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Transformations

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Margaret Halbig, *piano*

Friday, September 22, 2023 at 8 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.

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Ticket sales provide about 38 percent of our operating revenue each year. In addition, we rely on support from private foundations and Grants for the Arts from the city of San Francisco. Our generous individual donors complete the picture. We invite you to join us in our mission to connect audiences and local musicians and build up the classical music and world music scene in San Francisco. Donations are tax-deductible and donating on our website is easy and secure: www.oldfirstconcerts.org/give/, or checks can be mailed to:

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Friday, October 6 at 8 pm

Utsav Lal—Raga Pianist

with guests **Nilan Chaudhuri**, *tabla* & **George Brooks**, *saxophone*

Indian Pianist/composer Utsav Lal presents a genre colliding concert of Indian Classical Ragas and beyond through his distinctive voice on the piano. His concert features both traditional presentations, as well as new avenues of exploration drawing from raga music.

Sunday, October 8 at 4 pm

Zachary Donaldson, *lute*

A tour of the lute in renaissance Europe, from the by the free-flowing improvisatory style of 16th century Spanish composer Luís Milán to the fiery and stunning toccatas of early 17th century Italian composers such as Alessandro Piccinini and Giovanni Kapsberger, including hidden gems rarely performed and well-known favorites by John Dowland and Josquin des Pres.

Sunday, October 15 at 4 pm

Monica Chew, *piano*—*Best Friends*

Oakland composer and pianist presents a program of pairs of pieces she enjoys hearing side-by-side by Joshua Uzoigwe, Ali Osman, Stacy Fahrion, Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Ulvi Cemal Erkin, which make delightfully simpatico companions.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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PROGRAM

inti figgis-vizueta (b. 1993)

a bridge between starshine and clay (2018)

Halbig

Franz Schreker (1878–1934)

from **Acht Lieder, Op. 7** (1898–1900)

Wiegenliedchen

Zu späte Reue

Rosentod

McGuinness, Halbig

Lisa Bielawa (b. 1968)

The Dragon and the Girl (2014)

Chartier

Darian Donovan Thomas (b. 1993)

from **Fluid** (2016)

I. Fluid

Redondas

INTERMISSION

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) arr. By Eduard Steuermann

Verklärte Nacht (1899)

Redondas, Chartier, Halbig

Transformations is supported, in part, by a grant from the Alice M. Ditson Foundation. E4TT's 2023/24 season is sponsored, in part, by a grant from The Ross McKee Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

What would today's music be like without the work of the towering artistic figure and American immigrant Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)? Many argue that contemporary classical and film music would have followed a vastly different course without his powerful, liberating influence, his exploration of atonality and serialism, and his Expressionist compositions. With the 150th anniversary of Schoenberg's birth in 2024, E4TT's 16th season is aiming a spotlight on his music, and his influence, placed in a musical dialogue with works by composers of today.

We open our Schoenberg season with **Transformations**, a concert about various kinds of transformation—physical, biological, emotional, environmental, and musical. The centerpiece of tonight's concert is Schoenberg's early Expressionist masterpiece *Verklärte Nacht* (piano trio arrangement), which we've placed in a musical conversation with works by contemporary composers Lisa Bielawa, inti figgis-vizueta, and Darian Donovan Thomas, along with songs by Schoenberg's contemporary, Franz Schreker.

inti figgis-vizueta says, "At its core, *a bridge between starshine and clay* is just that: a piece that underlines the intersections between the binaries that create it. But in connecting interactions between left and right hands, low and high registers, or performer and instrument, those binaries are revealed to be false—a bridge that joins, but also dissolves." The work (and its title) was inspired by *summer, somewhere*, by Danez Smith, which itself quotes the title from *Won't You Celebrate with Me* by Lucille Clifton.

Known in his day primarily as an opera composer, **Franz Schreker's** music was a heady mélange of late Romanticism, Impressionism, chromaticism, polytonality and tonality. The three songs on today's program come from his Op. 7, and describe a miniature story arc, from a sweet lullaby to regrets about scorned love to loveless death.

Lisa Bielawa's *The Dragon and the Girl* is a study for an episode of Bielawa's opera *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch's Accuser*.

In 2023, Halbig was appointed collaborative piano coordinator of Interlochen Arts Camp and has been the pianist for Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco since 2014. An advocate of new and contemporary music, she is the pianist and a board member of San Francisco-based new music collective Ninth Planet and has also. Halbig earned her DMA from the University of California Santa Barbara and performance degrees from the University of Missouri, Kansas City Conservatory and University of Evansville.

Soprano and E4TT co-founder and Artistic Executive Director **Nanette McGuinness** has performed in 13 languages on two continents in over 25 roles with the Silesian State (Czech Republic), Opera San Jose (Opera in the Schools), and West Bay Opera, Pacific Repertory Opera, Trinity Lyric Opera, and Livermore Valley Opera, among others. Solo concert engagements include Mahler's Fourth Symphony, as well as *Shéhérazade* (Ravel), *Nuits d'étés* (Berlioz), *Stabat Mater* (Rossini), *Requiem* (Fauré), *Gloria* (Vivaldi), *Lord Nelson Mass* (Haydn), *Vesperae Solennes* (Mozart), and Handel's *Messiah* and *Solomon*. McGuinness has been featured on seven albums with Centaur and Yuggoth Records, and her CD of music by 19th and 20th century women composers, *Fabulous Femmes* (Centaur)—was called "perfect for the song recital lover" by *Chamber Music Magazine*. She earned her PhD in Music (specializing in Musicology) at UC Berkeley, MM in Vocal Performance from Holy Names College, and BA in Music from Cornell University.

Originally from Cuba, violinist/violist **Jennifer Redondas** has performed as a soloist in the U.S., Netherlands, Italy, Austria, France and Cuba in venues that include the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Mozarteum in Austria. As a historical violinist and violist, she has participated in the Oregon Bach Festival and Berwick Academy under the direction of Jos van Veldhoven. Her passion for Cuban music and jazz has led her to perform at SF Jazz with renowned artists such as Chris Potter, Anat Cohen and Chucho Valdés. An active member of the "Adventures in Music" program at the San Francisco Symphony, Redondas was a Fellow for the Classical Tahoe Orchestra 2023 season. She holds a Master's Degree in Violin Performance from the SF Conservatory of Music.

by the U.S. Embassy in Budapest for a four-city tour of Hungary in 2014; and performed at the Krakow Culture Festival in 2016 and 2022, and at the Conservatorio Teresa Berganza in Madrid in 2017. E4TT has performed locally at the German Consulate General, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Old First Concerts, JCC Peninsula, Trinity Chamber Concerts, and Noontime Concerts, among other venues. E4TT has released four albums, all of which have medaled in the Global Music Awards: *The Guernica Project* (2022), commemorating the 85th anniversary of the horrific carpet bombing of civilians and Picasso's masterwork in response; *Oncel/ Memory/ Night: Paul Celan*, honoring the centennial of the seminal 20th century poet; *The Hungarians: From Rózsa to Justus*, with works by Hungarian émigré Miklós Rózsa, and three of his compatriots who perished in the Holocaust; and *Surviving: Women's Words*, new music to poetry by women Holocaust survivors.

Cellist **Megan Chartier** is "unafraid to display gutsy abandon," as described by the *South Florida Classical Review*. She has performed throughout North America and Europe as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral cellist. Her current positions include core cellist of the Astralis Chamber Ensemble and principal cellist of Opera San Luis Obispo in California. In recent seasons, she has served as principal cellist of the Miami Symphony Orchestra and principal cellist of the Pacific Region International Summer Music Academy in Vancouver, and also recently performed with orchestras including the San Antonio Symphony, One Found Sound in San Francisco, Nu Deco Ensemble, and the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. A Semi-Finalist in the 2017 PRISMA Concerto Competition, she won 1st prize in the Ann Arbor Society of Musical Arts' 2015 Young Artist Competition and the 2015 Miami Music Festival Concerto Competition, conducted by Grzegorz Nowak of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Margaret Halbig is in high demand as a collaborative artist in both the instrumental and vocal fields. She is currently associate chair of the Voice Department and principal vocal coach at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she also frequently collaborates with faculty and student singers and instrumentalists.

Writes Bielawa, "Using motivic musical material associated with the young protagonist Vireo, who lives in three centuries at once and has fantastical visions that complicate her own life and pique the interest (and darker motivations) of those around her, the piece takes its mood (and its title) from a scene in which Vireo describes a terrifying (but totally friendly) fire-breathing dragon teaching his friend—a trusting young girl—to read ... The plot of Vireo deals with female hysteria and the ways it has been perceived and used by witch-hunters, psychiatrists, and artists over several centuries."

Darian Donovan Thomas writes, "I composed *Fluid* while meditating on the idea of a body of water interacting with vastly different civilizations over millennia. The piece is explicitly about the Yanaguana river in San Antonio, Texas. The Payaya people gave the river its name, meaning 'refreshing waters.' Later, Spanish and French missionaries would use the river, and build a university around its origin (the 'blue hole'). The river itself would become the hub of tourism and commerce in the city – no longer regarded as 'refreshing,' but still beautiful and adorned by the best jewelry of markets and restaurants capitalism has to offer."

Arnold Schoenberg based his lush tone poem *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*) on the eponymous poem written in 1896 by Richard Dehmel, in which a couple is walking through a forest in the moonlight when the woman tells her lover she is pregnant with another man's child from before they had met. A late Romantic/early Expressionist fin-de-siecle work, *Verklärte Nacht* unfolds in a single movement that can be divided loosely into sections that correspond to the stanzas of the poem; these explore the couple's feelings as they evolve from foreboding and sadness to acceptance and transformative forgiveness. Originally written for string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht* has been performed in numerous arrangements, including the Eduard Steuermann trio arrangement we will perform tonight.

Composer, producer, and vocalist **Lisa Bielawa** (b. 1968) is a Rome Prize winner in Musical Composition and takes inspiration for her work from literary sources and close artistic collaborations. Her

music has been described as “ruminative, pointillistic and harmonically slightly tart,” by *The New York Times*. She is the recipient of the 2017 Music Award from the American Academy of Arts & Letters and a 2020 Discovery Grant from OPERA America’s Opera Grants for Female Composers. She was named a William Randolph Hearst Visiting Artist Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society for 2018 and is Artist-in-Residence at Kaufman Music Center in New York for the 2020–2021 season. Bielawa consistently executes work that incorporates community-making as part of her artistic vision. She created music for public spaces in Lower Manhattan, and on the banks of the Tiber River.

NYC-based composer **inti figgis-vizueta** (b. 1993) writes magically real music through the lens of personal identities, braiding a childhood of overlapping immigrant communities and Black-founded Freedom schools—in Chocolate City (DC)—with direct Andean & Irish heritage and a deep connection to the land. Her musical practice is physical and visceral, attempting to reconcile historical aesthetics and experimental practices with trans & indigenous futures. *The New York Times* speaks of inti’s music as “alternatively smooth & serrated” and “slyly warp[ing] time,” *The Washington Post* as “raw, scraping yet soaring,” and *The Strad* as “between the material and immaterial.” Upcoming projects include new works for the Kronos Quartet, American Composers Orchestra with the Attacca Quartet, and Roomful of Teeth in collaboration with visual artist Rose Bond.

Seminal 20th century Austrian-American composer, writer, theorist, teacher, and painter **Arnold Schoenberg** (1874–1951) began his musical journey on the violin as a child, writing his first compositions soon after. Schoenberg studied with Alexander Zemlinsky—going on to marry his sister, Mathilde—and was a major member of the Second Viennese School of composition, along with Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Schoenberg’s early music was late romantic and highly expressionistic, followed by early explorations of atonality (although he preferred the term, “pantonal”), which led to his invention of the twelve-tone composition. He taught theory and composition in Berlin, but

with the rise of the Third Reich in Germany, emigrated to the US in 1933. Schoenberg went on to teach at both the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California. Suffering greatly from triskaidekaphobia, he died on Friday the 13th in his 76th (7+6=13) year.

Violinist, conductor, and composer **Franz Schreker** (1878–1934) was a contemporary of Schoenberg, Zemlinsky, Berg, and Korngold in Vienna. Schreker rose to fame with the production of his opera *Der ferne Klang* in Frankfurt in 1912, reaching the height of his career by the early 1920s. Schreker was appointed to the Berlin Hochschule für Musik in 1920, where he taught until he was forced out of his position by rising antisemitism (although his father had married a Catholic wife and converted, the family’s heritage was Jewish). Increasingly stressed by financial difficulties and unable to find new work, Schreker died in 1934 after a stroke at the end of 1933. Banned as “degenerate art” by the Nazis and subsequently almost forgotten, his music has been increasingly performed over the past decades.

Darian Donovan Thomas (b. 1993) is a Brooklyn-based, multi-instrumentalist, and interdisciplinary artist interested in combining genres into a single vocabulary that can express intersectionality (of medium and identity). Necessarily, he is interested in redacting all barriers to entry that have existed at the gates of any genre: this vocabulary of multiplicity will be intersectional and therefore all-inclusive. He has received a Bachelors in Music Composition from The University of the Incarnate Word, and was a 2018 New Amsterdam Composer Lab Fellow, 2018 SoSI Composer Fellow, and 2019 Banglewood Composition Fellow.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Winner of The American Prize in 2021 for Chamber Music Performance, **Ensemble for These Times** (E4TT) consists of award-winning soprano/ Artistic Executive Director **Nanette McGuinness**, cellist **Abigail Monroe**, pianist **Margaret Halbig**, and co-founder/ Senior Artistic Advisor composer **David Garner**. E4TT made its international debut in Berlin in 2012; was sponsored

Old First Concerts – Friday, September 22, 2023 at 8 pm

Transformations – Ensemble for These Times

Texts and Translations

Franz Schreker from *Acht Lieder, Op. 7*

Wiegenliedchen

text by Julius Karl Reinhold Sturm (1816–1896)

Schlafe, mein Liebchen, ich decke dich zu,
Englein nah'n dir im Traum.

Längst schon gingen Vöglein zur Ruh',
bargen ihr Köpfchen im Flaum.

Schlafe, mein Liebchen, ich decke dir zu,
Englein nah'n dir im Traum.

Schlafe die müden Äuglein dir klar,
bis die Sonne dich weckt;

hält die Liebe vor Leid und Gefahr
dich wie mit Flügeln bedeckt.

Schlafe die müden Äuglein dir klar,
bis die Sonne dich weckt.

Zu späte Reue

text by Julius Karl Reinhold Sturm (1816–1896)

Da geht er wieder, der bleiche Knabe
Dem ich die Treue gebrochen habe;
Und trägt noch immer, ob es auch bleichte,
Am Hut das Röslein, das ich ihm reichte.
Weh', daß ich Schätze um Liebe tauschte,
Mit eitlem Flimmer mein Herz berauschte!
Was ist von allem mir treu geblieben,
Als sein verschmähtes, verkanntes Lieben.

Rosentod

text by Dora Leen (pseudonym for Dora Pollak) (1880-c.1942)

Du rote Rose,
Die du in schimmernder Vase
Entgegenwelkest dem Tode;

Weithin durch das nächtlich stille Gemach
Hauchst sterbend du die letzten Düfte,
Der Blumenseele Seufzer hin.

Und du vergehst...

Eine in Purpur gewandete Klage,
Weil dich nicht Liebe gepflückt,
Weil dich nicht Liebe empfing.

Little Lullaby

Sleep, my dearest, I'll tuck you in:
Angels will come to you in your dreams.
The little birds have long gone to sleep,
Tucking their little heads under their down.
Sleep, my dearest, I'll tuck you in:
Angels will come to you in your dreams.

Let your tired little eyes sleep
Until the sun awakens you;
Love keeps you safe from pain and peril,
Covering you with its wings.
Let your tired little eyes sleep
Until the sun awakens you.

Belated Regrets

There he goes again, the pale boy
With whom I broke my trust;
And yet still he carries, though it has faded,
The little rose on his hat, which I gave him.
Alas, that I traded treasures for love,
My heart intoxicated by vain glitter!
What stayed true to me above all,
Was his scorned, unappreciated love.

Death of a Rose

You red rose,
Who, in a shimmering vase,
Withers towards death;
Off in a silent, nighttime chamber
You breathe the last scents, dying,
The flower's soul sighing.

And you fade away...
A lament clad in crimson,
For love did not pick you,
For love did not welcome you.

Lisa Bielawa *The Dragon and the Girl*

text by Erik Ehn, from *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch's Accuser*

Once upon a time a dragon
Instructed a virgin
By reading books out loud.
Because the dragon's breath was fire,
The books burned as she read them.
They paid close attention.
The dragon and the girl who came to visit
Lived in the heat of blown glass –
The cave in which the dragon
Lived
Was blown glass.
The king sent a knight.
To put an end to this class.
Knight threw his lance and
Killed the dragon.
Glass ball shattered.

Arnold Schoenberg *Verklärte Nacht*

text by Richard Dehmel (1863–1920)

Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain;
der Mond läuft mit, sie schau'n hinein.
Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen;
kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht,
in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen.
Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht:

Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir,
ich geh in Sünde neben Dir.
Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen.
Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück
und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen
nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück
und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht,
da ließ ich schaudernd mein Geschlecht
von einem fremden Mann umfängen,
und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet.
Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt:
nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet.

Sie geht mit ungelenkem Schritt.
Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit.
Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht.
Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht:

Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast,
sei Deiner Seele keine Last,
o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert!
Es ist ein Glanz um alles her;
Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer,
doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert
von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich.
Die wird das fremde Kind verklären,
Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären;
Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht,
Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht.

Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften.
Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften.
Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

Transfigured Night

Two people walk through a cold, bare grove; The
moon moves along with them; they look up at it.
The moon passes over the tall oak trees
Not a wisp of a cloud dims the light from the sky
above, Where black, spiky boughs reach.
A woman's voice speaks:

I bear a child and it isn't yours.
In sin I walk next to you.
I have sinned grievously against myself.
I no longer believed in happiness,
And yet I craved
A purpose to my life—maternal joy
And duty; thus I dared
To let my sex, shuddering,
Be embraced by a strange man,
And I felt blessed by it.
But now life has taken its revenge:
For now I met you, oh, you!

She walks, her steps clumsy.
She looks up. The moon moves with her.
Her dark gaze is drowned in the light.
A man's voice speaks:

May the child you've conceived
Not weigh down your soul.
Oh, see how brightly the universe shines!
Everything here glows;
You drift with me in the cold seas,
But a special warmth flickers
From you to me, from me to you.
It will transfigure the stranger's child,
Which you'll give birth to as my own;
You have transfused me with light,
You have filled me with childlike wonder.

He puts his arms around her strong hips.
Their breath kisses in the wind.
Two people walk through the exalted, bright
night.

Please fill out E4TT's audience survey—find it online using this [link \(bit.ly/3r3Ioty\)](https://bit.ly/3r3Ioty) or scanning the QR code below with your phone—to be entered in a drawing for a free copy of E4TT's latest CD and Gold-Medal winner, *The Guernica Project*.

