



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

Composers & Friends

Sunday, April 27, 2025, 2pm

Center for New Music, San Francisco

PROGRAM

Lagrangian Point

Davide Verotta

Sarita Cannon, soprano
Kymry Esainko, piano

Five Songs from Carl Sandburg's "Prairie"

Robert Fleisher

1. I was born on the prairie
2. I am here when the cities are gone
3. Have you seen a red sunset
4. Rivers cut a path on flat lands
5. I speak of new cities and new people

Sarita Cannon, soprano
Kymry Esainko, piano

Episodes for Solo Violin

James W. Cook

Monika Gruber, violin

Songs for a Modern Child

John G. Bilotta
Lyrics by John F. McGrew

1. Ornithology
2. Momentum

Sarita Cannon, soprano
Kymry Esainko, piano

Foray No. 11 in F
Foray No. 3 in D-flat

John Mackay

John Mackay, piano

Five Various Songs

Allan Crossman

1. My Entire Life Before Me
2. Water
3. Finally
4. Distance
5. What's It Like?

Sarita Cannon, soprano

Kymry Esainko, piano

Navaye Mahzoon (Solo Piano No. 3)

Soheil Shirangi

Soheil Shirangi, piano



Scan this code for the full program notes and composer biographies.

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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Program notes

Lagrangian Point

Davide Verotta

Suspended in a Lagrangian point
I dream of familiar lands
blue spheres and elaborate ink

My morning finds me watching Earth
divided in light and darkness
sunk deep in a feral rainbowed space

Earth living and life-giving

I turn and listen to the roaring sun
the spotted orb watching intent
a never-ending flaring fury

Sun the benign
the giver
protector

I turn and watch the circling planets
around in a quiet dance
singing their simple colored song

gray Mercury, white Venus, Jupiter orange,
and far [far] away lost frozen Eris [frozen]

Ma lí [lí] é l'improbabile pianeta
la sfera fluente e colorata
il vasto ostello di moltitudini

nel mare primordiale
sul suolo vergine
nei cieli liberi

cantano e chiamano
sognano e respirano
tutti si nutrono e riproducono

a planet shaped by the amazing force of want

Earth living want

*But there [there] is the improbable planet
the flowing and colorful sphere
the vast hostel of multitudes*

*in the primordial sea
on virgin soil
in the free skies*

*sing and call
dream and breathe
everyone feeds and reproduces*

Lagrangian Point is a short, lyrical hymn to Earth, inspired by Samantha Harvey's novel *Orbital*, a dreamy work that follows six fictional astronauts, over 24 hours, aboard the low-orbiting International Space Station. Borrowing a similar narrative device, the composition features a fictional character observing the solar system and Earth from a Lagrangian Point — a stationary position in space. In a much shorter version, the piece shares some of *Orbital*'s more philosophical motives: our gratitude for lovely Earth, its smallness in the cosmos, the perhaps surprising flourishing of life on it, and the force of "want" that seemingly drives life.

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, and is actively involved in the Bay Area new music scene. He is the current President of NACUSAsf. For more information, please visit his web site at www.davideverotta.com or his youtube channel www.youtube.com/DavideVerotta.

Five Songs from Carl Sandburg's "Prairie"

Robert Fleisher

1. I was born on the prairie

I was born on the prairie and the milk of its wheat, the red of its
clover, the eyes of its women, gave me a song and a slogan. . . .

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sun-
rise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.

The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and I know in the night I
rest easy in the prairie arms, on the prairie heart. . . .

O Prairie mother, I am one of your boys.

I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of pain over
love.

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sun-
rise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.

2. I am here when the cities are gone

I am here when the cities are gone.

I am here before the cities come.

I nourished the lonely men on horses.

I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.

I am dust of men.

I am dust of your dust, as I am brother and mother

To the copper faces, the worker in flint and clay,

The singing women and their sons a thousand years ago

Marching single file the timber and the plain.

3. Have you seen a red sunset

Have you seen a red sunset drip over one of my cornfields, the shore of night
stars, the Wave lines of dawn up a wheat valley?
Have you heard my threshing crews yelling in the chaff of a strawpile and the
running wheat of the wagonboards, my cornhuskers, my harvest hands hauling
crops, singing dreams of women, worlds, horizons?

4. Rivers cut a path on flat lands

Rivers cut a path on flat lands.
The mountains stand up.
The salt oceans press in
And push on the coast lines.
The sun, the wind, bring rain
And I know what the rainbow writes across the east or west in a half-circle:
A love-letter pledge to come again.

5. I speak of new cities and new people

I speak of new cities and new people.
I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
 a sun dropped in the west.
I tell you there is nothing in the world
 only an ocean of tomorrows,
 a sky of tomorrows.
I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say
 at sundown:
 Tomorrow is a day.

I hold Carl Sandburg responsible for this song cycle completed in 2004; under the influence of his evocative language, the Five Songs inhabit a distinctly different musical world than my other works. The brief texts are excerpts from the expansive poem "Prairie," which opens Sandburg's second published collection, *Cornhuskers* (1918). Born and raised in Illinois, Sandburg was a Pulitzer Prize recipient both for his poetry and his multi-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln; he was also a journalist, political activist, and a folk singer. The Five Songs are dedicated to my wife, Darsha, who introduced me to "Prairie." Today's performance is dedicated to my brother Richard, whose thoughtful comments after hearing the first two completed songs encouraged me to keep going and helped point the way forward.

Robert Fleisher is a composer, the author of *Twenty Israeli Composers*, and a contributor to Theresa Sauer's *Notations* 21. His acoustic works have been called "eloquent" (Ann Arbor News), "lovely and emotional" (Musicworks), "ingenious" (The Strad), and possessing "astoundingly attractive vertical sonorities" (Perspectives of New Music); his electroacoustic music has been described as "fascinating" (Fanfare), "endearingly low-tech" and having "a rich, tactile texture" (The New York Times). A native New Yorker, Fleisher attended the High School of Music and Art, earned a B.Mus. degree with honors in music theory and composition at the University of Colorado, and his M.M. and D.M.A. composition degrees at the University of Illinois studying with Ben Johnston, Salvatore Martirano, and Paul Zonn. He is Professor Emeritus at Northern Illinois University.

Episodes for Solo Violin, Op. 0f

James W. Cook

This piece, one of a series of works for solo instruments collectively designated Opus 0, was written in mid-2022, although as an idea it dates back at least a decade further (and, as an intention, arguably even another decade before that).

After completing the radically experimental *Exploratorium* in 2019, a work which initiated my “new” manner (and thus was labeled Opus 1), I set about reconstructing the portfolio of works that I “should have” written during my undergraduate years, 2002–2006. Prominent among these were four solos: for clarinet, cello, flute, and violin. (To these would be added trombone, trumpet, viola, and horn.)

The violin piece is in a single movement, but, as its title suggests, consists of a series of “episodes” defined mainly by tempo changes. There is no real “principal material,” just an ongoing developmental process that is at various points interrupted, restarted, and resumed. In its combination of virtuosic style with weighty utterance, the work recalls predecessors such as the violin solos by J.S. Bach, Max Reger, and Roger Sessions. As in those cases, the musical language has a conservative aspect while somehow also being peculiarly modern.

James W. Cook is a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Alabama, where he studied composition with C.P. First. In 2023 he received the First Runner-Up Award in the Nancy Bloomer Deussen Young and Emerging Composer Competition.

Songs for a Modern Child

John G. Bilotta

Lyrics by John F. McGrew

Ornithology

My mother is a scientist. Her field's aquatic birds.
She's called an ornithologist and she know a lot of words.
She's working in Antarctica in a cabin by the sea.
She studies terns and penguins and sent this photograph to me.

They say there's only ice and snow at the South Pole every year.
The wind is harsh in winter which is really summer here.
My mother sent us a letter. Her extra pair of shoes were lost.
She asked we send a new pair regardless of the cost.

We bought a pretty pair to send her but before we let them go,
I told my father get some more for the penguins in the snow.
My father said he didn't know what size the penguins wore.
He said let's send them in Mother's size and mail them from the store.

My mother really loved the shoes and sent this photograph to me
Of penguins in designer shoes and my mother in a cabin by the sea.

Momentum

Last week I learned to roller skate. My father taught me how.
He took me to the sporting goods store in Sunvalley Mall.
He said the most important thing you have to learn at first
Is how to safely stop the skates so you don't get hurt.

We were in the sports department, he said "Watch and see."
He put skates on his feet and said, "Joey keep your eyes on me."
He stood and caught his balance. He rolled a foot or more.
He stepped off of the carpet and on a marble floor,
But the total lack of friction sent him sailing out the door.

We heard but couldn't see him as he rolled into the mall.
I grabbed my little brother and we chased him down the hall.
He never got to show me the safest way to stop.
He hit the escalator starting at the top.

The doctor said he had a sprain but he'd heal up right away.
Just some bumps and bruises and he's back at work today.
I guess that's really all my news. It's nice that you all care.
Now my father only wears his shoes and he always takes the stairs.

"Best and brightest, Students! I need two volunteers..."

All the students' hands shoot up.

"...for tomorrow. Share something interesting you've done."

All the hands snap down.

"You only have to speak for three minutes."

One hand rises slowly.

"Emily! Thank you!"

"My mother's a scientist," Emily says.

"Perfect. Tell us all about it tomorrow. Now who else?"

One more hand rises slowly.

"How about roller skating?" Joey asks tentatively.

"How about it indeed! We look forward to hearing it."

John Bilotta has spent most of his life in the San Francisco Bay Area. His works have been performed and recorded by ensembles and soloists in the US and Europe, including Rarescale, Earplay, Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, North/South Consonance, Avenue Winds, Talea Ensemble, Trio Casals, Boston String Quartet, Belfiato Wind Quintet, Kiev Philharmonic, San Francisco Cabaret Opera, Bluegrass Opera, Boston Metro Opera, Thompson Street Opera, New Fangled Opera, Floating Opera and VocalWorks. He is currently vice-president of NACUSAsf and serves on the boards of the Society of Composers, Inc., and Goat Hall Productions.

Foray No. 11 in F, Foray No. 3 in D-flat

John Mackay

Foray No. 11 in F and Foray No. 3 in D-flat are two in a series of 24 forays composed as a dedication to J.S. Bach. Mr. Mackay coined the term “classi-jazz” as a way of describing the music, which embraces both the classical and jazz styles, harmonically and rhythmically. The 24 'forays' evoke a number of different moods and styles. One can hear in these forays the sounds of contemporary classical, jazz, boogie-woogie as well as influences from the many composers that have come before.

John Mackay has enjoyed a long career in the music business as a performer/composer/arranger. His music has been performed by music groups of all sizes and descriptions around the world---from solo piano to full orchestra and choir. His many recordings have crossed virtually all of the musical genres in the western world--classical, jazz, pop, choral, theatre, celtic, and sacred.

Five Various Songs

Allan Crossman

My Entire Life Before Me (Louis Phillips)

Oh to be sixteen again, and in love - and entirely miserable.
Smearing evening skies with maudlin break-free of gravity.
My entire life before me - like one of those maps,
That never gets properly folded.
Oh to be sixteen again.

Water (Hermann Claudius)

I walk to the river's bank before the night
to watch there for a passing minute.
My soul has something of the water in it
that I should be so lifted by the sight.
But see, the early stars are out below me and shine back again.

Finally (words/music by AC)

Got the hang of it, the new terrain of it.
I finally know how to love you!
Got the clang of it, the Vera Wang of it, Mickey Spillane of it!
I finally know how to care for you!

So let's go on and mix our histories, the hows the whys and the who.
We'll share one of life's sweetest mysteries, know what dance we could do.

I've got the tang of it, the Ang Lee of it, the brand-new key of it.
While showing the dance that we do...Two! Three! Four! And five six seven...
I finally know how, finally know...
I'm falling in love with you!!

Distance ("The Border" AC)

Distance makes the heart grow fonder,
I love you more the more I wander.
When I moved yonder I loved you more.

Distance gives us time to grow.
Will I return? Most likely no.
It's what I chose, Go back, what for?
Now I feel closer even more.

With so much space between there and here,
See, I can imagine you much more clearly;
You're more and more dear,
When I'm less and less near.

Distance makes our hearts entwine.
I love you more when you're not my life-line.
When I moved yonder I loved you more.

Distance gives us time to find
Who we two are in body and mind.
It's what I chose. Go back, what for?
Now I feel bound to you even more.

With so much space between each time, then,
I can see clearly ahead and behind
There's nothing to fear,
When we're less and less near.

What's It Like? ("Mozart, Where Are You" AC)
(Love-lorn)

What's it like to fall in love?
What's it like to cherish, to perish into one love together?

(Lover)

What's it like? Well, it's like a bird! No...
A beautiful word! No...It's completely absurd!

(Love-lorn)

What's it like when longing's done,
And to dream as one, to wake one morning together?

(Lover)

What's it like? Well, it's awesome and far out.
You're clearly devout about his face.
It's nice....that's it, nice!

(to pianist) HEY! WAIT A SECOND! I'M NOT THROUGH!

And even when it's boring, I mean he/she could be snoring,
But your heart is soaring....pouring.....roaring....whoring...(continues random rhymes)
(Lover) floats offstage babbling)

(Love-lorn)

So that's what it's like to fall in love: becoming incoherent,
You veer into your own mind...
What's it like to dance all night?
What's it like to cry from sheer delight – together?

These are two concert songs and three theatre songs.

The compelling lyrics of "My Entire Life Before Me" are by the contemporary New York poet, Louis Phillips. The luminous poem "Water" is by the German writer, Hermann Claudius. "Finally" is in the process of falling in love, and joyfully tells us more than we want to know. "Distance" (from the musical *The Border*) informs us why it makes the heart grow fonder. "What's It Like? (from the musical *Mozart, Where Are You?*) is a sincere *cri de coeur* with a surprise reply!

Allan Crossman has composed for many soloists and ensembles. *Millennium Overture Dance* is on the eponymous Grammy-nominated album from North/South Consonance; *Sonata fLux*, with pianist Keisuke Nakagoshi, appears on Navona Records; *Icarus Rising*, a collection of chamber and orchestral pieces, is on Centaur Records. The musical, *The Log of the Skipper's Wife*, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Co. at Stratford, UK, with his music drawn from Irish/Scottish chanteys and reels. Teaching has included Concordia University (Montreal), SF Conservatory, Wheaton College, The Crowden School (CA). www.acrossman.com

Navaye Mahzoon (Solo Piano No. 3)

Soheil Shirangi

A contemporary solo piano work exploring the sorrow of loss through a momentary approach, with elements of Iranian music, the Nava is one of the really popular Persian modes, could unfold in a series of brief, emotionally charged moments.

The opening void: The piece begins with a single, resonant low note, slowly decaying into silence. This represents the initial shock and emptiness of loss. The silence between the notes is as significant as the sound itself, creating a sense of longing and absence.

The fragmented Melodies: Disjointed, fleeting melodies appear in the higher register, resembling Persian *radif* motifs. These melodic fragments are often interrupted by sudden silences or unresolved harmonies, symbolizing the disconnection and fragmentation of memory. A sense of instability or unresolved grief is created through shifts in pitch, referencing Persian modes.

Soheil Shirangi is a composer, director, and music educator with over 14 years of experience in teaching and creating music. Currently pursuing a graduate degree in Composition at San Francisco State University, he is an active member of the National Association of Composers, USA (NACUSA). Soheil's career spans numerous international accolades and collaborations in contemporary, classical, and experimental music, with performances across Iran, Greece, Italy, Brazil, Germany, and the United States, etc.

As the founder and artistic director of Dream House Ensemble, He has championed contemporary music performances in Tehran and beyond, while mentoring students in piano, composition, and music theory.

His creative work has earned numerous awards, including recognition at the Tehran International Electronic Music Festival and the Orginsky International Composition Competition. He has directed performances at notable festivals such as the MUSLAB International Electroacoustic Music Exhibition and the Tehran Contemporary Music Festival. His enduring passion for composition and his commitment to nurturing new talent continue to shape his contributions to the global music scene.