. It is a dirty, slothful bird that pollutes its own nest with its dung. It cannot be brought to the island of Crete, and if it is, it will instantly die. The night-owl lets out a scream when it senses that someone is about to die.

When other birds see its hiding place, they noisily attack it to betray where it has hid. A crafty fighter, it will lie down on its back and bunch itself up, fighting with its beak and claws. When outnumbered and surrounded, it calls upon its ally the Hawk, which comes to aid the night-owl in combat with its enemies. If seen in the day, it is of dire portent.

### 2. Of the Phoenix

The phoenix is a bird of Arabia. There is only one of its kind in the whole world. It lives for upwards of five hundred years, and when it observes that it has grown old, it erects a funeral pyre for itself from small branches of frankincense, myrrh, and other aromatic plants. And turning to face the rays of the sun, and beating its wings, it fans the flames and is consumed in the fire.

From its marrow a worm arises and grows to maturity; and on the ninth day it acquires wings, and the phoenix rises from its ashes to fly.

Que fera le roy mauvis  
D’une voix autentique.  
Ti, ti, piti, thouy, chouthi (etc.)

Que dis tu? Le petit sansonnet de Paris, le  
petit mignon. Que la bas, passé, villain!  
Sainte teste Dieu! quio, quio, tost, tost,  
tost, din, dan, din, dan. Au sermon, ma  
dame! Voir Sainte Robin. A sainte Trotin,  
monstret le tetin, le doulx. A la messe,  
Sainte Caquette! Guillemette Colinette! Il  
est temps d’aller boyre! Qu’est là bas passé,  
villain. Saige, courtoys et bien apris. Il est  
temps d’aller boyre, que dis tu? Il est temps  
d’aller boyre, que dist tu?

Rire et gaudir c’est mon devis,  
Chacun s’i habandonne.

Rossignol du boys joly,  
A qui la voix resonne,  
Pour vous mettre hors d’ennuy  
Vostre gorge iargonne:  
Frian, frian, frian, velecy, ticun, teo, tu,  
coqui, oy ti, qui lara, turri, huit, tu fouquet,  
fi, ti, trrrr....

Fuyez, regretz, pleurs et souci,  
Car la saison l’ordonne.  
Arriere maistre coucou,  
Sortez de nos chapitre.  
Chacun vous est mal tenu  
Car vous n’estes q’un traistre.  
Coucou, coucou (etc...)

Par traison en chacun nid,  
Pondez sans qu’on vous sonne.

Reveillez vous, coeurs endormis,  
Le dieu d’amours vous sonne.

That the royal blackbird will sing  
In a pure voice.  
Ti, ti, piti, thouy, chouthi (etc.)

What are you saying? The tiny starling of  
Paris, the pretty little darling. Who’s  
down there? Pass on villain! By God’s  
holy head! Quio, quio, tost, tost, din, dan,  
To the sermon, madam! To see St. Robin.  
To St. Trotin to show off the tits and  
your little face! To Mass, my lady, St.  
Gossip! Guillemette Colinette! It’s time to  
go drink! Someone’s walking past. Wise,  
courteous and well brought up. It’s time  
to go drink, what do you say?

To laugh and rejoice is my motto,  
Each with abandon.

Nightingale of the pretty woods,  
Whose voice resounds,  
So you don’t become bored,  
Your throat jabbars away:  
Frian, frian, frian,velecy, ticun, teo, tu,  
coqui, oy ti, qui lara, turri, huit,tu fouquet,  
fi, ti, trrrr....

Flee, regrets, tears and worries,  
For the season commands it.  
Back off, master cuckoo,  
Leave the premises.  
Everyone says ‘bye-bye’ to you,  
For you are nothing but a traitor.  
Cuckoo, cuckoo (etc...)

Treacherously in others’ nests,  
You lay without being invited.

Awake, sleepy hearts,  
The god of love is calling you.

## The Blue Bird

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford was a major figure in Britain's late nineteenth century efforts to improve educational and professional opportunities for native musicians. While Stanford is not widely known today, his career as a composer, conductor, and educator helped pave the way for future composers, including Sir Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Benjamin Britten. In Stanford's *Blue Bird*, his most popular part song, the chorus beautifully portrays the still, calm lake while the flight of the blue bird is described by a soaring soprano solo.

—Jennifer Oates

The lake lay blue below the hill.  
O'er it, as I looked, there flew  
Across the waters, cold and still,  
A bird whose wings were palest blue.  
The sky above was blue at last,  
The sky beneath me blue in blue.  
A moment, ere the bird had passed,  
It caught his image as he flew.

—Mary Coleridge

## language of the birds

This work was written in 2010 for Magen Solomon, the San Francisco Choral Artists, and the Alexander String Quartet to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the San Francisco Choral Artists.

This piece was inspired by the San Francisco artist Brian Goggin's site-specific sculptural installation, *Language of the Birds*, which he created with Dorka Keehn. The installation is an illuminated flock of twenty-three translucent, suspended open books with bindings positioned to simulate the wings of birds in flight. Words, taken from books by neighborhood authors, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, are scattered and embedded in the plaza as if the words have fallen from the pages.

The plaza is on the corner of Broadway, Grant, and Columbus streets in San Francisco. Goggins and Keehn teamed up with scientist David Shearer and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore to power the installation with solar panels mounted on top of the bookstore. It is the first permanent solar-powered public art piece in the United States ([www.metaphorm.org](http://www.metaphorm.org)).

I met Goggin at the Djerassi Artists Residency while he was developing this work. When given the opportunity to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the San Francisco Choral Artists, I immediately thought of this piece and fell in love with the Ferlinghetti fragment that Goggin used and selected five fragments from Ferlinghetti's *San Francisco Poems*. Three deal specifically with birds, and the other two with trees and fog. I imagined walking from the lovely old trees in Marin County across the Golden Gate Bridge through the fog into San Francisco where one might encounter all sorts of the interesting personalities who perhaps put their caps in a cage and go out with birds on their heads.

—Veronika Krausas

### no. 1

Bird-song is not made by machines.  
Give your poem wings to fly to the treetops.

From *Great American Waterfront Poem*

### no. 2

at a very still spot where the trees dreamed  
and seemed to have been waiting thru all time

From *In Golden Gate Park That Day...*

### no. 3

I saw one of them  
I saw one  
with a bird on his shoulder

From *I Saw one of Them*

### no. 4

The light of San Francisco  
is a sea light  
an island light  
And the light of fog  
blanketing the hills  
drifting in at night  
through the Golden Gate  
to lie on the city at dawn

From *The Changing Light*

### no. 5

I put my cap in the cage  
And went out with the bird on my head

From *Quartier Libre*

All excerpts from Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *San Francisco Poems* (City Lights Foundation, San Francisco © 2001).