



*The San Francisco Chapter of the National Association of Composers/USA presents a new music recital.*

## New Music for Flute, Cello, Piano & Soprano

Saturday, November 23, 2024, 7:30pm

Sunset Music And Arts, San Francisco

### PROGRAM

*Autumn Leaves Ablaze*

Alex Shapira

Jessie Nucho, flute; Victoria Ehrlich, cello

*Water (Take me home to me)*

Monica Chew (Composer)

Megan Cohen (Librettist)

Sarita Cannon, soprano; Paul Dab, piano

*Echoes*

Allen Shearer

Sarita Cannon, soprano; Victoria Ehrlich, cello; Paul Dab, piano

*My Diamond Stud*

Douglas Ovens

Sarita Cannon, soprano; Jessie Nucho, flute;  
Victoria Ehrlich, cello; Paul Dab, piano

*Illumine Divergence*

Dinah Bianchi

Jessie Nucho, flute; Paul Dab, piano

*Dues cançons d'amor*

Brian Field

Sarita Cannon, soprano; Paul Dab, piano

*If I Must Die, Let It Be a Tale*

Davide Verotta

Sarita Cannon, soprano; Jessie Nucho, flute

*Into Darkness*

I'lana Cotton

Victoria Ehrlich, cello; Paul Dab, piano



Scan this code for the full program notes.

NACUSA is a non-profit organization founded in 1933 by Henry Hadley, originally as the National Association of Composers and Conductors. It is one of the oldest organizations devoted to the promotion and performance of music by Americans. Each NACUSA chapter typically sponsors several concerts each year which feature music by its members. NACUSA has chapters in Cascadia, East Coast, Great Plains, Los Angeles, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-South, San Francisco Bay Area, the South East, Southern Oregon, and Texas. Started by Nancy Bloomer Deussen and John Webber more than twenty years ago, the San Francisco Bay Chapter has evolved into an active organization with a peak membership of seventy-five composers. It produces four to six concerts each year in the San Francisco Bay Area. Learn more at <http://nacusasf.org>

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# Performer biographies

Soprano **Sarita Cannon** is a versatile performer who is comfortable in a variety of genres, including opera, oratorio, and musical theater. Her operatic roles include Susana, Antonia, Belinda, Barbarina, Despina, and Yum-Yum. She has sung soprano solos in Bach's *Magnificat*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Psalm 42*, and Poulenc's *Gloria*. Musical theater roles include Maria in *West Side Story* with North Bay Stage Company and Priest in all-female production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* with Ray of Light Theatre. Sarita is also an avid performer and advocate of new music who has sung works by Mark Alburger, David Ahlstrom, Mary Watkins, Hector Armienta, John Bilotta, and Matthew Owens. She sings in the San Francisco Symphony Chorus and has been the soprano section leader at All Souls Episcopal Parish in Berkeley since 2014.

**Paul Dab** is a San Francisco based pianist, teacher, vocal coach, and music director. Presenters have featured his performances at Center for New Music, Old First Concert Series, and the Shenson Faculty Artist Series at SF Community Music Center. He collaborates with Bay Area organizations including Lamplighters Music Theater, West Bay Opera, and Pocket Opera and has been part of the creative process for world premier operas and art songs by local composers. In classes, private lessons, and performances he engages students on a weekly basis through programs at SF Community Music Center, SF Opera Guild, and SF Conservatory of Music.

**Victoria Ehrlich** (cello) studied at Southern Methodist University, Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and Stony Brook University. Her teachers included Robert Marsh, Bernard Greenhouse, and Robert Gardner. Prior to joining the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in 1984, she played with the Santa Fe Opera, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the Opera Orchestra of New York, and was principal cellist with the Symphonies of Omaha, Richmond, VA, and Phoenix. Ms. Ehrlich has performed with the San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco Symphony, the New Century Chamber Orchestra, Composers, Inc., Berkeley Symphony, the Russian Chamber Orchestra, and Lamplighters. Ms. Ehrlich is also an active chamber musician, performing regularly with the Cecilia Quartet, the Bridge Players (who specialize in music by Jewish and Holocaust composers), the Picasso Ensemble (who perform in the historic Sesnon House in Aptos, CA) the African American Composers Initiative, (who discover, commission, and perform music by African American composers), Trio Solano, Sonic Harvest (new music by local composers), and the Fath Chamber Players, a fixture in Mill Valley.

San Francisco-based flutist **Jessie Nucho** is passionate about sharing both traditional and contemporary music as a chamber musician, soloist, and educator. She performs regularly with the new music ensembles [After Everything](#) and [Ninth Planet](#), where she also serves as Co-Artistic Director. She is a founding member of Siroko Duo, a flute duo dedicated to commissioning and presenting new works in creative spaces. As a soloist, Jessie has performed at San Francisco's Center for New Music, the Berkeley Arts Festival, the Hot Air Music Festival, and the Legion of Honor. Jessie holds an MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Tim Day. Previous instructors include Alberto Almarza and Jeanne Baxtresser at Carnegie Mellon University.

# Notes

**Alex Shapira's** music is performed throughout the US and Europe, he is the recipient of several awards such as the Vienna Classical Music Academy Composition Competition, New Ariel Piano Composition Competition, Saint-Saens International Music Competition, Vivaldi International Music Competition, King's Peak International Music Competition, Fidelio International Piano Composition Competition and is featured on the Navona Recordings label. He also received comprehensive scientific education, followed by a successful hi-tech career. Alex is now pursuing his passion for music again, creating music at the intersection of East and West, which balances between artistic intuition and structural rigor, always prioritizing the emotional experience. He is leveraging his scientific and high-tech background as well as the understanding of social and corporate processes in shaping new musical structures.

Alex is pursuing creative collaborations with composers, performers and visual artists to expand his creative reach and challenge himself to get out of his comfort zone. He joined the National Association of Composers USA in 2021, and serves on the NACUSA National Board. Alex lives in Dallas with his wife, they have two adult children and two granddaughters. He likes to hike, jog, meditate and enjoys modern art and a good laugh.

*Autumn Leaves Ablaze* was inspired by a wonderful Haiku written by Bobbie Perkins:

Autumn Leaves Ablaze

A lesson in surrender

Trees have no ego.

These profound lines brought several images to my mind, and I tried to find the adequate musical patterns to create an imaginary 'musical space-time' to evoke them:

- I. gentle autumn light smiling through foliage like confetti at a celebration;
- II. colored leaves engaged in a slow-motion, gravity-defying dance;
- III. a flutter of leaves, awoken by a sudden wind gust;
- IV. a couple of floating leaves surrender to the vast emptiness of the ocean;

The colorful and versatile combination of flute and violoncello timbres evokes the foliage season, with the exuberant autumn light that precedes the desolation and loneliness of the inevitable winter.

**Monica Chew** (she/her) is an Oakland composer and pianist who celebrates presenting rarely performed music and new works from around the world. A "gifted player with an affinity for deeply sensitive expression" (Whole Note), she has composed since 2017 and couldn't be happier about it. Her work has been featured as part of the Gabriela Lena Frank's Creative Academy for Music, Verdant Vibes, Hot Air Music Festival, Community Women's Orchestra, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. Her writing has been reviewed as "monumental" and "stunning" by *San Francisco Classical Voice*. Prior to 2015, she worked nearly a decade as a principal software engineer on security and privacy at Mozilla and Google. She lives in Oakland with her husband, an 1899 Steinway B, a clavichord, and a disused violin.

*Water (Take me home to me)* is the second of 3 songs, Siren Cycle, written by Monica Chew and Megan Cohen.

Water is a song of yearning, a retelling of the classic Odyssean siren tale with acknowledgment of how important water is to our bodies and our planet.

**Allen Shearer** has received the Rome Prize Fellowship, the Aaron Copland Award, a Charles Ives Scholarship, residencies at MacDowell, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His *Three Lyrics*, written at the Copland House, won the Sylvia Goldstein Award. The premiere of his opera *Middlemarch in Spring* was named one of the Ten Best Operatic Events of 2015 by the S.F. Examiner, and one of the year's most notable events in classical music worldwide by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. His operas *Howards End*, *America* and *Prospero's Island*, on libretti by Claudia Stevens, were given prominent premieres in San Francisco. Shearer holds a PhD from UC Berkeley and diplomas from the Akademie Mozarteum. His teachers include Andrew Imbrie and Fred Lerdahl at Berkeley and Max Deutsch in Paris. He is a founding director of Berkeley's annual music festival Sonic Harvest.

In 2008, Philip Larkin (1922-1985) was named "Britain's greatest post-war writer" by *The Times*. He was also a well-known jazz critic, and according to his correspondence with friends, he sometimes set his own verse to music. In selecting these three poems for "Echoes" I aimed for a range of tone and mood.

## **Echoes**

*Poems by Philip Larkin*

### **1. Days**

What are days for?  
Days are where we live.  
They come, they wake us  
Time and time over.  
They are to be happy in:  
Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question  
Brings the priest and the doctor  
In their long coats  
Running over the fields.

### **2. Home is so sad**

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left,  
Shaped to the comfort of the last to go  
As if to win them back. Instead, bereft  
Of anyone to please, it withers so,  
Having no heart to put aside the theft  
And turn again to what it started as,  
A joyous shot at how things ought to be,  
Long fallen wide. You can see how it was:  
Look at the pictures and the cutlery.  
The music in the piano stool. That vase.

### 3. Solar

Suspended lion face  
Spilling at the centre  
Of an unfurnished sky  
How still you stand,  
And how unaided  
Single stalkless flower  
You pour unrecompensed.

The eye sees you  
Simplified by distance  
Into an origin,  
Your petalled head of flames  
Continuously exploding.  
Heat is the echo of your  
Gold.

Coned there among  
Lonely horizontals  
You exist openly.  
Our needs hourly  
Climb and return like angels.  
Unclosing like a hand,  
You give forever.

**Douglas Ovens** “writes music that has been described by the press as ‘theatrical, haunting, and whimsical.’ Also active as a percussionist, his music is often rooted in the physicality of percussion playing and experimentation with sound... The *New York Times* described his piano piece *Moving Image* as ‘a work of special appeal...that has an almost conversational shape and pacing, and some wonderful textural detail.’” (from the notes for *Old Meets New*, Max Lifchitz, piano. North/South Recordings, N/S 1068).

Ovens has received commissions from the North/South Chamber Orchestra (NYC), the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra, Allentown and Asheville Symphonies. He has composed music for plays ranging from *The Oresteia* of Aeschylus to Gao Xingjian’s *The Other Shore* and Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, and has been presented in festivals throughout the United States, in Europe, Asia and South America by organizations including Vox Novus, North/South Consonance, NACUSA, and many others. Ovens studied at SFSU and UCSB before moving East to teach at UNC Asheville and Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania and way East at the Accademia dell Arte in Arezzo, Italy. Videos at: [YouTube@douglassovens8070](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdouglassovens8070) Info at: [douglasovenscomposer.com](http://douglasovenscomposer.com)

*My Diamond Stud* was the third of a set of songs, originally for soprano and vibraphone, that I was commissioned to write to honor poet Alice Fulton during her residency at Muhlenberg College. The word that I landed on to describe Fulton’s poetry is “immediacy.” Somehow in reading these poems, I feel I have lived some part of them. To me, they read as universal, but also as “American” of a certain time. This song is a Blues. Sometimes silky, sometimes gritty. Unfortunately, there was no Fender Stratocaster in the available instruments.

**My Diamond Stud** — Alice Fulton from *Dance Script with Electric Ballerina*

He'll be a former cat burglar  
because I have baubles  
to lose. I'll know him  
by the black  
carnation he's tossing:  
heads, he takes me,  
stems, the same. Yes,  
he'll be a hitchhiker at this  
roller-rink I frequent, my diamond  
stud who'll wheel up shedding  
sparks & say "Ecoutez  
be-be. I'm a member  
of a famous folded trapeze  
act. My agility is legend, etc."  
keeping his jeweler's eye on  
my gold fillings. He'll know  
what I really want: whipping  
me with flowers, his fingers' grosgrain  
sanded smooth, raw  
to my every move. For our tryst  
we'll go to travel-folder heaven  
& buff-puff each other's  
calluses in valentine tubs.  
He'll swindle the black heart  
between my thighs  
dress me up in ultra-  
suede sheaths, himself  
in naugahyde. No,  
leather. He'd never  
let anything touch him  
that wasn't once alive.

Award-winning Michigan composer **Dinah Bianchi** seeks to create vibrantly exciting music—music that is sublime, beautiful and with the communicative power that drives the creative spirit of all artists. She is well versed in a variety of musical genres with a portfolio that includes music for orchestra, concert band, string ensemble, chamber ensemble, solo works, as well as electronic music. Well received both nationally and internationally, Bianchi's music has been performed in concert halls in Europe, Asia, Canada, South America, and the United States. Recently, she completed a recording session for "Chasse Noir" with the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava in the Czech Republic. The recording was released in August of 2022. Her self-titled album, "Dinah Bianchi: First Impressions," which features Michigan-based artists, was released by Navona Records on May 3, 2024.

While creating this work, I focused on infusing the music with ambient sounds, rich harmonic language, extended techniques, and beautiful melodies that would highlight the many facets of flute performance. It was my ambition to create music that would showcase a high level of artistry and craft, while evoking the essence of change and growth through a type of reflective evolution. As this work celebrates new uncharted beginnings, the title, *Illumine Divergence* seemed apropos as *illumine* means: to illuminate; or to light the path; to hold a hopeful connotation, while *divergence* depicts the change or metamorphosis within the change. It was imperative to emphasize the beauty of change and progression not only present within the music, but to overtly symbolize the connection of the progression of time and achievements with accomplishments and events yet to be discovered., hence concluding the work with a sense of lingering mystery.

**Brian Field** began his musical endeavors at age eight with the study of piano, and began his first serious compositional efforts at sixteen. He earned his undergraduate degree in music and English literature from Connecticut College, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa. At Connecticut, he studied composition with Noel Zahler, piano with the Polish pedagogue Zosia Jazinovich, organ with John Anthony, and harpsichord/figured-bass realization with Linda Skernick.

Devoting himself to composition, Mr. Field continued his musical studies at the Juilliard School in New York City where he was awarded his Master of Music degree. At Juilliard he was a student of Milton Babbitt. From Juilliard, Mr. Field attended Columbia University, earning his Doctorate. At Columbia, he was a President's Fellow and studied composition with George Edwards and Mario Davidovsky.

Mr. Field's musical works include music for television and stage; solo acoustic, chamber, ballet, choral, and orchestral works—stylistically ranging from serious contemporary pieces to jazz to electronic music. His compositions have been performed throughout the United States and internationally.

These two love songs, based upon the verse of contemporary Catalanian poet Carles Duarte i Montserrat, are subtle, quiet and fragile works for voice and piano that explore the quiet – and private – intensity of love, and the metaphysical mysteries of that love.

“Ens vestim de llavis la nuesa” celebrates the strength of desire in us, the beauty of the skin when we love, the joy of existing when we feel the light of life in the eyes and the lips of our beloved. Is a text on a sensuality born within us from distant generations.

“Silueta” reflects upon the mystery of the other when we love. In loving, we break borders between us, but in doing this we reflect, contemplate and question who we are. The new and decisive link we build with our beloved moves us to rethink identity.



**Davide Verotta** was born in an Italian town close to Milano and moved to San Francisco as an eager twenty-seven-year-old. A professor at UCSF in biomathematics (gasp) for thirty years, he has been actively involved in the SF new music scene for a good twenty, and eventually left math behind to concentrate exclusively on composing. He studied piano at the Milano conservatory ages ago. Composition is more recent, with studies at SFSU, where he earned an MA, and UC Davis. Davide teaches piano and composition privately and at the Community Music Center in SF. He has received numerous local commissions, international competition prizes, and composition grants. For more information, please visit his web site at [www.davideverotta.com](http://www.davideverotta.com) or his youtube channel [www.youtube.com/DavideVerotta](http://www.youtube.com/DavideVerotta)

*If I Must Die, Let It Be a Tale* is a poem by Refaat Alareer, set here as a song for soprano and flute. Alareer was born in Gaza City in 1979. A graduate from University College Landon, and University Putra Malaysia, with a dissertation on John Donne, he taught literature and creative writing at the Islamic University of Gaza. Just weeks after he wrote this poem, on December 6, 2023, Alareer was killed by an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza, along with his brother, sister, and four of his nephews, during the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip.

**If I Must Die, Let It Be a Tale**

If I must die,  
you must live  
to tell my story  
to sell my things  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings,  
(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza  
while looking heaven in the eye  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—  
and bid no one farewell  
not even to his flesh  
not even to himself—  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above  
and thinks for a moment an angel is there  
bringing back love  
If I must die  
let it bring hope  
let it be a tale  
—Refaat Alareer

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**I'lana Cotton** has created works for a broad range of ensembles, from solo piano to small chamber groups to large choral and instrumental ensembles. She holds a Master of Arts degree in composition from UCLA. A California resident for many years, she was active in multi-art collaborations and performance. Since moving to southern Oregon in 2003, she has written over 35 works for Rogue Valley ensembles, including four commissions for the Siskiyou Singers. The Rogue Valley Symphony commissioned *Cantus*, a large-scale work for orchestra, in honor of its 50th anniversary season, which was premiered in October, 2017. She was active in NACUSAsf for over 10 years, and helped form NACUSA chapter in southern Oregon in 2006. You may visit her website at <http://www.notimemusic.com>.

*Into Darkness* was inspired by the Wendell Berry poem "To Know the Dark" and its imagery.

**To Know the Dark**

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,

And find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,

And is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

—Wendell Berry, *Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 1999