

A close-up portrait of Mark Abel, a middle-aged man with short, wavy white hair and light-colored eyes. He is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt with a subtle pattern. The background is a blurred, textured wall.

MARK
ABEL

Home Is
a Harbor
opera
in three acts

The Palm Trees
Are Restless

Five Poems of Kate Gale

HILA PLITMANN,
soprano

World Premiere
Recordings

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MARK ABEL

HOME IS A HARBOR

opera in three acts

JAMIE CHAMBERLIN, soprano

ARIEL PISTURINO, soprano

BABATUNDE AKINBOBOYE, baritone

E. SCOTT LEVIN, baritone

JANELLE DeSTEFANO, mezzo soprano

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LA BREA SINFONIETTA

THE PALM TREES ARE RESTLESS

Five Poems of Kate Gale

HILA PLITMANN, soprano

TALI TADMOR, piano

A two-disc set

Total playing time: 2 hours, 4 minutes



“Morro Rock and Bay from Black Hill,” Morro Bay, California, by Rich Reid

MARK ABEL
HOME IS A HARBOR
opera in three acts

Disc 1

1. Act 1, Scene 1 – "Hi, Mom!" (11:52)
2. Act 1, Scene 2 – "So you're really going to leave here" (10:59)
3. Act 1, Scene 3 – "Hi baby, you're looking fine tonight" (14:32)
4. Act 2, Scene 1 – "This is not quite what I expected ... " (13:17)
5. Act 2, Scene 2 – "Hardly cut out for animal husbandry ... " (7:46)
6. Act 2, Scene 3 – "Hey, what's going on?" (8:33)
7. Act 2, Scene 4 – "Lance, my darling, can this really be you?" (10:34)

Disc 2

1. Act 3, Scene 1 – "So, Lenore ... " (8:06)
2. Act 3, Scene 2 – "And where will you go now?" (17:08)

THE PALM TREES ARE RESTLESS
Five Poems of Kate Gale

3. The Storm Drain (3:09)
4. Los Angeles (6:05)
5. Crater Light (3:45)
6. Shura (5:27)
7. The Great Divorce (3:13)

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INTRODUCTION

A few years back, after the release of *The Dream Gallery* – California composer and lyricist Mark Abel's orchestral song cycle and debut recording for Delos – label Director Carol Rosenberger commented: "In Mark's opera-like cycle, we meet realistic present-day characters who think, feel and express themselves freely and kaleidoscopically. His music ingeniously reflects every subtlety in emotional tone and impulse; it's unique in my experience — and memorable."

There's no question that Abel has a particular affinity for programmatic vocal music. His two critically acclaimed previous releases on Delos revealed his fresh, *sui generis* approach to the art song. And now, with *Home Is a Harbor*, he gives us his remarkable first opera – a work that bears strong stylistic and thematic resemblances to his song cycles while making creative and confident use of the expanded scope afforded by the opera medium.

Steeped in the classics during his pan-global childhood and youth, Abel became a rock musician as a young man, and absorbed modern jazz along his path. Eventually, he became disenchanted with the limitations of rock, and – while pursuing a career in journalism – decided to become a composer of

serious music. But, remaining true to the best qualities of his earlier influences, he developed a stylistic meld that successfully combines elements of all three: the expressive depth of classical music, the in-your-face impact of rock, and the free-flowing and quasi-improvisatory nature of jazz.

Soprano Jamie Chamberlin, a standout performer at Long Beach Opera who has collaborated extensively with Abel in recent years, observes: "With *Home Is a Harbor*, Mark has solidified the complex fusion that has become his compositional signature. This unique sound is part of an emerging genre of vocal music that demands more than simply a beautiful voice. As a singer, it requires a blending of registers, vocal techniques, and most importantly, an emotional connection to the work."

Abel pulls no punches in his lyrics, which frequently lay bare core aspects of personal and cultural behavior. His libretto for *Harbor* achieves this with a singular effectiveness – skillfully blending dramatic, comedic and contemplative elements. In many of his songs as well as this opera, he may present his scenarios and populate them in a Californian context, yet the issues they address are universal. Most of us will see ourselves – or people we know – reflected in the social milieus and situations he explores.

As the plot of *Harbor* unfolds, the young twin-sister heroines leave home hoping to apply their talents and abilities meaningfully. But as they pursue their personal goals along very different yet similarly thorny paths, the satisfying self-actualization they seek eludes them. Instead, they discover the pervasive shallowness and ethical conflicts of living and working in a society that often defines success in selfish and essentially immoral terms. But their home-bred consciences and essential decency win out in the end, as they abandon their respective ventures' greed-driven realities in disgust and repair to their family roots, in search of missions that lend their lives the sorts of meaning and moral positivity they've been missing. And they find just that, in their mutual resolve to serve the desperate needs of their community's homeless veterans: the victims of a brutal and misguided war.

This engrossing release also offers a new and memorable song cycle, *The Palm Trees Are Restless*, given a stunning performance by the Grammy-winning soprano Hila Plitmann. *Palm Trees* sets resonant and powerful verses of Los Angeles poet Kate Gale that strike different chords of human experience we can all respond to. While *Home Is a Harbor* is concerned primarily with the passage from youth to early adulthood, *Palm Trees* speaks movingly of a world where illusion has been

driven from the stage altogether, leaving loss, yearning, bitterness and an ecstatic escapism in its wake. Abel's music shifts accordingly, mirroring the often bleak – but starkly beautiful – internal spaces explored in Gale's poetry.

New York music writer Grego Edwards called Abel's previous CD, the song cycle collection *Terrain of the Heart*, "art song at a high-water mark of invention." The same can surely be said of *The Palm Trees Are Restless*.

– Lindsay Koob

COMPOSER'S NOTES

Home Is a Harbor, my first opera, is a portrait of contemporary America. Its points of entry are the experiences of twin sisters from California's bucolic and lightly populated Central Coast, which has managed to maintain a more grounded and traditional lifestyle than the technology-obsessed Bay Area and stressed-out, fraying-at-the-edges Los Angeles.

The girls' journeys following high school pull them out into the swifter currents of the so-called "real world" – where they encounter early success, the financial crisis, the human cost of the war in Afghanistan, the emptiness of some of their peers, and the restrictions on personal growth imposed by their chosen

professions. Set in bicoastal locales and roughly covering the years between 2005 and 2011, the piece is a sort of "Pilgrim's Progress," closing serenely with a return to the sisters' hometown of Morro Bay and a vow to aid the area's homeless veterans. One senses that this is not the end of their story, but rather a redemptive pause on the path to maturity.

The libretto I wrote for *Harbor* covers a wide emotional landscape – ranging from youthful exuberance and celebration of "family values" to tragedy, pathos and disillusion, with streaks of humor, satire and social commentary running alongside. The opera's musical language derives from many sources, synthesizing classical elements with a pop- and rock-tinged shorthand symbolizing Americans' penchant for cursory, cliché-ridden communication. While arias are few and brief, there is plenty of lyricism in the vocal writing and episodes of tender, propulsive and spacey instrumental music that illustrate the "soul states" of the characters.

I was determined to write for a modest ensemble to encourage performances that won't break the bank. I love woodwinds and couldn't do without a piano. But I knew the piece would have moments of drama that called for a big sound, and my solution was to include the organ – an instrument rarely encountered in

operas. My palette for it consists only partly of "church" sounds; several Hammond and synthetic sounds appear, as does a shrill-but-effective "combo" organ of the type popular in the rock bands of my teenage years. The organ in the lower register frequently plays in unison with the double bass, creating a thicker cushion for the rest of the ensemble on which to sit.

The varied musical idioms that have meant the most to me over the years come into play throughout *Harbor*. While "shout outs" are not a part of my style, I was unable to resist brief quotations from Laura Nyro's ever-incandescent 1967 song "The Confession," the final minutes of Dmitri Shostakovich's 15th Symphony (1971) and a phrase from the late Charlie Haden's bass solo on Denny Zeitlin's 1966 jazz trio masterpiece "Mirage." The latter appears three times in *Harbor*, signifying a period of introspection by one of the characters. But the goal, as always, was to create a work that would accommodate in a seamless manner the many influences that have shaped what I do.

The realization of *Home Is a Harbor* owes much to Jamie Chamberlin and Ariel Pisturino – two fine and expressive Los Angeles sopranos whom I had in mind from the beginning and were the featured performers on my CD *Terrain of the Heart* – and to up-and-coming conductor Benjamin Makino. I expect much

more to be heard in the future from all three. That goes equally for fellow cast members Babatunde Akinboboye, E. Scott Levin, Janelle DeStefano, Jon Lee Keenan and Carver Cossey, who are among the most sparkling singers on the Southern California scene. Widely admired cellist Timothy Loo recruited an ensemble of outstanding players for the *Harbor* recording. Everyone involved gave their all and their commitment touched me deeply.

The Palm Trees Are Restless, my fourth song cycle for soprano and piano, was composed in 2014 during a short break from the writing of *Home Is a Harbor*. It's a setting of verses by Kate Gale, a charismatic Los Angeles poet-publisher-educator whose work is marked by powerful imagery and deeply felt emotion that frequently bursts through the surface in startling and dramatic fashion.

The *Palm Trees* poems depict, in turn, a magical and tender sexual encounter, the spiritual bleakness of L.A., a barroom conversation's candid revelations, an attempt to retrieve memories of the poet's long-absent sister, and a bitter monologue that could be set in the office of a marriage counselor or lawyer. Writing the music was amazingly easy; I found myself being led into fascinating pools and eddies at every turn, and had only to react honestly and spontaneously to emerge with music that

cohered and, I believe, captured the essence of the poems.

The classical world is filled with singers with outstanding technique. But only a handful have the curiosity and courage to make it their mission to penetrate, absorb and transmit to the world challenging new music. Such a one is the highly acclaimed soprano Hila Plitmann, who many prominent composers seek out on a regular basis. The reason is her astonishing emotional range, which encompasses an arc that starts from contemplative near-stasis, passes through warm intimacy and bold assertiveness, and powers all the way to the edge of hysteria (if that is called for by the composer). Hila also possesses great beauty of tone, naturalness of phrasing and the ability to carry her voice splendidly over an orchestra without the heavy delivery of a dramatic soprano. Very few can do what she does.

It was my good fortune that the unique talents of Kate Gale and Hila Plitmann dovetailed wonderfully in *Palm Trees*. Hila's friend and longtime collaborator Tali Tadmor played the piano parts with a keen sensitivity and creative flair. I'm very grateful to all three.

— Mark Abel

www.markabelmusic.com



Jamie Chamberlin



Ariel Pisturino



Babatunde Akinboboye

HOME IS A HARBOR

music and libretto by

MARK ABEL

JAMIE CHAMBERLIN, soprano Lisa
ARIEL PISTURINO, soprano Laurie
BABATUNDE AKINBOBOYE, baritone Lance
E. SCOTT LEVIN, baritone Leo, Liam
JANELLE DeSTEFANO, mezzo soprano Linda, Lenore
JON LEE KEENAN, tenor Larry
CARVER COSSEY, bass Lou

BENJAMIN MAKINO, conductor
LA BREA SINFONIETTA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

LISA (soprano) – twin sister of Laurie, budding artist, committed to expression, self-confident, a bit preachy at times. After graduating from high school in Morro Bay, Ca., goes to NYU, drops out after receiving early acclaim, moves to hipster area of Brooklyn. Eventually typecast by art dealer and disgusted by obstacles to her artistic evolution, she returns to Morro Bay

LAURIE (soprano) – wholesome, sensible “people person” – more compassionate than Lisa but somewhat lacking in direction. After high school attends local Cuesta College and trans-

fers later to Cal Poly, decides to try the business world, takes job from financial con artist in Orange County, over time becomes repulsed by the practices required, returns to Morro Bay

LANCE (baritone) – Laurie’s older boyfriend, works as sous chef in Morro Bay seafood restaurant, decides to join military to help pay for further education, sent to fight in Afghanistan, comes back maimed, addicted to drugs and disillusioned with America’s war policies. Disappears from hospital, ends up homeless and cut off from family, drifts back to Morro Bay

LEO (baritone) – The girls' father, a contractor in Morro Bay

Role 2: **LIAM** -- Laurie's boss in Orange County financial services firm

LINDA (mezzo) – Leo's wife, a local realtor

Role 2: **LENORE** – Lisa's Soho art dealer

LARRY (tenor) – Lisa's boyfriend in Brooklyn. Lots of irony and attitude but few skills

Role 2: **BUM** – begs money from Lance at the close of Act 1.

LOU (bass) – Elderly African-American poet, neighbor of Lisa and Larry

Nonsinging Extra: **THE YOWLER** – untalented, ukulele-strumming darling of Brooklyn clubs

Role 2: **NURSE** at hospital in Long Beach

SYNOPSIS:

ACT 1

Scene 1 – Morro Bay, the house on Estero Avenue (2005)

The family sits around the dinner table. Lisa has just been accepted by NYU; everyone is excited though her mother is a bit dubious about her moving to New York. Laurie laments that

she will be attending less-glamorous Cuesta College, a two-year school nearby. A spate of cellphone calls over the celebratory meal hints that technology may be quietly eroding small-town family ties.

Scene 2 – Morro Strand State Beach

The sisters walk on the sand after dinner and talk of their dreams and aspirations, growing up on the Central Coast, optimism about the future in general. Lisa is the more cynical of the two, but clearly is determined to make her mark in the art world. Laurie's hopes are more traditional in nature.

Scene 3 – Morro Bay, the Embarcadero

Lance tells Laurie of his desire to join the military to help pay for college and learning a tech career; she is appalled but is persuaded to go along with his dream scenario for the two of them. Scene ends with a prophetic encounter in the rain between Lance and a homeless Vietnam vet.

ACT 2

Scene 1 – Ditmas Park, Brooklyn, hip young neighborhood (2008)

Lisa awakens early and muses on her early success in the art world, life in New York, her boyfriend Larry. She intends to call her parents later to say she is dropping out of NYU because

a degree is no longer relevant to her goals. An exchange with Larry illuminates his shallowness and immaturity. A conversation with neighbor Lou shows him to be her touchstone to more profound values.

Scene 2 – Career Day, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

Laurie, “the people person,” awakens from a nightmare. She still lacks direction a year after transferring to Cal Poly. Emboldened by Lisa’s decision to leave NYU, she allows herself on Career Day to be recruited into the business world as Liam convinces her with inspirational language that she can succeed and help others with his realty and reverse-mortgage company in Irvine. Laurie still intends to marry Lance when he returns from Afghanistan later in the year.

Scene 3 – Music club in Brooklyn

Larry has brought Lisa to listen to The Yowler; though he’s never heard her, he effuses about her recent writeup in the New York Times. The Yowler takes the stage, strums her ukulele and sings a trivial millennial ditty off-pitch. Lisa finds her wretched and becomes clearer about how empty Larry is. They argue bitterly outside the club before being interrupted by a phone call – Laurie reports that Lance has been severely injured in the fighting in Afghanistan.

Scene 4 – V.A. Hospital, Long Beach

With Laurie at his bedside, Lance speaks of the worthlessness of the war. He has become addicted to painkilling drugs and seems to inhabit a dream world. Laurie leaves emotionally shattered, confused about her own feelings and senses she will be unable to marry him.

ACT 3

Scene 8, two scenarios unfolding simultaneously (2010)

Lisa informs Lenore, her New York art dealer, that she has reached the end of the stylistic road that brought her early success and is striking out in a new direction. Lenore strenuously counsels otherwise and urges Lisa to follow a conventional career path. Lisa reacts with scorn.

In the Irvine office of Cutting Edge Financial, Laurie gets into a fierce argument with Liam about the ethical pitfalls of the products she is selling. He accuses her of hypocrisy and suggests that her moral character is no higher than his. Laurie realizes she is being corrupted.

Facing ultimatums to get with their bosses’ programs, both girls turn and walk out.

Scene 9 – Morro Bay, the Embarcadero (several months later)

The sisters commiserate at a café in the harbor, their spirits at a low ebb. Lisa has only vague

plans. Laurie expresses remorse for what she now regards as her abandonment of Lance, who disappeared from the hospital and whose whereabouts are unknown.

As they head for their car in the rain, they are accosted by a bum in a wheelchair. It is Lance. After a tearful reunion, the sisters dedicate themselves to forming an organization to aid homeless local veterans. Laurie can tap her "people skills" for a worthy cause and Lisa will be able to refocus her career at her own pace and do some good for the community.

ACT 1, SCENE 1:

(Screen door slams.)

LISA: Hi Mom.

LINDA: Hi. We're eating in half an hour.

LISA: And how did it go today?

LINDA: Well, the Adams property is finally in escrow.

LISA: Yay! *(punching the air)*

LINDA: Can you spell P-R-I-U-S? Mama's gonna get one soon!

LISA: Oh, cool.

LINDA: The rest was the usual; folks from Fresno and Bakersfield looking for that second home with an ocean view. ... For cheap!

LISA: Dream on, turkeys!

LINDA: Can you get the mail?

LISA: OK.

(Interlude: She returns and sifts through the mail. Jumps at seeing a particular letter. Stage business with envelope as the other three watch from a distance with amusement.)

LINDA: Oh, what have you got there?

LISA: It's D-Day!

THE THREE: Open it!!

LISA: OK, bombs away! ... I'm in!!

LAURIE: I knew you could do it. You're the best sister ever.

LINDA: That's wonderful, honey! Wow, what a kick in the head.

LEO: Way to go! Give my regards to Broadway. It's ... it's just fabulous. Dad'll take a hug now.

LISA: Well, please come visit anytime. Hope you like sleeping on a futon.

LINDA: Let's eat. I got some great-looking asparagus and halibut at the farmers' market.
(Family sits down at the dinner table.)

LAURIE: NYU! You hit the jackpot! And I'm stuck

going to Cuesta College, *(Lisa and Linda make violin gestures)* like every other fresh-faced farm girl around here.

LEO: Hey, don't knock it. At least it's affordable. Ahem. ... Just remember, the old man didn't even go to college. But he had practical skills, learned to do things that needed doing but most people are too lazy to learn.

LISA/LAURIE: Yes, you're an old school dad – and we wouldn't have it any other way.

LEO: Well, thank you.

THREE WOMEN: Any other way.

ALL FOUR: We are one happy family, and grateful for what we have.

(They start passing the food around and begin eating.)

LAURIE: I would bet that show in Santa Barbara is what put you over the top.

LINDA: And the newspaper article: "Morro Bay student's paintings draw raves."

LEO: We're awfully proud of you, Lisa.

LINDA: Still, I worry about you living in New York. I hear it's not so dangerous anymore. But I don't want it to mess with your head, little girl.

"Money talks and bullshit walks" – isn't that

what the Noo Yawkuhs say?

LISA: Mom!! I'm not in it for the money. I'll be safe. Rudy Giuliani drove the street thugs out of town a long time ago. ... Or so they say.

LEO: You'll become Morro Bay's second international star, like that Japanese fella from over the hill. What's his name?

LINDA: Nagano. Kent Nagano.

LEO: Oh, that's right.

LISA and LAURIE: Who??

LEO: Never mind.

(Musical interlude with all four bobbing heads and snapping fingers. ... In turn, each person's cell phone rings.)

LEO: Sorry, gotta take this. ...Randy, can't you handle this yourself?

LISA: Oh, hey, girl. One problem, we're in the middle of dinner.

LAURIE: Hi Lance. OK, 8 o'clock by the shell shop.

LINDA: No, Marcia, we're still waiting for his signature.

(Eventually, the table is silent except for the sound of texting as all four are fixated on their phones.)

LAURIE: Awesome dinner, Mom. Hey Lisa, let's hit the beach before the sun goes down.

(The two girls rise and take their own and their parents' dishes into the kitchen.)

LISA and LAURIE: Bye!

(The parents wave ...)

ACT 1, SCENE 2:

(On Morro Strand State Beach, sunset, Morro Rock looming behind.)

LAURIE: So you're really going to leave here. It's such a beautiful place, and the people are so nice. Are you sure?

LISA: Yes, I'm sure. This area is wonderful, it's true. I'll miss it and I'll be back. ... But I need to see much more of the world if I'm going to grow my art. Art feeds off experience, you know.

LAURIE: I know.

LISA: New York seemed so exciting when I was there last fall. It gives off an electric charge. Day and night, at any hour! And there are so many different types of people, the colorful neighborhoods, full of character – not just some white-bread place. And I want to journey to Europe, Russia, the Middle East, maybe Asia. If I can't scrape up the funds, there's always New Orleans, Savannah and Charleston – even the Rust Belt.

LAURIE: God save the Rust Belt!

LISA: Artists are repopulating some of the crumbling cities there.

LAURIE: I know. I know. ... *(Aside)* Why is she more confident than me? Still, I know I'm going to miss her. My sister.

(Interlude as the two muse; Lisa lights a cigarette)

LISA: I'm in no hurry to find a guy. The ones we know seem so confused by life, don't they? The only ones who are sure are the business types. Yes, damned sure! ... The mellower ones just want to chill and anesthetize themselves with music, weed or surfing. That's just wrong!

LAURIE: I know. I know.

LISA: And what about you? You seem so happy and content. Can you stay that way by never leaving the same place? With the same boyfriend?

LAURIE: I can't see a reason to leave. I love Lance and hope we can grow together. There's no better place than here to raise a family.

LISA: That's true. But don't be in a hurry to have kids. They can stop your life dead ... in its tracks – for decades. ... You're a "people person." Don't forget: That can open a lot of doors.

LAURIE: I know.

LISA: You can be a force for good, sis. Go into some field like environmental protection, sustainable agriculture, solar energy, affordable health care for all. You can volunteer for the Marine Mammal Center, help find housing for the homeless.

LAURIE: I know! Enough already.

LISA: Hey, let's just be thankful we grew up here. (*Stubs out cigarette.*) Clean air ...

LAURIE: Sea otters in the harbor.

LISA: Long walks on the beach.

LAURIE: Kayaking in the estuary.

LISA: Watching elephant seals mate.

(*The sun sets and stars appear.*)

LAURIE: I'm going to meet Lance on the waterfront. I'll see you later, OK?

LISA: OK.

ACT 1, SCENE 3:

(*The harbor at Morro Bay, lights twinkle on the water. Lance leans against a lamppost and sees Laurie coming.*)

LANCE: Hi baby, you're looking fine tonight.

LAURIE: Why, thank you. ... I'm just wearing jeans.

LANCE: Still, you're the greatest girl I've ever seen. (*They kiss passionately.*)

LAURIE: You said there was something you wanted to discuss with me. What is it?

LANCE: Not yet. Not now.

BOTH: Ohhh ... (*ecstatically*). (*They embrace.*)

LAURIE: But you always say we shouldn't withhold.

LANCE: You've got me there, devil woman! ... Well, it's like this; how shall I put it? I can't remember the last time I did something off script, and I'm feeling low.

LAURIE: Whatever do you mean?

(*Interlude as Lance paces back and forth*)

LANCE: I'll tell you! My job is deadly and I can't see how staying a sous chef in Morro Bay, as nice as it is here, will keep me engaged.

LAURIE: Good God! You sound like my sister. This area's not good enough for you? What have I been missing here?

LANCE: Nothing. I just wanted to think things through before we talked.

LAURIE: And? ... (*begins to cry softly*)

LANCE: To me, you are everything – the most precious jewel that this young man's seen. My soul never knew it was alive before we united and the world was changed. I thank you, Laurie. ... I wouldn't trade the last few years for anything. I want to marry you, you know that. But we're going to need money, and I want a real career – something in technology. ... Of course! ... The best way to do that, so I'm told, is join the army. *(Laurie buries her face in her hands.)*

LAURIE: For God's sake! What's the matter with you!! Do you want to get killed in Iraq or Afghanistan?

(Interlude)

And what about me? My own dreams? The promise of a life together.

LANCE: Yes, our life together. That's what I want, too.

Just trust me on this. Trust me now. ... They pay you a nice bonus when you join, give you a lot of training and pay for most of your college education.

LAURIE: Such a bargain!

LANCE: My parents can't manage that. It'll only be for a few years.

LAURIE: A few years! Oh, that's nothing.

LANCE: Won't you wait for me? Wait for our lives to finally begin?

BOTH: Our love will endure. Our love is strong enough to beat the odds, deep enough to bear the cost.

LAURIE: I admire you. You don't want to settle for ...

LANCE: ... Less than a fulfilling life.

BOTH: We can dream. We can dare!

LAURIE: I will remember what we're saying.

LANCE: I will always keep you near.

BOTH: Now we turn a page of eternity. When the clouds roll away, we will live in a house of bliss.

LAURIE: Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

LANCE: Now that you've heard me out, it'll be the soundest sleep I've had in weeks.

(They wave goodbye and walk to their cars. A soft rain begins to fall and sounds of distant rolling thunder are heard. Laurie disappears around the corner.)

(Tension slowly builds after dissonant shift in the organ, as a disheveled homeless man approaches Lance as he tries to unlock his car door.)

BUM: Hey man, I need some money.

LANCE: I don't have any.

BUM: Really, it's bad. Help me out, brother.

LANCE: Get away from me!

(The Bum keeps coming, tottering forward toward Lance, who shoves him away.)

BUM: Hey! Don't push! *(He falls down on the pavement.)* ... That's cold, man. I served in 'Nam.

LANCE: Sorry. *(drops him a few dollar bills and gets in his car)*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT 2, SCENE 1

(Lisa and Larry's apartment in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn)

LISA (soliloquy): This is not quite what I expected when I came here: My art discovered at a student exhibit by a powerful man with some powerful friends. They call my seascapes "21st Century Turner."

Ha! And the critics agree. ... Maybe you CAN fool all of the people some of the time.

I've sold so many and must paint nearly 24/7 to keep up with demand. It's all a bit much. And I've decided (*repeat*) – I'm going to quit school at the end of the term. That way I'll have more time to work.

Besides, I almost flunked out by skipping so many classes. ... I'm going to go for it even harder – and see what happens.

(glances at the sleeping Larry)

Larry, not quite the love of my life. But he'll do, for now. ...People say he is a slacker. That's true. He's also faithful, funny, has lots of money and he's hot (*enumerating on her fingers*) – all things a girl can appreciate. Especially one like me. ... I'm in no hurry to find a mate. My art comes first, romance is gravy for now. *(stares out the window briefly)*

OK, rise and shine, New York style! *(Raises window and street cacophony enters. Larry grunts, puts his pillow over his head, then springs up.)*

LARRY: Hey, Sergeant Lisa! (*salutes*) Are you running a boot camp here? You're a tad over the top this morning. Come back to bed. *(beckons with index finger)*

LISA: No way. It's almost noon.

LARRY: Way! *(He grabs her and pulls her onto the bed.)* I'm wanting a rerun of last night's performance. You were steaming up the place. And I'm feeling the urge once more. Start the day with a bang?

LISA: Chill out, Romeo. *(Pushes him away.)* I've gotta get to work, and I need to drop the bomb on my parents about leaving school. *(Larry rises to his knees in bed and dances.)*

(Lisa stands up and straightens her clothes.)

Oh, and weren't you and your homie Jake gonna meet some investors somewhere around Happy Hour? "The Ultimate Game-Changing App" – and all that?

LARRY: Wow, that's so harsh. I suggest a little patience. A little patience. Then wait and see what dreams may come. *(Arms outstretched.)* Or have you forgotten what a silver-tongued devil I am? *(he begins dressing)*

LISA: Um, no. But just remember to look the part – the sweater, the scarf, the stubble, the tousled locks *(enumerates on her fingers again)*. And maybe study up first on the product you're pitching.

LARRY: Got it covered, chief. I know the outline and have my rap down cold. Jake can handle the tech talk – if there is any. *(gives a thumb's up)*

LISA: Great. Great!! I'm feeling every confidence in the outcome. ... Silly boy. Now off you go. *(gestures with her hand.)* The gang at the coffeehouse awaits. *(They kiss and Larry leaves.)*

(Lisa resumes her musing, which is gradually interrupted by footsteps coming down the hall. She opens the door for a man who's holding a coffee cup.)

LISA: Lou! How are you?

LOU: Oh, I'm fine. Can't complain. I just thought I'd check in and see if you want to resume our conversation of the other night.

LISA: Sure, come right in.

LOU: Listen, dear, I may be an old cowhand from the Rio Grande, but I want to make sure you know what you're doing by leaving school. Even though you're on a roll with your painting, the life of an artist is tough. They may love you today but freeze you out tomorrow. And if you're a poet, of course, you'll spend a lifetime bundled up. *(mimics shivering by clutching arms to his body.)*

LISA: I know, Lou. No illusions here. I'm not that talented anyway, just lucky at the moment.

LOU: No, you are good. Really good! Just be clear that to be an authentic artist is a lifetime commitment; you must love it above all else. Sometimes that can lead to a lonely existence. Look at my place – just a studio filled with books. A visitor now and then.

And you're a beautiful girl. Maybe part of you hungers for the good life with a wealthy guy, a summer house in the Hamptons, even a kid or two. There's an old jazz piece among my vinyl – "Divided Man," it's called. I think most of us are like that.

LISA: I think my walking away from school shows my dedication to the path. I want my work to develop and I'm full of ideas right now. ... I know you wonder what I see in Larry; he's no artist, that's for sure. I'm young and I'm having fun.

LOU: Nothing wrong with that. It is what it is. As long as you know: You must be your own inner compass.

LISA: And I am, my friend.

LOU: Every time I've deviated, *(she kneels and takes his hand)* I've been damned sorry. ... Don't make the same mistakes that I did.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

(In her dorm room at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Laurie tosses and turns and is awakened by a nightmare.)

LAURIE: Hardly cut out for animal husbandry – or philosophy, either. These three years just seem like a waste. I'm not finding a field that speaks to me. I need to ramp things up, but how? Lisa's lighting the world on fire. I want to at least start making a difference in people's

lives before Lance comes home. Only three more months.

(sits down at the kitchen table and picks up a flyer from a pile of mail) Oh, whoop-de-do. It's Career Day down at Cal Poly. That'll fix everything right up.

(starts making coffee) Maybe I ought to check it out. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Get your act together, Laurie! A little makeup and a winning smile – there's hope yet for the girl.

(scene shifts to a table with a sign reading "Cutting Edge Financial, Irvine, Ca.")

LIAM: Damn! I can't believe I drove all the way up here from the O.C. For this? None of these hayseeds has ambition. Don't they know these are boom times? ... No, wait. What do I see strolling toward me? Come closer, honey. ... Time to get my game face on *(smiles broadly as Laurie gingerly approaches table)*.

LAURIE: Hi. My name's Laurie. I don't know much about your industry, but I'm looking for a new direction, so I thought I'd ask.

LIAM: Hi Laurie. I'm Liam, executive V.P. of Cutting Edge. *(hands her his card.)* We're in the business of helping people – getting them into new homes (often for the first time), leveraging their assets so they can enjoy a better lifestyle, arranging reverse mortgages so Mom and Pop can stay in the place they've worked so hard for. *(gesticulates)* What we do is a key part of mak-

ing the American dream come true for everyone. Opportunity -- that's what our country stands for. Whew! *(exhales)*

LAURIE: That's impressive! *(gaining confidence)* My boyfriend's in the military – Afghanistan – fighting to safeguard those freedoms. I'm interested in doing something back here to make our America a better place; maybe your company is helping empower people – in its own way. Eh?

LIAM: I see we have an idealist here! *(grins broadly)* Well, we do empower people, pure and simple. The more of a stake they have in our society, the more they'll contribute to the whole – and everyone's prosperity rises. Just like a birthday cake! ... *(Laurie applauds.)*

Say, have you ever considered public relations or sales as a career? You have a great energy about you.

LAURIE: Not really. But everyone says I'm a "people person."

LIAM: Yes, I'll bet you are! Why don't you come down next week for an interview? What do you say? This is the best time ever to make your mark in the business world.

LAURIE: I'll think it over. Thanks, Liam. *(They shake hands.)* It was nice meeting you.

(each turns to the side and speaks)

LAURIE: Gosh! He means now, not after I graduate.

LIAM: *(dials a number on his cellphone)* Right! I've got a live one here. And I'm gonna reel her in – by next Friday, I'm betting.

LAURIE: Well, Lisa's doing the same thing. And I can always go back and finish school. ... Can't I? *(lights black out)*

ACT 2, SCENE 3

(After brief interlude, curtain opens on mockup of club interior, with cardboard cutouts of audience members. Lou is the only human in the audience. Ambient crowd noise and rock music track swell up as Lisa and Larry enter. Larry greets the cardboard figures with banter and sends texts to his friends)

LARRY: A golden oldie! Turn it up!!

(They lip-sync along with the song.)

You told me something just the other day.
Crazy for your lovin'.
It made me think about the month of May.
Crazy for your lovin'.
And how the heavens are about to part.
Still crazy for your lovin'.
As I surrender to your tender spark.
Still crazy for your lovin'.

I need you now, I need you oh so badly.
Churning in a passion hurricane.

No holding back, I'm gonna love you madly.
We were meant to seize our inspiration now.

LARRY: What was that band's name?

LISA: The Zip Lock Queens.

LARRY: Oh, that's right. ... What a bunch of
dope girls.

LISA: OK, so what are we doing here, exactly?

LARRY: You're jumpy tonight. Yo, kick back,
have a drink and relax. The headliner is special.
The Times just did a big writeup on her. (*Lisa
and Lou roll their eyes.*) She's kinda Americana,
folksy, a little roots rock around the edges, great
vocals, amazing lyrics.

LISA: And how do you know all this, dude?

LARRY: Oh, I've never heard her, but there's a
heavy street buzz. Jake says she's burning up
the indie scene right now. Guess we'll find out
soon enough.

LISA: Uh-huh. (*points finger at invisible waiter*)
Two Fat Tires, please!

LARRY: Here she is now.

(*The Yowler takes the stage, ukulele in hand.*)

(*spoken*) Hi everyone! ... Oops, hang on ...
(*extended tuning of ukulele*). OK, we're good.
This is a cool-looking pick. You think?

THE YOWLER: (*sung*) Your tweets, your tweets,
They're always special, they're always sweet.
Your tweets, your tweets,
They always sweep me right off my feet.

Woh-oh-oh ...a-woh-oh-oh
We live in a magic world
Woh-oh-oh ...a-woh-oh-oh
And I'm such a happy girl.

LISA: God, this is awful.

LARRY: Shhhhhh!!!

THE YOWLER: I used to try to play guitar. It's
hard! And too heavy to lug very far. Now I plunk
my tiny uke; gonna paint it pink 'cause it's so
cute!

Woh-oh-oh ... etc.

LISA: She can't sing a lick.

LARRY: Keep it down, will you? I like her.

LISA: I've heard barnyard animals that could do
better. ... I'm leaving. I've got better things to
do. You can stay if you want. (*Gets up from ta-
ble, heads for the exit. An agitated Larry follows
her out the door.*)

LARRY: Hey, what's going on? You're dissing me
in front of my friends.

LISA: Listen, Larry, I haven't got time to waste on artists who are crap. Don't you have any standards?

LARRY: Standards? What do you mean? The world is shifting into a new mass consciousness and I want to feel a part of it. She's got her finger on the pulse (*points back at The Yowler*). What's wrong with that?

LISA: Well, I'll tell you now. I don't feel a pulse at all. You and your pals just go with the flow – and think you're actually creating it. I'm fed up.

LARRY: And who do you think you are? Michelangelo? So far above everyone else? Get a grip. You're a snob from an off-the-map town on the Left Coast.

LISA: Damn it, Larry, you don't understand me! And you've never tried either, you bastard ... (*her cell phone rings*) Laurie, what's the matter? ... Lance? What happened to him? ... Oh, God!! How terrible!!!

(*She breaks down, Larry is frozen with indecision, Lou reaches out his hand from the club door and moves toward her. Curtain.*)

ACT 2, SCENE 4

(*Laurie walks down the hall at the V.A. hospital in Long Beach, enters Lance's room and sits down next to the bed. He is asleep and attached to monitoring devices.*)

LAURIE: Lance, my darling. Can this really be you? So still and pale. Maimed and disfigured, dear God. What did we do to earn this? I don't know. I pray that you make it back to health and happiness. (*begins arranging flowers by his bedside*)

(*Warning sounds from a monitoring device. A frantic Laurie rushes out and calls for the nurse, who comes in and adjusts the intravenous drip line in Lance's arm*)

NURSE: He'll be alright. The fluid was just running low. You should stay a while longer. He may wake up soon. But remember, he's become addicted to the painkillers.

LAURIE: Thank you. Thank you so much. ... And now, sweet prince, I'll be here to listen when you tell your tale. Your tale of woe. (*Lance gradually emerges from sleep.*)

LANCE: (*weakly*) Laurie, can this really be you?

LAURIE: It can.

LANCE: So long a flight, you've come so far.

LAURIE: Baby, this isn't Landstuhl, it's Long

Beach. And they've torn you to pieces, along with my heart. *(weeping)*

LANCE: Don't worry. I'll be fine. ... Soon, I think.

Mother! *(between a groan and a shout)*

LAURIE: Lance, you're drifting. Please don't leave. Stay with me.

LANCE: When the moon rises over the Hindu Kush, it's beautiful. You can almost enter the spirit world through a cobalt blue door and float away. But there's always danger near. Danger here. Men who want to kill you. Men who barely have shoes.

We've accomplished nothing. Don't let anyone tell you different. *(points at her for emphasis)* They're not ready for our life or times – and they may never be. They fight among themselves like ancient tribes from the Bible. All they agree on is: They want us gone.

Heaven and hell! ... *(spoken darkly, almost a snarl)*

(Lance appears to experience a series of mild seizures, sinks back in the bed)

LAURIE: Lance! Where have you gone? ... Help me! *(looks around in alarm)* I'm clutching at straws right now. Millions of stars have been shot from the sky. ... Can I help him at all? I can't conceive of how we move on.

(as interlude begins, a Buddha image slowly appears in the backdrop. Lance regains consciousness.)

LANCE: I'll stay by the bridge of sorrows, it's peaceful there. In the shade of the fig tree that grows by the river.

LAURIE: Lance! ... I can't bear it! *(She runs from the room and leans against the wall in the hallway in an agonized state)*

END OF ACT TWO

ACT 3, SCENE 1

(Two "corner offices" in Manhattan and Irvine sit side by side, with Lenore and Liam behind the desks. Lisa and Laurie approach the doors from either side of the divided stage.)

LISA: So, Lenore. We didn't have much of a chance to schmooze at the gallery the other night. What did you think of my new series, eh?

LENORE: *(lights up a smoke from a cigarette holder)* You're moving in a different direction, darling; that's clear. It's striking work. But I'm concerned you may be burning some bridges.

LISA: Which ones?

(Liam drums his fingers on his desktop, then Laurie enters)

LIAM: OK, talk to me. You've been moping around the office lately; no spring in your step. What's up?

LAURIE: Liam. Liam!! Listen ... *(clasps her hands together tightly)* Hear me. A lot of our clients are in a world of hurt – and it's really bothering me. The financial crisis stole their equity, but they're still stuck with a monthly nut they could barely afford in the first place. And these reverse mortgages; half the people don't understand the fine print. If they have to leave their home and go into long-term care, they're shafted.

LIAM: What's your point?

LENORE: Well, we've both made out pretty well with your seascapes. Right?

LISA: Right.

LENORE: *(rises and approaches Lisa)* Abundant museum buys, some flush collectors and good press *(wags her finger)*. We've built a nice brand together. *(The two waltz together for eight bars.)*

LISA: That's true.

LENORE: But you're still young and on the cusp in the public mind. *(They break apart and Lisa emits a strangled sound.)*

LENORE: If you change styles now, it will just confuse everyone. I strongly advise against it.

LISA: I've already changed, Lenore. No more seascapes. I'm done.

LENORE: Now let me tell you something, missy. The art world is a flimsy structure, a haven for gamblers and flim-flammers, a house of cards – and yours could tumble pretty fast if you don't listen to me. I've been around this block more times than I can count.

LISA: Translation: I don't wanna lose my cash cow.

LAURIE: My point? My point is that our fine products aren't helping people. It's an illusion you're selling, fed by basic fears, and you conned me into believing all that bull about capitalism being the great social enabler.

LIAM: Whoa, sister! Stop right there! You bought it because you wanted to get ahead too. We're running a business here, not a charity. And you've used that pretty face of yours to close the deal, time and again *(slashes arms back and forth as if holding a straight razor; Laurie recoils)*. You're no better than me. ... And what about that night in Newport Beach? *(he leers at her)*

LAURIE: That never happened!!! ... You have no idea how I think. That elderly couple in Fullerton

are going to lose their home because of a decision I suggested. It makes me sick!

LISA: You'll get used to my new direction. I'm not going to abandon it just to please you. I'm an artist and I need to move on. Deal with it!

LENORE: Do you know who you're talking to? I've made half of the artists in this town. There's a thousand more who'd kill to join my stable.

LIAM: No wonder you feel sick. Your 15 minutes as "Orange County's Top Mortgage Producer" are just about up!

LAURIE: I don't know if I can do this anymore. I still have a conscience, so not like you.

LENORE and LIAM: In summary, let me make one thing perfectly clear.

LISA and LAURIE: What's that?

LENORE and LIAM: It's my way – or ... the highway. *(arms and palms outstretched toward the door)*

LISA and LAURIE: Up yours!!! *(In sync, the sisters give them the elbow gesture, turn and stalk out, slamming the door behind them.)*

ACT 3, SCENE 2

(The harbor at Morro Bay, lights twinkle on the water. Lisa and Laurie sit at the bar of a restaurant, each nursing a glass of wine.)

LAURIE: And where will you go now?

LISA: I'm not sure, but I'm done with New York. I think I'll stay for awhile here. It's our home, after all.

LAURIE: And your career?

LISA: My career. ... Yes, a reboot's in order, but this time on my terms. Lou was right; this is a marathon, with dozens of potholes pitting the road.

LAURIE: And how is Lou doing now?

LISA: Didn't I tell you? He died in the hospice seven weeks ago. The finest friend that I made there. I'm going to miss him so.

LAURIE: Well, he won't be forgotten; such a wonderful man.

LISA: I did his portrait a while back – in the new style Lenore dumped all over.

LAURIE: What does she know, anyway?

LISA: How to make money. That's about it. ... I know a dealer in L.A. He loves my stuff and might take me on. Here's hoping *(they raise glasses and toast)*.

LAURIE: I'll drink to that.

LISA: And let's drink to your getting away from that monster Liam.

LAURIE: I'm awakening from a bad dream that lasted for ages. He was trying to steal my soul – and I almost let him. What's wrong with me?

LISA: Stop! He was a sociopath, preying on trusting people. It's his specialty.

LAURIE: Liam, begone! ... And there is still something that's haunting me to this day. I don't know what has happened to Lance, or where he might be.

LISA: And his parents know nothing, either?

LAURIE: No one's heard anything since he disappeared from the hospital that day. I blame myself; I abandoned him rather than climb that mountain.

LISA: It was too much for you. ... I guess we're learning there's enough tragedy to go around in this life. ... How to make these lessons work – work for us. That's the challenge, girl.

LAURIE: For now, though, I'm adrift.

LISA: I must admit: Me too.

LAURIE: Well, let's head out. It's supposed to rain. *(They leave the restaurant and begin to walk to their car. A soft rain begins to fall and sounds of*

distant rolling thunder are heard. Tension slowly builds as a disheveled man in a wheelchair approaches.)

LISA: Uh-oh, someone's coming.

LAURIE: Hurry up, will you?

MAN *(still some distance away)*: Hey, just a minute. Wait. Wait up, please.

LISA *(fumbling for her keys, shouts toward the man)*: We've got to go! Some other time!

LAURIE *(as the man nears)*: Come on, Lisa! I'm not in the mood for this.

MAN: I haven't eaten today. Can you help me?

(Lisa opens the driver's side door and unlocks the passenger side, Laurie yanks open the door, but turns and stares at the man in his wheelchair, now only a few feet away.)

LAURIE *(with shock of recognition)*: Lance!!

LISA: Lance!!

BOTH: Can this really be you?

(They burst into tears.)

LANCE: I've lost touch. Lost touch with myself. You, beautiful sisters. I remember. ... Don't look at me, Laurie. I'm just a shadow of someone you once knew.

LAURIE: No! You are alive! *(she embraces him)*
For God's sake, please forgive me. I deserted
you at the worst time; I'll never forgive myself.

LANCE: I forgave you a long time ago. The
world still turns. The birds fly over the harbor.

But I'm living rough, down by the creek. Every-
one's turned their back on me. I can't connect
– even with Mom and Dad. It's so hard to get
around; can't walk far, must use this *(slaps hand
on the wheelchair as his agitation increases)*.
The worst part is: I can't think! *(holds hands to
head) ... (thunder sounds in the distance)* I must
leave. *(begins wheeling himself down the street)*

LAURIE and LISA: Lance!!

LAURIE: Come back!! Where are you going?

LISA: Let him go. He won't be hard to find. He's
as shook up as we are.

(interlude)

LAURIE: We have to do something. The need is
right here. Right now.

LISA: He's really messed up, and he's not getting
any support either. It's winter, no time to be living
outside. There must be others like him, too.

LAURIE: I know it sounds impossible, but maybe
we can create something that will help. ... A drop-
in center with food and counseling? That'd be a
start. ... I need to move into community service

– and wash away the dirt I've covered myself with.
Can you help with this, dear Lisa?

LISA: I'll step back awhile from the path I follow.
I need to reformulate, but my will is showing
wear and tear. It feels as if I'm in a trance. This
could pull me out, and it would be great to do
things for these people who are suffering.

LAURIE: Dad still owns that storefront up on
Quintana. It's empty, let's fix it up; we can get
some older furniture from Hanrahan's ware-
house, I'm sure.

LISA: We can work the town to get donations.

LAURIE: I'll turn on the charm; we'll get dona-
tions!

LISA: New adventures.

BOTH: Sweet renewal. *(They embrace.)*

*(The rain clouds have blown away and a cres-
cent moon hangs in the sky.)*

LISA: In good time.

LAURIE: Life comes clear.

BOTH: The birds fly over the harbor.

.....

END OF OPERA



LA BREA SINFONIETTA

AMY TATUM, *flute, alto flute, piccolo*

CLAIRE CHENETTE, *oboe, English horn*

PHIL O'CONNOR, *clarinet, bass clarinet*

ANTHONY PARNTHER, *bassoon*

ALLEN FOGLE, *horn*

DANIEL ROSENBOOM, *trumpet, flugelhorn*

VICKI RAY, *piano, sampled celesta & cymbalom*

ARON KALLAY, *organ*

TIMOTHY LOO, *cello*

STEVE DRESS, *bass*

M.B. GORDY, *percussion*

JASON GOODMAN, *vibraphone, percussion*

BRUCE CARVER, *percussion*

BENJAMIN MAKINO, conductor





Kate Gale



Hila Plitmann



Tali Tadmor

THE PALM TREES ARE RESTLESS

Five Poems of Kate Gale

HILA PLITMANN, soprano

TALI TADMOR, piano

Poems appear in the collection

"Echo Light,"

Red Mountain Press, 2014

The Storm Drain

Liquid canopy descending sky
It's dark inside the storm drain
but you took me here.
Tongue slow lips open hands lightly under.

When I'm eighty no one will crawl with me
in a storm drain to hold my breasts
while the sky is falling.

I lean into corrugated metal. Rust.
Age. Wet. My back into all that.

Los Angeles

"I have known the arms already, known them all –
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare ..."
– T.S. Eliot

Los Angeles people look right through you,
see little ghosts with no shape or color.
Money gives a body form like a straitjacket

holding you against wind, pestilence.
You are shadow against dusk. Cream against
pale.
All colors not cream become sunshine.

I have stood in the sill of time counting my
days, the cups full of cries
and laughter, paint and words, silence and tea
equal nothing here.

Los Angeles, once a desert glitters, glitters green
The green holds you up against the sky.
Gives you shadow.

That shadow casts longing across beaches
and highways.
As morning opens, you see hands stretching
out for a piece.

The palm trees are restless. Your silhouette
an outline.
Light streams across you, you are nothing.

You must be thin to cast a shadow. You must
drive a cool car. You must have blond
highlights.

There is no place for silence. I stare in the
mirror.

Cover my face with my hands.
My hands hold my reflection. In the mirror
I see nothing.

Crater Light

The man drinking whiskey sours tells me
about his divorce.
The problem was his wife, apparently. She
would not
lie still. Any movement, any distraction
caused malfunction.
She knew this. She was warned. Yet she moved
arms, ears, toes.

Stay still, he said. His wife underneath.
Said it louder. She froze. The light changed.
Moonlight, shadow. I can't focus, he said.
She opened her eyes. Can I watch?

Better not, he said. Nothing's going to happen.
Stay still. She knew he was right by the way
the moon's craters seized the light
and reflected it back
to earth through the window. Unable to create
light of their own.

Some receptors create. She was sure of this.
She stayed still,
but he was right, nothing happened. What he
tells me?
She was warned. He buys me a drink.
Hopes my mind will change.
But my mind is with his wife in bed
watching the moon's craters.

Shura

It wasn't a face anymore. A broken thing.
Opened wide by time and cavernous
washes of memory.
Waves of what might have been.
The memory where my sister's face
was is empty of light and shadow.
Time rushed in leaving stains only of itself.
All hollows and blank fields where iridescent
sunshine
glances off, goes its own way. Search for
eyes shining.
Nothing. Huge dark spaces. Lips that move
randomly
around parroted word shapes. A face like
leaf shards buried.
What used to be alive pieces floating around
just under the surface, you see them give way
to decay.
Used to hold water and sunlight,
echo sky even.
Now darkness. A face once. Surely a face.

The Great Divorce

for C.S. Lewis and the fragile women of Los Angeles

You can't talk to me like this.
I told you. Or somebody told you.
Somebody ought to have told you.

I've suffered terribly. I'm fragile.
And therefore. You musn't. No.
You don't see. I've had to pick myself up.

Hold it all together.
I've been raped by pretty much
every male I've ever met.

A sort of rape anyway.
Something I would characterize as rape.
You can't imagine.

You really have no idea. Don't start.
Let me stop you. Let me pour myself a quick
shot
of Hennessy and stop you.

No, I don't want to go to therapy. Don't you
see?
This is who I am. That's the problem with
most people.
They don't actually see you.

They see it. This thing you hold in front of
your face
to keep them out. To keep them from
knowing anything
they can hold against you, and they will.

Hila Plitmann is one of the premier exponents of contemporary vocal music. Born in Jerusalem, she has recorded and performed in concert the works of such celebrated composers as John Corigliano, David Del Tredici, Richard Danielpour, Aaron Jay Kernis, Thomas Ades and George Benjamin — as well as emerging figures like Christopher Cerrone and Paola Prestini.



A frequent guest soloist with ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic and the Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, National, Pittsburgh and Pacific symphonies, Ms. Plitmann has sung under the direction of such distinguished conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Leonard Slatkin, Kurt Masur, Jo Ann Falletta, Carl St. Clair, John Adams and Robert Spano.

She won the 2009 Grammy for Best Classical Vocal Performance, has recorded extensively for several labels and in 2012 released a solo album, *The Ancient Question*. Ms. Plitmann is a 1997 recipient of a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School.



Tali Tadmor is a Los Angeles-based pianist, accompanist, teacher and vocal coach who has performed in some of the world's great venues – from her debut recital at Carnegie Hall in 2009 to the Walt Disney Concert Hall, The Ford Amphitheater, Avery Fisher Hall in

Lincoln Center and the Great Hall in the heart of China's Forbidden City.

A native of Tel Aviv, Ms. Tadmor has collaborated with many well-known artists, including Plácido Domingo, Metropolitan Opera soprano Angela Meade, Los Angeles Philharmonic cellist Daniel Rothmuller, and composers Eric Whitacre, Lee Holdridge and Michael Gordon. She works regularly with Los Angeles Opera.

Ms. Tadmor holds a faculty position as Vocal Coach and Accompanist at the Herb Alpert School of Music at the California Institute of the Arts. She received both Master and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the University of Southern California, majoring in Keyboard Collaborative Arts.

Called "spellbinding" by the San Francisco Chronicle, soprano **Jamie Chamberlin** has been recognized for her abilities as a singer and actress. In 2015 Ms. Chamberlin starred as Marilyn Monroe in the U.S. premiere of Gavin Bryars' *Marilyn Forever* at Long Beach Opera, for which Opera News praised her "shimmering tones" and "star-struck vulnerability." Other roles with LBO include Cunegonde in the company's 2016 production of *Candide*, and Soprano II in the Philip Glass/Allen Ginsberg collaboration *Hydrogen Jukebox*.

Ms. Chamberlin made her professional debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic singing the

world premiere of Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Wing on Wing*, and followed that with her LA Opera debut as the Cretan Woman in *Idomeneo* with Plácido Domingo, and the High Priestess in *Aida*.



Fanfare Magazine praised her "effortless soprano" on the Delos recording

Terrain of the Heart: Song Cycles of Mark Abel, describing her voice as "youthful yet somehow knowing beyond her years." Ms. Chamberlin is an alumna of both UCLA and the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera.



Hailed in *Fanfare Magazine* for her "simply exquisite" voice, soprano **Ariel Pisturino** is an alumna of the University of Southern California, Northern Arizona University and OperaWorks.

She made her professional debut in 2010 with Long Beach

Opera as Nancy T'ang in *Nixon in China*. Ms. Pisturino collaborates regularly with composers in Southern California and sings with new music ensembles including the unSUNG concert series, Chamber Opera Players of LA and the Spacious Vision Song Project.

Ms. Pisturino was the soloist in the *Five Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* on Mark Abel's CD *Terrain of the Heart*, released by the Delos label in 2014. She recently appeared in The Industry's critically acclaimed production of the "mobile opera" *Hopscotch*, which the Los Angeles Times called "one of the most audacious cultural events of the year." Upcoming engagements include Bach in the Subway in L.A.'s Union Station and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with Redlands Opera Theater.

A singer of diverse talents and strong stage presence, Nigerian-American baritone **Babatunde Akinboboye** has performed with Los Angeles Opera, Opera San Jose, Opera Santa Barbara, Long Beach Opera and Center Stage Opera. He has sung the roles of Guglielmo in *Così fan Tutte*, Horace Tabor in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Henry Davis in *Street Scene*, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*, Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and the Wolf/Cinderella's Prince in *Into the Woods*.

Mr. Akinboboye has also debuted the roles of Drew in OperaWorks' Arts for Social Awareness Project production of *The Discord Altar*,

and Zanni in Gloria Coates' *Stolen Identity* at Disney Hall's RED-CAT venue. His most recent performances include Daggoo in LA Opera's *Moby Dick*, Escamillo in Pacific Opera Project's *Carmen*, and Luca's Father in The Industry's production of *Hopscotch*.



His honors include

Regional Finalist of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Audition, and finalist in the International Eisteddfod Vocal Solo Competition in Llangollen, Wales.



Bass-baritone **E. Scott Levin**, described as “a gifted comic actor” with a “smooth, buttery voice” and “incredibly sharp timing,” has been making audiences laugh for the past 13 years. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington

University in St. Louis and Graduate Certificate in Vocal Performance from the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music.

Since 2002, Scott has sung in over 20 productions with Union Avenue Opera in St. Louis and numerous productions with Pacific Opera Project in Los Angeles. He has also sung with many other companies in Southern California – including Long Beach Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Redlands Opera Theater, Center Stage Opera, OperaWorks, Definiens Project, Orange County Opera and Celestial Opera.

In 2015, he made his debut at Townsend/Fresno Opera as the Sacristan in *Tosca*, his Los Angeles Opera “Off-Grand” debut as Babayan (Bartolo) in *Figaro 90210!*, and most recently, his LA Opera mainstage debut as Dr. Spinellocchio in *Gianni Schicchi*, starring Plácido Domingo.

The talents of mezzo soprano **Janelle DeStefano** extend across the entire arc of classical singing, from opera and oratorio to recital and chamber music. Praised for her “passionate delivery” and “rich seamless voice,” she has rendered dramatic performances in such diverse concert works as Monteverdi’s *Vespers*, Bach’s *B minor Mass*, Respighi’s *Laud to the Nativity*, Zeisl’s *Hebrew Requiem*, Szymanowski’s *Stabat Mater* and the U.S. premiere of Peter Eötvös’ *Schiller: Energische Schoenheit*.

She has been featured in concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the Los Angeles



Chamber Orchestra; Jacaranda: Music at the Edge; Bach Collegium San Diego; the Los Angeles Master Chorale; and, most recently, with the Grammy-winning Los Angeles Guitar Quartet at the Laguna Beach Music Festival. Operatic roles include Romeo in *I Capuleti e i*

Montecchi; Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*; and the title role in Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Ms. DeStefano completed her DMA, with honors, from USC Thornton School of Music. She is currently a Professor of Voice at Santa Monica College.



Tenor **Jon Lee Keenan** grew up in a musical family and was exposed to a wide variety of music, ranging from rock'n'roll and bluegrass to classical and jazz in his hometown of Las Vegas. After graduating from UNLV with a triple major in Music, he

moved to Los Angeles to pursue his musical career, eventually graduating with a doctorate in Vocal Arts from USC.

Since joining the Los Angeles Master Chorale in 2007, Mr. Keenan has appeared as a featured soloist in each season. Recent highlights include the West Coast premiere of Magnus Lindberg's *Graffiti* with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the role of the Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Other recent engagements include appearances with the American Bach Soloists in Bach's *Easter Oratorio* and *St. Matthew Passion*, and with the envelope-pushing company The Industry as George Hunter White in Anne LeBaron's *LSD: The Opera* and as Jameson in *Hopscotch*. When not singing, he can be found playing jazz bass with the Disciples Trio.

Bass **Carver Cossey** has 40 years' experience as a singer, conductor, and educator. As both soloist and chorister, he has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, Pacific Chorale, Roger Wagner Chorale, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Opera and the LA Jubilee Singers, among others. He has toured internationally with many of these organizations in addition to performing numerous solo recitals across the United States.

Prof. Cossey has led gospel choruses at the University of California, Irvine; Saddleback College and Cypress College. He recently founded the Carver Cossey Singers, an

ensemble of talented professionals, and led them in an acclaimed appearance with the Pacific Symphony.



As a featured artist, Prof. Cossey has appeared on recordings of the Pacific Chorale, the John Alexander Singers and Mark Abel's orchestral song cycle *The Dream*

Gallery. His performance as Lonnie on the latter recording was praised as "a particular standout" and "wonderfully dramatic."

Conductor **Benjamin Makino** is the Music Director at Opera Memphis. Previously the Assistant Conductor at Long Beach Opera, he conducted the company's highly praised productions of David Lang's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, Michael Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Ernest Bloch's *Macbeth* and Michael



Gordon's *Van Gogh* – as well as the U.S. premieres of Gavin Bryars' *The Paper Nautilus* and *Tell-Tale Heart* by former Police drummer Stewart Copeland.

Mr. Makino is a graduate of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program of the Washington National Opera, where he was hand selected by Director Plácido Domingo. He completed studies at Chapman University and the University of California, Los Angeles, and pursued advanced studies at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. In 2014 he was identified by Opera America as a future leader in the field of opera in the United States.

"Home Is a Harbor" recorded July 2015
at The Bridge, Glendale, Ca., and
The People's Music, Sherman Oaks, Ca.
Engineers: Milton Gutierrez, Jason Siler
Produced by Mark Abel,
Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli
and Carol Rosenberger

"Club scene" vocal tracks
sung by Ayana Haviv

"The Palm Trees Are Restless"
recorded Oct. 22, 2014
at Henson Recording Studios,
Hollywood, Ca.
Engineer: James T. Hill
Produced by Mark Abel
and Carol Rosenberger

Score preparation and all manner of
invaluable assistance: Jeremy Borum
Editing: Matthew Snyder
Mastering: Mark Willsher

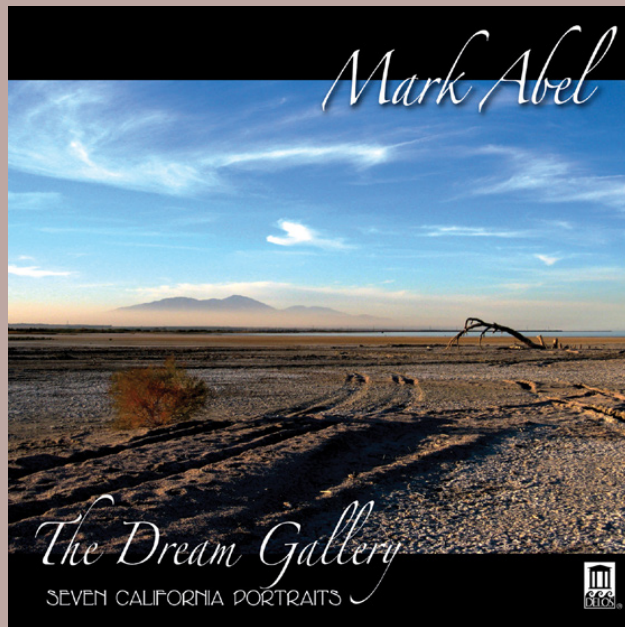
Cover photo: Corina Gamma
Session shots: Tom Zizzi ("Harbor"),
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Special thanks to Julia Torgovitskaya,
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"Palm Trees Under a Violet Sky," Los Angeles, by Frank Hsu

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