



presents

Joel Chapman's

Interdependence

World premiere

Saturday, February 13, 2021

5:30 PM Pacific Standard Time

Volti

Robert Geary, Artistic Director

Sopranos

Yuhi Aizawa Combatti
Victoria Fraser
Andrea Mich
Colby Smith

Altos

Monica Frame
Rachel Rush
Blythe Tai
Celeste Winant

Tenors

Ben Barr
Will Betts
Kevin Gino
Tim Silva

Basses

Sidney Chen
Nica Dennis
Eric Newell
Philip Saunders

Interdependence

Music, lyrics and video direction by Joel Chapman

Executive Producer: Barbara Heroux
Technical Consultant: Andrew Forsythe

Composer's Note:

Needing help is not a burden. In fact, it can be quite connecting.

There's a wisdom in disability that I have picked up from disabled ancestors before me and understand within my own disabled body: help is ok. I don't have to do it myself. Our mistakenly celebrated cult of independence is not the only answer. We are in this together.

Choirs, too, understand the beauty of interdependence. In fact, the art of choral music is deeply entrenched in community and help. Sometimes, when I know I can't hold a note for long enough, I'll work with my section partner to figure out a staggered breath plan: In the first half of the measure, I'll breathe. In the second, they will. That's interdependence.

There's a relief that comes with the radical acceptance of "I can't do that," and if there's one thing I want audiences to take away from this piece, it's an inching toward that practice.

Worthiness is not a function of what we can or cannot do.

"Interdependence" is broken into four sections, sung live on the internet by four quartets. Each of the four sections takes us through time from Spring to Winter, mirroring our collective understanding of pandemic isolation, which started in the spring and continues now, at the time of this premiere, in the dead of winter. We all sort of understand what it means to be "alone for a year" now, and one thing we no longer have is the popping up of random, happenstance, fleeting spots of interdependence. Hello in the hallway. "Hey can you help me with this for a sec?" "What do you think of this?"

Each live movement has a visual or auditory connection to interdependence. In "**Spring**," everyone is swiffering, cleaning, dusting. One singer drops their swiffer — the others help them. The singer can't quite reach a spot while dusting — the others help. In "**Summer**," a singer constantly drifts toward existential dread, complete boredom, and anxiety — the others help them. In "**Fall**," each singer on the screen is the head or the body of another singer. And in "**Winter**," a singer thinks they are alone, until another brings them soup. Sprinkled throughout this piece are themes of "reaching" and "falling," which may apply lightly to my own experience, but there are universal threads within each concept.

The live movements are connected by pre-recorded vignettes that further explore interdependence in choral music.

Pandemic isolation has hit a lot of disabled folks hard, and I think it's important to remember that the very same needs of care expressed within this piece — which are sometimes presented with levity — are quite urgent when applied to needs for functional, daily care. Disabled and nondisabled folks alike participate in interdependence, but it may look very different. Further, my own cis-white-disabled-male relationship with interdependence is different than trans disabled, BIPOC disabled, and other multiply marginalized disabled folks. Interdependence is much bigger than me, it is much bigger than this piece, and it is much bigger than Volti.

This piece is not about disabled experience. It is a celebration of interdependent joy. It is my own access point to interdependence, which I would like to share with you, but it is not the only one. It is my reminder to myself; to my communities; to my disabled and nondisabled siblings: we are all worthy regardless of what we can or cannot do. Help is not a burden. Help is healing. We can do this with a little laughter, a dose of honesty, and a bit of togetherness.

We've been adrift in the isolation that the winter expected to bring, but while we sing, we're interconnected 'til spring.

Much love,
Joel Chapman (he/him)

1. INTRO

There are things I can do
There are things I can't do
Maybe it's true for you too

Oh the things that I miss
If I might reminisce

(Maybe it's true for you too)

Feeling choir-y blisses
And it's almost what this is
(Oh the things that I miss
If I might reminisce)

There are songs I can sing
There are songs I can't sing
Maybe it's true for you too.

2. SPRING

without words

3. SUMMER

without words

4. FALL

In the autumn
As the leaves fall to the bottom

I remember
Raking leaf piles in November

(Oh the things that I miss)

Rolling sleeves up
Throwing all the heaps of leaves up
High into sky they'd fall
I would get a face full

If I fall too
I won't be as graceful

5. WINTER

Midwinter
I'm sludgy as stew
Unlike the spring when the thing felt brand-new
I'm creaky I'm weak there are things I can't do

Midwinter
Alone for a year

Sheltered from raindrop and aerosol
But who picks me up when I fall

If I can't reach you
Who picks up

Midwinter

"Sorry I was making a stew
I'm still here for you"

So I'm not on my own
"You're just singing to us on a phone"

MEET THE ARTISTS

Joel Chapman (he/him) is a San Francisco-based songwriter, bass-baritone, and conductor. Joel's passion is in new works development: in addition to singing regularly with Volti, he is co-creator of *Gravity, a New(tonian) Musical*, finalist in the 2017 O'Neill National Music Theater Conference and most recently seen at the Brava Theater in 2019. His works have been performed throughout the Bay Area, and he has an upcoming commission to compose art songs for [The Young Activists' Songbook](#). Theatrical credits include *Utopia* by Charles Mee—a 2020 world premiere (dance composer/Bob, Cutting Ball Theater); *A Christmas Carol* (music director, American Conservatory Theater); *Piaf Lives* (Voice, The Green Room 42); *Tinderella* (music director/orchestrator, The Custom Made Theatre Company & Faultline Theater); a particularly gritty *Sweeney Todd* at the Exit Theater (music director & Judge Turpin, San Francisco Bay Area Theater Company); and his favorite show of all time, *Sunday in the Park with George* (music director, Stanford University). Joel fights passionately for accessibility and loves public transit. | joelchapmanmusic.com



Robert Geary, founding Artistic Director of Volti, the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival, also serves as Artistic Director of the San Francisco Choral Society. His multi-dimensional commitment to the choral arts over more than forty years has led him and his choirs to national and international prominence. Under his direction since its founding in 1979, Volti has become recognized as one of the most important and accomplished new music ensembles in the USA.

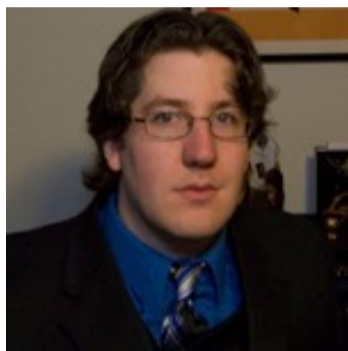
For 37 years, until stepping down as Artistic Director in 2019, Geary oversaw the development of the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, an innovative education and performance program whose record of success in competition is at the highest international standard. With his guiding vision, the Golden Gate International Children's and Youth Choral Festival has become part of the international choral environment, bringing thousands of young singers from dozens of countries to California for a thrilling series of performances and competitions. For more than 25 years he has led the San Francisco Choral Society to a robust position as a keeper of the traditional repertoire and an innovative force in the commissioning and performance of new works for chorus and orchestra.

Geary's dedication to today's choral music has encouraged the careers of several leading composers and has led to more than 200 new works. He has conducted and served as a clinician in dozens of countries. His choirs have performed with symphony orchestras and opera companies and for many musical conferences and festivals, both internationally and here in the United States, and can be heard on recordings with many labels. Geary has prepared choirs for leading conductors including JoAnn Falletta, Helmuth Rilling, Robert Shaw, Kurt Herbert Adler, Edo de Waart, Krzysztof Penderecki, Herbert Blomstedt, Dale Warland, Kent Nagano, Michael Morgan, Michael Tilson Thomas, Ludovic Morlot, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

THE VOLTI SINGERS



Ben Barr, tenor, has been singing off-and-on with Volti since 1992. He received his B.A. in Vocal Performance in 1994 from San Francisco State University. He has been seen on the stages of the Lamplighters, West Bay Opera, Santa Cruz Opera, and other companies, although it has been a few years since he slapped on the grease paint. He is the father of three wonderful children, and the husband to the most amazing wife ever. He is also the owner of B-Squared Consulting, a firm that specializes in tech support for small businesses.



Will Betts studied low brass and voice while at the University of the Pacific, graduating with a degree in Music Management. As a singer, he has performed with a variety of ensembles throughout the Bay Area, including AVE, Clerestory, Volti, and the Kronos and Saint Lawrence String Quartets, and has toured internationally with Pacific Boychoir Academy and The Choir of Oxford. In his other life as a jazz trombonist, he has performed with such artists as Dave Brubeck, Christian McBride, Phil Woods, and Wayne Bergeron. During the day, Will works as the manager of the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra.



Sidney Chen, bass-baritone, specializes in the creation of new music for voice. He performs with Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble, most recently in Monk's music-theater work *On Behalf of Nature*, which toured internationally and was recorded for ECM Records. In recent seasons he has premiered Ryan Brown's "medical oratorio" *Mortal Lessons*; performed in the 2018 Other Minds Festival; collaborated with the Friction Quartet on a collection of new works for vocal quartet and string quartet; toured to Denmark with SF Lyric Opera's production of *the little match girl passion* by David Lang; and performed Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* for eight voices and orchestra at the Mondavi Center. He is a co-founder of The M6, a New York-based vocal sextet, and a member of the nine-voice ensemble Clerestory. He has performed with Volti since 2000.



Yuhi Aizawa Combatti, a Japan-native soprano, is recognized for her clear timbre and keen musicianship in repertoire ranging from Renaissance to Contemporary. Yuhi has performed with orchestras and chamber ensembles in the United States and Japan including the Kronos Quartet, the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Berkeley Symphony. A passionate advocate of new music, Yuhi was a featured soloist for the West Coast premiere of Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* with UC Davis Orchestra in 2015, and has enjoyed premiering works by a multitude of composers as a member of Volti. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Westminster Choir College.



Nica Dennis is a Bay Area native vocalist and multi-instrumentalist. An alumna of SF State University's diverse music department, Nica has studied, composed and performed in the contexts of opera, symphonic and chamber music, funk, bluegrass, jazz, Latin, and musical theater, among others. In 2014 she was the recipient of the coveted Edwin Barlow Award for her appearance in that year's NATS Bay Area singing festival, and she has performed as a soloist with San Francisco's Phenix Opera Company. She performs with the Bay Area's most distinguished vocal ensembles, including Volti, Cappella, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus.



While Monica Frame, mezzo soprano, has sung with ensembles ranging from the National Chamber Choir of Israel to the San Francisco Choral Artists, her singing on Valve electronic games and commercials enjoy the most YouTube hits. She is the alto soloist and section leader at Saint Mary Magdalene Catholic Church in Berkeley. A licensed psychotherapist, Monica specializes in school-based mental health services, and she particularly enjoys providing services to music education organizations such as the Crowden School and the San Francisco Girls Chorus. Monica is deeply grateful for the regular opportunity Volti gives her to collaborate with composers in what she thinks of as a form of musical midwifery.



Born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, soprano Victoria Fraser holds degrees from the Smith College, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, University of Notre Dame, and University of Limerick in Ireland. She has performed as a soloist and chorister in Europe and North America. She has sung under the direction of Masaaki Suzuki, Helmut Rilling, Matthew Halls, John Nelson, and Jeffrey Thomas. Passionate about interdisciplinary performance, Victoria composes pieces and produces concerts which re-contextualize classical music through visual art, dance, and technology. Born to a mountaineer father, Victoria loves to ski, rock climb, mountain bike, hike, SCUBA dive, and row.



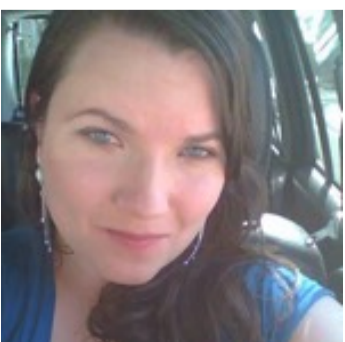
American-Filipino Tenor Kevin Gino is proud and excited to join Volti during this season. Originally from Los Angeles, Gino has been privileged to sing with ensembles such as Cal Bach Society, Marin Baroque, Pocket Opera, Ars Minerva, the SF Opera Chorus, and the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra since he moved to San Francisco. A proud alumnus of the SF Conservatory of Music and Music Academy of the West, Kevin enjoys discovering works that challenge him, old and new. When he isn't creating, he is at home playing video games or outside enjoying his coffee in the beautiful Bay Area.



Andrea Mich, soprano, earned her Bachelor's degrees in Music and in Molecular and Cellular Biology from UC Berkeley, where she was actively involved in Perfect Fifth, Chamber Chorus and Symphony Orchestra. She frequently performs throughout the Bay Area as both a soprano and a flautist, in chamber ensembles and as a soloist, and has performed under the batons of Gustavo Dudamel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Marin Alsop, among others. When not performing, Andrea works as a product manager for laboratory software, and does her own experiments through baking pastries and cakes.



Bass-baritone Eric Newell, hailing from Nashville, Tennessee, is the Director of Choirs at the Kirby School in Santa Cruz, where he conducts four ensembles and teaches various other music classes. He has sung in a variety of solo and choral settings, performing with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, the Atlanta Master Chorale, and at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC. Eric has degrees in business administration from Emory University and choral conducting from the University of Georgia, and is excited to begin performing new music on the west coast with Volti in 2020.



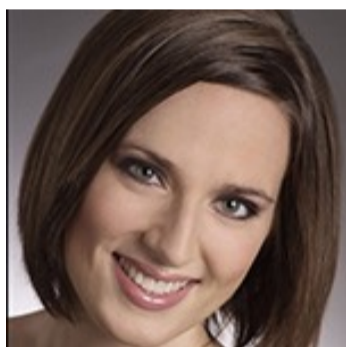
Rachel Rush, mezzo-soprano, is in her sixth season with Volti. A Bay Area native, she completed her B.A. in music at UC Santa Cruz in 2013, where she appeared as a soloist with several ensembles and sang roles in the UCSC opera program. Recently she has appeared with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's New Music Ensemble, served as faculty for Volti's Choral Institute for high school singers, and participated in the American Bach Soloists Academy, as well as singing with Bay Area opera companies including Opera Parallèle and West Edge Opera. She is currently the alto section leader at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Francisco.



Philip Saunders, who has sung low bass for Volti for more than twenty seasons, studied trombone and voice at Indiana University. He played four years for the Fresno Philharmonic, and in various Los Angeles and San Francisco area orchestras. He sang with the Fresno Lyric Opera, Los Angeles Opera Chorus, L.A. Master Chorale, S.F. Symphony Chorus, Creative Voices, AVE and the Josquin Singers, and has twice been guest soloist at the Mendocino Music Festival. He is the bass soloist and Assistant Music Director for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Oakland (for whom he has composed two masses and several motets), and is a founding member of Pacific Collegium. He works with computers to keep the lights on.



Tim Silva, tenor, is a proud native of the East Bay. When he's not making art, he's playing with plants. He sings regularly with Volti and Gaude. He recently appeared as a soloist with the California Bach Society. Tim is an assistant conductor for the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choirs, and music director of the Throckmorton Theatre Chorus. He has performed and/or recorded with Artists' Vocal Ensemble, Briget Boyle, Chalice Consort, Foreignfire, Iron Henry, Katy Stephan, Kronos Quartet, Marin Symphony, Michael Bang, Nick Hours, ODC/Dance, Russian National Orchestra, San Francisco Choral Artists, and others.



Colby Smith has had the privilege of performing across the United States with celebrated ensembles such as New York Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, New Century Chamber Orchestra, and The Knights while at the Ojai Music Festival. Her interest in new music was sparked in 2008 while performing at the Spoleto Festival in Anthony Davis' opera *Amistad*. As a member of Volti since 2012, she has continued to explore the complexity of new music and joy of collaborating with composers. A proud New Jersey native, Colby earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Westminster Choir College.



Blythe Tai is a mezzo-soprano who has been singing with Bay Area choirs for over 25 years. In addition to Volti, she currently sings with the chamber choir Convivium. Recently, she has been an ensemble member and featured soloist with local groups such as Opera San Jose, Bay Area Classical Harmonies, the San Francisco Lyric Chorus, and Waffle Opera. Blythe is also an active volunteer for music arts organizations and was a founding member of Opera Theater Unlimited. Blythe studied music and English at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is a proud alumna of the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir.



Celeste Winant, in addition to Volti performs regularly with American Bach Soloists, Gaude, Philharmonia Chorale, and Vajra Voices. Her voice has been described by SF Classical Voice as "attractive", "a true, rich alto." She toured with SF Lyric Opera's critically-acclaimed production of David Lang's *the little match girl passion* in Denmark, and was featured in the vocal octet for Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* with the UC Davis Symphony in 2015. She has also recently soloed with the UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus, North Valley Chamber Chorale (Chico), Grace Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys, and the Stanford University Singers. In addition to her singing, Celeste received her Ph.D. in physics in 2003 and presently is a research programmer in formal demography at UC Berkeley.

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2020
2021

*SINGING WITHOUT A NET
— ON THE INTERNET*

COMING UP NEXT

Saturday, April 24, 2021

5:30 PM Pacific time

Volti's next premiere

an as-yet-untitled work

by the composer/performer and media artist

Pamela Z

* * *

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