

New Music For Women's Voices - March 29 & 30, 2014

PICTURE OUR

**NEW
MUSIC FOR
WOMEN'S
VOICES**

vox musica

welcome

Welcome to our **PICTURA: New Music for Women's Voices**, a collaborative concert project between the Crocker Art Museum, the art work of Sam Francis, local choral composers, and Vox Musica.

This concert project showcases new choral compositions inspired by the art work of California Expressionist artist, Sam Francis, and written by composers from the greater Sacramento area.

The presentation of new works, collaborations, and adventurous concert projects has been the hallmark of Vox Musica's activities, since our inception. When Rika Nelson, Director of Public Programs at the Crocker Art Museum asked Vox Musica to collaborate on a project for the Sam Francis exhibition we knew that this would be a perfect opportunity to ask our local choral composers to create new musical compositions influenced by his artwork.

To our surprise we received over ten submission of newly composed works. Each had a unique approach and compositional approach. Although we are not able to present all the submitted works in concert, the ensemble selected the works that they felt were significant contributions to women's choral literature and that had deep connections to the art work of Sam Francis.

We are overjoyed at the reception of our call for scores and are excited to perform the winning pieces in **PICTURA: New Music for Women's Voices**.

organization

VOX MUSICA, INC

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Assistant Director: **Valerie Simonson**



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Vox Musica was founded in 2006 to fill a niche of untapped potential in Sacramento's budding classical music scene. This women's ensemble enjoys the privileged position of nurturing the choral arts by combining outstanding vocal artistry with innovative programming. Vox Musica is committed to excellence in performance of diverse and challenging choral literature for women's voices, and is dedicated to promoting new works, including many premieres and commissioned works. Through collaborations with composers, conductors, choirs and musicians from around the world, Vox Musica's featured concert projects have included collected works from the eighteenth-century Venetian Ospedali, eastern music from India, Persia, and Georgia, works for guitars and women's voices, music for Taiko Drums and Women's Voices, and a concert project featuring electronic music and women's voices. Vox Musica has released one compact disc, has presented dual concert seasons in both Sacramento and Napa, and has been a featured artist on the prestigious Old First Concert Series in San Francisco and the American Choral Directors National Convention in Chicago.

Jessica Dacpano, soprano I
Jenna Hopper, soprano I
Susanna Peebles, soprano II
Kathryn DeFay, soprano II
Heather Razo, accompanist/alto I

Veronica Tonus, alto I
Jenifer Swanson, alto I
Lua Hightower, alto II
Mary Frank, alto II
Jennifer Crawford, alto II

"This new vocal ensemble is a welcome addition to the Sacramento music scene and they proved it by delivering the goods on a smartly selected program."

- Sacramento Bee, 2006.

"The recent arrival of the choir Vox Musica to the Sacramento music scene is also indicative of the talent moving into the area that highly values new music."

- American Music Center, 2007.

"The singers and conductor Daniel Paulson threw down a breathtaking performance of my Three Nightsongs."

- Joshua Shank, 2008.

"The ensemble breathed refreshing life into three contemporary arrangements of a 15th-century hymn 'Es Ist Ein Ros Entsprungen'."

- Sacramento Bee, 2010.

director

Daniel Paulson, founder & music directors, holds a Bachelor of Music degree in voice performance from Sacramento State University, and a Masters of Music Degree in Choral Conducting from California State University, Los Angeles. Hailed as an "astute programmer" and a conductor who can "coax urbane performances from his singers," Daniel has conducted the Auris Ensemble, the Orchestra of St. Cecilia, All Hollows Chorus, has served as assistant chorus master and section principle for the Choir of St. Cecilia, and has been a featured guest conductor for the Northern Zone Nevada Music Educators Association High School Honor Choirs. Some of the highlights of his career include the creation of a children's chorus program for the Gold River Discovery Center, conducting his choirs at American Choral Directors Association's Chorus Festivals, conducting premiere performances on the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, CA, the Mondavi Center for the Arts in Davis, CA, the Old First Concert Series in San Francisco, CA and the American Choral Directors Association National Convention in Chicago, IL. Currently, he is the Adjunct Professor of Voice and Choral Music at Sacramento City College, works in the Music Department at American River College, is a resident artist with the Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and serves as Founder & Music Director for Vox Musica.



"Paulson has proved himself to be an astute programmer. He's not afraid of taking chances."

- Sacramento Bee, 2007.

"Stunning performance of my Desertscape; Paulson made it come to life."

- Maggi Payne, composer, 2008.

"Paulson coaxed a multi-layered sound from the singers. This gave a transcendent feel to the music, whose mysterious dimensions were delicately revealed."

- Sacramento Bee, 2010.

guest artists



Eric Hart, *percussion*, originally from Herald, CA, is a student in the Music Department at Sacramento City College. His studies include piano, percussion and general music education. At SCC he has played with the Commercial Music Ensemble, Jazz Band and the #CollegeChoir. He has been studying percussion for the past five years and has recently mastered the art of playing the "Hapi" Drum. The "Hapi" drum is a unique percussion instrument, similar to the "Hang" drum. This past November Hart had his premiere "Hapi" drum performance when he accompanied the Sacramento City College #CollegeChoir for their Fall Concert. He hopes to transfer to the Berklee College of Music after his studies at Sacramento City College.



Erik Alvarez Urbina, *cello*, grew up in Stockton where he started his study of the cello with Louise Saunders. He attended the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific, where he studied with Nina Flyer. He received many honors, including the annual concerto competition with the University Symphony Orchestra. He has worked in recent years with internationally acclaimed cello soloist Jakob Koranyi of Sweden. Now a free-lance artist and teacher based in Stockton, he performs regularly as a recitalist and orchestra player and teaches throughout the Central Valley'.

SEASON EIGHT



LUMINUM: A VOX CHRISTMAS

Friday, **DEC 20**
7:30pm concert
Blessed Sacrament Cathedral (Sacramento)

Saturday, **DEC 21**
7:30pm concert
St. Ignace Loyola Parish (Sacramento)

Sunday, **DEC 22**
5:00pm concert
Dixon United Methodist Church (Dixon)



OFFERO: TAHOE ARTS PROJECT

Week of: **JAN 27-31**
13 Educational Outreach Lecture/Concerts
Location: 13 High Schools & Middle Schools (Lake Tahoe)

Friday, **JAN 31**
7:00pm concert
Lake Tahoe Community College
Duke Theater (Lake Tahoe)



PICTURA: NEW MUSIC FOR WOMEN'S VOICES

Saturday, **MAR 29**
7:00pm concert
Location TBA (Sacramento)

Sunday, **MAR 30**
5:00pm concert
Location TBA (Sacramento)

Thursday, **APR 3**
7:00pm concert
Crocker Art Museum (Sacramento)



NOVA: A RECORDING PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Saturday, **JUN 7**
7:00pm concert
Location TBA (Sacramento)

Weekend of: **JUN 13-15**
"Sac Sings" Choral Festival
Harris Center for the Arts/Ince Stages at Folsom Lake College (Folsom)

singer bios



Jessica Dacpano, *soprano*, is currently a student at Sacramento State University pursuing her Bachelor's in Music. Before transferring to Sacramento State, Jessica attended American River College for three years where graduated with four Associate degrees. The Associate degrees obtained were in Music (Voice), Jazz Studies (Voice), Liberal Arts and General Education. At ARC she received the Sacramento Chorale Scholarship in 2011 as well as the Phil Givant Memorial Scholarship for two consecutive years (2011-2012). Jessica is currently active in the Sacramento State University Chamber Choir and is in her second season with Vox Musica.

Jenna Hopper, *soprano*, is in her third season performing with Vox Musica. Since she was very young, Jenna has enjoyed singing around the state of California, as well as performing in various All-State and National Honor Choirs. Her parents' love of music and vocal-performance inspired her to pursue her passion, and she has spent time on-and-off for the past eight years providing vocal-coaching to both individuals and groups looking to improve their technique. Jenna owns a direct sales company with her husband. She will continue to share her love of music throughout her career.



Susanna Peeples, *alto*, has been a musician since birth. After playing the trumpet and French horn throughout her schooling, she started to sing in college at UC Davis, pursuing a major in Vocal Performance. As a glutton for punishment, Susanna continued her studies by attending University of the Pacific in Stockton, receiving her Masters of Music in Music Education. She currently saves the world by teaching high school choir in Stockton. Now living in Sacramento, Susanna is thrilled to start her first season with Vox and sing with other talented, dedicated musicians!

Kathryn DeFay, *alto*, has been a member of Vox Musica since its inception. Kathryn comes from a very musical family and started singing at a young age. Prior to joining Vox, she sang with Dixon United Methodist Church Adult Choir, Dixon Community Choir, and Dixon High School Choir as well as playing the clarinet throughout High School. Currently she sings in Vox Musica as well as a vocal quartet based in Dixon. Kathryn is also our fashion coordinator, drawing the color choice from the concert theme. Kathryn holds a degree from the University of California at Davis in Costume and Textile Design.



Heather Razo, *alto*, began her music training at the age of five with piano lessons, and later began her singing career in her elementary school choir. As a graduate of Sacramento State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Humanities and a minor in Music, Heather is the Director of Music at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish, teaches private piano and voice lessons, as well as lending her piano and accompanying skills to various organizations and events in Sacramento. Heather is enjoying her second season with Vox Musica.



Veronica Tonus, *alto*, received her Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. She has performed in vocal ensembles since high school, including the University Chorus at the University of the Pacific and as a member of Sigma Alpha Iota, an international music fraternity. When she is not performing with Vox Musica, she is playing flute in the Woodland Community Band and teaching elementary music in Davis, CA. This is Veronica's first concert project with Vox Musica.

Jenifer Swanson, *alto*, began her career in music in the 5th grade, learning flute and started singing at American River College, serving in the Chamber Singers for 4 1/2 years. Currently she is working on her Floral Design Diploma from Ashworth College, and holds a love for spreading joy with flowers. She is also continuing her flute studies under Kim Davis of Sacramento, and plans to transfer soon to a CSU. Having a creative mind and love for crafting, when not playing flute or singing, she can be found at Hobby Lobby getting items for her next DIY project. Jenifer is very excited to be starting her second season with Vox Musica.



Lua Hightower, *alto*, is a classically trained pianist as well as a composer, vocalist, and multi-instrumentalist (piano, tambura, frame drum, ney, oud). She is the founding member of Beloved World Music Ensemble, an ensemble dedicated to performing traditional and original devotional music in the Sufi tradition of mystical Islam. LuAnne has performed jazz in various New England venues throughout the 1980s, at the 1992 Baha'i World Congress in New York City, Washington DC, at the Rumi Festival in Chapel Hill, NC and at Grace Cathedral for a celebration of Huston Smith. LuAnne is excited to be back singing with Vox Musica.

Mary Frank, *alto*, is in her second season with Vox Musica. A veteran of choral music, Mary has sung in a wide variety of ensembles from jazz to madrigal to Jewish women's choirs. She loves the challenge and fulfillment that comes with being a member of Vox. While not practicing her music, Mary is a professional editor and teacher and the owner of an educational products business called Engaging Stations. She and her husband Adam live in Placer County and have three beautiful children, Gabriel, Miriam and Gideon.



Jennifer Crawford, *alto*, is honored to be in her seventh season with Vox Musica. Her musical upbringing includes singing in church, school and community choirs, as well as playing flute, oboe, and piano in concert bands, jazz ensembles, and woodwind quartets throughout her school career. When not singing, Jennifer can be found writing computer code, volunteering as a Master Food Preserver for Sacramento County, running from zombies, or knitting.

program

Early Morning Blue +

I.

Portia Njoku

When I am Among the Trees +

II.

Heather Razo

It's Francis +

III.

Maryam Mirbagheri

Untitled No. 1 +

Untitled No. 2 +

IV.

Travis Maslen

INTERMISSION

Blue, Red, Yellow +

I. White Fields

II. Glaring White

III. Gift of Song

IV. Beyond the Visual

IV.

Daniel Paulson

Eric Hart, *hapi drum* & Erik Urbina, *cello*

Abstract Blue +

V.

Heather Razo, *piano*

Clifford W. Shockney

+ **World Premiere**

Early Morning Blue †

Portia Njoku

COMPOSER BIO: Portia Njoku, a composer and tubist, has recently earned a double master's degree in Music Composition and Tuba Performance at California State University Sacramento. As an active performer, Ms. Njoku, has held principal positions with many ensembles as well as freelancing with various chamber ensembles throughout the Sacramento region.

As a composer, Ms. Njoku loves to compose for all types of chamber groups and collaborations. In 2008, she wrote the tuba quartet "Elegy for a King", a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for Black History month. "Elegy for a King" was later recorded on Dr. Joanna Ross Hersey's album, *O quam mirabilis*, in 2010 and is currently available on iTunes. "Early Morning Blue", Ms. Njoku's newest work, was a fun and wonderful project, which has inspired more vocal works and projects for the future.

Over the years, Ms. Njoku has studied with Julian Dixon, Scott Choate, and Bruce Chrisp on tuba, and Dr. Stephen Blumberg and Professors Leo Eylar and Pablo Ortiz for composition. Ms. Njoku received her Bachelor's degree in Music Theory and Composition from the University of California, Davis. When she is not performing or composing, Ms. Njoku loves to cook, play sports, and enjoy time with friends and family.

PROGRAM NOTES: While researching Sam Francis' works, I noticed that his painting style was fluid, snakelike, and mixed in texture and color. I paid special attention to a few of his blue works, *Tokyo Blue* (1961) *Blue Balls Untitled* (1962) and saw inspiration for my piece. In my work, I imagined the dark blue night sky as it starts to brighten up and transform into the coming sunrise.

Throughout *Early Morning Blue*, I use counterpoint in way that evokes fluidity by blurring the emphasis on the downbeats and staggering the vocal entrances. My choice in a flat key also reflects a cool tone color as opposed to a brighter, sharp key. I also use major seconds in my harmony to create dissonance that closely connects the vocal lines together like Francis' mixed color abstract painting, *Blue and Red* (1953). You can visually see the dissonance in this work as the reds clash with the blues.

When I am Among the Trees †

Heather Razo

COMPOSER BIO: See Singer Bios

PROGRAM NOTES: When I first heard the poem, "When I Am Among the Trees" by Mary Oliver, I was drawn to the imagery of "the willows and the honey locust, equally the beech, the oaks, and the pines," and the ease of imagining the scene set in the poem. The beginning

of the piece reflects the meditative, introspective quality of the words. As it progresses and the trees begin to call out, the piece takes on a more exuberant feel, particularly when “the light flows from their branches.” The final chords of the piece convey the brilliance found in the trees’ encouraging last words.

text:

When I am among the trees,
Especially the willows and the honey locust,
Equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
They give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.
I am so distant from the hope of myself,
In which I have goodness, and discernment,
And never hurry through the world but walk slowly, and bow often.
Around me the trees stir in their leaves and call out, “stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.
And they call again, “it’s simple,” they say,
“And you too have come into the world to do this,
to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine.”

It’s Francis +

Maryam Mirbagheri

COMPOSER BIO: Maryam Mirbagheri was born February 18th, 1992 in the small city of shiraz, Iran. She started her journey in music by taking guitar lessons as a child and while listening to records her dad brought from US, she became interested in American music. In middle school she formed her own band and from that point on she decided to continue music professionally. She started performing in Iran’s underground music scene and at age 17 she wrote her first instrumental guitar album which never got passed the demo phase due to Iranian laws about Iranian women in music. She then competed in Iranian national youth competition as a music composer and was a semi finalist. Before moving to US, Maryam performed in Iranian International Fajr Music festival and upon her arrival in US she joined American River College Advanced Vocal Jazz Ensemble with whom she won a jazz downbeat award and performed in national music festivals . Maryam is currently working on finding her voice as a composer and she is going to be studying in Los Angeles after graduating from American River College.

PROGRAM NOTES: I’m really excited to share this music with you. It’s kind of in a weird form and inspired by a weird idea as well so I love to explain it to you. As a child I was first introduced to art by painting. After a few years my parents bought me my first guitar and I started taking music lessons. Since I was more familiar with painting at the time, I used it to help me memorize my music. You ask how? Well.. I assigned a color to all the notes so that way I could imagine the music piece in a certain color and memorized it that way. The colors were assigned as the following :

C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Green	Yellow	Red	Navy blue	Pink	Cream	Light blue

I then tried to analyze this painting and see which colors come first and how it's painted and in this composition my idea was to "re-paint" the painting using sound! For example the piece starts with the tonic chord which represents the white canvas and then the lead soprano starts singing " B" which is color light blue(the base color of the painting) and then other colors add up.The sharps and flats were also used based on the colors. for example if the color was dark green then the note would be C# but if it was light green the note would be Cb. In the middle of the piece you'll see how different parts of the painting were completed.. please note that in this piece the singers should be divided into 2 groups : 1) canvas people who support the harmony and 2) the color singers who are "painting".

text:

Blue, Navy Blue.

Blue, Yellow, Red, Green Colors.

Eyes, Nose, Lips,

A man, crying, maybe smiling, and waiting to be colored

crying maybe smiling listening to music,

painting music, singing, coloring

I am, a man named Sam.

Untitled No. 1 & No. 2 +

Travis Maslen

COMPOSER BIO: Travis Maslen graduated from CSU Sacramento, with a degree in music and has been teaching music for the past nineteen years. He is currently in his tenth year at Christian Brothers High School and teaches three levels of band, string orchestra, pep band, drumline, jazz band, handbell choir and ukulele club. He not only composes and arranges for Christian Brothers but he has also written for other ensembles, such as Freestyle Quartet, Touch of Fun Quartet, Namaste Women's Chorus, Bones West, Trombone Christmas – LA and Tuba Christmas - Sacramento. On average, he writes fifteen works per year including pieces for symphonic band, string orchestra, jazz band and chorus. He currently plays trombone with the Elder Creek Stompers Jazz Band and alto saxophone for the Elk Grove Community Band.

PROGRAM NOTES: "Untitled No. 1 and 2," are both pieces based on the abstract artwork of Sam Francis. While looking online at his artwork, I noticed that a lot of his pieces were named "Untitled." In keeping with that theme, I thought it would be appropriate to title these two compositions "Untitled."

The text to "Untitled No. 1" is adapted from a Japanese Haiku written by Kobayashi Issa in 1813. My initial inspiration in using Japanese Haiku was due to Sam Francis's history with

Japan. Upon further research, words from Issa's haiku echoed a quote that I read while viewing the Sam Francis exhibit at the Crocker Art Museum; "his paintings document moments in time and address questions of infinite space." In the haiku, "a colorful galaxy" describes the infinite space that Sam Francis filled with bright color. "Untitled No. 1" has an underlying repetitious current that speaks about something that is lovely to see. The melody of the song talks about looking through a hole in a paper window and eventually reveals this "lovely sight" to be a colorful galaxy. At this point, the chords become thick and colorful in texture, while the music becomes grandiose, combining to describe the colorful galaxy that Sam Francis has created. By definition, haiku is poetry that describes two ideas in juxtaposition. To parallel this idea the song is written in two parts: the anticipation of knowing what is on the other side of the hole in the window is musically hurried and anxious juxtaposed with the peaceful, beautiful music that reveals the colorful galaxy.

The text to "Untitled No. 2" is by Theresa Mungas, my girlfriend's mother. She liked the idea of my writing for this contest and was inspired to write a poem based on the artwork of Sam Francis. Mrs. Mungas consents to having her poem adapted for use in this contest (see attached letter). The song begins with word painting: "colors scream" big and loud, soft subdued "emerald green," the violence of "canvas bled" and peaceful, colorful "sunset red." As the piece progresses, the middle section talks about the "joyful bedlam" that is Sam Francis's work. On top of the altos' repetitious ostinato, the sopranos describe that on the surface, Sam Francis's works seem like they could be created by a child ("the hand of a child"). Over the rest of the voices a soprano soloist clarifies that the artwork is well calculated and intentional ("not hand of a child, mind of a man"). Eventually, all of the voices agree that it is the "mind of a man," and musically come back together. The opening lines are rearticulated and the piece culminates by naming the artist, "I am Sam, Sam I am."

text:

Untitled No. 1

A lovely thing to see,
Through the paper,
through the paper's window,
A lovely thing to see,
Through the window's hole,
through the window's tear,
A lovely thing to see,
A colorful galaxy,
A lovely sight to see.

Untitled No. 2

Colors scream, emerald green.
Canvas bled, sunset red.

Joyful bedlam,
Hand of a child, no see-hear.
Voiceless accord, no unrest.
Not hand of a child, Mind of a man.

Colors scream, emerald green.
Canvas bled, sunset red.
I am Sam, Sam I am.

COMPOSER BIO: See Director Bio

PROGRAM NOTES: *Blue, Red, Yellow* is an original work commissioned by the Crocker Art Museum for their featured exhibition of internationally acclaimed California native Sam Francis (1923–94), one of Abstract Expressionism’s top practitioners and California’s most accomplished artists. For *Blue, Red, Yellow* short descriptions were extracted from the interpretations, receptions, and responses of Francis’ work by over fifteen curators, historians, and critics, including his son, Shingo. These descriptions were then used to craft a new poetic text that served as the guiding inspiration for the musical work, *Blue, Red, Yellow*, and hopefully sew fresh understandings of Francis’ art work. Just as Francis describes his output as “one continuous body of work with changing aspects, like a cloud,” so does the music of *Blue, Red, Yellow*. Each movement connects to each other through similar harmonic and rhythmic material only slightly changing the melodic and modal approaches. At the heart of Francis’ art work is a deep connection to the power of color, he claims that, “color is a receptacle for a feeling and a way for you to hold it until understanding arrives or meaning is extracted.” This “credo” on color is realized in the music of *Blue, Red, Yellow* wherein stacked fifths, each representing a particular color of “Blue,” “Red,” “Yellow,” are layered on each other filling the sound space, saturating the canvas of silence with harmony, a musical receptacle for purpose, feeling, and understanding. Paulson’s explains, “just as it is the intention of Abstract Expressionism to invite an emotional response rather than an analytical one, it is my hope that the convergence of text and harmony in *Blue, Red, Yellow* will illuminate deep emotional connections to the life and art of Sam Francis.”

text:**I. White Fields**

White...
 Blue, Red, Yellow
 Majestic, vivid blues,
 blazing reds, golden yellows
 burn brightly in a white field,
 the white field of mysticism.

II. Glaring White

Oceans of glaring white
 interrupted by continents, and islands,
 peninsulas, and isthmuses of intense,
 Blue, Red, Yellow

III. Gift of Song

Mysteries unfold in color.
 Vibrant colors,
 Emotive colors,
 Transforming colors,
 Color is pure, Color can hear,
 Color is powerful, Color can destroy,
 Color is a gift of song.

IV. Beyond the Visual

Saturated, homogenous tones,
 intensely resonating pigments,
 exceed in their imaginations,
 beyond the visual, beyond the tangible.
 Building bridges between
 the inner most thoughts and emotions
 of the surrounding world.
 Blue, Red, Yellow

Abstract Blue +

Clifford W. Shockney

COMPOSER BIO: Clifford W. Shockney holds a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Indiana University. As a performer, he has been involved with a number of organizations, including the Sacramento Chorale, the Sacramento Master Singers, and as a recital soloist, organist and accompanist in various locations, including the Crocker Art Museum. He has also composed and arranged a number of pieces, including "If Music Be the Food of Love" and "Wexford Carol," among others.

PROGRAM NOTES: Viewing works of Sam Francis as well as videos of his painting techniques inspired me to compose an unstructured work using the words for various shades of blue as the text in an abstract way along with the unexpected use of accent colors. The colors have their own musical themes. I used the music to represent the blocks sweeps and dots of color that Mr. Francis formed in his paintings. My goal was to create a piece that is interesting and accessible for the audience. I also wanted to create a piece that is fun while still challenging for the singers.

text:

Blue
Powder blue
Baby blue
Cobalt
Beryl purple
Ultra marine
Sapphire,
Indigo,
and Navy
Aquamarine
Blue-gray
Blue-green
Cerulean
Azure
Teal
Turquoise
Aqua
Red!

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