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Cycles of Resistance

commissioned & curated by Chelsea Hollow

Chelsea Hollow, *soprano*

Taylor Chan, *piano*

Friday, January 28, 2022 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.

ABOUT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

- Great venue for music with beautiful acoustics and amazing Steinway concert grand piano.
- Primarily local emerging and mid-career professional musicians presenting innovative programs.
- Every concert offers new insights and virtuosic performances.
- Complimentary refreshments served at intermission or after the concert.
- An independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to presenting music at affordable prices, especially for low-income seniors and students.
- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

DONATING TO OLD FIRST CONCERTS

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: Old First Concerts, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Thank you!

COVID-19 RESPONSE: RETURNING TO THE MUSIC

Old First Concerts is committed to the health and safety of our audiences, performers and staff. We look forward to having all audiences back in our space when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we are happy to be able to continue presenting artists of the highest caliber to our audience in the Bay Area—and beyond—via livestreamed events. We are following city guidelines and safety protocols to help ensure the safest possible environment for our performers and staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Following us on **Facebook** is a great way to keep informed about the latest concert information. While you are there, don't forget to **share** events with your friends and hit the "Like" button liberally. [facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/](https://www.facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/)

You can also find us on **Instagram @oldfirstconcerts** with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

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COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Friday, February 4 at 8 pm

Circadian String Quartet—Fanny and Felix

Monika Gruber, *violin*; **David Ryther**, *violin*; **Omid Assadi**, *viola*;
David Wishnia, *cello*

Celebrate the enduring musicality and strong bond of the famous sister and brother composers—Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn—both prodigiously talented musicians but unequally supported and encouraged in their talents due to the prevalent sexism of the time.

Sunday, February 6 at 4 pm

Sierra Ensemble

Matthew Vincent, *violin*; **Janis Lieberman**, *horn*; **Marc Steiner**, *piano*

Sierra Ensemble performs the premieres of two genre-expanding new works for horn, violin and piano: the World Premiere of Richard Aldag's *Trio for Violin, French horn, and Piano* and works by Charles Koechlin, Lennox Berkeley, and Johannes Brahms.

Saturday, March 12 at 7 pm

3rd Annual Pacific Pythagorean Music Festival: Modes of Change featuring Del Sol String Quartet, Ken Ueno, Viola Yip, Hafez Modirzadeh, and Keshav Batish

A festival celebrating the experimental innovators and traditional masters of pure-ratio harmonies, highlighting Persian scales with the World Premiere of Reza Vali's newest string quartet, plus a World Premiere of Madeline Ashman's *Gravitation*.

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PROGRAM

Sophie Xuefei Zhang (b. 1987)

Two Poems by Qiu Jin World Premiere

Qiū Hǔi Táng

Mǎn Jiāng Hóng

Anthony R. Green (b. 1984)

Zachte Krachten World Premiere

Michael Wiener (b. 1975)

Ma'agal World Premiere

Myron Silberstein (b. 1974)

Prayers for Peace World Premiere

I. As-salāmu 'alaykum

Intermission

Lauren McCall (b. 1986)

Living Water World Premiere

River Flow

She Doesn't Trust the Water

Living Water

Jason Cady (b. 1974)

I Could Not Allow That to Stand

Molly Joyce (b. 1992)

The Beauty of Disability World Premiere

program continues

Özden Gülsün (b. 1983)

Al kan kuşak World Premiere

Kadınlar tanıdım

Ben, Zeynep.

Bir Dünya Kadındır

Ben, Ayşe.

Ben de eskiden kız çocuğuydum

Ben, Fatma.

Başka Kadınlar

Myron Silberstein (b. 1974)

Prayers for Peace World Premiere

III. Śānti-Pāṭha

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Early in the Covid-19 Pandemic, desperate to connect with artists once again, I created a Call for Proposals with the intention of bringing together composers and librettists from around the globe to create inspiring works grounded in activism and resilience; my hope was to inform and inspire the healing of societal wounds through the empathy we experience as a recital audience. Tonight's concert program is almost entirely those commissions with a couple of added works that fit the theme.

The program chronologically explores poetry and texts of resilience and rebellion throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. We begin in China around 1906 and move through Marxist poetry of the Netherlands to the bonding hope of young girls during the Holocaust and end the first half with a meditation on Peace. The second half brings us into modern day activism with harrowing narratives from the Turkish Femicide, the Flint Michigan Water Crisis, the fight for disability rights, and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's response to the harassment she faced on the steps of the Capitol.

San Francisco Opera Guild, West Bay Opera, West Edge Opera, The Lamplighters, and Pocket Opera.

Taylor Chan holds an M.M. in Collaborative Piano from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she is currently a staff accompanist and vocal coach. She also teaches private piano lessons at The Hamlin School, and accompanies various opera, musical theatre, and new music productions and projects. As accompanist to the Grammy Award-winning Premier Ensemble of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, she performed at Davies Symphony Hall and made her Herbst Theatre debut in recital with lyric tenor Nicholas Phan (2018). Other SFGC performances include TedXSanFrancisco (2018), David Conte's Faculty Artist Series (SFCM), San Francisco's Tony Bennett Way celebration, and private events for Senator Dianne Feinstein and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Gratitude...

This concert was made possible by a great deal of helpers. Thank you all for your support and generosity of time and energy!

Special thanks to:

Old First Concerts for keeping live performance and virtual streaming options available for artists and performers during these last two years; The wonderful composers I've been so fortunate to work with over these last few years; Madison for populating the subtitles; Regina for all your guidance and expertise; Grandma Gracie, Gido, Grandmamá, Grandpa, Auntie, Uncles, & Friends for your virtual childcare!!!! Lisa, for co-commissioning *I Could Not Allow That to Stand*; Elizabeth, for constantly inspiring me to be the best version of myself #BigRamen; Jordan, for partnering with me in life, parenting, and these artistic endeavors which have not only fueled much of my personal artistic expression but are contributing more variety and perspective to the classical song canon.

longer have a voice and I thought, we have to be their voice. I didn't only want to commemorate them, I also wanted to celebrate the protests, especially the Night March held annually on March 8th; these protestors have been fighting for these deaths to be recognized and treated with equal justice to non-domestic murders and violence. My dear friend, Didem Gülçin Erdem, created the libretto. You will hear the stories and pain of several women throughout the work as well as recordings of protest chants and the police intervention of those protests.

This work is important to me because it represents more than just the women of Turkey, but the global community of women who have suffered domestic violence. *Al kan kuşak* means "The Bloody Red Belt" which is a striking image of domestic violence, but in the Turkish language, it also represents the cycles of abuse that can bind one generation to the next. Turkish women and women around the world are all bound by this sad belt. This song cycle is dedicated to all the women killed by men and all women who oppose it. Thanks to the brave protesters and the monument counter, these women are no longer anonymous deaths, but a powerful symbol for which we fight. -Özden Gülsün

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Chelsea Hollow is an operatic activist, creating art that makes her audience think collectively and creatively. In this time of political, environmental, and social unrest, Hollow cherishes her mission as an artist to give voice to the voiceless and challenge societal norms that exclude marginalized voices. In 2019, she commissioned, curated, and toured with her feminist recital, *Voice for the Voiceless*. This work inspired a call for proposals in 2020 which created the recital, *Cycles of Resistance*. Chelsea Hollow is also a coloratura soprano known throughout the San Francisco Bay Area for her "soaring high range" and "stage panache!" Locally, she performs with companies including The

The entire program is receiving its world premiere tonight excepting for *Autumn Begonia* which I premiered in my last solo recital in 2019 and *I Could Not Allow That to Stand* which was premiered virtually as a part of my presentation for The United Nations' Discussion on Human Rights, Arts, & Protest.

Sophie Xuefei Zhang (b. 1987) *Two Poems by Qiu Jin*

These two pieces are set on the poems by Qiu Jin, a Chinese revolutionary and feminist, who, not only lived but also died for what she believed in. *Qiū Hǔi Táng* (*Autumn Begonia*) is dictated by simple melodic lines that are composed in accordance with the inflections of the different tones of spoken Chinese in order to convey a sense of strength and determination in quietude, as Qiu Jin becomes aware of the choice a woman is/should be able to make on her own without any "protection" of a man. In *Mǎn Jiāng Hóng* (*A River of Blossoms*), elements of the sound of Guqin overshadow a supposedly joyous time of Mid-Autumn Festival as Qiu Jin's determination to join the revolutionary cause grows ever more explicit and ferocious despite her identity as a woman. -Sophie Xuefei Zhang

Anthony R. Green (b. 1984) *Zachte Krachten*

As a social justice artist with a deep appreciation and love for historical figures who are not widely known and celebrated, I am constantly researching activists and other socially important and relative figures who are not widely celebrated, but definitely beloved and respected in niche circles. For the *Cycles of Resistance* project organized by Chelsea Hollow, I chose to set a Dutch sonnet written by Henriette Roland Holst for high soprano and piano.

Also known as "Aunt Jet", Henriëtte Roland Holst-van der Schalk (1869–1952) was a Dutch poet and socialist. She was active in some of the main Marxist parties, where she met and collaborated with known activists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. Despite her bouts with various sicknesses

(depression, anorexia, anemia, and heart disease, among others), she constantly and diligently fought for better rights and protections for laborers, youth, and women. She worked for the resistance newspaper *De Vonk* (the sparkle), and was also active in bettering the lives of Indonesian immigrants in the Netherlands, both before and after Indonesian independence. As her life progressed, she grew more and more religious, but never lost her socialist intentions. While beloved for her poetry, she also wrote plays, biographies (of Rousseau, Gandhi, and Tolstoy), articles and other pieces of journalism, and radio plays. Her work was recognized by many prizes, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Amsterdam in 1947.

Zachte Krachten is a musical representation and intimation of this beloved sonnet by Aunt Jet. It speaks of how "soft powers" always win, and how the movement of every entity on the earth is towards love. This beautiful vision is one that is especially needed in the year 2020, a year that feels as though a grand end to humanity is imminent. In my setting, I use limited gestures and intervals as an extended leitmotif, symbolizing the main ideas within the sonnet. Musically, I utilize the register extremities of both the voice and the piano, but the music harmonically and registrally climbs towards an upper, celestial pitch area, which - for me - is symbolic and reminiscent of love. - Anthony R. Green

Michael Wiener (b. 1975) *Ma'agal*

The piece *Ma'agal* for soprano and prepared piano is based on texts written by young girls (12-14 years old) who lived between 1942 and 1944 in room 28 of the girls' home L 410 in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Their life and thoughts are portrayed in the book by Hannelore Brenner, *The Girls of Room 28: Friendship, Hope, and Survival in Theresienstadt* (New York: Schocken, 2009). The girls of room 28 had the following motto, which was like an incantation or secret password, "You believe

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, February 11, 2020. -Jason Cady

Molly Joyce (b. 1992) *The Beauty of Disability*

The Beauty of Disability honors legendary disability activist Judith Heumann, recognized internationally as a leader in the disability community and lifelong advocate, more recently publishing her memoir *Being Heumann*, released in February 2020 on Beacon Press and she was also featured in the recent Netflix documentary *Crip Camp*, released in March 2020. The work highlights Heumann's ongoing efforts with disability rights, and specifically her emphasis on the universality of disability as the largest yet perhaps most unacknowledged global minority (15% according to 2011 WHO/World Bank report) and available to all as born, acquired, permanent, and temporary. This is represented through her statements such as "we needed to fight back people's view that if you had a disability, you needed to be cured, that equality was not part of the equation" and "I encourage you all to recognize that disability is a family you can join at any point in your life."

The work includes textual elements from a personal interview with Heumann, as well contributions from writer Marco Grosse and composer Molly Joyce. -Molly Joyce

Özden Gülsün (b. 1983) *Al kan kuşak*

When I saw Chelsea's Call for Proposals, the first thing that came to my mind were the women murdered by men in Turkey. You can see lists of their names at www.anitsayac.com. Anıt Savaş means "the monument" in Turkish. It is a digital counter for all of the women who died because of domestic violence. In Turkey and much of the Middle East, these abusers and murderers find protection from the state and their communities because it is seen as a domestic affair. But these are murders and everyone who remains silent is an accomplice. These women, killed by their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sweethearts no

of the original note sequence. The resulting sounds were further shaped through the addition of effects and instrumental timbres in Ableton. -Lauren McCall

Jason Cady (b. 1974) *I Could Not Allow That to Stand*

On July 21, 2020 Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made a speech that linked the rise in crime in New York City to the rise in poverty due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Afterward, Florida Representative Ted Yoho called her "disgusting" and a "fucking bitch." Reporters from *The Hill* overheard the exchange and wrote about it. The next day Yoho gave a non-apology to Congress. He denied his comments, and claimed that having a wife and daughters made him "cognizant of his language." He ended with the inane assertion that he "cannot apologize for my passion, or for loving my god, my family, and my country." On July 23, AOC responded on the House floor with a speech that went viral. She said that she was not "waiting for an apology, but what I do have issue with is using women—our wives and daughters—as shields and excuses for poor behavior." Her words resonated with women and the targets of bullies everywhere. This song condenses AOC's response.

Sections of her speech felt either like recitative or aria and I wrote the melodies accordingly—much of it with Lydian and Pelog scales. I've developed some rhythmic approaches to setting text over the last few years in my operas. And in this piece I tried them out in 6/8. This was partly because I was thinking about the popularity of the "triplet flow" in hip hop. I based the form of the piece on the modulation structure of *Giant Steps* by John Coltrane.

Lisa Eldredge & Concert Rebels co-commissioned *I Could Not Allow That to Stand* under the direction of soprano, Chelsea Hollow and I composed it for her. She premiered selections of it online at a webinar on Arts and Activism hosted by the UN's

me – I believe you. You know what I know, whatever may happen, you won't betray me – I won't betray you."

Furthermore, the girls of room 28 created their own flag with a white circle around two clasped hands, which symbolized 'circle' and 'perfection' (Ma'agal in Hebrew). They also wrote their own anthem, which they had set to the melody of the Czech folk song *Ach padá, padá rosička* (*The Dew Is Falling*): "We want to be united ... we have come here, but our hope ... is to return home again ... We shall drive every evil away and won't go home until we have ... We clasp each other's hands and sing this anthem of our home."

The song *Ma'agal* starts with a rhythmic ostinato of the motto by the girls of room 28. This motto, spoken and sung initially in 3/4 time, gradually blends into the anthem in 4/4 time and the word ma'agal, depicting the circle of perfection, as well as the chromatic tones spelling out the name B-A-C-H. The anthem's second verse is sung ad libitum layering the Hebrew folk song *Rachel*, the Slovak national anthem *Nad Tatrou sa blýska*, the Lutheran chorale *Nun danket alle Gott*, and sound clusters on various melodies which had been used by the composer Viktor Ullmann (1898–1944), who was also incarcerated in Theresienstadt. The last verse of the song *Ma'agal* then combines all these melodies simultaneously, with small musical adaptations, for example by setting the Lutheran chorale in minor. Yet in the end, the final chord turns into G major on the texts 'We clasp each other's hands and sing this anthem of our home' and 'Rachel – mother of mothers'. The last three bars also encode the names H-E-La-G-A (Helga Kinsky wrote a diary of her time in room 28), F-La-A-eS-C-Hk-A (Anna Hanusová, née Flachová noted down the hymn) and H-An-D-A (Handa Drori wrote the hymn's text). -Michael Wiener

Myron Silberstein (b. 1974) *Prayers for Peace*

The murder of George Floyd added a new layer of hopelessness to a country that was already, in my opinion, irreparably damaged by reality-TV posturing having hijacked political debate and by COVID-19's escalating victory over a population that values the freedom to cough on each other over the civic ethic that shrinks from killing each other. Hopeless as I felt, I also felt inadequate to the times; too frightened of both COVID-19 and of police violence to join a protest and not in a financial position to give more than nominal support to organizations or political candidates that sought to promote changes I could not personally implement. I found the words of the *Oseh Shalom*, which I had not recited since my Bar Mitzvah, going through my mind. My setting of the *Oseh Shalom* came to me more quickly than any other song setting I had previously written. Soon afterward, I set the *Śāntipāṭha* from the *Yajurveda*, then the apocryphal *Prayer of St. Francis*, and finally, I wrote a setting of the salutation *As-salāmu 'alaikum*. These four prayers petition for peace in four subtly different ways: *As-salāmu 'alaikum* expresses the desire that the Other—the person whom the speaker encounters—experience the deity's peace and blessing. *Oseh Shalom* requests that the deity create peace not only in “the high places” but for us and throughout the community as well. The *Śāntipāṭha* is a methodical, meditative acknowledgement of peace throughout the universe, from the heavens to the earth to the plants to the waters and even within peace itself; it then expresses the desire for the speaker to experience that very peace. The *Prayer of St. Francis*, which I chose to close the cycle, requests that the speaker be an instrument to make peace proliferate and to turn hate to love.

Throughout my writing, I was painfully aware my setting of these prayers for peace is not a substitute for practical action. One of the things that horrifies me most about our current moment in history is our leaders' preference for “thoughts and prayers” over legislation, the job they were ostensibly hired to

do. If a deity does indeed exist, I doubt that it appreciates being asked to provide interventions that we could provide for ourselves.

I have never been a victim of racial violence or of any other form of institutional oppression. How fatuous for a white guy working from home as the country self-destructs around him to “respond” via art-song settings of arcane texts. So all I can say is: my *Prayers for Peace* is something I felt an inner compulsion to write. Not so much in answer to the times but rather at a time when I did not feel drawn to any texts but these. I hope the cycle will speak to its listeners both now and at any other time that it may be heard. -Myron Silberstein

Lauren McCall (b. 1986) *Living Water*

Living Water is a three-movement work for solo soprano, piano, and electronics. The first movement, *River Flow*, was created to present part of the story of what happened as the beginning of the Flint Water Crisis unfolded, the second movement, *She doesn't trust the water*, was created to express the frustration community members felt, and the third movement, *Living Water*, was created to inspire a call to action. Each movement of *Living Water* begins with electronics as a way to mirror the experiences of the community members of Flint and others who have gone through hardships. Oftentimes we cannot control what life brings to us, but we must keep responding and working to make those situations better.

The electronics were made in Max/MSP, where a machine learning model was trained on data of Flint Water Blood Lead Level Testing Results. This data was first funneled through a Max/MSP object called makenote, and sent to Ableton through a noteout object, where it was formed into a MIDI file. Then the MIDI file was fed through a ml.markov object in Max/MSP. This is a stochastic model and the MIDI notes were used to train this model and build new note sequences based off of the probability