

INVERSION
ENSEMBLE

Presents

Colors Harmonic



Colors Harmonic

February 25th, 2018
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Austin, Texas

I. Bright:

- *Ah, Sunflower* Alexander Johnson
- *Golden Callings* Carson Cooman
Jennifer Wang, Katie Lewis, Alissa Floyd, Rebecca Stidolph, Soloists
- *Chartreuse** Robbie LaBanca
Ben Hummel, Violin

II. Vibrant:

- *the sea is awash with roses** Robbie LaBanca
Adrienne Inglis, Flute
- *The Green and Salty Days* from *The Salty Suite* Kathleen Allan

III. Iridescent:

- *Where Go the Boats* Dale Trumbore
- *Aquamarine** Trevor Shaw
Ben Hummel, Violin

IV. Muted:

- *Deep Blue* Ian Clarke
Adrienne Inglis, Flute
Sheryl Stack, Piano
- *The Blue of Distance* Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

V. Black and White:

- *Shadow** Robbie LaBanca
Ben Hummel, Violin
- *White Moon* Luke Flynn
Sheryl Stack, Piano
- *DEMON* Matthew Brown
- *Lux Aeterna** Stephanie K. Andrews

VI. Electric:

- *Cochineal** Adrienne Inglis (ASCAP)
Walter Torres, Electronic Track

**World Premiere Performance*

Note from the Artistic Director:



Humans are an extraordinarily visual species. After all, if I say a word like “chair” aloud, one of you may think of an old wooden desk chair, while another may mentally picture a leather recliner. Regardless, every sound evokes an image in our collective mind. With **Colors Harmonic**, my fellow composers and I have committed to embracing the reflexive associations between sounds and images. In some cases, Inversion Ensemble will be singing about specific places and objects and their colors in a literal sense. In other cases, the music will be intended to give the general impression of a certain color. Ask yourself, “What does green sound like?” - you may very well have an answer after our concert! Inversion Ensemble is also using this opportunity to celebrate some of the many amazing visual artists in our Central Texas community. You’ll see a variety of terrific artwork on display as you take in the sounds of our talented musicians.

As always, I have the pleasure of creating this project with the help of some very gifted colleagues. I’m honored to be sharing the podium throughout **Colors Harmonic** with Cina Crisara, one of the truly great musicians I have known.

It is my hope for you that you might experience a moment when the sounds of the music, combined with the images before you, will carry you to a place full of life’s deeper meaning. I hope you’ll feel a sense of connection as you realize that art itself is a living thing, a living thing that invites us to see and hear all that surrounds us with constantly renewed awareness.

Thank you for joining us!



Trevor F. Shaw
Artistic Director
Inversion Ensemble

Guest Conductor, Cina Crisara



Guest conductor, Cina Crisara is in her first season as Chorus Master/Assistant Conductor of Austin Opera. Previously she held the position of Chorus Master for Opera Omaha spanning 17 seasons. She was also serving as a full-time faculty member at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Concurrently she completed 16 seasons as the Chorus Master for the Omaha (Nebraska) Symphony, culminating in Cina becoming the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Omaha Symphonic Chorus. She made her conducting debut with the Omaha Symphony in 1999.

Cina Crisara is also a professional singer, and has been a member of the Conspirare Symphonic Choir and Company of Voices since 2009. She has served as a Section Leader/Rehearsal Conductor for the Conspirare Symphonic Choir, and has performed on 10 Company of

Voices recordings, including the Grammy award winning “The Sacred Spirit of Russia”.

Presently, Dr. Crisara is the Director of Music at Saint John’s United Methodist Church in Austin. In addition to regular Sunday services, she designs and directs special musical events and services which are offered throughout the year. A production of the musical “Godspell” was given recently. In the summer of 2016, several members of the Saint John’s Chancel Choir combined with singers from the Conspirare Symphonic Choir to perform in Italy with Craig Hella Johnson. Cina will co-direct concerts with Craig Hella Johnson in Australia in the summer of 2018.

Cina Crisara has a Master of Music in Piano Performance from New York’s Ithaca College, and she earned a DMA in Choral Conducting from the University of Texas at Austin, having studied with Dr. Morris Beachy and Dr. Fiora Contino.

This is Dr. Crisara's 2nd concert with Inversion Ensemble having performed and conducted on the inaugural performance in February 2017.

Texts and Program Notes

Ah Sunflower (2013)

Program Note:

Ah Sunflower is special to me; in addition to being a setting of a text I adore, this piece was one of my first contrapuntal compositions (having many different musical lines). This type of musical texture is ideal for a poem with floral imagery, as the vitality and energy in the different musical lines evokes blossoming and growth. To me, this text is a declaration of love for a “sunflower,” an avatar for something pure and innocent, like a young child or even a faithful pet. Whatever it may be, the subject of this adoration is very personal to the adorer and inspires him or her to be honest and true in a world often devoid of these qualities.

- Alexander Johnson

Text:

Ah Sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done;
Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sunflower wishes to go!

- William Blake (1757-1827)

Golden Callings (2012)

Program Note:

Golden Callings (2012) was commissioned by Lorelei Ensemble (Beth Willer, music director), who premiered it on May 18–19, 2012. The piece is a setting of a poem by American poet Elizabeth Kirschner (b. 1955). The music falls into two parts: a slow, expressive first section followed by a swirlingly vibrant one. A final, intense affirmative statement ends the work.

- Carson Cooman

Text:

On the silky hillocks of the sea, peachscented
rays are splayed upon turquoise waters
while sky lifts its heavy lids.
I walk along the trail, surrender
to melodies that move through solitude, dream
of the elegant bones inside birds, their tiny
voice boxes, golden callings, rising and falling
at once. The compost in my wounds
composes me as does the rich
roux of sorrow that burrows into my soul's

creamy marrow. I see wintry, ghostly cocoons
pinned like corsages on low brush, red,
red berries impaled upon very broken
of flurrying wings and soon, soon,
my wounds, your wounds and our very
brokenness will be what awakens us greatly.
To go on means to go in, give in, to rise
and fall at once because that's what grace does.
Resist at first, if you must, but then hold on.

- Elizabeth Kirschner

Chartreuse and Shadow (2009)

Program Note:

Originally composed as partner pieces *Chartreuse and Shadow* were meant to represent two distinct musical colors of joy and sorrow. These pieces also symbolize Good Friday and Easter. *Chartreuse* is an expression of the bright green color of unfettered joy. *Shadow* is the mournful cry of deep sadness and regret.

- Robbie LaBanca

the sea is awash with roses (2017)

Program Note:

The text for this piece comes from one of my favorite American poets, Kenneth Patchen, who has been the inspiration for several of my compositions. The sense imagery that is illiciated from his words resonate with me. The sounds of musical waves become the bases for the piece. The women's voices are used as the vehicles of the text while the men's voices service as a lilting musical ebb and flow. The idea that life and love float along like petals on the ocean, blowing ashore with no ability to change anything - just along for the ride, is a powerful thought. The poet also suggests that even with a long life, our understanding of pleasure is like that of snow, fleeting and temporary. And life keeps blowing rose petals from the ocean to the land in a seemingly random but perhaps divine pattern. This piece utilizes flute and ocean drum to create the atmosphere of the coastline and waves.

- Robbie LaBanca

Text:

The sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land

O love, it is so little we know of pleasure
Pleasure that lasts as the snow

The still hills fill with their scent
O the hills flow on their sweetness
As on God's hand

But the sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land

- Kenneth Patchen (1911-1972)

The Green and Salty Days (2010)

Program Note:

Commissioned by Newman Sound Men's Choir. A setting of Al Pittman's eerily beautiful poem about visiting his deserted childhood hometown.

Text:

We came ashore
where wildflower hills
titled to the tide
and walked
sad and gay
among the turnip cellars
tripping over the cremated
foundations
of long-ago homes
half buried
in the long years' grass

Almost reverently
we walked among the rocks
of the holy church
and worshipped roses
in the dead yard
and came again to the cover
as the did after rosary
in the green and salty days

And men offshore
hauling traps
wondered what ghosts
we were walking
with the forgotten sheep
over the thigh-high grass paths
that lead
like trap doors
to a past
they could hardly recall

- Al Pittman (1940-2001)

Where go the boats (2012)

Program Note:

Where Go the Boats? (2012) sets a seemingly simple Robert Louis Stevenson text about a child's boats sailing down a river. As the river flows away with the boats at the poem's conclusion, the speaker realizes, "Other little children / Shall bring my boats ashore." The poem's undertones—loss, longing for return, and letting go—reach far beyond a child's immediate experience. This particular musical setting aims to bring out both the surface simplicity of this poem and its potential darker, deeper implications. The child narrator copes with the loss of the boats in the same way an adult must cope with the loss of a lover: the lost objects are gone forever, but will nonetheless be loved in the future.

Text:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Dark brown is the river. | On goes the river |
| Golden is the sand. | And out past the mill, |
| It flows along forever; | Away down the valley, |
| With trees on either hand. | Away down the hill. |
| Green leaves a-floating, | Away down the river, |
| Castles of the foam, | A hundred miles or more, |
| Boats of mine a-boating— | Other little children |
| Where will all come home? | Shall bring my boats ashore |

- Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Aquamarine (2017)

Program Note:

I composed my setting of Leslie Ullman's lovely poem, "Aquamarine" over a period of nearly three months, a much longer span than any previous choral work of mine. The poetry, full of imagery of the Southwest, had me lost in its mix of memories, subtle romance, and the notion that the mind can cause the eye to see a rainbow of colors on a uniformly reddish-brown canvas. I chose to explore these ideas through repetition of the main melodic theme with some subtle and some not-so-subtle harmonic variations each time the theme is sung. The violin obligato is essentially an additional voice, meant to answer the primary narrating voice (the choir). Every phrase I wrote for the violin is singable to the additional text in my head, which I'll not share, for fear of spoiling your individual interpretation as a listener, and to maintain the sanctity of the original poem. There is a short phrase beginning thirty-five measures in, consisting only of a simple violin line while the singers hum. There is no need to imagine additional text there! It is my hope that the break in text and theme may allow you a few moments of serenity, moments to contemplate what you've heard, lyrically and musically, and to prepare for the next major harmonic shift. The ending is quiet and may seem less passionate than most of the piece. However, the acknowledgment of a hungry horse as a final statement symbolizes to me a hazy awakening from the colorful beauty of romance, as if we'd slowly remembered where we were. We ironically become increasingly self-aware by opening up to the world around us. While my musical setting was not written to be an exact mirror image when comparing sections in the first half to the latter half, you'll likely have little trouble finding the varied iterations of the "A" and "B" sections. Those small differences signify that our memories are seldom entirely accurate. It is utterly human to coat our fondest recollections of the past with an enhancing glow.

- Trevor Shaw

Text:

A drop of sea, rounded as beachglass
or a tablet of eucalyptus
on the tongue, its color
soothes the eye with the cool
undersiders of leaves. This

It's the color of joy
only deeper, perhaps forgiveness,
when the self's right hand
reaches for the left and holds it
at last, resting. This is the color
long enough to warm them into
a single shape - it shimmered
like a knot of roots lifted
from broken soil. Then you let them go
slowly, as though retracing
that touch for both of us to keep

- Leslie Ullman

is the color of sky just before
sunrise, the air in the valley
still freshened from stars.
It's the color of water gulped from the dark
green hose after a ride on the mesa
and the color to ease forgetfulness,
another thirst, giving words
back to a watchful, timid child
who murmured stories late at night.
that filled my eyes last night
under the three-quarter moon, even though
the pale light flooding the corral
wasn't really the color of sea.
You took my hands, and kept them
while the chestnut mare nosed
at our feet for grain, her lips
barely disturbing the rippled sand,
precise as a surgeon's hands
probing a slowed heart

Deep Blue (2013)

'Deep Blue' is partly inspired by the ocean and whale song. The composer gave first performances of the work at flute courses in the summer of 2012 with its US premiere at the Las Vegas 2012 NFA convention along with a performance at the BFS 2012 convention in Manchester, UK.

The Blue of Distance (2010)

When searching for the lyrics for my choral piece, I encountered an alluring phrase "the blue of distance". It remained just a poetical-philosophical hint since the text itself doesn't get utilized at all. Instead, the function of the lyrics is given to a set of speech sounds – mostly humming or the sung open vowels "a-e-i-o-u". In one part of the piece these vowels-letters appear as chords, they determine the succession of entrances of choral voices and their interrelationships.

- Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

The Blue of Distance (from Rebecca Solnit "A Field Guide to Getting Lost")
"The world is blue at its edges and in its depths... that color of horizons, of remote mountain ranges, of anything far away. The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not. And the color of where you can never go. For the blue is not in the place those miles away at the horizon, but in the atmospheric distance between you and the mountains... Blue is the color of longing for the distances you never arrive in, for the blue world..."

White Moon (2017)

Program Note:

The birth of Luke Flynn's daughter happened just after he received the commission to write a new piece for Choral Arts Initiative's fifth anniversary. This new presence in the lives of Luke and his wife informed the kind of choral work he would write. When asked by Choral Artists during a visit to one of our rehearsals how and why he decided to write a piece that was relatively short and simple, he responded: "I just wanted to write a little lullaby, and I didn't want it to become this big monster. When you get a commission, you kind of have three choices: you could do something big and grand, you could do something small and light, or you could do something kinda crazy. I just wanted to do something small and light. It's a piece for a baby. If it keeps going and going, it defeats the purpose."

- Choral Arts Initiative

Text:

| | |
|--|--|
| White moon comes in on a baby face. | Falling across the long road that runs from the house. |
| The shafts across her bed are flimmering. | Keep a little of your beauty |
| Out on the land White Moon shines, | And some of your flimmering silver |
| Shines and glimmers against gnarled shadows, | For her by the window to-night |
| All silver to slow twisted shadows | Where you come in, White Moon. |

- from *Baby Face* by Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

DEMON (2015)

Program Note:

DEMON was written and premiered on Saturday, October 15, 2015, presented to an audience of film and video game composers as a demonstration of novel vocal techniques. My challenge to myself was to write a piece with zero specified pitches or texts; previously, I had experimented with such techniques only within the context of more "traditional" choral pieces, such as *Pacem*. As the piece began to take shape, I realized that the addition of an appropriately spine-tingling text would complement the sound world which was emerging. The Latin included in the piece is taken from a biblical story of demon possession. Asked for a name, the response is: "Our name is Legion, for we are many." Although this piece may be performed with smaller choirs—perhaps even as few as eight or twelve—I imagine it becoming increasingly effective (and impactful) with greater numbers, given the techniques employed. (A Roman legion consisted of about five thousand men at the time of the story, for what it's worth!)

- Matthew Brown

Text:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Legio nomen mihi | Our name is Legion |
| Est multi sumus | For we are many |

- Marcus 5:9

Lux Aeterna (2015)

Program Note:

Lux Aeterna was composed in 2015 as part of *A Requiem for Peace*. It is a setting of the *Lux Aeterna* from the traditional Requiem Mass, the text of which is found in the *Liber Usualis*. Beginning with the traditional plainsong chant sung in unison, it blossoms into four-part harmony as the Latin text "Lux aeterna, luceat eis Domine" ("Let light perpetual shine upon them, Lord") is heard. Harmonic tension builds as the plea "Requiem aeterna dona eis Domine" ("Grant them eternal rest, O Lord") is repeated three times. The final chord builds with the single word "Lux," an entreaty for eternal light to shine upon our beloved departed. It is my hope that this setting of the *Lux Aeterna* may bless those who have known loss with solace and peace.

- Stephanie K. Andrews

Text:

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.

Let perpetual light shine upon them, O Lord,
with your saints forever,
for you are merciful.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Cochineal (2017)

Program Note:

Cochineal combines earthy and electronic to set to music the ancient Andean recipe for dyeing alpaca wool with cochineal, an insect full of carminic acid that feeds on prickly pear cactus. Composed for SATB chorus and electronic dance track, the recipe depicts the synthesis of insects, alpaca wool, minerals, water, fire, sun, time, and a couple of unusual ingredients to create colorful beauty. Using Andean harmonies and scales, the music captures the grandeur of the Andes mountains and the artisanal tradition of hand-crafting colorful yarn from local natural ingredients. The computer-generated electronic track created using Logic Pro X features original sound design and compelling dance rhythms. Cochineal is the first musical collaboration between Adrienne Inglis and Walter Torres.

- Adrienne Inglis

Text:

Recipe:

Pick cochineal off of nopal cactus leaves
Plunge them into boiling water.
Pour off the water.
Dry them in the sun.
Grind the cochineal into powder.
Grate saqta into water and
clean the alpaca wool in its soapy lather.
Light a fire under the pot.
Wait for the water to steam, simmer.

Put alpaca wool in a pot of clear water.
Add alum add to fix the dye, alumbre.
Add the cochineal.
Stir the wool.
Add lime juice to turn the wool orange.
Add stale urine to turn the wool purple.
Remove the wool and hang in a tree to dry.
Rinse the dry wool in a flowing stream.
Hang the wool in a tree in the sun to dry.

Ingredients:

Cochinilla (crimson-dye-producing insect)
nopal cactus
saqta (a native root and natural detergent)
alpaca wool
alumbre (potassium alum mordant)

lime juice
urine
fire
steam
macnu

INVERSION
ENSEMBLE

Trevor Shaw, Artistic Director*
Robbie LaBanca, Managing Director*

Adrienne Inglis*
Adrienne Pedrotti Bingamon
Alexander Johnson*
Ben Hummel
Cayla Cardiff
Chris Tuggey
Cina Crisara
Claudia Carroll
Courtney Pierce
Doug Rensi
Eric Johnson*
Garrett Oden
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Todd Brennan
Trevor Villwock
Veronica Gonzalez
Vincent Schueren

Sheryl Stack, Pianist
Ben Hummel, Violin
Adrienne Inglis, Flute

*Ensemble composers

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