

The Song of Songs

Jorge Liderman

b. 1957

Based on a translation by Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch

1 Movement I 21:49

Introduction: The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's
Scene 1: Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses
Scene 2: All night, my love
Scene 3: I am in the fever of love
Scene 4: Have you seen the one I love?

2 Movement II 19:03

Scene 1: You ravished my heart
Scene 2: My heart stayed awake
Scene 3: This is my beloved
Scene 4: Feast, friends, and drink!

3 Movement III 21:36

Scene 1: O Shulamite, dance again
Scene 2: Come my beloved
Scene 3: Bind me as a seal upon your heart

The Shulamite: Elissa Johnston, soprano

The Lover: Charles Blandy, tenor

Daughters of Jerusalem: Catherine Webster, soprano
Sara Colburn, mezzo-soprano; and Amelia Tirst, contralto

Chamber Chorus of the University of California at Berkeley
Marika Kuzma, director

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

Tod Brody, flute/piccolo
William Wohlmacher, Peter Josheff, clarinets
Blair Tindall, oboe
David Bithell, trumpet
Zachary Limacher, Keith Bucher, horns
Carla Kihlstedt, violin
Kurt Rohde, Madeline Prager, violas
Richard Worn, contrabass
Timothy Dent, Russell Greenberg, percussion
Karen Rosenak, Jacqueline Chew, pianos

David Milnes, conductor

THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs -- surely one of the most remarkable books of the Hebrew Bible -- is a poem about the sexual awakening of a young woman and her lover. It takes the form of a dialogue between the two, or between the young woman, who is called the Shulamite, and the Daughters of Jerusalem. The lovers are quite young, perhaps the age of Romeo and Juliet, and the freshness of their voices suggests that they are discovering love for the first time. In the Bible, sexuality is typically associated with the sober business of procreation. Not so in the Song, which recommends eros for its own sweet sake. "How did this book ever get into the Bible?" readers frequently ask -- a question that has occasioned much conjecture. The prominent role given to the Shulamite is also surprising, since the Bible is for the most part the domain of men. The young woman has the best lines in the Song, including the first words ("Kiss me!") and the last. She says with some pride that she "awakened" her lover, and her invitations to love are more outspoken than his. She is the one who teaches that love must not be roused carelessly:

*Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me
by the gazelles, by the deer of the field,
that you will never awaken love
until it is ripe. (2:7)*

and it is she who speaks the great truths about love:

*Love is as fierce as death,
its jealousy bitter as the grave.
Even its sparks are a raging fire,
a devouring flame. (8:6)*

The Song of Songs calls out naturally for music. The word 'shir' in its Hebrew title, "Shir ha-Shirim", means both "song" and "poem." Like the word "lyric," it points to the origins of poetry in music. "Shir ha-Shirim" is a superlative term, like "the Holy of Holies," meaning "the best of songs, the most songful of songs." There is music to be heard in the lovers' garden of delight, as seductive as the fragrance of henna and spikenard, frankincense, myrrh and aloes. The young man, urging the Shulamite to come out and enjoy the wonders of spring, invites her to a concert of songbirds:

*Now is the time of the nightingale.
In every meadow you hear
the song of the turtledove. (2:12)*

And the lovers themselves are among the makers of music. The Shulamite listens for "the voice of my beloved" (2:8) as he listens for hers. "Let me hear your voice, your delicious song" (2:14), he calls to her, and again at the end of the poem: "O woman in the garden, all our friends listen for your voice. Let me hear it now" (8:13).

The Song of Songs was associated with music from the beginning. Scholars believe that individual lyrics may have been performed at banquets and festivals and weddings for hundreds of years before the Song came to be written down in its present form, most likely in the third century BCE. Singing to the accompaniment of flute, timbrel, or lyre was as much a part of the good life in ancient Israel as drinking wine or anointing oneself with fragrant oils. What kind of music was sung on festive occasions? Perhaps something like the following, which has been called a drinking song:

*Feast, friends, and drink
'til you are drunk with love! (5:1)*

The Song was known and sung among the people, who continued to understand it as an erotic love poem even when the rabbis began to interpret it allegorically as a dialogue between God and the people of Israel. Rabbi Akiva, who revered the Song as the "Holies of Holies," felt obliged to issue a stern warning: "Whoever warbles the Song of Songs at banqueting houses, treating it like an ordinary song, has no portion in the World to Come." His prohibition, of course, made it perfectly clear just what people were doing, and where. Later, the Church Fathers interpreted the Song as a dialogue between Christ and the Church, or between Christ and the soul of the believer.

For two thousand years, a variety of allegorical interpretations held sway, most of them guaranteed antidotes to eros -- the Shulamite's breasts, for example, are taken to represent Moses and Aaron! -- though the mystical commentaries, Jewish and Christian, remained faithful to the ardor of the literal meaning. The Song became part of the liturgy of the synagogue, chanted on the Sabbath of Passover week, with different cantillations in the Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions. It held an honored place in the church liturgy as well, and in the Middle Ages was particularly associated with the worship of the Virgin Mary.

Many notable composers, including John Dunstable, Josquin des Pres, Giovanni da Palestrina, Henry Purcell, William Billings and Igor Stravinsky, have made settings of lyrics from the Song, and the Song has inspired a number of well-known Israeli folk songs and dances. In Jorge Liderman's setting we hear a contemporary response to this ancient poem -- one that celebrates fittingly the power and the joy of human love.

~ Chana Bloch

When I first read the lyrical new translation of *The Song of Songs* by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch, I was immediately attracted to the idea of setting it to music. My interest in the Song goes back to 1985, when I composed "Shir ha-Shirim," a work for soprano and chamber ensemble based on excerpts from the Hebrew text, and I welcomed the opportunity to explore the text more fully in its English version. The passionate intensity of the Blochs' translation, its richly sonorous language and strong supple rhythms, clearly invited a musical setting. As I talked about the text with Chana, I was struck once again by the joy, warmth and color of the Song -- the passion of young love, the exhilaration of a first sexual encounter, the blossoms, spices and bird songs of springtime. These impressions translated themselves almost immediately into sound, suggesting three instrumental ensembles:

- 1) two pianos and two marimbas — percussive, pulsating
- 2) two clarinets, two violas and two French horns, with their lush tone
- 3) flute, oboe, trumpet, violin and double bass, with their mixed timbres

These three ensembles accompany the Shulamite (soprano) and her lover (tenor). They also interact with the Daughters of Jerusalem, which includes a female chorus and three soloists (soprano, mezzo-soprano, and alto,) who are seated among the clarinets, violas, and horns. I carried this orchestral sound in my ears for a while before I began to consider how it might evolve as a musical structure. How should the various elements interact with one another? Were there any architectural features of the text that would suggest corresponding forms in the music? I spent a great deal of time with the text, talking to Chana about my ideas and impressions, and benefiting from her intimate knowledge of the Song. Among other things, we discussed the cyclical structure of the poem, marked by refrains and repetitions, and by the reoccurrence of lovers' meetings and partings, songs of praise, moments of longing and celebration. With this in mind, I developed a formal model

that would allow me to give shape and direction to my musical thoughts. From the very start, I knew I wanted to create a large-scale work, one that would include almost the entire text of the translation, somewhat modified and reconfigured to serve the needs of the music. The result was an hour-long cantata, divided into three movements. Although my setting of the Blochs' translation is not a staged work, I conceived my *Song of Songs* as a dramatic representation of the text. Each of the scenes in the three movements is distinct in its dramatic and musical quality.

Movements I and III present the passionate sexual encounter of the Shulamite and her lover. Movement I reveals at once her boldness and openness; with her very first words, she invites her lover: "Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!" (scene 1). This is followed in scene 2 by their encounter, "All night between my breasts, my love is a cluster of myrrh." In the third scene, the Shulamite, "in the fever of love," sings: "Now he has brought me to the house of wine, and his flag over me is love." In scene 4 she searches for him and finds him. With the wisdom of her experience, she appeals to the Daughters of Jerusalem: "Never awaken love until it is ripe." In Movement III, he praises her body, from her sandalled feet to the crown of her head, as she dances (scene 1). The musical excitement generated by his praise elicits her invitation to "go out into the fields and lie all night among the flowering henna." There, she promises, she will give him her love (scene 2). In the final scene, she declares: "There, beneath the apricot tree, your mother conceived you, there you were born. In that very place, I awakened you." and she urges him with great solemnity: "Bind me as a seal upon your heart." The consummation of love in both movements is followed by a parting which is only temporary, a prelude to further encounters: "Before day breathes, before the shadows of night are gone, run away, my love!"

Movement II was conceived as a contrast to I and III. Here, at the center

of the piece, each of the lovers pays tribute to the other. The young man exclaims, "How beautiful you are, my love, my friend!" And the young woman in turn praises him: "My beloved is milk and wine, he towers above ten thousand." Their mutual praise culminates in a festive conclusion, which brings in the Daughters of Jerusalem, supported by the full orchestra:

*Feast, friends, and drink
till you are drunk with love! (5:1)*

The praise and celebration in the second movement, framed by the lovers' encounters and partings in the first and third, forms an a-b-a' design, which is reflected in the instrumentation and formal articulation of the music. While in Movements I and III the orchestra is divided into the three ensembles outlined above, in Movement II the instruments are grouped into winds, strings and percussion. Finally, the musical materials of Movements I and III resemble each other, reflecting the cyclical nature of the text, while Movement II incorporates some of the Ashkenazi tropes that are traditionally used for the liturgical cantillation of the text. The joyous and festive spirit of love in the Song is what first attracted me to this project. My hope is that the music — bright, passionate, rhythmic, pulsating— honors the spirit of this ancient text in a fitting contemporary idiom.

Song of Songs was written for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and the Chamber Chorus of the University of California, Berkeley, and its composition was made possible by a UC President's Research Fellowship in the Humanities, and a grant from the UC Berkeley Consortium for the Arts. "The Song of Songs" is dedicated to my wife, Mimi Wolff.

~ Jorge Liderman

The Song of Songs

Based on a translation by Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch (Random House, 1995)

MOVEMENT I

Introduction – “The Song of Songs”

Shir Ha Shirim asher l'Shlomo

The Song of Songs which is Solomon's

Scene 1 - “Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses”

Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!
Your sweet loving
is better than wine.

Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!
You are fragrant,
you are myrrh and aloes.
All the young women want you.
Take me by the hand, let us run together!

Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!

I am dark, daughters of Jerusalem,
and I am beautiful!
Dark as the tents of Kedar, lavish
as Solomon's tapestries.

Scene 2 - “All night, my love”

My love, I dreamed of you
as a mare, my very own,
among Pharaoh's chariots.

*My king lay down beside me
and my fragrance
wakened the night.*

*All night between my breasts
my love is a cluster of myrrh,
a sheaf of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of Ein Gedi.*

And you, my beloved,
how beautiful you are!
Your eyes are doves.

*You are beautiful, my king,
and gentle.*

*I am the rose of Sharon,
the wild lily of the valleys.*

Like a lily in a field
of thistles,
such is my love
among the young women.

*And my beloved among the young men
is a branching apricot tree in the wood.*

*How beautiful you are,
your love is a cluster of myrrh,
a sheaf of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of Ein Gedi.*

Scene 3 - "I am in the fever of love"

*Now he has brought me to the house of wine,
and his flag over me is love.*

*Let me lie among vine blossoms,
in a bed of apricots!
I am in the fever of love.*

*Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me
by the gazelles, by the deer in the field,
that you will never awaken love
until it is ripe.*

*Hurry, my love, my friend,
and come away!*

*The voice of my love: Listen!
bounding over the mountains
toward me, across the hills.*

*Look, winter is over,
the rains are done,
wildflowers spring up in the fields.
Now is the time of the nightingale.
In every meadow you hear
the song of the turtledove.*

***Hurry, my love, my friend,
and come away!***

*My beloved is mine and I am his.
He feasts
in a field of lilies.*

My beloved is mine and I am hers.

She feasts in a field of lilies.

***Your beloved is yours and you are hers/his
You feast
in a field of lilies.***

*Before day breathes,
before the shadows of night are gone,
run away, my love!
Be like a gazelle, a wild stag
on the jagged mountains*

Scene 4 - "Have you seen the one I love?"

*At night in my bed I longed
for my only love.
I sought him, but did not find him.*

*I sought him everywhere
but I could not find him.
My only love.*

*"Have you seen him? Have you seen
the one I love?"*

***"Have you seen him? Have you seen
the one you love?"***

*I had just passed them when I found
my only love.
I held him, I would not let him go.*

We are in the fever of love.

Your love, your only love!

*Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me
by the gazelles, by the deer in the field,
that you will never awaken love
until it is ripe.*

***We swear to you,
we, daughters of Jerusalem
we will never awaken love
until it is ripe.***

MOVEMENT II

Scene 1 – “You ravished my heart”

*Who is that
rising from the desert,
her head on her lover's shoulder!*

How beautiful you are, my love,
my friend!

You ravished my heart
with one glance of your eyes.
Your eyes! Turn them away
for they dazzle me.

The curve of your cheek
a pomegranate
in the thicket of your hair.

Your hair
like a flock of goats
bounding down Mount Gilead.

*“Who is that rising from the desert
like a pillar of smoke,
more fragrant with myrrh and frankincense
than all the spices of the merchant!”*

The wine of your kisses, the spice
of your fragrant oils.

Your lips are honey, honey and milk
are under your tongue,
your clothes hold the scent of Lebanon:

spikenard and saffron,
cane and cinnamon,
myrrh and aloes,

all the rare spices.

*“Who is that rising like the morning star,
clear as the moon,
bright as the blazing sun,
daunting as the stars in their courses!”*

Your eyes! Turn them away
for they dazzle me.

You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah,
majestic as Jerusalem,
daunting
as the stars in their courses.

Scene 2 – “My heart stayed awake”

*I was asleep but my heart stayed awake.
Listen!
my lover knocking:*

“Open, my sister, my friend,
my dove, my perfect one!”

*“But I have taken off my clothes,
how can I dress again?”*

“Open, my sister, my friend,
open, my perfect one!”

*I have bathed my feet,
must I dirty them?*

*My love reached in for the latch
and my heart
beat wild.*

I rose to open to my love,

*but he had slipped away.
How I wanted him when he spoke!*

*I sought him everywhere
but could not find him.*

*I called his name
but he did not answer.*

*Then the watchmen found me
as they went about the city.
They beat me, they bruised me,
they tore the shawl from my shoulders,*

those watchmen of the walls.

*Swear to me, daughters of Jerusalem!
If you find him now
you must tell him
I am in the fever of love.*

Scene 3 – “This is my beloved”

*How is your lover different
from any other, O beautiful woman?
Who is your lover
that we must swear to you?*

*My beloved is milk and wine,
he towers
above ten thousand.*

*How is your lover different
from any other, O beautiful woman?
Who is your lover
that we must swear to you?*

*His head is burnished gold,
the mane of his hair
black as the raven.*

*His eyes like doves
by the rivers
of milk and plenty.*

*How is your lover different
from any other, O beautiful woman?
Who is your lover
that we must swear to you?*

*This is my beloved,
tall as Mount Lebanon,
a man like a cedar!*

*This is my beloved,
and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

Scene 4 – “Feast, friends, and drink”

An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride,
a hidden well, a sealed spring,
a well of living waters
that stream from Lebanon.

Awake, north wind; O south wind, come,
breathe upon my garden.
Let my lover come into his garden
and taste its delicious fruit.

I have come into my garden,
my sister, my bride,
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices,
I have eaten from the honeycomb,
I have drunk the milk and the wine.

*Feast, friends, and drink
till you are drunk with love!*

MOVEMENT III

Scene 1 – “O Shulamite, dance again”†

*Again, O Shulamite,
dance again,
that we may watch you dancing!*

*Why do you gaze at the Shulamite
as she whirls
down the rows of dancers?*

How graceful your steps in those sandals,
O nobleman's daughter.

The gold of your thigh
shaped by a master craftsman.
Your navel is the moon's
bright drinking cup.
May it brim with wine!

Your belly is a mound of wheat
edged with lilies.
Your breasts are two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.

Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel,
the hair of your head
like royal purple. A king
is caught in the thicket.

How wonderful you are, O Love,
how much sweeter
than all other pleasures!

Scene 2 – “Come, my beloved”

That day you seemed to me a tall palm tree
and your breasts
the clusters of its fruit.

I said in my heart,
“Let me climb into that palm tree
and take hold of its branches.

And oh, may your breasts be like clusters
of grapes on a vine, the scent
of your breath like apricots,
your mouth good wine --”

*That pleases my lover, rousing him
even from sleep.*

*I am my lover's.
He longs for me,
only for me.*

*Come, my beloved,
let us go out into the fields
and lie all night among the flowering henn
I am my lover's.
He longs for me,
only for me.*

*Let us go early to the vineyards
to see if the vine has budded,
if the blossoms have opened
and the pomegranate is in flower.*

There I will give you my love.

*Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me
that you will never awaken love
until it is ripe.*

Scene 3 – “Bind me as a seal upon your heart”

*There, beneath the apricot tree,
your mother conceived you.
There you were born.
In that very place, I awakened you.
Bind me as a seal upon your heart,
a sign upon your arm,
for love is as fierce as death,
its jealousy bitter as the grave.
Even its sparks are a raging fire,
a devouring flame.*

*Great seas cannot extinguish love,
no river can sweep it away.
Even its sparks are a raging fire,
a devouring flame.*

I have come into my garden,
my sister, my bride,
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices,
I have eaten from the honeycomb,
I have drunk the milk and the wine.

How wonderful you are, O Love,
how much sweeter
than all other pleasures!

*Feast, friends, and drink
till you are drunk with love!*

*Before day breathes,
before the shadows of night are gone,
run away, my love!
Be like a gazelle, a wild stag
on the jagged mountains.*

*Hurry, my love! Run away,
my gazelle, my wild stag
on the hills of cinnamon.*

Born in Buenos Aires, **Jorge Liderman** began his musical studies at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, under Mark Kopitman. In 1988 he received his doctorate in composition from the University of Chicago where he worked with Ralph Shapey and Shulamit Ran. A year later, Liderman joined the composition faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. His works have been commissioned and performed by the London Sinfonietta, the American Composers Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood Orchestra, Radio France, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, the Nieuw Ensemble, the Arditti String Quartet, Cuarteto Latinoamericano, Boston Musica Viva, Milan Divertimento Ensemble, Chicago Pro Musica, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, as well as by individual artists including Oliver Knussen, Diego Masson, David Tanenbaum and Esa Pekka Salonen. His opera *Antigona Furiosa* (1991), commissioned by Hans Werner Henze, won the 1992 Munich Biennale International Prize in Composition. He has also received awards from the Guggenheim, Harper, Gaudeamus and Fromm Foundations, as well as from ISCM, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the University of California President's Fellowship program. Liderman's music has been featured at Darmstadt, Nuova Consonanza, Stuttgart's Neue Musik, Semaines Musicales Internationales d'Orleans, Mexico's International Foro, London's Viva, Osaka's Expo 90, The International Rostrum of Composers, Paris, and Holland's Proms among others. Liderman's music can be found on CRI, Bridge, and Albany Records. (See <http://www.jorgeliderman.com>)



Elissa Johnston has appeared in a wide range of repertory. Her orchestral engagements include appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen and Miguel Harth-Bedoya, the Atlanta Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Fort Worth Symphony, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Rosa Symphony, and the San Francisco Contemporary Players. She has performed numerous times with the Los Angeles Philharmonic's New Music Group both in Los Angeles and at the Ojai Festival with conductors Tan Dun,

David Zinman, Daniel Harding and Steven Stucky. She made her Lincoln Center debut in 1999 singing Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes* with the New York City Ballet and returned to Lincoln Center in May of 2001, premiering *Morgen!*, a set of 10 orchestral songs by Richard Strauss choreographed by Peter Martins. Ms. Johnston appeared in the New York Philharmonic's Copland Festival and Lincoln Center's Stravinsky Festival. Her recital appearances include programs at the Aldeburgh Festival in England and at the Aspen Festival's Winter Music Series with composer Ricky Ian Gordon. In Aspen she sang the role of Pat Nixon in the world premiere of John Adams' concert suite from *Nixon in China* entitled *The Nixon Tapes*, with the composer conducting.

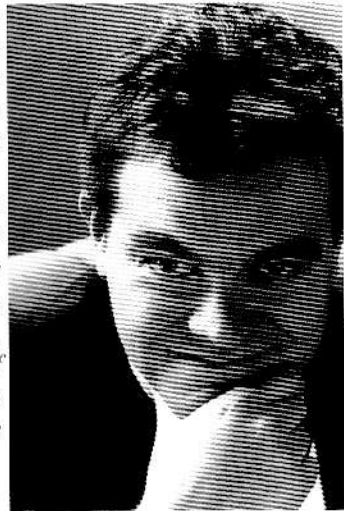
Ms. Johnston's recent operatic engagements include Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Snape Proms in England, the role of Female Chorus in

Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at the Aldeburgh October Britten Festival, and Marzelline in concert performances of Beethoven's *Fidelio* at both the Aspen Festival, and with the Wheeling Symphony. With the Los Angeles Opera, she has appeared in *Il Trovatore*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. Ms. Johnston also performed the role of Brigitta in concert performances of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, led by Valery Gergiev.

Charles Blandy played the role of Francis Flute in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed at Tanglewood under conductor Stefan Asbury. At Tanglewood, he also appeared in Ligeti's "Scenes and Interludes" from *Le Grand Macabre*, and created the role of the Arresting Officer in Osvaldo Golijov's opera *Ainadamar*, which was reprised at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

A frequent concert performer, his repertoire ranges from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Cantata Singers under David Hoose, and the *St. John Passion* this year, under guest conductor John Harbison. He premiered Jorge Liderman's *Song of Songs* with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and sang Britten's *St. Nicolas* under Raymond Leppard.

Opera roles include Ferrando in



Così fan tutte, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, and Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*. He will make his company debut with Opera Boston this season, appearing in Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne* and Gluck's *Alceste*. A native of Troy, New York, he graduated from Indiana University, where he studied voice with Alan Bennett and Lied repertoire with Leonard Hokanson. He also studied at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England and has a BA in religion from Oberlin College.

David Milnes, conductor, is a musician of extraordinary breadth and long-standing commitment to contemporary music. In his early years, he studied not only piano and organ, but also clarinet, cello, and voice. Milnes received his undergraduate education in music at SUNY Stony Brook. In 1984, at age 27, he won the prestigious Exxon Conductor position with the San Francisco Symphony. He remained as the Symphony's Assistant Conductor and Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra until 1986, working closely with Edo de Waart and Herbert Blomstedt. Following study and collaboration with such renowned conductors as Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, Otto-Werner Müller, and Michael Tilson Thomas, he earned his doctorate in conducting from Yale University in 1989.

From 1994-2002, Milnes was Principal Guest Conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra and also guest

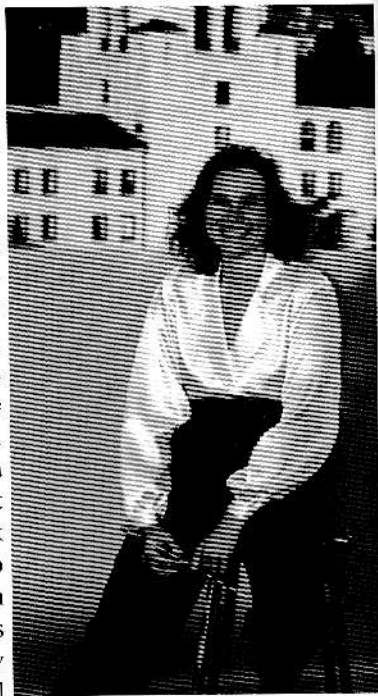


conducted numerous orchestras across the United States. He has conducted at the Tanglewood, Aspen, and Monadnock Music Festivals, and has led operatic repertoire ranging from Mozart to Weill. He maintains a keen interest in jazz, which has led to appearances on jazz saxophone with Gene Krupa, Chuck Mangione, John Pizzarelli, and Billy Taylor.

In 1996, David Milnes joined the music faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, where he directs its symphony orchestra and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. He first conducted the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1997, and joined the ensemble as Music Director in June, 2002.

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP) is a leader among ensembles in the United States dedicated to contemporary chamber music. Founded in 1971, the ensemble is a nine-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, having performed over 1,000 new works and commissioned 66 new pieces. Along with the ensemble's Music Director David Milnes, the instrumentalists who make up the Players are recognized virtuosi in new music performance. Each season the ensemble performs a concert series at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. SFCMP also tours widely throughout California, with performances on such concert series as San Francisco Performances, Cal Performances, the Stern Grove Festival, the Other Minds Festival, Los Angeles' Monday Evening Concerts, the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, and the Ojai Festival. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and its East Coast debut in May 2001 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The ensemble has recorded eight full-length CDs and contributed performances to six others. (See www.sfcmp.org)

Choral Director **Marika Kuzma** is well known in the San Francisco Bay Area as both a choral and instrumental conductor. As a choral director at the University of California and guest choral director at the University of Virginia, Oklahoma City University and Dartmouth College, she has conducted music spanning the Middle Ages to Haydn's *Creation* to Verdi's *Requiem* to Reich's *Tehillim*. She has been invited to prepare choruses for various artists and ensembles: George Cleve (Midsummer Mozart Festival), Nicholas McGegan (Philharmonia Baroque), Michael Morgan (Oakland East Bay Symphony), Mark Morris (Mark Morris Dance Group) and Kent Nagano (Berkeley Symphony). Her work with orchestra has included guest appearances with the Berkeley Symphony, the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, National Orchestra of Ukraine, Earplay, and Composers Inc. In the realm of contemporary music, Kuzma has conducted California premieres of works by Lou Karchin, Jorge Liderman, Frederic Rzewski, Steve Reich, Toru Takemitsu, and John Thow.



The **Chamber Chorus of the University of California** at Berkeley is an ensemble competitively selected from among singers in the Berkeley campus community. Sponsored by the Department of Music, the ensemble has earned a fine reputation in the San Francisco Bay Area particularly for its performances of contemporary music and early music. The chorus has premiered works by such noted composers as Morton Feldman, Lou Harrison, Richard Felciano, Jorge Liderman, and John Thow. Performances of early music have included regular appearances with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under Nicholas McGegan. Critics from from *The New York Times*, *Opera News*, *Washington Post*, and *San Francisco Chronicle* alike have praised the chorus as "richly sonorous," "sumptuous," "electric." Its discography includes several Handel oratorios with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra (Harmonia Mundi); *Icons of Slavic Music* (Ameridisc); Elinor Armer and Ursula LeGuin's *Eating with the Hoi* (Koch International); Dufay's *Missa Ave regina celorum* (Sanglier) and its most recent release *Of Songs and Seasons* (a *cappella* music by Brahms and the Ukrainian composer Lesia Dychko).

Ariel Bloch is Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. His books and articles deal with classical Arabic, Arabic dialectology, biblical and modern Hebrew, Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Aramaic. He is co-translator of *The Window* by the Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch.

Chana Bloch is the author of three books of poems, *The Secrets of the Tribe*, *The Past Keeps Changing*, and the award-winning *Mrs. Dumpty*. She is co-translator of four books by Israeli poets: Dahlia Ravikovitch's *A Dress of Fire* and *The Window*, and Yehuda Amichais' *Selected Poetry* and *Open Closed Open*.

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