



## VOICES OF THE PEARL

Voices of the Pearl traces, in newly commissioned song cycles, the tenuous lineage of women who dared to encounter the unmediated divine. Their efforts span time, religion, nation and culture. This project commissions, performs and records musical works from composers across the globe, setting text by and about female esoterics from world traditions throughout history, reclaiming these lost voices and the tradition of female spirituality. For more information and program notes, please visit: [www.voicesofthepearl.org](http://www.voicesofthepearl.org)

1

PERSEVERE (2017)

13:52

by Karola Obermüller *World premiere recording (May 2018)*

Anne Harley *soprano*, Barbara Poeschl-Edrich *harp* and

Karola Obermüller *live electronics*

*With special thanks to scholars Holly Gayley, Dolma Kyab,  
Bryan Levman and Jim Anderson.*

*Session Producer:* Robert Schneider (farao | studios GmbH)

*Audio Engineer:* Florian Rauscher (farao | studios GmbH)

both from Bavaria Musikstudios, München, Germany

*Recording Editor:* Karola Obermüller

*The commissioning, premiering, and recording of PERSEVERE were funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Canada Council of the Arts, the University of New Mexico Music Department, UNM John Donald Robb Composers' Symposium, UNM Research Allocation Committee, and Scripps College.*

**Movements 1, 2 & 3:** Sung in the original Pali, to texts from female Buddhist nuns Paṭācārā and Uppalavanna, from the *Therīgāthā* (circa 500 BCE)

**Movements 4, 5 & 6:** Sung in the original Tibetan, to texts from Yeshe Tsogyal, from *Lady of the Lotus-Born* (c. 777–817 CE)

**Movements 7, 8 & 9:** Sung in the original Tibetan, to texts from Khandro Tāre Lhamo (1938–2002), from *Pad ma'i phreng ba*

**2** Still Life After Death (1995)  
by Chinary Ung *Recorded September 2017*

9:54

Stacey Fraser, *soprano* & James Hayden, *bass-baritone*  
Brightwork newmusic: Aron Kallay, *artistic director & piano*; Sara Andon, *flute*;  
Brian Walsh, *clarinets*; Tereza Stanislav, *violin*;  
Maggie Parkins, *cello*; Nick Terry, *percussion*  
David Rentz, *conductor*  
Scott Vance, *recording engineer and editor*

In *Still Life After Death*, a living Soul, represented by the soprano, embarks on a ritualistic, spiritual journey at the end of life. In the face of death, the Soul searches for insight into the great beyond. Although it may feel frightened or abandoned, the Soul does not journey alone: a Monk, represented here by a bass-baritone, chants short phrases from a Buddhist scripture in the ancient language of Pali, with the intention of guiding the Soul's consciousness. In hopes of achieving a realized and enlightened state at the moment of death, the dying Soul repeats the Monk's verses, until the very last breath.

**3** My Spirit is Chanting (2011)  
by Yii Kah Hoe *World premiere recording (2012)*

8:12

Anne Harley, *soprano*; Brian Walsh, *bass clarinet* & Nick Terry, *percussion*  
*Recording engineer and editor*: Hunter Ochs

*Commissioned by the Asian Young Musicians' Connection*

*My Spirit is Chanting* is inspired by *Makyong*, a traditional form of dance-drama, from the northern part of Malaysia, the native country of the composer. This is Yii's impression of *Makyong*, especially *Makyong* singing and its function as ritual theatre associated for healing purposes, involving trance dancing and spirit possession. The piece is not intended as an imitation of actual *Makyong*.



**4** **You Moving Stars** (2017) 14:10  
by Emilie Cecilia LeBel *World premiere recording (August 2018)*

Anne Harley *soprano* & Steve Thachuk *electric guitar*  
*Recording engineer and editor:* Scott Fraser

*This commission was funded, in part, by the Canada Council for the Arts.*  
*With special thanks to scholars Bryan Levman and Andrew Nguy.*

*You Moving Stars* sets female voices from the *Therīgāthā* in Pali and the *Golden Light Sūtra* in early Chinese from the Dunhuang scroll held by Denison Library at Scripps College. The verses here are drawn from the seventh scroll of the *Sūtra on the Supreme King of Golden Light*, more commonly known as the *Golden Light Sūtra*. The *Therīgāthā* is the earliest collection of women's literature known in the world, and it collects spiritual poems by and about early female disciples of the historical Buddha (from approximately 5th century BCE).  
—Emilie Cecilia LeBel

**5** **Therīgāthā Inside Aura** (2018) 22:07  
by Chinary Ung *World premiere recording (2018) re-release*

Anne Harley and Stacey Fraser *sopranos and light percussion*  
Susan Ung *viola and voice*  
Brian Walsh, *clarinet and voice*  
Nick Terry, *percussion and voice*  
David Rentz, *conductor*  
*Recording engineer and editor:* Adam Borecki

*This commission was funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts,*  
*Chapman University, EnviroLab Asia, and Scripps College.*

*Therīgāthā Inside Aura* sets texts by and about notable early female disciples of the historical Buddha, as transmitted in the *Therīgāthā* (Verses of the Elder Nuns). The 73 biographical poems collected in the *Therīgāthā* document early female Buddhist esoteric spiritual practice and the lives of those practitioners, in Pali. The *Therīgāthā*, dating from circa 600 B.C.E., is considered by many scholars to be the world's oldest known collection of women's literature.  
*(continued on next page)*

It is little read outside religious and scholarly circles, and deserves to be better known.

Verses selected here from the *Therīgāthā* present seven leading Buddhist female practitioners: Bhaddā Kundalakesā, Sumanā, Virā, Ubbiri, Mettikā, Mittā, and Sumangalā. The texts are all sung and spoken in the original Pali, in order to preserve their integrity. As with other pieces on this album, we worked with specialist scholar/practitioners, we recorded pronunciations and documented the ancient rhythmic chanting styles for the Pali verses. Ung suggested later that we include verses in English, and in Khmer from his own translation, **uniting in music three languages in which he has lived his life.**

*Therīgāthā Inside Aura* is dedicated to the peacemakers of tomorrow.

***Voices of the Pearl, Volume 3 (released: 31 July 2020)***

*Artistic director, commissioner, curator, and producer:* Anne Harley

*Album mastering and editing (unless otherwise noted):* Scott B. Fraser

*Graphic design and photography:* Anne Harley

*Photo:* Detail of 'Thousand Buddhas' stele, from Northern Zhou dynasty, 557-581 BCE, Shanghai Museum, China.

*Logo design:* Michael Pope

Performer, scholar, and composer biographies are available at  
**[www.voicesofthepearl.org](http://www.voicesofthepearl.org)**



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