

ROBERT ISTAD CONDUCTS PACIFIC CHORALE AND SALASTINA

 YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIEH, PRODUCER

All Things Common

Music of Tarik O'Regan



Arian Jansen, executive producer



All Things Common

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Executive producer Arian Jansen of SonoruS Audio is a hero to our musicians at Yarlung Records. We are incredibly grateful to friends and sponsors like Arian, whose generosity has allowed us to make so many of our recordings available. Thank you Arian. Arian serves not only as executive producer on this album but also worked with me as my recording engineering partner.

SonoruS has become well known as the maker of one of the finest tape players in the world. But even if you have not heard of Arian's company before, you have surely benefited from Arian's designs in other arenas. Your cellphone charger was most likely made for your cellphone company by Flextronics, using one of Arian's many energy-saving patents. If you have an iPhone, the charger uses Arian's technology. Microsoft's original Xbox gaming console uses Arian's power supply and cooling solutions. (Arian's son Victor "helped" Arian with this development as one of the first Xbox players in the world. Victor was five years old at the time and his enthusiasm for this particular video game console remains unabated to this day). If you have been treated in a hospital, it is possible that the monitoring system uses Arian's designs. Plasma scalpels used in hip replacement surgeries and Cesarean section sometimes utilize Arian's technology.

Many audiophiles have heard Arian's SonoruS equipment in various rooms at CES, The Show at Newport, Rocky Mountain, and AXPONA audio conventions. His all-tube Sonorus preamplifier and monoblocks feed electrostats directly coupled to the output tubes (no transformers) using Y867 tubes running at 7,000 volts. The results inspire awe. Yarlung collaborated with SonoruS at The Show a few years ago, and debuted some of the tapes in this collection. Our music won an Audio Oasis Award from the esteemed reviewer David W. Robinson at PFO.

Thank you, Arian, for the care you take designing SonoruS equipment, and for your skill collaborating with me as a fellow recording engineer on this album. Our musicians and our listeners appreciate you as much as I do.

Artistic Director Robert Istad on Tarik O'Regan and Pacific Chorale

Tarik O'Regan's music captured my attention when I heard a live performance of *The Ecstasies Above* in 2007. Tarik's choral writing forever changed my musical perspective. His music grabbed me with its rhythmic audacity, harmonic daring and unique wit. From that first hearing, I hoped I would be able to collaborate with Tarik in some way. At my invitation, Tarik graciously became our composer in residence at Pacific Chorale shortly after I was appointed Artistic Director, and this recording shares some of the fruits of our collaboration.

I speak for our singers and for Salastina¹ when I report how much fun we had preparing Tarik's music and then performing it in concert and in this recording. We immediately felt a kinship that pushed us to capture Tarik's musical vision at the highest possible level.

This recording traces Tarik's distinctive development as a composer. We present never-recorded works from twenty years ago alongside new compositions written for this project. Tarik's ingenuity speaks definitively throughout, and I believe our album serves as a testament to his exceptional voice.

¹ Salastina Music Society performs in intimate concert halls in Southern California, often in Barrett Hall at the Pasadena Conservatory of Music and in The Edye Second Space at The Broad Stage in Santa Monica. Depending on the musical requirements, Salastina ranges from very few musicians to larger chamber orchestra ensembles. In our case, Salastina musicians included co-directors Maia Jasper White and Kevin Kumar on violins; Meredith Crawford, viola; Charles Tyler, cello; and Eric Shetzen, bass. Beyond their roles with Salastina, many listeners will know Meredith Crawford as principal viola in the Pacific Symphony at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and Maia Jasper White as a member of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and as Martin Chalifour's violin partner playing Schoenberg in Yarlung's Walt Disney Concert Hall recording entitled *Trésors Ensevelis*. Please visit www.salastina.org for more information about Salastina musicians and about their adventurous concert programming.



left to right: Jackson McDonald, Joslyn Amber Sarshad, Raphael Poon, Chelsea Chaves

Tarik joined us for this concert and recording session. He was originally Pacific Chorale's London-based composer in residence, but just before our recording, Tarik and his family moved to San Francisco. We claimed them immediately as Californians, and commissioned *Facing West* with generous underwriting from **Lenora Meister** and Salt-Away Products, Inc. Not only did Lenora fund Tarik's first commission since his move to California, but she also graciously underwrote this album and concert. Introducing the piece for our live audience, Tarik spoke about the view westward over the Pacific Ocean from the state he now calls home.

Our concert took place in Samueli Theater at Segerstrom Center for the Arts on May 18th, 2019. We reset the hall and held our recording sessions on the evening of May 20th and the afternoon of May 21st. As before when my Cal State Fullerton University Singers recorded with Yarlung, our producer Bob Attiyeh asked that Pacific Chorale, Salastina and I prepare each piece (or each movement of the longest work) carefully enough so we could record it successfully in one take. We succeeded! The performance you hear is real. This is not surgically stitched together from many takes. Some of the tracks on this album are the only take we recorded, and others we performed multiple times until we had the flavor and execution that Tarik and Bob and I wanted. We are so proud of our extraordinary musicians. We worked hard to capture the sound Tarik had in his mind when writing these works, and to reflect accurately what I hear when conducting Pacific Chorale singers. Yarlung used one stereo microphone (an AKG C24 which used to belong to Frank Sinatra borrowed from Ancona Audio) as well as two rear microphones for surround sound. With such minimalist recording techniques, there is nowhere to hide. But the results, when we succeed, are worth the extra effort. I hope you agree.



Saunder Choi, Denean Dyson, Nicholas Preston

Pacific Chorale's residency at Segerstrom Center for the Arts (SCFTA) was essential to the success of this project. Segerstrom Center for the Arts serves as much more than Pacific Chorale's artistic home. The people of Segerstrom Center inspire us to dream, provide innumerable artistic opportunities beyond our traditional concert season, and lend essential financial support to our programs like this one. SCFTA's Samueli Theater provided the perfect acoustic space in which to capture our music, and without Segerstrom Center's assistance, this recording would not have occurred.

Aaron Egigian and Judy Morr provide consistent encouragement and support to me personally and to Pacific Chorale and our programming. Segerstrom Technical Director Tom Lane arranged everything such that the Yarlung Records team kept smiling throughout. Our sincere thanks.

Great appreciation also to Pacific Chorale's administration especially Andrew Brown, President and CEO, and Alex Nelson, Director of Artistic Production, and to our valiant board of directors and most specifically **Lenora Meister**, who served as underwriter and executive producer of this recording and CD. My gratitude to Arian Jansen for underwriting and executive producing the DSD and analog tape releases of this music. Your passion for our musicians and the power of choral music inspires me every day. I am so proud that my first recording with Pacific Chorale celebrates Tarik O'Regan.

Pacific Chorale includes up to 140 singers when we perform in the 1,800-seat Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, but I selected a core ensemble of 24 singers and five string players from Salastina Music Society for our Tarik O'Regan concert and recording in the smaller 300-seat Samueli Theater.



Maia Jasper White, Meredith Crawford, Kevin Kumar

Pacific Chorale

Robert Istad, Artistic Director

Soprano

Chelsea Chaves
Rebecca Hasquet
Kathryn Lillich
Katie Martini
Maria Cristina Navarro
Joslyn Amber Sarshad

Alto

Denean R. Dyson
Stacey Kikkawa
Laurel Sanders
Jane Hyunjung Shim
Alison Stickley
Angel Yu McKay

Tenor

Daniel Alvarez
Saunder Choi
Alan Garcia
Johnny G. Gonzales
Nicholas A. Preston
Nate Widelitz

Bass

Ryan Thomas Antal
Matthew Kellaway
Yannick Lambrecht
Jackson McDonald
Jason Pano
Raphael Poon

Salastina

Maia Jasper White, violin
Kevin Kumar, violin
Meredith Crawford, viola
Charles Tyler, cello
Eric Shetzen, bass

Pacific Chorale

Robert Istad, Artistic Director
Andrew Brown, President & CEO
Thomas A. Pridonoff, Board Chair
Alex Nelson, Director of Artistic
Production

Leonora Meister, Executive Producer

Tarik and I thought carefully about our album title. We eventually suggested *All Things Common*, also our opening track. Tarik set three texts from the New Testament in this work: Luke 11:17, Romans 14:19 and Acts 4:32. Taken together, they serve as a reminder that we are strongest when we work constructively together, and that we fragment and disintegrate when we fight continuously amongst ourselves. *All Things Common* reminds us that people thrive when we strive for the benefit of all mankind and share the bounties of this world. These strike me as reasonable ideas in any era.

—Robert Istad

Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons Artistic Director of Pacific Chorale

Come hear Pacific Chorale live at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa. Join us for a concert or make a donation at www.pacificchorale.org



Jane Hyunjung Shim, Daniel Alvarez, Alison Stickley

Tarik O'Regan has written music for a wide variety of ensembles and organizations including Pacific Chorale, Dutch National Ballet, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Sydney Dance Company, Chamber Choir Ireland, BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

The Phoenix, his opera about the life of Lorenzo Da Ponte, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera with a libretto by John Caird, premiered in April 2019. Tarik's work, widely recorded and published exclusively by Novello, has been nominated for two GRAMMY® awards and both *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* Best Classical Releases of the Year for *Threshold of Night*; the National Endowment for the Arts Artistic Excellence Award, and a South Bank Sky Arts Award nomination for *Heart of Darkness*; a Gramophone Award nomination for *Scattered Rhymes*; and more.

Tarik grew up predominantly in London, spending some of his childhood in Morocco, where his mother was born, and in Algeria. Following the completion of his undergraduate studies at Pembroke College, Oxford, and private study with both Jeremy Dale Roberts and Robert Saxton, he continued his postgraduate studies with Robin Holloway at Cambridge University, where he was appointed Composer in Residence at Corpus Christi College.

O'Regan has been appointed to the Fulbright Chester Schirmer Fellowship at Columbia University; a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship at Harvard; and positions at Trinity and Corpus Christi Colleges in Cambridge, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and Yale. Recently he was elected Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford and to the board of Yaddo. O'Regan currently holds the position of Visiting Artist at Stanford University.



Tarik O'Regan, Robert Istad



Robert Istad, Executive Producer Leonora Meister, Tarik O'Regan

Working with Robert Istad and Pacific Chorale over the years has been an especially important experience for me and my music. Rob's method of building a piece from page to performance (or, in this case, recording) is one based on a bedrock of precision and impeccable technique. His commitment to the composer's intent, coupled with the ability to contextualize my work within a framework based on his knowledge of a vast amount of extant repertoire by other composers forms the all-important scaffolding. The composition comes to life measure by measure, brick by brick, until eventually it stands free, breathing and swaying ever so slightly from the breezes of subtle interpretations and gentle inflexions. This is the magic in the air which lies not on my pages but in the trust between Rob and the Pacific Chorale, not only in each other, but in their collective expertise.

This particular combination (precision and what I would call "room to breathe") is an extremely rare one in general, but especially in the world of conducted music for voices. All this makes it all the more wonderful that it has been captured here by Bob and Arian at Yarlung Records, famed for their use of minimalist audiophile recording techniques and single takes to deliver sound as close to living performance as possible.

It has been a privilege – and a lot of fun, let's not forget that – to have been part of many different programs through many different seasons with Rob and Pacific Chorale. *All Things Common* permits a glimpse into our ongoing work together; I hope you enjoy it.

Tarik O'Regan
March 30, 2020

Notes on the Music

These works by Pacific Chorale's Composer-in-Residence Tarik O'Regan feature choral writing for a variety of vocal and instrumental combinations composed over several decades, and shows the arc of his musical style and compositional career—from the earliest piece performed, the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* of 2001, to *Facing West*, completed in 2019. O'Regan began composing choral works during his undergraduate music studies at Oxford University, where he wrote for the famous all-male Choir of New College, Oxford, with its boy trebles, and continued during his time as a postgraduate composition student at Cambridge University, where he wrote



for the renowned SATB mixed choir at Clare College, under the directorship of Tim Brown. The works on today's program represent his many British-American connections and commissions from musical organizations on both sides of the Atlantic. O'Regan's recent work, his setting of Walt Whitman's poem *Facing West*, reflects his move to San Francisco, and is an appropriate choice for a new Californian composer writing for a California ensemble, who views our state with a fresh perspective.

Executive Producer Leonora Meister, Tarik O'Regan

All Things Common (2017)

Rebecca Hasquet, soprano

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

Luke 11:17

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Romans 14:19

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which they possessed was their own; but they had all things common.

Acts 4:32

All Things Common, the 2018 American Choral Directors Association's (ACDA) Raymond Brock Commission, has been performed extensively, at ACDA regional meetings and elsewhere. O'Regan carefully chose texts from the King James Version of the New Testament calling for peace, which are especially relevant for us today: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Luke 11:17), "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace" (Romans 14:19), and "...But they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). A notable, recurring musical feature of the work is O'Regan's mirroring of the meaning of the text about the "kingdom divided against itself" with his presentation of canons on these words in close rhythmic and melodic succession. These canonic statements only resolve at the very end of the piece, and in quietude, on the word "common" at the end of the phrase "But they had all things common," suggesting a hope for resolution to global conflict.

Blessed Are They (2013)

Maria Cristina Navarro, soprano; Salastina Music Society

Text from *All Saint's Day* (1867) by Ada Cambridge (1844-1926), and from *Lights Out* (1916) by Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

Blessed are they whose labours only cease
When God decrees the quiet, sweet release;
Who lie down calmly in the sleep of peace.
Blessed are they!

Whose dust is angel-guarded, where the flowers
And soft moss cover it, in this earth of ours;
Whose souls are roaming in celestial bowers.
Blessed are they!

I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
their way, however straight,
Or winding, soon or late;
They cannot choose.

Blessed Are They, for chorus and string quartet, setting a text about remembrance, was commissioned in 2013 by Frank A. Thomas, Jr. in honor of Raymond and Elizabeth Chenault, long-time organists and choirmasters at All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta, and was first performed there on All Saints' Sunday, November 3, 2013. It sets excerpts from Ada Cambridge's poem "All Saints' Day" and Edward Thomas's "Lights Out" in an apt connection. Although written for All Saints' Day, it can be performed on any occasion. In *Blessed Are They*, O'Regan explores musical and poetic ideas about the meaning of sleep and repose. The string quintet provides more than instrumental accompaniment, and helps to elaborate on the meaning of the text, while providing a sense of rhythmic and melodic propulsion that supports the sometimes slower-moving choral lines.

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis: Variations for Choir (2001)

Quartet: Rebecca Hasquet, Jane Hyunjung Shim, Nicholas Preston and Raphael Poon

Cello: Charles Tyler

Magnificat Luke 1:46–55

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

My soul magnifies the Lord.

Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior.

*Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae: ecce enim ex
hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden:
for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

*Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum
nomen ejus,*

For He who is mighty has done great things to me; and holy
is His name.

*Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.*

And His mercy is on them who fear Him from generation to
generation.

*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo: dispersit superbos
mente cordis sui.*

He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the
proud, even the arrogant of heart.

Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.

He has deposed the mighty from their seats, and exalted the
humble.

Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes.

The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He
has sent empty away.

*Suscepit Israel, puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae
suae.*

He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His
mercy.

*Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini
ejus in saecula.*

As it was spoken to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed
forever.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

*Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula
saeculorum. Amen.*

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

Nunc Dimittis Luke 2:29–32

*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum
verbum tuum, in pace:*

Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum,

Quod parasti ante facem omnium populorum,

*Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis
 tuae Israel.*

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

*Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula
 saeculorum. Amen.*

Now let your servant depart in peace, O Lord, according to
Your word.

For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

A light as revelation to the Gentiles, and a glory of your people
Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

O'Regan's *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* (2001), for chorus, vocal soloists, and solo cello or soprano saxophone, is the earliest work on the program, and was commissioned by Tim Brown and the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge. The paired texts of the *Magnificat* (the Canticle of Mary: "My soul doth magnify the Lord") and *Nunc Dimittis* (the canticle of Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word") are integral components of the Anglican Evensong service. Because of its length, however, O'Regan's setting is more commonly performed as a concert work. As in many of his other works, this one uses canons and canonic patterns, and quasi-minimalist, repetitive techniques paired with a highly developed thematic palette. The work represents a textual and musical journey through different musical sounds, including the use of plainchant, and aleatoric sections that are sometimes paired with strongly metered chordal choral exclamations, and the use of two solo obbligato instruments, the cello or the soprano saxophone (thus creating two distinct versions). O'Regan also explores the contrast of sonic space with various combinations and permutations of the full choir (*ripieno*) and vocal solo group (*concertante*).

Turn (2016)

Chelsea Chaves, soprano; Daniel Alvarez, tenor

Text from *Cirkelloop* (1908) by Albert Verwey (1865–1937), translated by Cliff Crego

I am a spark without goal, without direction,
Thrown into the universe as my journey began,
Before long another sun bound itself to me
And turning I lived for an unmeasured while,

Endless world, incomplete universe
And without beginning, but where each part
Image is of the whole and a lightshow

A kernel of life, empty in itself,
Full of the energy that around me spun.
O that I could without knowing for centuries
Turn within the ungrasped radiating rose.

Along the eternal ways, tell me, shall once, shall
Ever there be an end to your steady fire,
You, a diamond in the hollow of a hand?

Turn was commissioned by the ensemble Conspirare and premiered by that group in May 2016. It sets the poem *Cirkelloop* (Cycle) by Dutch poet Albert Verwey (1865–1937)—translated by Cliff Crego—and was inspired by O'Regan's visit to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and the painting of Verwey by Dutch painter Jan Veth (1864–1925). Written for divided eight-part unaccompanied choir, *Turn* is composed almost entirely in irregular 7/4 meter. O'Regan often places melodic lines inside the choral ensemble texture, and the chorus expands as the piece unfolds, with an emphasis on flowing rhythmic filigree, and ostinato patterns throughout. The music presents a feeling of constant flowing or turning, and the forward momentum is heightened towards the end of the piece with the sudden change of harmony on the word “you” in the phrase “You, a diamond in the hollow of a hand.” O'Regan musically emphasizes the suggestion of the text about feeling microscopic in the grand scheme of life.



Saunder Choi, Nicholas Preston, Johnny Gonzales

Facing West (2019)

World Premiere

Pacific Chorale Commission generously underwritten by Lenora Meister, Salt-Away Products, Inc.

Kathryn Lillich, soprano; Charles Tyler, cello

Text from *Leaves of Grass* (1860) by Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Facing west, from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western Sea—the circle almost circled;
For, starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,
From Asia—from the north—from the God, the sage, and the hero,
From the south—from the flowery peninsulas, and the spice islands;
Long having wander'd since—round the earth having wander'd,
Now I face home again—very pleas'd and joyous;
(But where is what I started for, so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

O'Regan's *Facing West* for eight-part chorus and solo cello was commissioned by Pacific Chorale and Robert Istad and sponsored by Lenora Meister and Salt-Away Products, Inc., and was completed in April 2019. The composer set the text by Walt Whitman, who published the poem of the same title in the 1860 edition of his famous collection *Leaves of Grass* (first published in 1855), a decade after California's statehood in 1850. Whitman's poem consists of one long sentence in free verse, divided into 11 lines. Just like the poem, O'Regan's music equals one long sentence, slowly unfolding and building in sound in overlaid musical lines. The tempo marking is "quasi recitative," suggesting a musical declamation of Whitman's poetry. O'Regan's composition and Whitman's poem ask us to imagine faraway places, not only by looking toward California from the east, from Whitman's New York City vantage point, but also through looking westward from the perspective of California toward Asia, and to other places far beyond the Western Sea.



Charles Tyler, cello, with Music Director Robert Istad

The Ecstasies Above (2006)

Quartet 1: Kathryn Lillich, Laurel Sanders, Nicholas Preston and Ryan Antal

Quartet 2: Katie Martini, Jane Hyunjung Shim, Nate Widelitz and Jackson McDonald

Salastina Music Society

Text from *Israfel* (1831) by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell

“Whose heart-strings are a lute”;

None sing so wildly well

As the angel Israfel,

And the giddy stars (so legends tell),

Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell

Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above

In her highest noon,

The enamoured moon

Blushes with love,

While, to listen, the red levin

(With the rapid Pleiads, even,

Which were seven,)

Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israferi's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings—
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
Where deep thoughts are a duty,
Where Love's a grown-up God,
Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervor of thy lute—
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour;
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfil
 Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
 A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
 From my lyre within the sky.

Tarik O'Regan wrote *The Ecstasies Above* in 2006 for two vocal quartets, chorus, and string quartet. It was a Robert Baker Fund, Yale Institute of Sacred Music (Yale University) commission, and was premiered by the Yale Schola Cantorum under the direction of Simon Carrington. A frequently performed work, *The Ecstasies Above* sets the poem *Israfil* by American poet Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), first published in 1836 in *The Southern Literary Messenger*. The poem presents the Koranic imagery of Israfil, the Angel of Music, who will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the Day of Resurrection: "And the angel Israfil, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures." According to O'Regan, "Poe suggests that if Israfil were placed in an earthly environment, he would not sing with such zest. From the Koranic source of the name of the protagonist, the story is refashioned by Poe into an homage of ecumenicity to an all-encompassing angel of music." *The Ecstasies Above* combines a popular sensibility with the Anglican choral tradition and rhythmic minimalism, and positions contrasting sections and sound combinations between the three main musical groups.



Denean Dyson, Angel Yu McKay, Stacey Kikkawa and behind: Daniel Alvarez, Saunder Choi, Nicholas Preston

I Listen to the Stillness of You
from *Mass Observation* (2016)

Text from *Amores* (1916)
by D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930)

I listen to the stillness of you,
My dear, among it all;
I feel your silence touch my words as I talk,
And take them in thrall.

My words fly off a forge
The length of a spark;
I see the night-sky easily sip them
Up in the dark.

I Listen to the Stillness of You is a short section for unaccompanied chorus from O'Regan's *Mass Observation* of 2016. It sets two stanzas of D. H. Lawrence's longer poem "Listening" from the collection *Amores* (1916). His setting of Lawrence's poem musically represents the poetic image of two lovers, one of whom is carefully watching the other. The complicated larger work from which it comes treats the intrusiveness of modern life and loss of privacy, our uneasy relationship with technology and government surveillance, and the idea of anonymous watching. In contrast, the intimate, quiet, gorgeous excerpt "I Listen to the Stillness of You" is gentle and simple.

—John Koegel, Professor of Musicology, California State University, Fullerton

Pacific Chorale

In September 1968, conductor Maurice Allard announced choir auditions as part of community outreach at University of California's fledgling campus in Irvine. Uncertain what the response would be from the young and largely arts-free Orange County community, Maurice waited with fingers crossed. Jan Unvert Landstrom, the choir coordinator, recalls Allard saying, "If 35 show up for auditions, I'll take all 35."

On September 22, 116 singers lined up to audition. Pacific Chorale was born.

We had our first rehearsal the following week and gave our standing-room-only debut performance (Mendelssohn's *Elijah*) as the Irvine Community Chorus in January 1969. The community's enthusiastic response indicated strong demand in Orange County for musical offerings, and led the Irvine Community Chorus to spin off from the university the following season and incorporate independently as the Irvine Master Chorale. Though the repertoire could sometimes be daunting—in our second concert we tackled Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*—the singers not only rose to the challenge but embraced it.

When Maurice left the Chorale in 1972 to pursue other interests, the board of directors hired John Alexander, a dynamic 27-year-old conductor from Louisiana then teaching at California State University's Northridge campus, as our new artistic director. Shortly after he stepped into the role, John announced ambitious plans to take the Chorale on tour in Europe. This began a long-standing tradition that over the years would take us to China, to South America, to Europe many times, to the U.S.S.R. and, memorably, Estonia on the eve of its emancipation. We traveled to New Orleans for the American Choral Directors Association National Convention, and toured the western United States for *The Lord of the Rings in Concert*. (Our singers proudly added "Elvish" to their linguistic resumes.) More recently, the Chorale traveled to New York City to make our Carnegie Hall debut with Pacific Symphony.

We will never forget the historic venues and artistic experiences on these trips. But what veterans of these tours recall most is the way they led to our bonding not just as an ensemble, but as a family. We reminisce about hotel-room parties, bus mishaps, practical jokes, culinary (mis)adventures, lost luggage, hysterical "no-talent" talent shows, and lifelong friendships we made on these trips.

Orange County grew, and so did our Chorale. Recognizing that our audience and singers encompassed far more than the city of Irvine, and reflecting our community's broader, more expansive outlook, we changed our name to Pacific Chorale. The Orange County Performing Arts Center (now Segerstrom Center for the Arts) opened in 1986, with the Chorale as one of its resident companies. We became more and more professional, with added administrative staff members and with a new core of paid singers. We joined Chorus America, the North American service organization providing resources, networking, and advocacy for the burgeoning choral field.



Pacific Chorale: Jane Shim, Angel Yu McKay, Denean Dyson, Cristina Navarro, Johnny Gonzales, Raphael Poon, Rebecca Hasquet, Jason Pano, Ryan Antal, Chelsea Chaves, Matthew Kellaway, Yannick Lambrecht, Joslyn Sarshad, Jackson McDonald, Katie Martini, Alan Garcia, Kathryn Lillich, Daniel Alvarez, Alison Stickley, Nate Widelitz, Saunder Choi, Robert Istad, Stacey Kikkawa, Nicholas Preston, Tarik O'Regan, Laurel Sanders

Our artistic partnerships and experiences proliferated. Pacific Symphony was founded in 1978, and so began another enduring artistic relationship. Pacific Chorale began to undertake engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Hollywood Bowl, and Ojai Music Festival. We performed under dozens of the world's leading conductors, including Pierre Boulez, Seiji Ozawa, Zubin Mehta, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gerard Schwarz, Marin Alsop, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Bobby McFerrin, Christopher Hogwood, Roger Wagner, John Williams, and Gustavo Dudamel.

Our programming broadened beyond the traditional masterworks to include a focus on new and American works. This led to the Chorale's first commissions and composer residencies, and to many West Coast and world premieres. Many of these works made their way into recordings, both self-produced and under Pacific Symphony's auspices, driven by the recognition that new music depends on recording to find performers and audiences.

Amid all this change and growth, one thing remained constant: Pacific Chorale's singers and Pacific Chorale's conductor share a special bond. Our choral family had become an occupation, a hobby, a lifestyle, and a social hub. As the number of concert engagements and rehearsals climbed, a tongue-in-cheek license plate frame began to appear on certain cars within Orange County and beyond: "I can't... I have Pacific Chorale."

Under the leadership of Board Chair Mary Lyons and Artistic Director John Alexander—both veteran educators—nurturing the choral singers, composers, conductors, and audiences of the future became one of our principal focuses in the 1980s and '90s. An ambitious slate of programs sprang up to complement Pacific Chorale's concert offerings, from children's and youth choirs, to competitions and workshops for composers, to community choral showcases, touching thousands of lives beyond the concert hall and earning national recognition. Today, young people who sang and studied under the Chorale's auspices can be found working in churches, concert halls, conductors' podiums, and universities around the country, from the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles to the Broadway stage.

After 45 years at the podium, John Alexander stepped down as artistic director in 2017, to the shedding of many tears. For the following season, Pacific Chorale's 50th, John's protégé Robert Istad took the helm. Rob was no newcomer. His 17-year history with the Chorale as a staff member, singer, and assistant conductor meant he already knew and loved the Chorale fiercely. And we love him back.

Pacific Chorale is an artistic ensemble, vehemently dedicated to that artistry. It is also a network, a community, and a family. Lifelong friendships have been forged. Couples have met, fallen in love, and married while singing together. Children have been raised in our chorale's embrace. We come together from all backgrounds, ages, livelihoods, and belief systems to share in the power and beauty of music and the fellowship of kindred spirits. And as our opening track on this recording relates, courtesy of Saint Luke by way of Tarik O'Regan, in those moments we share "all things common."



Robert Istad

Robert Istad

I have always been in love with music. As a toddler, my favorite toy was my Fisher-Price record player. My parents were not wealthy, but were determined to give their children exposure to as much cultural richness as possible: music, theater, visual art, travel. So after I begged for piano lessons at age 5, my Mom took a side job to purchase a used spinet piano and pay for lessons. She laughingly relates that she was the only parent in the neighborhood that had to beg her child to *stop* practicing.

Perhaps it was in my genes. My grandfather, Lloyd Istad, became a professional-level violinist with the support of my great-grandparents, even though as Depression-era Norwegian immigrants they were living in poverty. It must have been heart-breaking when he had to decline an opportunity to play with the Chicago Symphony to serve as a Marine during World War II. He took his violin with him during his deployment to the South Pacific, where he held informal concerts with his fellow Marines in the evenings.

Music was everywhere in my grandparents' home. They played records of Brahms symphonies, Mendelssohn violin concertos, and Verdi operas. Rarely did my grandfather play his violin for anyone, as his fingers had become damaged and cumbersome after years of manual labor in his roofing business. Still, every Christmas Eve he would don his red plaid holiday pants, open the old leather violin case, and play Christmas carols with me at the piano. The entire family would sing. I'm sure we sounded a veritable mess, but to me it was my favorite concert of the year. He lived on as my musical champion, helping fund my move to more rigorous teachers, and supporting my decision to study music professionally in college. I still feel his presence with me when I conduct, and I live in gratitude when I think of the sacrifices he made that allowed me to thrive.

I attended Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, where I could major in pre-med while maintaining my piano studies. Dr. Robert Satterlee recruited me as his piano student. As part of my piano scholarship, I was required to perform in a major ensemble. Having also studied percussion, I expected to be playing in the orchestra or wind ensemble. Instead, I was required to audition for the choir. I had sung musical theater and other contemporary music, but had very little choral experience. After some grumbling, I auditioned, and was surprised to win a spot in the Augustana Choir, the top-level ensemble. My conductor informed me that my musicianship was good, and that he thought my voice... would improve with time.

Walking into that first rehearsal with trepidation, I felt completely out of place. My section leader handed me a large folder of music and we started to sing. The first piece we rehearsed was Herbert Howells' Requiem. The sound overwhelmed me. It was resonant in a way I had never experienced: so perfectly in tune, so rich. As a pianist, I'd lived my life in equal temperament, and had never experienced just intonation. My mouth closed and I could only listen. I could feel my entire body vibrating. In an instant, I was transformed. Creating this kind of experience with others would become my life's mission.



Robert Istad

When it came time to choose where I would go to graduate school, I selected California State University, Fullerton, where I would study with John Alexander, the renowned conductor of Pacific Chorale. As his graduate assistant, I was also given the opportunity to serve as the Chorale's director of operations.

The first concert I planned as Pacific Chorale's director of operations was a production of Mahler's Eighth Symphony. Charged with coordinating rehearsals and staging for singers from four separate choirs, I spent hours preparing diagrams, stage instructions, and the details of an artistic vision I could barely comprehend. Luckily, people were (for the most part) patient and loving. I learned valuable lessons, including how to make important decisions quickly. I don't believe I'd ever felt such an intense sense of pride in my life as when that performance began.

The first time I heard Pacific Chorale, I was astonished. That sound resonated with me for days. I know I am not the only person who has felt this way after hearing the Chorale's power and artistry for the first time. Our musicians, board members, staff and audience members have made its perseverance our mission. I fell in love with Pacific Chorale, held on for dear life, and have yet to let go.

After I completed my doctorate under William Dehning at the University of Southern California, the ties I had forged with Pacific Chorale called me back to Orange County. I found myself blessed and fortunate to become Director of Choral Studies at Cal State Fullerton, a job that brings me daily joy as I encourage and mold the phenomenal young talented people coming through our program. It was a tremendous affirmation to be recognized as Outstanding Professor of the Year in 2016.

John Alexander also asked me to serve as Pacific Chorale's assistant conductor. One of my privileges in that role was leading the Chorale in rehearsals for many of our guest engagements with Pacific Symphony, conducted by the remarkable Carl St.Clair. Preparing a choir for Carl is an enlightening adventure; Carl has been an immense positive influence on my artistic life. I cherish every moment we work together.

In 2015, John gave me the opportunity to share the podium with him on a concert with Pacific Chorale and Pacific Symphony. I was to conduct Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi*—the orchestrated version of the very piece that inspired my life in choral music. Although I had written my dissertation on it years earlier, I really understood the piece only after the gift of conducting it. I will never forget the moment I walked on stage and the musicians gave themselves over to the grandeur of Howells' score.

That same year, Pacific Chorale's Board of Directors announced that after 45 years at the podium, John would be retiring as Artistic Director in 2017. They gave me the greatest honor I could possibly imagine by asking me to be his successor. My first season as Artistic Director—the Chorale's fiftieth anniversary season—opened on October 29, 2017. I had the privilege that night of introducing music by Tarik O'Regan to our Pacific Chorale family. The artistic journey these last few years with Tarik as our composer in residence has been rich and exciting, leading directly to this recording, the fulfillment of a dream. I hope that it brings you even a portion of the joy that this music and this ensemble have given me.

—Robert Istad



Alex Nelson, Director of Artistic Production and Robert Istad

A close-up portrait of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a plaid scarf, looking directly at the camera.

ROBERT ISTAD CONDUCTS PACIFIC CHORALE AND SALASTINA

All Things Common

Music of Tarik O'Regan

All Things Common
Blessed Are They
Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis
Turn
Facing West
The Ecstasies Above
I Listen to the Stillness of You

Recorded in Samuelli Theater at Segerstrom Center for the Arts
on May 20-21, 2019

Arian Jansen, executive producer

Recording Engineers: Bob Attiyeh & Arian Jansen

Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman, Arian Jansen & Bob Attiyeh

DSD512 Mastering Engineer: Tom Caulfield

Tube Microphones: Ted Ancona

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