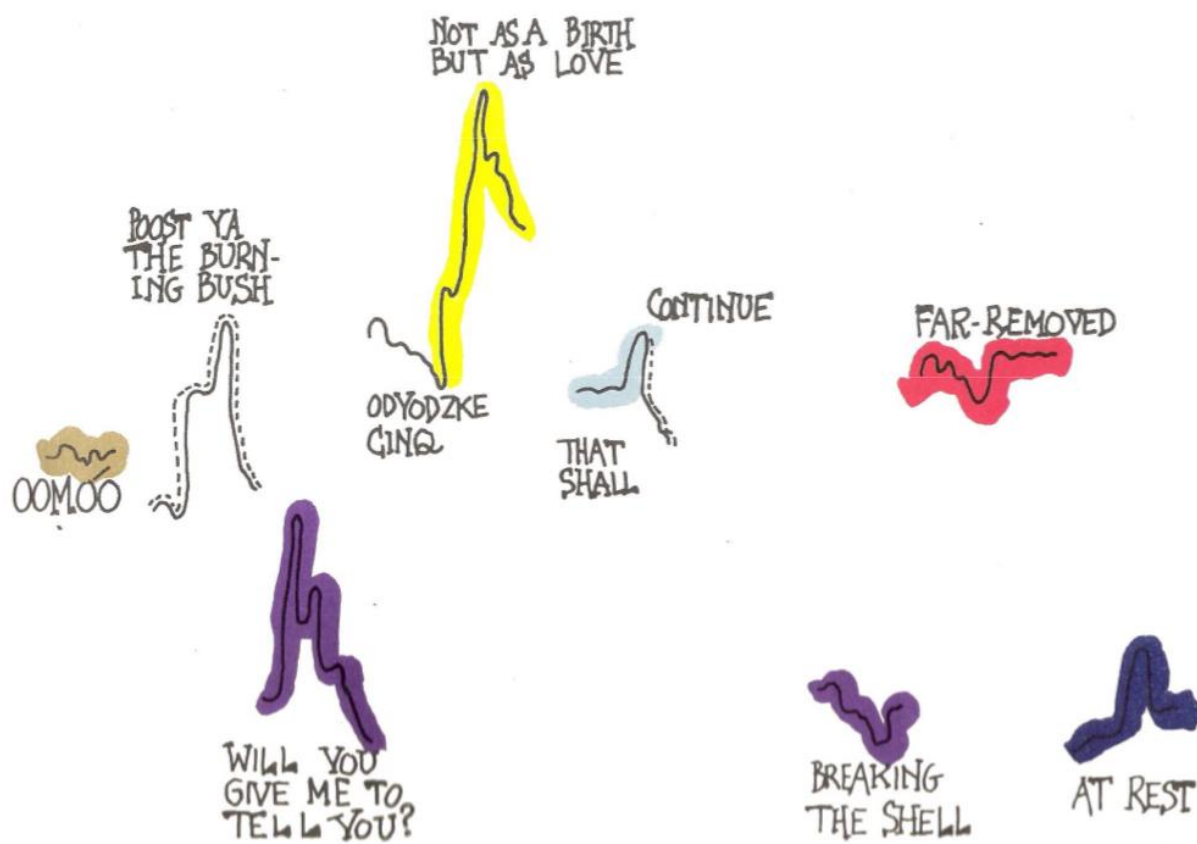




PHONICS

October 25th, 2025

7pm

1920 Thayer Ave.

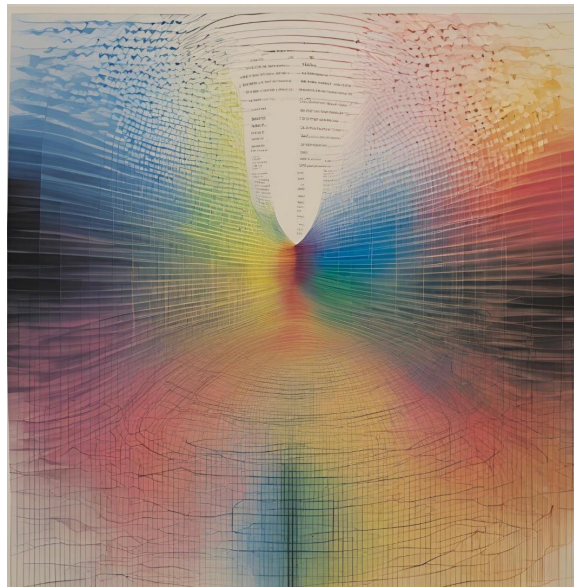
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Welcome to Spectra, a concert series where programming is prismatic. Each program refracts a theme into a spectrum of musical perspectives and celebrates the unique field that emerges. Our present mission is to illuminate resonant conversations between the vast aesthetic currents/compositional practices of music across history and to create an inclusive space for musicians and audiences to connect and inspire each other. Our long-term vision is to queer the presentation of “art” music by prioritizing the fluidity of relation over the rigidity of canon.

Donations are greatly appreciated to compensate the professional musicians performing, offset production costs, and support Spectra’s future performance projects. Please consider giving what you can, either in person at the concert or through our [Venmo page](#) or [GoFundMe](#).

Finally, we would love to hear from you about your concert experience and stay connected. Please connect with us via [Instagram](#) or our [website](#). Visit our [YouTube channel](#) for recordings of previous concerts.

Thank you for being here. Please join us afterwards for refreshments!



“Go Away” from *Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say*

Kate Soper
(b. 1981)

Yekaterina Lynch, soprano
Emma McCartney, flute

De Profundis

Frederic Rzewski
(1938-2021)

Alexandre Tchaikovsky, piano

Intermission

Aria

John Cage
(1912-1992)

Yekaterina Lynch, soprano

soshi so\$\$\$hi

Peter S. Shin
(b. 1991)

“Syllables” from *Harawi*

Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)

Yekaterina Lynch, soprano
Alexandre Tchaikovsky, piano

The Physics of Love

Alexandre Tchaikovsky
(b. 1997)

Alexandre Tchaikovsky, poet

Program Notes

Whether at the level of sentence, word, or syllable, language is inherently musical. An ode to our childhood discovery of vowels and consonants, PHONICS features works that amplify the rhythms and timbres of speech, each using a different medium of performance to convey the complex interaction between sound and sense.

Intention vs. Interpretation

“**Go Away**” by American composer **Kate Soper** is a setting of a text by Lydia Davis that interrogates the gap between what we say and what we mean. Throughout an obsessive, sprawling prose poem, a speaker attempts to interpret the emotional intention of a man saying “Go away and don’t come back.” Taken at face value, this phrase hurts, but to what degree are these words meant to make us feel hurt? What kind of anger prompted them, and can the anger be understood and empathized with in spite of the bluntness of its expression? Ultimately, we are left with the enigma that “only the words themselves mean what they say.”

Kate Soper’s precise and colorful counterpoint between the soprano and flute emphasizes every tiny emotional undercurrent in this text, using music to fill in the gaps that language has left. Through a variety of extended techniques and unexpected tempo and dynamic changes, the music deconstructs the intellectual, run-on sentences into visceral sounds and sudden reactions, revealing a powerful psychological portrait of the speaker and the hidden energy that underlies the words we choose to express ourselves.

A Letter From the Depths

From 1895-1897, Oscar Wilde was in prison, convicted of “gross indecency” for his gay relationships by a homophobic Victorian society. During this time, he wrote a 50,000-word letter addressed to his former friend and lover Lord Alfred Douglas as a way to cope, detailing the height and downfall of their relationship and reputation, the hardships of his present life, and the revelations he had while in solitude. Douglas, known affectionately as Bosie, cut ties with Wilde after he was sentenced, never personally wrote to Wilde, and was never sent the letter for fear that he would destroy it.

This letter, posthumously titled ***De Profundis***, was later set by the American composer **Frederic Rzewski** for speaking pianist. Across an intense 25-minute journey, the pianist recites portions of it while accompanying themselves, not only on the keyboard, but also through whistling, singing, humming, whispering, and other sound effects. In fact, the piece

opens with rhythmicized breathing, as if it were just born and trying to gather the energy to utter a first word. The passages of plain spoken word are in constant dialogue with these various accompaniments, creating a layered collage that captures the breadth of Wilde's experience from philosophical to animalistic, from comic to tragic, from manic to resolute. Yet, for all its theatrical drama, *De Profundis* is ultimately a work of spiritual healing, gradually inching toward internal peace from the depths of misery.

Shaping the Voice

Aria by American composer **John Cage** is an exercise in both vocal and linguistic virtuosity. The text — an eclectic amalgamation of words and phrases in Armenian, Russian, Italian, French, and English — is spaced out across an entirely graphic score for solo voice. Each linguistic unit is given its own wavy line to communicate its intonation, and each line is given a unique color that denotes a different style of singing. The work largely resists the representational qualities of language and instead highlights the momentary chemistry between vowels/consonants and vocal timbres, charting the sheer sonic possibility of the human voice.

A Pop Collage

Pop music is a vibrant genre that prioritizes the musicality of language. From rhyme, to repetition, to syncopation, to electronic vocal effects, pop artists are constantly trying to give the words we know a new, catchy sonic imprint. In his electronic work *soshi so\$\$\$hi*, second generation Korean-American composer **Peter S. Shin** creates a collage of spoken and sung soundbites taken from different girl groups in the Korean pop music market. The result is both a celebration of K-Pop's artistry, and a critique of its rigid commercial mold that has led to the exploitation of these groups' members. The work explores the complex line between art as a form of expression, and art as a form of capitalism. Read the composer's note below:

The word "baby" is one of the most frequented lyrics in K-Pop girl group songs, but that's also true for Beyonce, The Beatles, Prince, and Aretha Franklin. What differentiates K-Pop is the specific bubblegum pop sub-genre that exhibits the Korean concept of *aegyo* which is not so much of a personality, but a character that forces a cute, affectionate, and often humorous and flirtatious innocence—in other words, acting and sounding like a baby.

I sample interviews from *Music Bank*, one of Korea's broadcast music programs, where each performing group recites a formulaic countdown and answers questions

one-by-one in rapid fire succession before performing on stage. I take vocal snippets from love songs of women pining over men and obscure the gendered aural signifiers in a queering of a genre and society that falls behind in LGBTQ advocacy and visibility. From *aegyo* soundbites to bizarre and campy English lyrics, I used Meta's machine learning hybrid source separation software to isolate vocals from some of the most iconic and representative songs in this particular sub-genre by the following girl groups within the decade of 2010 to the present: SNSD (Girls' Generation), APink, GFriend, Red Velvet, TWICE, and STAYC. While scrutinizing the exploitation of these young women, the work also recognizes their individual artistries that continue to captivate their growing fandoms.

Symbols and Syllables

Harawi is French composer **Olivier Messiaen**'s final song cycle. Nearly an hour long in its entirety, the cycle is a tale of cosmic love, of lovers separated by death and reunited in the afterlife. Named after an Andean genre of love songs, it incorporates traditional folk melodies from the Andes and occasionally features words in Quechua, a family of indigenous languages from the South American region.

"**Syllables**," the ninth movement of the cycle, occurs just after the lovers have embraced their earthly deaths in "Adieu." Its text dissolves them into the eternal symbols of their love and a variety of Quechua syllables. The song alternates between warm, lyrical litanies of images like the "green dove" and the "double-violet," and ecstatic, dancing rhythmic sections that are like incantations to shed mortality and invoke a new spiritual realm. The intense, unsettling onomatopoeic power of the repeating syllables "pia pia pia" and "doundo tchil" is a testament to how language communicates feeling sonically, even when stripped of a semantic meaning.

The Physics of Love

I compiled an album of poems this past summer in a period of extraordinary creative flow. I say album rather than book in the sense that these poems are meant to be heard as much as read. Poetry's instrument is language, operating in both a visual dimension on the page, and a sonic dimension out loud. The aim of this performance is to synchronize those dimensions. Catch whatever meanings you can, but don't force them! — Alex

Texts

Kate Soper/Lydia Davis: "Go Away" from *Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say*

When he says, "Go away and don't come back," you are hurt by the words even though you know he does not mean what the words say, or rather you think he probably means "Go away" because he is so angry at you he does not want you anywhere near him right now, but you are quite sure he does not want you to stay away, he must want you to come back, either soon or later, depending on how quickly he may grow less angry during the time you are away, how he may remember other less angry feelings he often has for you that may soften his anger now. But though he does mean "Go away," he does not mean it as much as he means the anger that the words have in them, as he also means the anger in the words "don't come back." He means all the anger meant by someone who says such words and means what the words say, that you should not come back, ever, or rather he means most of the anger meant by such a person, for if he meant all the anger he would also mean what the words themselves say, that you should not come back, ever. But, being angry, if he were merely to say, "I'm very angry at you," you would not be as hurt as you are, or you would not be hurt at all, even though the degree of anger, if it could be measured, might be exactly the same. Or perhaps the degree of anger could not be the same. Or perhaps it could be the same but the anger would have to be of a different kind, a kind that could be shared as a problem, whereas this kind can be told only in these words he does not mean. So it is not the anger in these words that hurts you, but the fact that he chooses to say words to you that mean you should never come back, even though he does not mean what the words say, even though only the words themselves mean what they say.

Frederic Rzewski/Oscar Wilde: *De Profundis*

People point to Reading Gaol and say, 'That is where the artistic life leads a man.' Well, it might lead to worse places. Mechanical people to whom life is a shrewd speculation depending on calculation always know where they are going, and go there. They start with the ideal desire of being the parish beadle, and they succeed in being the parish beadle and no more. A man whose desire is to be something separate from himself, succeeds in being what he wants to be. That is his punishment. Those who want a mask have to wear it.

But with the dynamic forces of life, it is different. People who desire self-realisation never know where they are going. They can't know. To recognise that the soul of a man is unknowable, is the ultimate achievement of wisdom. The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?

We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken. We are specially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. On November 13th, 1895, I was brought down here from London. From two o'clock till half-past two on that day I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress, and handcuffed, for the world to look at. When people saw me they laughed. Each train swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob.

For a year I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time. In prison tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy.

Morality does not help me. I am a born antinomian. I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for laws.

Religion does not help me. The faith that others give to what is unseen, I give to what one can touch, and look at.

Reason does not help me. It tells me that the laws under which I am convicted and the system under which I have suffered are wrong and unjust. But, somehow, I have got to make both of these things just and right to me. I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes, the harsh orders, the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—each and all of these things I have to transform into a spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualising of the soul.

I have no desire to complain. One of the many lessons that one learns in prison is that things are what they are and will be what they will be. Suffering is one very long moment. We cannot divide it by seasons. We can only record its moods, and chronicle their return. With us time itself does not progress. It revolves. It seems to circle round one centre of pain.

For us there is only one season, the season of sorrow. The very sun and moon seem taken from us. Outside, the day may be blue and gold, but the light that creeps down through the thick glass of the small iron-barred window is grey. It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always twilight in one's heart. And in the sphere of thought, no less than in the sphere of time, motion is no more.

We who live in prison, and in whose lives there is no event but sorrow, have to measure time by throbs of pain, and the record of bitter moments. We have nothing else to think of. Suffering is the means by which we exist, because it is the only means by which we become conscious of existing, and the remembrance of suffering in the past is necessary to us as the evidence of our continued identity. Between myself and the memory of joy lies a gulf no less deep than that between myself and joy in its actuality.

So much in this place do men live by pain that my friendship with you, in the way in which I am forced to remember it, appears to me always as a prelude consonant with those varying modes of anguish which each day I have to realise; as though my life had been a Symphony of Sorrow, passing through its rhythmically linked movements to its certain resolution.

The memory of our friendship is the shadow that walks with me: that seems never to leave me: that wakes me up at night to tell the same story over and over: at dawn it begins again: it follows me into the prison yard and makes

me talk to myself as I tramp round: each detail that accompanied each dreadful moment I am forced to recall: there is nothing that happened in those ill-starred years that I cannot recreate in that chamber of the brain which is set apart for grief or for despair: every strained note of your voice, every twitch and gesture of your nervous hands, every bitter word, every poisonous phrase comes back to me: I remember the street or river down which we passed, the wall or woodland that surrounded us, at what figure on the dial stood the hands of the clock, which way went the wings of the wind, the shape and colour of the moon.

The gods are strange. It is not our vices only they make instruments to scourge us. They bring us to ruin through what in us is good, gentle, humane, loving.

Love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world. If the world has been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love, because in no other way could the soul of man reach perfection.

Far off, like a perfect pearl, one can see the city of God. It is so wonderful that it seems as if a child could reach it in a summer's day. And so a child could. But with me and such as me it is different. One can realise a thing in a single moment, but one loses it in the long hours that follow with leaden feet. We think in eternity, but we move slowly through time; and how slowly time goes with us who lie in prison I need not tell again.

I hope to live long enough and to produce work of such a character that I shall be able at the end of my days to say, 'Yes! this is just where the artistic life leads a man!' For the last seven or eight months, in spite of a succession of great troubles reaching me from the outside world almost without intermission, I have been placed in direct contact with a new spirit working in this prison through man and things, that has helped me beyond words: so that while for the first year of my imprisonment I did nothing else, and can remember doing nothing else, but wring my hands in despair, and say, 'What an ending, what an appalling ending!' now I try to say to myself, and sometimes when I am not torturing myself do really say, 'What a beginning, what a wonderful beginning!'

Olivier Messiaen, "Syllables" from *Harawi*

9 Syllables

Colombe, colombe verte,
Le chiffre cinq à toi,
La violette double doublera,
Tres loin, tout bas.

O mon ciel tu fleuris,
Piroutcha mia!
O déplions du ciel,
Piroutcha mia!
O fleurissons de l'eau,
Piroutcha mia!

Kahi pipas, mahi pipas...
Pia pia pia pia... doundou tchil...
Tout bas.

9 Syllables

Dove, green dove,
The figure five for you,
The double-violet will double,
Very far away, in a low voice.

O my heaven, you bloom,
Piroutcha mia!
O, let's unfold a piece of sky,
Piroutcha mia!
O let's flower a bloom of water,
Piroutcha mia!

Kahi pipas, mahi pipas...
Pia pia pia pia... doundou tchil...
In a low voice.

Artist Bios

Alexandre Tchaykov

Alexandre Tchaykov is a Bulgarian pianist and poet devoted to the exploration of contemporary musical idioms and interdisciplinary discourses. He holds degrees from UCLA (DMA), Northwestern University (MM), and UGA (BM and BA English). A passionate teacher, he leads a private piano studio and has served as an instructor for college courses in musicianship, music history, and music appreciation. His dissertation and recent recital program, [“LYRIC: An Ode to Poetry and Song,”](#) assess the conceptual overlap between poetic and musical expression. Over the years, he has held fellowships at several renowned music festivals, including Tanglewood, New Music on the Point, and Kneisel Hall. When he isn’t practicing, teaching, or writing, you can find him baking in the kitchen or wandering in nature.

Yekaterina Lynch

Yekaterina Lynch is a California-based soprano and graduate of UCLA’s Herb Alpert School of Music. She previously trained at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music’s Pre-College Program and studied at the Odessa Conservatory in Ukraine. At UCLA, she was a recipient of both the Elaine Krown Klein and Mimi Alpert Feldman Scholarships.

Yekaterina recently covered the principal role of Maria in the world premiere of *The Grand Hotel Tartarus* by Richard Danielpour (2024). Her performance credits include Echo in the premiere of Kay Rhie’s *Quake* (2023) and Damon in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*. Partial roles include Meg (Falstaff), Mère Marie (*Dialogues of the Carmelites*), and Rosalinda (*Die Fledermaus*).

A passionate advocate for contemporary music, Yekaterina most recently gave a performance of Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire* in celebration of the composer’s 150th anniversary, held at Schoenberg Hall. She also served as Music Director of Con Brio, a student-led string orchestra at UCLA, for two years and as Associate Director for Opera UCLA’s spring production of Handel’s *Rodrigo*. This fall, Yekaterina will also be the Assistant Director on *Turn of the Screw* with Opera UCLA.

Emma McCartney

Emma McCartney is a Los Angeles based flutist from St Paul, MN. She is a dedicated performer of new music and regularly performed with USC Thornton Edge while at USC. She has also attended the Montreal Contemporary Music Lab, the Toronto Creative Music Lab, New Music on the Point, and soundSCAPE as a performer. She won 2nd place at the 2017 NFA orchestral excerpts competition, and was a semi finalist for the Plowman Competition in 2019 with her USC Woodwind Quintet. Emma has a bachelors degree in flute performance from DePaul University, and a masters and graduate certificate from the University of Southern California.