

# VOXFIRE

## THE WHEEL OF LIFE

Songs & Poetry  
from the Middle Ages

*Samela  
Aird  
Beasom*

*Susan  
Judy*

*Christen  
Herman*

“BACH’S LUNCH” Recital Series  
Friday, October 6, 2006 — 12:15 p.m.  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach

# VOXFIRE



**SUSAN JUDY** soprano

**CHRISTEN HERMAN** mezzo-soprano

**SAMELA AIRD BEASOM** soprano

**V**OXFIRE is the collaboration of three of the West Coast’s most highly regarded interpreters of early and contemporary vocal music. Using their distinct vocal colors, the three sopranos have melded their talents as a means of adapting and presenting the works of these eras with their very own musical style and dramatic flair. Voxfire’s sopranos are well known for their contributions to vocal music, both as soloists and as members of prominent professional ensembles. From this varied background, they have chosen the intimate approach of one-on-a-part to create an enchanting marriage between choral and solo singing: a vocal chamber music that refreshes the ear with a pure, sonic clarity. From their highly acclaimed concerts for the Santa Cruz Baroque Festival and the J. Paul Getty Museum, to their virtuosic performances of Benjamin Britten’s *A Ceremony of Carols* and Steve Reich’s *Tehillim*, Voxfire continues to introduce exquisitely faceted musical gems to enthusiastic audiences throughout the West. And with their CDs *Songs to the Virgin* and *Echoes*, Voxfire is now delighting listeners throughout the world.

Voxfire would like to thank Karla Devine and Trinity Lutheran’s “Bach’s Lunch” recital series for making this concert possible.

## I

**READING:** Canticle of the Creatures . . . St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1182–1226)

**ECCO LA PRIMAVERA** (ballata) Francesco Landini (c. 1325–1397)

Spring has come and gladdens our hearts;  
it is a time for smiling faces and falling in love.  
Springtime's very air calls us to be joyful;  
in this lovely season everything is beautiful;  
fresh grass and new flowers cover the meadows;  
the trees too are adorned with new leaves.



**READING:** In April at Eastertide . . . . . Anonymous French  
(12th or 13th Century)

**DER MAY MIT LIEBER ZAL** . . . . . Jehan Vaillant (1350–1400)  
(Minnesänger song) text: Oswald von Wolkenstein (1377–1445)

May adorns every hill, field, mountain and valley with a delightful deluge.  
From the sweet song of the birds, the crested lark, the common lark,  
the thrush, and the nightingale ring and sing in a high pitch.

To his great distress, the cuckoo flies behind them  
as he strives toward the frolicking little birds.  
Listen to what he said: “cu cu, cu cu, cu cu,  
give me the prize, which I want to possess from you.  
For hunger makes me greedy for my empty stomach.”

“Oh misery! Where should I go now?” said the tiny creature,  
“Come wren, finch, chickadee and lark and now we sing:  
oci und tu ich, tu ich, tu ich, tu ich, oci oci oci oci oci,  
fi fideli fideli fideli fi, ci cieri, ci ci cieri, ci ci ciwigk, cidiwigk fici fici.”  
The cuckoo bird sang only: “kawa wa cu cu.”  
“Raco,” said the raven, “I also sing well, I must be perfect.  
That is my singing. Move forward, come here, it is perfect!”  
“Liri liri, liri liri liri liri lon,” so sang the lark.  
“I sing loudly, a thrush, that resounds in the forest.”

They celebrate with a monotonous voice, they cackle and careen  
here and there, just like our pastor. Zidiwick zidiwick zificigo zificigo  
the nightingale, this one wins the Grail with her song.

— translated by Karina Marie Ash

## II

**READING:** Fresh new rose . . . . . Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1255–1300)

**VERGENE BELLA** (cantilena motet) . . . . . Guillaume Dufay (c. 1397–1474)  
text: Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374)

Lovely virgin, who clothed with the sun  
Crowned with stars, you pleased the highest Sun  
So that he concealed his light in you,  
Love urges me to speak of you  
But I do not know how to begin without your aid,  
and his, who commanding placed himself in you.  
I invoke the one who answers always  
those who have called upon her with faith.  
Virgin, if toward mercy  
for the extreme misery of human things  
You have ever turned, bend toward my prayer.  
Help me in my struggle  
Although I am of earth and you are queen of heaven.

**DE TOUTES FLOURS** (ballade) . . . . . Guillaume de Machaut  
(c. 1300–1377)

Of all flowers and all fruits there were none  
In my orchard except a single rose:  
The rest was laid waste and destroyed  
By Fortune who harshly makes war  
Against this sweet flower  
To crush its color and perfume.  
But if I see it picked or fallen,  
After it I never seek to have another.

Ah! Fortune, who are a gulf and pit  
To swallow up any man who dares believe  
Your false law, in which I find nothing good  
And nothing sure, is too deceptive a thing;  
Your smile, your joy, your honour  
Are only tears, sadness and dishonour.  
If your false turns make my rose wither,  
After it I never seek to have another.



III

**READING:** The heralds of Summer are here . . . . . Charles d’Orleans  
(1394–1465)

**SUMER IS ICUMEN IN** (round) . . . . . Anonymous (c. 1260)

Summer has arrived  
Loudly sing, cuckoo!  
Grows the seed and blooms the lea  
And the woods springs anew  
Sing, cuckoo!  
The ewe bleats after the lamb  
The calf lows after the cow  
The bull leaps, the buck leaps, twisting.  
Merrily sing, cuckoo! Cuckoo, cuckoo,  
Well sing you, cuckoo.  
Nor cease you ever now!

**TRES DOUS COMPAINS** (chace) . . . . . Anonymous (Mid-14th Century)

Sweet friend, get up, for I can sleep no longer,  
and only toss about; so I pray that we go  
immediately and play an estampie  
in front of my sweetheart’s house.  
What is more I beg you, for love’s sake,  
that we take, all of us in the party,  
little drums and bagpipes, lutes and great big flutes.  
Let’s both go back now and look for the trumpeters.  
They have all got up in a great hurry and,  
except for these two, all gone off somewhere else  
to greet the morning. Come on, now, everybody,  
without anymore interruptions! My dear friend,  
you begin the dance and we will follow after you.  
Arrange yourselves properly! Come on, trumpeters:  
Blow! ‘Po-po...’ Quickly: ‘Po-po...’ Lord, what a fine  
time we’re having! ‘Ba-ba...’ The drums have come.  
Ready now! ‘Ton-ti-ti...’  
Now the bagpipe: ‘Cu-re-lu-re...’  
The instruments are tuned. Ready, fifes! Fifes, play!  
‘Li-ri-li...’ The morning is ours.  
It’s time to go back now, my Lady, if it pleases you,  
for it is full daylight. Now, let’s keep together  
and go off and enjoy ourselves.

IV

**THIS WORLD’S JOY** . . . . . Anonymous English (c. 1300)

Winter wakeneth all my care;  
Now the trees are waxing bare;  
Oft my sighs my grief declare  
When it comes into my thought  
Of this world’s joy, how it goes all to nought.  
Now it is, and now ‘tis not--  
As it ne’er had been, I wot.  
Hence many say-it is man’s lot:  
All goeth but God’s will;  
We all die, though we like it ill.  
Green about me grows the grain;  
Now it yelloweth all again:  
Jesus, give us help amain,  
And shield us from hell;  
For when or whither I go I cannot tell.



**IO MI SON UN CHE PER LE FRASCHE** (madrigal) . . . . . Jacopo da Bologna  
(1310-1386)

I am one who roves among the leafy groves  
simply to seek the lovely flowers  
to weave myself garlands with new odors.  
Thus the welcome bough is won  
of the green tree that shuns no place.  
How it pains my heart.

**READING:** Founts of tears and rivers of sadness . . . . . Christine de Pisan  
(1365–c. 1431)

**SU LA RIVERA** (madrigal) . . . . . Anonymous (14th Century)

On the sea shore, where the sun’s heat stirs the salty depths,  
I find myself more deserted by love than ever before.  
This fateful arrow has so deeply wounded my heart that I can only die.

**READING:** When April with his showers . . . . . Geoffrey Chaucer  
 Canterbury Tales: Prologue (excerpt) (c. 1343–1400)

When in April the sweet showers fall  
 That piece March's drought to the root and all  
 And bathed every vein in liquor that has power  
 To generate therein and sire the flower;  
 When Zephyr also has with his sweet breath,  
 Filled again, in every holt and heath,  
 The tender shoots and leaves, and the young sun  
 His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,  
 And many little birds make melody  
 That sleep through all the night with open eye  
 (So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)  
 Than folk do long to go on pilgrimage,  
 And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,  
 To distant shrines well known in distant lands.  
 And specially from every shire's end  
 Of England they to Canterbury went,  
 The holy blessed martyr there to seek  
 Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak...



**STELLA SPLENDENS** (cantiga) . . . . . Llibre Vermell (14th Century)

Shining star of the mountain, like a sunbeam  
 miraculously glowing, hear your people.

They all flock together, glad peoples  
 rich and poor, high and low;  
 they climb the mountain as soon as they see it  
 and return from it filled with grace.

Leaders and nobles of royal stock,  
 the world's mighty who possess grace,  
 proclaim their sins, beat on their breasts  
 and on bended knee cry this: Hail Mary.

Queens, countesses, illustrious ladies  
 of power and their maidservants,  
 little girls, young maidens, old women and widows  
 climb the mountain, as do nuns.

So let us all pray, both men and women,  
 And acknowledge our worldliness in true humility  
 before the glorious Virgin, mother of mercy,  
 that we may be granted the sight of Heaven.

**WORLDES BLIS** (song) . . . . . Anonymous English (13th Century)

The world's joy lasts no time at all,  
 it departs and fades away at once.  
 The longer I know it, the less value I find in it.  
 For it is all mixed with troubles, with sorrows and misfortune,  
 and at the last, when it begins to pass away,  
 it leaves a man poor and naked.  
 All the joy, both here and there,  
 is finally encompassed by weeping and lamentation.

**AD MORTEM FESTINAMUS** (virelai) . . . . . Llibre Vermell

We hurry towards death, we withdraw from sin.

I have promised to write with contempt for the world,  
 so that an unworthy age will not be appeased by vanity.  
 The hour is at hand to rise up and prepare for death's sleep.

Short life shortens and shortly ends;  
 death comes quicker than anyone thinks.  
 Death destroys all and pities none.

When the trumpet shall sound for the final day  
 and the Judge approaches, who will distinguish for eternity  
 those elected to his realm and those destined to hell.

All earthly kings and great men of the world  
 must be changed, and also clerics and those in authority  
 must become like little children, renouncing ostentation.

Alas dear brothers, it is worth contemplating  
 the harsh suffering of the Lord for us  
 while weeping and vowing to sin no more.

Benevolent Virgin of virgins crowned in Heaven,  
 with your Son, intercede for us.  
 And when we depart this life, be our mediator.

You will be worthless as a cadaver;  
 why do you not guard against sinning?  
 Why do you seek to rise up?  
 And why do you seek wealth?  
 Why do you wear ostentatious clothing?  
 Why do you not confess your repentance?  
 Why do you not rejoice over your neighbor?

VI

**MA FIN EST MON COMMENCEMENT** (chace) . . . . . Guillaume de Machaut  
 (c. 1300–1377)

“My end is my beginning  
 And my beginning my end.”



*You are cordially invited to join Samela, Susan, and Christen after the recital for lunch. Box lunches, with sandwiches made from special-order bakery bread and farmers-market-fresh produce, are available for \$5, or \$6 with a soda or juice, to enjoy here or take back to the office.*

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**“THE PRELIMINARIES”**

**Saturday, October 21, 2006 at 2:00 P.M.**

In just a year since its founding in January 2005 at the Colburn School, the fast-rising **JANAKI STRING TRIO** was Grand Prize winner at the 59th Annual Coleman Chamber Music Competition and winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition in New York City. Individually, its members study with Southern California’s premier teachers: violinist **SERENA MCKINNEY** with

Robert Lipsett, violist **KATIE KADARAUCH** with Paul Coletti, and cellist **ARNOLD CHOI** with Ronald Leonard. By popular demand, Janaki is returning for the second season in a row.

*Free — donations appreciated*

**MAIN CONCERT SERIES OPENER**

**Sunday, October 22, 2006 at 4:00 P.M.**

The piano trio **feHrmEnbuRg** from the chamber music collective *inauthentica* draws its name from each of its members: cellist **Paula Fehrenbach**, a member of the New West and Santa Barbara Symphonies and the Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra; New Zealand-born violinist **MARK MENZIES**, Professor of violin at CalArts; and pianist **GAYLE BLANKENBURG**, faculty member of Pomona College, Scripps College, and the Claremont Graduate University.

*Suggested concert donation \$15 / \$5 students*

*Hors d'oeuvre & dessert reception with the artists follows*

**“SUPER” BACH’S LUNCH RECITAL OPENER II**

**Friday, November 3, 2006 at 12:15 P.M.**

**Laurie Rubin** mezzo soprano, **David Wilkinson** piano

Mezzo-soprano **Laurie Rubin** received high praise from New York Times chief classical music critic Anthony Tommasini, who wrote she possesses “compelling artistry,” “communicative power,” and that her voice displays “earthy, rich and poignant qualities.” Recent career highlights include her United Kingdom solo recital debut performance at Wigmore Hall in London and her solo recital debut in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

*Free — donations appreciated*

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Attention: Karla Devine

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