

VOXFIRE - Echoes

Album Artists

Samela Aird Beasom — voice, solo (6, 9, 12, 15, 21); spoken (16 & 22)

Christen Herman — voice, solo (4, 8, 10, 15, 17, 23); spoken (23)

Susan Judy — voice, solo (2, 4, 7, 11); spoken (20)

Shira Kammen — vielle, medieval harp

Nina Treadwell — theorbo, Baroque guitar

Linda Burman-Hall — harpsichord, organ

Amy Brodo — viola da gamba

Album Credits

Live concert recordings:

Santa Cruz Baroque Festival — Barry Phillips, engineer

Episcopal Cathedral Center of St Paul, Los Angeles, CA — Martin Herman, engineer

Grinnell College, Iowa

CD Mastering: James Neil, Neil Records, Pasadena, CA

Voxfire Photographs: Alexandra Palko

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Voxfire Story & Bios

Voxfire began as a professional vocal trio, with sopranos SAMELA AIRD BEASOM, CHRISTEN HERMAN and SUSAN JUDY each coming from a traditional classical background. From the beginning, the trio had a passion for exploring different styles and sound worlds, whether it was chant and part songs from the Middle Ages and Renaissance or compositions newly written for them. They enjoyed turning their audiences on to fresh, new, and rarely heard music.

To high acclaim, Los Angeles-based Voxfire has appeared widely in the western United States and beyond, crafting original early music concerts for festivals and series as varied as the Santa Cruz Baroque Festival, the Arcosanti Foundation Concert series, the J. Paul Getty Museum series, and the Pasadena Conservatory of Music *Mansions & Music* series. The trio has released two albums of their early music repertoire: "Songs to the Virgin" and a live-performance collection, "Echoes." In the contemporary realm, their performances have showcased their virtuosic skills in works such as Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" (sung one on a part), Steve Reich's "Tehillim;" and newly composed pieces written for the trio by Martin Herman and Edward Cansino.

After sharing their distinctive and soulful sound with audiences for years – either unaccompanied or with instruments appropriate for the ancient and modern repertoire – they wanted to branch out, and thought it might be compelling to blend the "old" with the "new."

Why not perform ancient music with modern instruments and harmonies?

In 2009 they began to realize this goal with the opportunity to do a concert highlighting songs from 14th-century Spain in collaboration with players of Middle Eastern instruments -- oud, Turkish clarinet, and hand drums. They were excited by the colorful sounds and invention that emerged from the marriage of East and West.

Entering the realm of improvisation was new and exciting.

The next step in their musical evolution was to go even more modern – both in instrumentation and the level of improvisation. They had an affection for the 14th-century songs they'd just performed, because the songs came from an interesting era – a time of relative religious tolerance, mixing of cultures and flourishing of the arts.

In 2015 they began working with composer/arranger players Ross Garren and Nick DePinna to explore ideas for arrangements, and all were ecstatic about what they were collectively coming up with – resetting and expanding their vocal lines while adding piano, harmonica, trombone, sax, percussion, layers of computer-generated riffs on their early music vocals...a lot of jazz, a dash of rock, a hint of experimental and who knows what else...in short, decisively non-14th century, absolutely genre defying.

Shattering notions and boundaries, the new Voxfire was born.

Voxfire – Bios

SAMELA AIRD BEASOM, a founding member of Voxfire, began her career as a soloist in Renaissance and Baroque repertoire, touring extensively throughout the United States and Japan with the Roger Wagner Chorale. She has since been featured with numerous other Los Angeles-based ensembles, including I Cantori, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, and L.A. Opera, for whom she has performed in over 100 productions. Samela has been a featured soloist at the Carmel Bach, Santa Cruz Baroque, Corona del Mar Baroque, and Ojai Festivals, and was one of the founding members and primary soloists of Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra. Her extensive studio work includes sessions for composers Hans Zimmer, Danny Elfman, James Horner, Jerry Goldsmith, James Newton Howard, Thomas Newman, and John Williams.

CHRISTEN HERMAN, mezzo-soprano, is a founding member of Voxfire. Known primarily for performing music written before 1750 and after 1950, she has appeared as a soloist with numerous California-based ensembles, including I Cantori, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Paulist Boy Choristers, Los Angeles Cambridge Singers, Millennium Consort, and Artists' Vocal Ensemble in San Francisco. She was featured in Long Beach Opera's production of Charpentier's *The Imaginary Invalid*, and in I Cantori's production of Hildegard von Bingen's chant-drama *Ordo Virtutum* in the lead role of *The Soul*. Recently, she performed with *Tonality*, a new vocal group dedicated to promoting social justice. Festival and series appearances include the Ojai, Santa Cruz Baroque, and Los Angeles Bach Festivals, Music at St. Matthew's, Armand Hammer Museum, and Colly Soleri Series at Arcosanti. In addition to film score solo and ensemble singing, she has performed and recorded premieres of works by Steve Reich and Joan La Barbara.

SUSAN JUDY, a specialist in both early and contemporary music, has appeared as soloist throughout the Southwest at various festivals and series including the Ojai, E. Nakamichi, Santa Cruz Baroque, and San Luis Obispo Mozart Festivals; the Berkeley Festival; the famed Monday Evening Concerts at Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Skirball Center and Diljian Chamber Music Series. Susan has debuted a number of new works, including west coast premieres by Steve Reich, John Adams, and Otto Luening, and as a soloist with the California E.A.R. Unit. She performed for many years with Los Angeles-based ensembles Musica Pacifica, I Cantori, and Musica Angelica as a soloist, and as a principal in staged productions of medieval and Baroque works. More recently, she sang with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Millennium Consort, and the Grammy®-winning Los Angeles Chamber Singers & Cappella. In addition, she has performed with American Bach Soloists and other ensembles throughout California. As a founding member of Voxfire, Susan has researched, arranged, produced and performed numerous concerts of ancient and newly-commissioned repertoire.

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Album Track Listing

1. O quam mirabilis est 3:18
Latin antiphon, text and setting by Hildegard of Bingen (1098 - 1179)
2. O nobilissima viriditas 4:55
Latin chant, text and setting by Hildegard – Susan Judy, solo
3. Ave stella matutina 3:49
Gregorian chant (Latin, late 13th c.)
4. La bella stella 2:50
Italian 2-part ballata, Johannes de Florentia (fl. 14th c.) – Susan Judy & Christen Herman, solo a cappella
5. Sancta Maria, non est tibi similis 2:17
Latin motet, John Dunstable (ca. 1370-1453) – Voxfire, a cappella
6. Honte, paour, doubtance 3:00
French ballade, Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300-1377) – Samela Aird Beasom, solo
7. Or sus, vous dormés trop 5:59
French virelai, Anonymous (14th c.) – Susan Judy, solo
8. O cieco mondo 2:38
Italian madrigal, Jacopo da Bologna (fl. ca. 1340-1360) – Christen Herman, solo
9. Je ne cesse de prier 2:19
from *Le lai de la fonteinne*, Machaut – Samela Aird Beasom, solo
10. Pour ce te pri 1:29
from *Le lai de la fonteinne*, Machaut – Christen Herman, solo
11. Et qui de ceste eaue prendroit 1:29
from *Le lai de la fonteinne*, Machaut – Susan Judy, solo

12. De la duis le pere nomme 2:27
from *Le lai de la fonteinne*, Machaut – Samela Aird Beasom, solo
13. Gram piant'agli occhi 4:11
Italian ballata, Francesco Landini (ca. 1325-1397) – Voxfire, a cappella
14. Nella mi' vita 2:43
Italian ballata, Landini – Voxfire, a cappella
15. Su la rivera 1:39
Italian madrigal, Codex Rossi (14th c.) – Samela Aird Beasom & Christen Herman, solo a cappella
16. Fresh New Rose / De toutes flours 6:16
Italian poem, Guido Cavalcanti (ca. 1254-1300) – Samela Aird Beasom, spoken (English)
French ballade, Machaut – Voxfire, a cappella
17. Worldes blis 1:19
Middle English poem, Anonymous (13th c.) – Christen Herman, solo a cappella
18. O my Hart 1:03
English song, King Henry VIII (1491-1547) – Voxfire, a cappella
19. Ah Robyn 2:25
English poem, set by William Cornyshe (ca. 1465-1523) – Voxfire, a cappella
20. T'amo mia vita 3:19
Italian poem (Guarini), set by Luzzasco Luzzaschi (ca. 1545-1607) – Susan Judy, spoken (English)
21. Amor ch'attendi 1:22
Italian poem (Rinuccini), set by Giulio Caccini (ca. 1546-1618) – Samela Aird Beasom, solo
22. Sì, sì ch'io v'amo 4:29
Italian poem, set by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) – Samela Aird Beasom, spoken (English)
23. Amore è bandito 3:34
Italian poem, set by Barbara Strozzi (1619-ca. 1664) – Christen Herman, spoken & solo
24. Come dolce hoggi l'auretta 3:17
Italian poem (G. Strozzi), set by Monteverdi

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Translations

1. O quam mirabilis

O how miraculous is the perception
Of the Divine Understanding,
That He knows all creation.
For with Jesus
He examines the doings of man,
Whom He has made,
Likewise He beholds all His works
Made whole in the form of man.
O how miraculous is the inspiration,
That mankind thus is elevated.

2. O nobilissima viriditas

O most noble greenness,
Who are rooted in the sun
And who in brilliant serenity
Shine in a wheel
Which no earthly supremacy can grasp,
You are circled in embraces
Of divine ministries.
You redden like the dawn
And burn like the sun's flames.

3. Ave stella matutina

Hail! Star of the morning,
Lily of purity,
Mother of the King
And Queen of Heaven,
Lead us from destruction
With the gift of your grace.
From you, Maria,
Shines the light
Of words of pure truth.
In you, then, wisdom appears
Before the radiance of the deity.
Walk the life, the law and the way
Of the virgin chaste.
For the world,
You alone lead the way
To the holy Love of salvation.

4. La bella stella

The beautiful star
Who always keeps her flame
Lit in my mind,
Luminous and clear,
Was emerging from the mountain.
I wondered greatly,
But the Lord, who is great, said:
“Our virtue pours forth water of this kind.”

5. Sancta Maria, non est tibi similis

Holy Mary, in this world
there has arisen
none like you among women.
Blooming like the rose,
fragrant, as the lily,
pray for us, holy Mother of God.

6. Honte, paour, doubtance

Shame, timidity, fear of doing ill,
Reluctance to display her will,
Generous in denial, and slow to assent,
Reason, moderation, honor and modesty
Must appear in her heart,
And have no dread of slander in any wise,
And in every way cowardly to be in love,
Which keeps good watch over her honor.

7. Or sus, vous dormés trop

Now you sleep too long, my pretty lady.
It is day—arise and listen to the lark:
“Que dit Dieu....que te dis Dieu”
[as God says...what’s God saying to you?]
It is day, it is day, it is day, again I say: it
is day.”
O lady of sovereign beauty above all,
For you so pretty and fair,
Near you in the tender month of May
I stay and will remain.
It is worth it.

And now without delay
Sound up the nakers and bagpipes:
“Lire, lire, lire, lyliron, lyliron, lire,
titinton, titinton, titinton, titinton.”
Partners, let’s dance, let’s step together.
“titinton ton.”
It is to you, my lady,
That God himself pays homage.

And I do beg you, love,
Come out and play:
“Lire....titinton.”
Now let us sing and keep time
And gaily turn about
“titinton ton.”
It’s a sweet life, nothing could be finer.

For I live in hopes of rousing you,
My pretty one,
Making the blackbird sing,
And the redwing and the goldfinch:
“Chireli, chireli, chireli” as they sing on;
They sing while Robin sleeps on like the
dead.
So let’s dance, you little Paris hussy,
For you, whom I love above all mortals,
This ballad was made;
Lady, I offer it to you.
For I will always serve you
With true heart and steadfast love.

8. O cieco mondo

O blind world, full of flattery,
Deadly poison in each of your delights,
False, full of deceit and distrust.

Yet he is never concerned about you
Who will taste the fruit
Of sweet blossoms.

9. Je ne cesse de prier

My dear lady
To lighten my burden of woe,
But she so much keeps her distance
And I find her so harsh and proud
That my beseeching
Cannot soften her resistance.

And so I shall approach another lady,
Who will grant me utter joy
Easily, and with a smile
For ever; this is no fickle love
And it will never grow less;
Indeed, the only true joy one can choose
Is the joy that lies in her.

10. Pour ce te pri

For this reason I beg you,
Virgin, hear my prayer,
For little do I declare
Or decry
Or lament the sins
Which are in me
From long past,
Slumbering beneath the surface,
And they make me shudder,
For they are rooted in my very heart.

I offer you my soul
And give it up to you
Without hesitation,
And choose you
Above all things.
Now be my refuge
And be with me
Against the devil,
For I have no friend
Nor any help in my misery.

11. Et qui de ceste eaue prendroit

And if you took this water
And put it
In cold weather
In some vessel, it would set
And freeze
So that you could
Shape the ice;

But it would never lose its taste
Or change it,
For henceforward it would still be
Water and have the properties of water.
Anyone can see that
And observe it
In the winter time.

12. De la duis le pere nomme

The source, then, is God the Father,
The fountain is the Son
Who comes from the Father and became
man,
And the clear and gentle stream
Is the Holy Ghost, that is how it is;
It comes from both the Father and the
Son.
These six are three, that works out
If one gives it careful thought.

But I would rather be in Rome
Or overseas in exile
Or thrown in the Somme,
Or the River Jordan or the Nile
Than believe anything that a worthy man
Should not believe without risking his
soul;
For is anything worth a fig
Without God? Certainly not, I say!

13. Gram piant'agli occhi

Tears pour from my eyes,
Heavy grief is in my heart,
My soul is overwhelmed
And I die because of this bitter, harsh
separation.

I call on death,
Who does not want to hear me;
Life goes on against my will
And I must suffer a thousand deaths.
But although I live I never want to follow,
Against my will, a bright star and sweet love.

14. Nella mi' vita

I feel that my heart is failing my life,
Because I must leave you.
I leave in pain,
Because Fortune wishes it
And forces me to do so.

But wherever I shall be,
As long as my strength lasts, Lady,
You will not be able to avoid my being yours.
Because my soul would sooner
Die with my body than leave you.

15. Su la riviera

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.

16. De toutes flours

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 colour and perfume.
But if I see it picked or fallen.
After it I never seek to have another.

Rather it is a true gift of nature;
And I believe that you will never have
the strength
To abase its value and worth.
Leave it to me then, for elsewhere
Than in my orchard
After it I never seek to have another.

But truly I cannot imagine
That the virtue which surrounds my rose
Should come from you and by your
false deeds.

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.

17. Worldes blis

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.

18. O my Hart

O my hart and o my hart
My hart it is so sore
Sens I must nedys from my loue depart
And know no cause wherefore.

19. Ah Robyn

Ah, Robin, gentle, Robin,
Tell me how thy leman doth
And thou shalt know of mine.

My lady is unkind I wis,
Alack why is she so?
She lov'th another better than me,
And yet she will say no.

I cannot think such doubleness
For I find women true,
In faith my lady lov'th me well
She will change for no new.

20. T'amo mia vita

"I love you my life," my dear love
Sweetly tells me, and with this single
Lovely phrase
It seems my heart is joyfully transformed,
To make me its master.
Oh sweet voice of such delight,
Take it quickly, Love;
Print it on my heart.
Breathe only for her, my soul.
"I love you my life," that you should be my life.

21. Amor ch'attendi

Why do you delay, Love?
Why have you not readied your darts?
Vengeance, Love!
Pierce that heart that haughtily denies your
hegemony.

O pomp, o glory, o spoils!
'Twill be a noble victory if love wounds her.
Should love burn and batter,
Which — Love or Hate — will get the glory?

If it cruelly denied mercy before,
Now it humbly asks mercy.
O fiery dart,
Who can escape your firing their ice?

From heaven on high Jupiter hurls thunderbolts,
The archer of Delos rains down arrows.
But let the golden arrow that surpasses
all in strength
Be crowned with laurel.

22. Sì sì ch'io v'amo

Yes yes I love you,
Fair beautiful eyes.
Yes yes I long for
Your binding tresses of golden hair.
I have no other wish
But that my heart be yours as it is mine.

Yes yes how you burn,
Happy dear eyes,
Yes yes you are founts of love,
More bright than the sun
And I have no other wish
But that my heart be yours as it is mine.

23. Amore è bandito

Love is banished!
Lovers, up, up.
An edict has been made,
That love will be no more.

Once love is banished
And vanquished,
Oh, oh, we want to hear
No more of torments and grudges.
The case is closed,
Love is banished!

Illusions for the brain,
And jealousy for the heart,
Passions and madness
Are hidden away,
The case is closed,
Love is banished!

Hope and desire,
Complaints and sighs,
Sobs and torments,
Are being dispersed.
The case is closed,
Love is banished!

24. Come dolce hoggi l'auretta

How sweet the breeze today,
How soft its balmy breath,
How wantonly it kisses
Kisses my cheeks and breast.

'Tis Cupids cause the breeze
When they soar in flight
On outspread wings from heaven
To lift the veil of night.

The forest smiles, the meadow shines,
The fountain plays, the waves rejoice
At the first faint stirring
Of a cool, refreshing breeze.

When you come, o balmy breeze,
May our hearts, too, be filled
With that sweet delight that you
In every soul distill.