



NOAH MEITES

COUNTING



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1 COUNTING (2012, rev. 2021) 18:46

Geoffrey Pope, conductor

Alina Roitstein & Elissa Johnston, sopranos

Molly Pease & Niké St. Claire, altos

Michael Matsuno, Catherine Baker, & Rachel Beetz, flutes

Jan Berry Baker, alto saxophone/soprano saxophone

Dan Kaneyuki, alto saxophone

Hitomi Oba, tenor saxophone

Patrick Shiroishi, alto saxophone soloist

Ken Fischer, baritone saxophone

Dan Rosenboom & Jonah Levy, trumpets

Allen Fogle, horn

Steve Suminski, trombone

Steve Trapani, bass trombone

Robby Good, celeste

Vicki Ray & Aron Kallay, piano

Jiji Kim & Brady Cohan, electric guitars

Mike Valerio, electric bass

2 Cadere (2019).....7:46

Brightwork New Music
Sarah Wass, flute
Brian Walsh, clarinet
Yuri Inoo Miyoshi, percussion
Aron Kallay, piano
Adrienne Pope, violin
Maggie Parkins, cello

3 Sonance (2013, rev. 2017) 10:22

HOCKET
Sarah Gibson and Thomas Kotcheff, pianos

4 Fracture Mechanics (2022) 10:41

New Thread Quartet
Jonathan Hulting-Cohen, soprano saxophone
Kendra Wheeler, alto saxophone
Erin Rogers, tenor saxophone
Zach Herchen, baritone saxophone

To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief (2013)

5 I. Restlessly 8:22

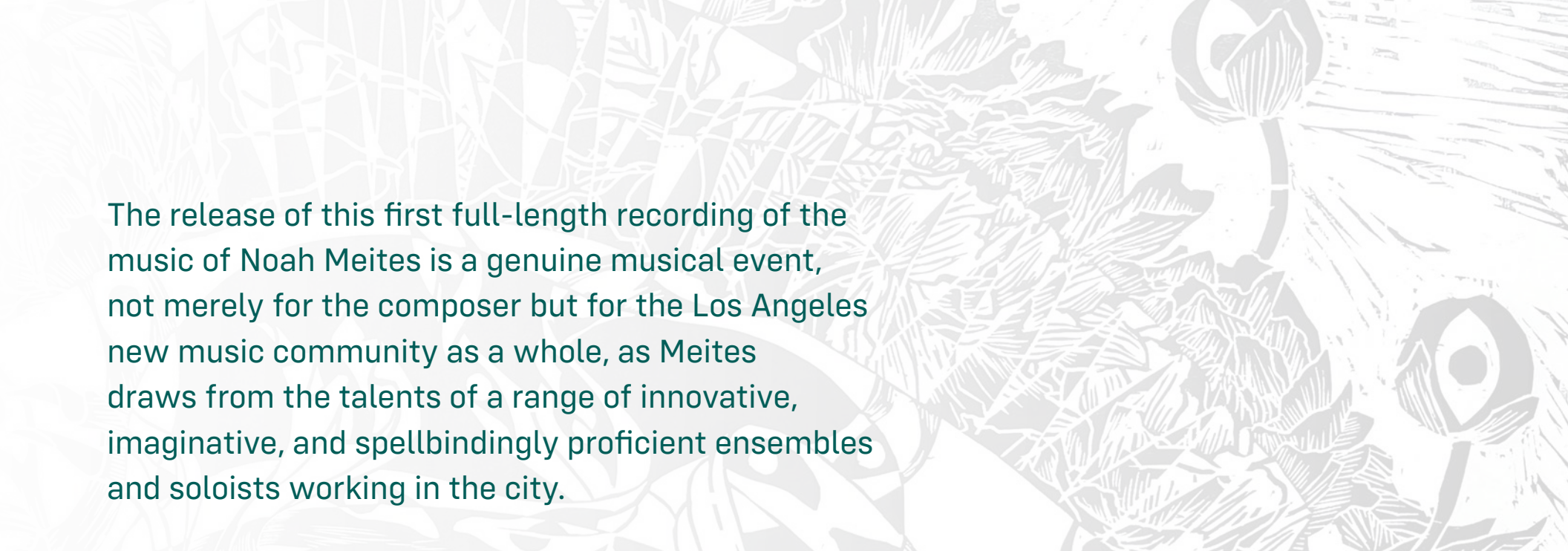
6 II. Agitato 5:34

Linnea Powell, viola
richi valitutto, piano

7 Voyager Golden Record (2018).....5:54

LA Signal Lab
Erika Oba, flute
Hitomi Oba, tenor saxophone
Noah Meites, trumpet/flugelhorn
Scott Worthington, double bass
Adrienne Pope, violin
Linnea Powell, viola
Jen Bewerse, cello

Total Time: 67:28



The release of this first full-length recording of the music of Noah Meites is a genuine musical event, not merely for the composer but for the Los Angeles new music community as a whole, as Meites draws from the talents of a range of innovative, imaginative, and spellbindingly proficient ensembles and soloists working in the city.

Brightwork Ensemble, for example, known both for their performances of new work and the “classics” of the last hundred years, deftly executes the mesmerizing *Cadere*, while LA Signal Lab, a quartet of “young and versatile performer-composer new-music Trekkies,” as described by the LA Times — Meites is one of those Trekkies — mingles chaos and consonance in the bricolage of *Voyager Golden Record*. The piano duo HOCKET navigate rhythmic complexity with the telepathy of conjoined twins in *Sonance*, first drafted while the composer was under the tutelage of Louis Andriessen, while the saxophonists of the New York-based New Thread Quartet — recorded here during an extended residency at UCLA — bring subtlety, flash, and humor to *Fracture Mechanics*.

Linnea Powell and richi valitutto, artists associated with one of the more visible new music ensembles in LA, the Grammy-nominated Wild Up, handle viola and piano virtuosically in the shimmering, yet mournful, *To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief*. Rounding out this pantheon are a host of first-call new music and studio musicians (among them Dan Rosenboom, Mike Valerio, Jiji Kim, and the Ray-Kallay duo) on the most ambitious piece, *COUNTING*, itself a small anthology of contrasting styles.

Not surprisingly for a composer whose doctoral dissertation concerned the music of Andriessen, Igor Stravinsky, and Prince, Meites’ music is characterized by close attention to timbre and harmonic texture, at times mockingly simple rhythmic foundations, and by keen explorations of tonality.

Though he never settles into the postmodern ironies of the pasticheur, his compositions often move boldly yet carefully through phases that can, by turns, be atmospheric, grandiose, playful, elegiac, or simply stunning. And like Prince, Meites' melodic sense is pure, accessible, even "catchy" at times, though his greatest inheritance from the Purple One might be his ability to mix seemingly incongruent elements — think of the splashy, libidinous guitar solo over the vacant, robotic drum track in the opening of "When Doves Cry" — into a never-settled but always engaging whole.

The opening of *COUNTING*, a wall of brassy, brash Stravinskian fanfare, thrusts you into a Zeitgeist laced with crisis, headlines blaring that Biblical-scale powers are descending from the heavens in the guise of moneyed Fat Cats. This motif is juxtaposed — forming a sort of social dialectic — with syncopated woodwinds, piano, and hints of electric instrumentation that evoke the People, minds on trivialities and survival, skittering through the shadows of Art Nouveau skyscrapers. Meites, not afraid of modernist flourishes, brings us back to the late 1920s, when stock data rushed like salmon across the wires and Weegee raced across New York in a hijacked ambulance.

But shortly after two minutes, we are introduced to a quieter, reflective present: electric guitars counterposed with a loose cadre of solo woodwinds. Then, severing this dyad, the third major sonic element of the piece enters: a chorus of female voices that sweep like skeins of silk across the proceedings, an angelic encouragement imploring us

to resist the soul-leveling of being mere statistics: "Stand up and be counted." Jeremy Schmidt's poem "Censuspeak," which provides the text of *COUNTING*, shirks common lyrical effusions; instead, it is replete with bureaucratese, creating an internal tension — empty speech executed with passionate near-abandon — in the changeling, at times willowy, vocal textures.

COUNTING then revisits the opening motif, if anything with more throaty agitation, eventually leading to a metrically indeterminate passage in which jazzy bass and woodwinds spar with shattering piano clusters. The text of this middle section (the second stanza of Schmidt's poem) eschews all hints of subjectivity and becomes mere enumeration — "Nineteen seventy-three nine point two seven percent," the angels blithely intone. But in a last parry of the Biblical dark, the opening motif returns a third time, now mingled with tones of personal tragedy — macroeconomics scaling down to the human — finally emptying out into accents of fusion: a bit of funk guitar and bass augmented by flute and saxophone.

But suddenly: Meites' already vast musical vocabulary expands, as a frantic, squiggly saxophone solo — improvised by Patrick Shiroishi, another LA-based luminary — barks its recalcitrance over what seemed the matters-of-course. The comfortable interior of the jazz combo is eventually countered by the false promises of the pursuing angels as they sing a sort of warped Facebook users' agreement, promising that your "answers will only be used, and all particulars, for



statistical purposes and no other purpose.” Yeah, sure. In the final moments, a celeste’s delicate tintinnabulation leads us into the air, and we end at a standstill.

In *Cadere*, a stately, if ghostly, opening leads into sparse, rhythmic percussion figures, introducing us to an investigation of external, maybe even suburban, spaces. Shimmering strings threaten an Appalachian Spring, as if dawn were slowly rising to reveal a scene of Middle American bliss. Harpsichord and piano flurries slowly widen the scope, but then a cacophonous burst of strings intrude, insistently announcing that *Cadere* isn’t a meditation on rebirth at all — the focus, instead, collapses onto a silhouette of the Bates Motel perched next to a forgotten, crumbling ravine. Did we really see it?

“Cadere” means “to fall” in Latin; from it we get the words “accident,” “cadence,” and “cascade,” which is fitting, as the piece moves elegantly among the three: moments of tonal assurance — anchored by subtle quotations from Josquin des Prez’s 15th-century motet *Ave Maria, Virgo Serena* — keep us perched just above the edge of the mental abyss that is Norman’s basement. Remarkably subtle shifts in color characterize the last half: a haunting violin figure and tripping woodwinds, verging on atonality, contrast with a falling

piano line that softly, paradoxically, seems to aspire upward toward closure.

A piece for two pianos, *Sonance* starts sparsely, though eventually two melodic poles emerge, one lingering in the higher octaves, the other in the lower. Midway, fecund polyrhythms take the foreground, with an unhinged walking bass line shifting between octaves grounding the percussive, discordant chords that strike, parry, or seduce by turns, evoking Nancarrow strolling through Coyoacán dodging traffic while protecting his piano rolls. In the final moments, a new timbre is introduced in the form of slow, koto-sounding plucks of the piano wires, dissolving foreground and background, before sprightly figures in the higher registers lead us to the outro, a measured if aggressive descent into angular primitivism.

Fracture Mechanics starts with an ambient excursion into the breathier sides of the saxophone, but soon melodic lines metamorphose out of the harmonics like animals from forest mists. What follows is a propulsive, Schubert-inspired section that resembles the type of neoclassical score one might hear over a scene of a woman rushing through Hammacher Schlemmer trying to buy last-minute Christmas gifts while pursued by a Ginsu-wielding former lover. The whispering extended techniques return — our shopper in a brief period of

LSD flashback? The coda slows into a trickle of sound, as if the brief bursts of ambulatory life were but a dream after all.

To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief, inspired by the proto-absurdist 19th-century short story “Misery” by Chekov, starts with inky, sustained piano chords highlighted by sporadic color bursts. A viola line reminiscent of Schnittke taunts like a dance of the dead intruding upon a stolen evening in a bombed-out Ukrainian library. The viola trips between the upper and lower registers, never quite able to establish dominance, while the piano lurks behind the crumbling columns, amused but scornful. But there’s an underlying minimalism to the whole, as a basic two-note motif provides an ashy skeleton to the tripping sound clusters before becoming starved of variation and simply having to stop, like a set of train tracks in an abandoned mine.

The second movement of *To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief* starts with the viola and piano sparring to out-dissonance each other — not a florid argument, more a bickering over the last of the fresh produce. But soon we are compelled down darkened alleys — parries, shifts, quick sightings — as if in pursuit of the Third Man. The viola makes a stab at going it alone, but the minimal two-note melody has only herky-jerky, misaligned legs upon which to run. Spare piano figures shoot one last mote of light into the darkness, including final notes that suggest an antique music box running out of tension. We end with what could be the last bubbles of air escaping from the bottom of the pond.

Voyager Golden Record starts with a slow crescendo that introduces a loose commingling of timbres that echo, if not parody, James Milton Black’s Methodist hymn “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder,” but then it yokes itself to the beat of a hammered piano — a snippet sampled from an earlier composition by Meites — that operates as a coarse pulse over which a collage of voices and instruments start to swirl. Spectrally, the late Jimmy Carter intones the message sent with the Voyager disc into space: “We are attempting to survive our time, so that we may live into yours...” In fact, Carter never uttered these words, at least not in that order; the sample is the product of a feat of devilish editing by Meites, culled from audio of the former president.

This first half of *Voyager Golden Record* is the “Revolution No. 9” of the collection — at moments, the clamor nearly rises to the pitch of the giddy misreading of Stockhausen that was the *White Album*’s most controversial effort — but then, a little after two minutes, elegy takes over. Trumpet momentarily occupies the foreground, followed by a childlike melodic figure in the saxophone and flute playing together somewhere in the depths of the harmonics. “Let us labor for the Master / from the dawn till setting sun,” the returning strings implore, if through parched throats. Are we being mocked for our thoughtless march toward annihilation, or being lured back into innocence?

— Brian Kim Stefans

Censuspeak

by Jeremy A. Schmidt (2011)

Stand up, actual enumeration
stand up, every item—and all particulars required
stand up and be counted—esta es la nuestra—
it counts for more than you
stand, your answers will only be used for statistical
purposes and no other purpose
master address file—non-response follow-up—the whole
number of persons in each state—soon unaccountable—
print race, for example—and so—shall by law direct
a just and perfect enumeration

Seventeen nine-six—nineteen thirteen
twenty-one two-seven—nineteen twenty-eight—
eight point four
four—nineteen seventy three—
nine point two seven percent—nineteen eighty
fourteen point seven-three—nineteen eighty-eight—
twelve point seven six percent—nineteen ninety-one
fourteen point three zero percent—nineteen ninety-two
sixteen point three seven percent in
nineteen ninety-eight
and eighteen point zero zero percent of income
to the top one percent—two-thousand ten

Every item of information
every family within each district, and not otherwise
every dwelling-house—actual inquiry—
randomly selected sample
every subsequent term of ten years, a just a perfect
enumeration, in such manner
answers will only be used, and all particulars
for statistical purposes and no other purpose
each and every item, looked up in perfect silence
according to their respective numbers



Noted for his “lyricism and complexity” (*SF Classical Voice*), composer **Noah Meites** (b. 1982) writes dramatic, often rhythmically charged music that forges unexpected connections across musical traditions and historical eras. Born and raised in the city of Chicago, Meites draws on wide-ranging interests in literature, visual art, and the natural world to create music that is both viscerally engaging and intellectually probing, inviting listeners to hear familiar materials in new and often surprising ways.

His music has received national recognition from BMI, New Music USA, and SCI/ASCAP, and has been presented by organizations including the LA Phil, ISCM World (New) Music Days in Miami, June in Buffalo, the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music, Tuesdays@Monk Space, the Carlsbad Music Festival, the Pacific Rim Music Festival, the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. He has been a resident artist at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Banff Centre, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the Avaloch Farm Music Institute. Recent commissions include works for Vicki Ray / Piano Spheres, New Thread Quartet, Brightwork New Music, HOCKET, Aperture Duo, and Arkora.

He is a co-founder of LA Signal Lab, a composer-performer collective formed with Hitomi Oba, Nick DePinna, and Dan

Marschak, dedicated to presenting stylistically diverse work with a particular emphasis on the intersection of improvised and pre-composed music.

His principal teachers include Paul Nauert, Hi Kyung Kim, and Louis Andriessen, with whom he worked closely in Amsterdam as one of the Dutch composer's final students. He holds master's and doctoral degrees in music from UC Santa Cruz, where his dissertation examined affinities between the musics of Andriessen, Igor Stravinsky, and Prince through the lens of Bertolt Brecht's dramaturgical theories. He also holds a degree in English literature from Brown University — where he received the Weston Prize for instrumental performance — and a performance certificate in jazz trumpet from the Centre des Musiques Didier Lockwood in Dammarie-lès-Lys, France.

Meites serves on the faculties of the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and the Colburn Conservatory of Music. He lives in the Franklin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles with his wife, Linnea Powell, their daughters Zoe and Daisy, and their dog Bowie. He probably wishes he were playing tennis right now.

Brightwork Ensemble is a classical new music septet based in Los Angeles, California. A flexible and fearless group of world-class musicians, Brightwork consists of piano, violin, soprano, cello, flute, clarinet, percussion (an instrumentation which is often called “Pierrot + percussion,” and which is to modern chamber music what the string quartet was to earlier

centuries), and champions the best of the music that's being written today, while continuing to play the classics of “new” music from the last hundred years.

We play the music we love, whether this is one of our favorite masterworks of the 20th century, or the latest dazzling score from a composer whose music we just discovered. What the listener can expect at a Brightwork concert—at the very least—is exciting, emotionally engaging music presented in state-of-the-art performances. Brightwork seeks to draw the audience into the creative process.

HOCKET is a Los Angeles-based piano duo whose work continues to shape contemporary music through an enduring body of performances, commissions, and recordings. Lauded as “brilliant” by Mark Swed in the *Los Angeles Times* and as an “adventurous young ensemble” by *The New Yorker*, HOCKET was formed by pianist-composers Sarah Gibson (1986–2024) and Thomas Kotcheff, whose shared commitment to commissioning and performing new music defined the ensemble's artistic voice.

Together, they performed at leading festivals and venues across the United States, including the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA, MATA Festival in New York City, the Center for New Music in San Francisco, the Carlsbad Music Festival, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Noon to Midnight Festival. HOCKET premiered over one hundred chamber and duo works and collaborated with leading new-music ensembles including Eighth Blackbird

and the Bang on a Can All-Stars. They performed concerti with the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, USC Thornton Edge, Oberlin Sinfonietta, and the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra.

HOCKET has received grants from the Presser Foundation and The Earle Brown Music Foundation and was selected for Firebird Ensemble's Outstanding Young Artists Initiative and Eighth Blackbird's Blackbird Creative Lab. The ensemble was a Piano Spheres core artist and a performing artist on the Schoenhut Piano Company Artist Roster.

New Thread Quartet was formed with the mission to develop and perform impactful new music for the saxophone, and to provide high level ensemble playing to feature today's compositional voices. In 14 seasons, the quartet has commissioned and premiered over 150 new works at such venues as Carnegie Hall, Roulette, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Morgan Library, Bang on a Can Summer Festival Benefit, and Monadnock Music. New Thread has performed its annual fall Explorations and spring Electric Sax Series at Manhattan's Dimenna Center and Cell Theater.

Based in New York City, New Thread regularly conducts masterclasses, residencies, and performances for student saxophonists and composers at Peabody Conservatory, University of Virginia, Berklee Conservatory, the University of California Los Angeles, Amherst College, and New York University. The quartet has recorded on New World Records,

Innova, and New Focus Recordings. New Thread is a presenting partner of Composers Now.

Linnea Powell enjoys a multifaceted career as a freelance chamber, orchestral, and studio violist in the Los Angeles area. An avid interpreter and champion of new music, Linnea is a member of the GRAMMY-nominated ensemble Wild Up and often performs with Monday Evening Concerts, WasteLAnd, Brightwork Ensemble, and the Salastina Music Society.

Along with violinist Adrienne Pope, Linnea has commissioned over 24 new works for violin and viola as the co-founder and violist of Aperture Duo. The LA-based ensemble has been featured in contemporary music festivals throughout Southern California and regularly works alongside emerging composers in educational residencies. Aperture Duo has been featured in Chamber Music Magazine, was a 2021 recipient of the Fromm Foundation Commission, and their self-titled debut album, released in 2021 on Populist Records, was listed in *Best of Bandcamp*.

Linnea regularly serves as Principal Viola for touring Broadway productions at the Ahmanson and Pantages Theater. She has recorded and performed with such legendary artists as Bjork, The Beatles, John Williams, and Van Dyke Parks, and records frequently for the film and television industry.

richi valitutto is a Grammy-nominated piano soloist, chamber musician, and vocal accompanist. Described as “a keyboard superstar” (*The New Yorker*) and as a “vigorously virtuosic,” “all around go-to new music specialist” (*LA Times*), their soloistic charisma, flexible collaborative artistry, and inquisitive scholarship distinguish them as a performer with a dynamic spirit and openness to experimentation, interdisciplinarity, and creative reflection. They have collaborated and performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company, Tiny Desk Concerts, PBS Great Performances, Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, and the American Academy in Rome, among many others.

Their debut solo album of contemporary premieres, *nocturnes & lullabies* (New Focus Recordings) was released in March 2020 to critical acclaim. Since 2010, richi has been an original member of the Los Angeles ensemble Wild Up, most notably as “pianist, and resident [Julius] Eastman scholar” (*Vogue*), contributing their piano artistry, incisive writing, and tenacious research efforts to the ensemble’s ongoing, multi-volume Julius Eastman Anthology, dedicated to the late composer’s music. *richardvalitutto.net*

Described by the *LA Times* as a collective of “four young and versatile performer-composer new-music Trekkies who cross genres with the graceful ease of the USS Enterprise traversing galaxies,” **LA Signal Lab** was formed in 2015 by California-based composer/performers Noah Meites, Hitomi Oba, Dan Marschak, and Nick DePinna. Through

commissions, collaborations, performances, and recordings, LA Signal Lab is dedicated to promoting stylistically diverse new works with a focus on the intersection of improvised and pre-composed music.

LA Signal Lab is the recipient of grants from New Music USA, the Hugo and Christine Davise Fund for Contemporary Music, and has been an ensemble in residence at Avaloch Farm. They have performed and/or led masterclasses at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, Las Positas College, San Francisco’s Center for New Music, and SFCM’s Hot Air Festival. Their 2021 album, *Water and Power*, a collaboration with HOCKET and Aperture, was released on Orenda records.

Katherine Tzu-Lan Mann creates large-scale paintings and paper installations that examine mythology, identity, and landscape. She is the recipient of the Sustainable Arts Foundation grant, a Fulbright grant, the AIR Gallery and Lower East Side Printshop Keyholder Fellowships, and the Mayor’s Award and Hamiltonian Fellowship in Washington, D.C.

Some of the venues where she has shown her work include the Kreeger Museum, Academy Art Museum, Walters Art Museum, American University Museum, Tides Museum, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington, Tephra ICA, Rawls Museum, the U.S. consulate in the UAE, and the U.S. embassy in Cameroon.

Brian Kim Stefans is a poet, digital artist and researcher based in Los Angeles. He's published several books of poetry including *Free Space Comix* (1998), *What Is Said to the Poet Concerning Flowers* (2006) and most recently *For Trapped Things* (2023). A book of translations, *Festivals of Patience: The Verse Poems of Rimbaud*, appeared in 2021.

His poetry has appeared in several anthologies including *Best American Poetry 2004* and *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology*. Stefans's poetry has been translated into several languages including Chinese, Spanish, German, Swedish and Albanian. He was an early proponent of netart, and digital works such as *The Dreamlike of Letters* and *Kluge: A Meditation* have received wide acclaim.

Stefans is a Professor of English at UCLA where he teaches courses in poetry, experimental literature, and screenplay/media studies. arras.net



COUNTING was recorded between December 14th, 2021 and October 15th, 2022 at Evelyn & Mo Ostin Music Center
Sound engineer: Stuart Schenk
Mixing: Brian Montgomery
Mastering: Zach Herzen
Text: “Censuspeak” (2011) by Jeremy A. Schmidt

Cadere was recorded October 15th, 2021 at Evelyn & Mo Ostin Music Center
Sound engineer: Sergey Parfenov
Mixing and mastering: Zach Herzen

Sonance was recorded November 19th, 2021 at Zipper Hall
Sound engineer: Francesco Perlangeli
Mixing and mastering: Zach Herzen

Fracture Mechanics was recorded January 29th, 2023 at Evelyn & Mo Ostin Music Center
Sound engineer: Sergey Parfenov
Mixing and mastering: Zach Herzen

To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief was recorded June 8th, 2022 at Zipper Hall
Sound engineer: Sergey Parfenov
Editing: Nick DePinna and Noah Meites
Mixing and mastering: Zach Herzen

Voyager Golden Record was recorded November 11th, 2017 and June 3rd, 2023 at Grandma’s Dojo and Evelyn & Mo Ostin Music Center
Sound engineers: Miles Senzaki and Nick DePinna
Editing: Nick DePinna and Noah Meites
Mixing and mastering: Zach Herzen

Recording producer: Nick DePinna

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