



# INTERSTITIAL

*A Book of (Musical) Stories*

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2022**  
**7:30 P.M. | NEWMAN RECITAL HALL**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

USC Visions & Voices    USC Thornton    USC Dornsife  
*Department of English*

# INTERSTITIAL

## ABOUT INTERSTITIAL

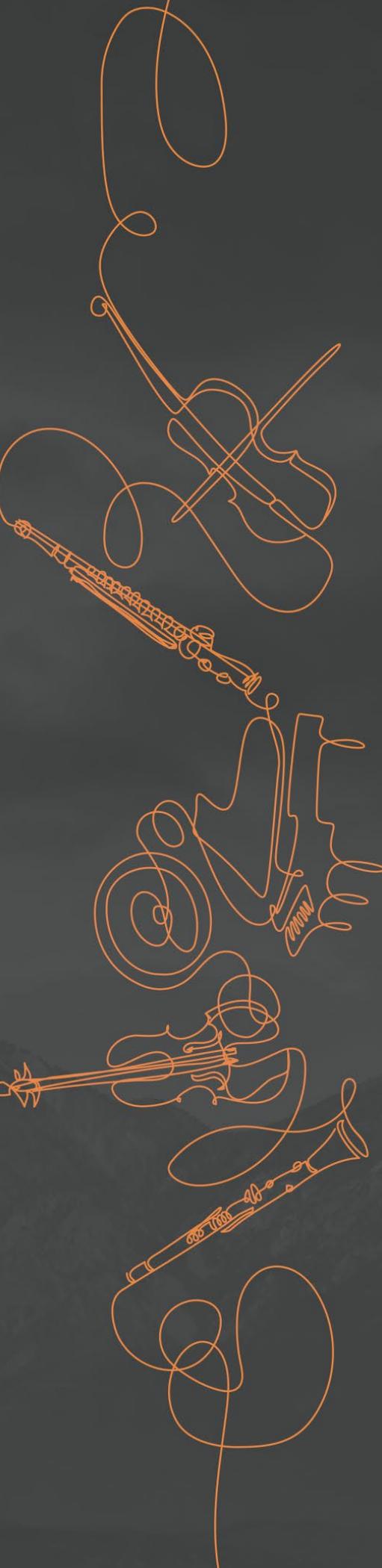
*Interstitial* presents stories about being between identities by six composers and six poets, performed by six singers and six musicians, all of whom are based in Los Angeles. *Interstitial* explores musical storytelling unconfined by traditional methods of presentation. The individual pieces sit between cantatas, operas, and song cycles, all approaching different styles, genres, and forms that bring together music and story. Each explores a different aspect of Los Angeles and the people in it, how we relate to each other, the city as a whole, and the underlying environment, a psychogeography of the landscape outlined through music.

### ***My House Is Not My House*, Fahad Siadat/René Reynolds**

This micro-drama juxtaposes the ecological time scale of the natural environment in and around Los Angeles and the more fleeting human activity that occurs within it. The piece begins and ends with the voice of the Wild Oaks, steady, eternal, constant. Interspersed is the frenetic activity of Mr. Croogés, a real estate developer planning on knocking down the wild oaks and replacing them with an apartment complex of the same name. The scene cycles through the anxious troubles of the residents before culminating in a fire that destroys the building but leaves the voice of the Wild Oaks, persistence and unchanging.

### ***MLK & COLISEUM*, Nicolas Benevidas/Rickerby Hinds**

*MLK & COLISEUM* is part of Rickerby Hinds' beautiful set called *INTERSECTIONS*, which is a semi-autobiographical collection of lyrics written for *Interstitial*. Each lyric is about a different intersection in the Crenshaw neighborhood, where he grew up. *MLK & COLISEUM* is about the intersection of boyhood and manhood, adolescence and adulthood, and the fascinating ways in which we define it. One of what will ultimately be up to four movements, I was drawn to this text because of the concentric circles of intersections within, whether it be a physical place, the time of day, or the bicycle he uses to get around town. We set out to make something that was defined by the intersection of our own art forms, using recordings of Kerby's own voice layered over itself in conjunction with the voices of HEX and the instrumentalists of Brightwork, making an electroacoustic pastiche at the intersection of our shared love of our new home in the greater L.A. Region.



### **Waterways and Dwellings, Molly Pease/Molly Bendall**

My libretto is inspired by waterways in Los Angeles, in particular, Ballona Creek, which flows through a great deal of L.A. and then to the Ballona wetlands, to Marina del Rey and to the ocean. I often take walks along the creek and the wetlands near the Marina, and I began thinking about all that dwells there now and what once dwelled there, including wildlife and birds, the Tongva tribe, sailboats and yachts, tourists, and the homeless. My fellow composer Molly Pease and I took a walk there together and talked about how we became aware of so many sounds, moods, and perspectives in this area.

### **Stories, Veronika Krausas/Sarah LaBrie**

*Stories* interweaves episodic memories by Sarah LaBrie of family, food, smells, and locations. To me they seemed to organize themselves into the 4 elements. These four episodes are bookended by texts about a tree—branching into the sky and the roots tunneling into the ground—how a tree is the epitome of interstitial in nature!

### **Without History, Without Pain, Carolyn Chen/Warren Liu**

Warren Liu’s poem *Before We Were Tasked with Our Forgetting* considers the Pacific coast as a site of historic violence by settlers to native peoples and ecosystems. *Without History, Without Pain* takes on this sense of tension and loss fought over longer historical, even geological time. In the music, voices and instruments shift between singing tones, the din of crowds, murmurs of the unspoken, and the roar of the ocean.

### **Johns 1-14: Our Secret Sermon, Saunder Choi/Brian Sonia-Wallace**

For our piece, we wanted to explore a facet of L.A. life that is hidden from most Angelenos, though it exists under their noses and has since the beginning: gay bathhouses. These are spaces of anonymity, non-verbal communication, and desire—but also of protection, connection, and even transcendence. Queer thought holds these spaces as sacred. In our piece, the bathhouse collides with sacred Latin text and music—an echo of religious trauma, perhaps. But here, the line “the word became flesh” opens a door to ask questions about the relationship between language and bodies—what it means to be intelligible to each other, at all. Through playfulness, we find the edges where the sacred and the profane meet. That is where knowledge comes from.

## **PERFORMERS**

#### **HEX:**

**Laurel Irene**, soprano  
**Molly Pease**, mezzo-soprano  
**Fahad Siadat**, tenor  
**Saunder Choi**, tenor  
**David Conley**, baritone  
**James Hayden**, bass

#### **BRIGHTWORK ENSEMBLE:**

**Sara Andon**, flute  
**Brian Walsh**, clarinet  
**Aron Kallay**, piano  
**Nick Terry**, percussion  
**Shalini Vijayin**, violin  
**Maggie Parkins**, cello

## BIOS

**NICOLAS LELL BENAVIDES** is a composer and lecturer at the USC Thornton School of Music who has worked with groups such as the Washington National Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, New Opera West, West Edge Opera, Nashville Opera, and Shreveport Opera.

**MOLLY BENDALL** is a librettist, professor of English at USC Dornsife, and author of *Watchful* and four previous collections of poetry. Bendall has received the Eunice Tietjens Prize from Poetry magazine, the Lynda Hull Poetry Award from *Denver Quarterly*, and two Pushcart Prizes.

Deemed “the brightest new music group you’ve heard in years” by KPFK, **BRIGHTWORK NEWMUSIC** is a flexible and fearless classical sextet that seeks to draw the audience into the creative process through exciting, emotionally engaging music presented in state-of-the-art performances.

**CAROLYN CHEN** is a composer whose work has been presented at festivals and exhibitions in 25 countries, at venues including Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Guggenheim Bilbao, and the Institute for Provocation (Beijing).

**SAUNDER CHOI** is a composer, choral artist, and graduate of USC Thornton whose works have been performed by the Philippine Madrigal Singers, The Crossing, the Los Angeles Master Chorale Chamber Singers, SACRA/PROFANA, Tonality, Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, World Youth Choir, Asia Pacific Youth Choir, and others.

**HEX** is “L.A.’s premier vocal sextet,” featuring singers who have performed with LA Opera, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Choral Lab, The Industry, C3LA: The Contemporary Choral Collective of Los Angeles, and Tonality.



**Nicolas Lell Benavides**  
Composer



**Molly Bendall**  
Librettist



**Sara Andon**  
Flute  
Brightwork newmusic



**Aron Kallay**  
Piano  
Brightwork newmusic



**Maggie Parkins**  
Cello  
Brightwork newmusic



**Nick Terry**  
Percussion  
Brightwork newmusic



**Shalini Vijayan**  
Violin  
Brightwork newmusic



**Brian Walsh**  
Clarinets  
Brightwork newmusic



**Carolyn Chen**  
Composer



**Saunder Choi**  
Composer & Vocalist



**David Conley**  
Vocalist  
HEX



**James Hayden**  
Vocalist  
HEX



**Laurel Irene**  
Vocalist  
HEX

**RICKERBY HINDS** is a librettist, playwright, and chair and professor of playwriting in the Department of Theater, Film, and Digital Production at the University of California, Riverside, and the founding director of the Center for Dramatic Innovation.

**VERONIKA KRAUSAS** is a composer and professor at the USC Thornton School of Music whose commissions and performances include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Industry, New York City Opera, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Esprit Orchestra, Piano Spheres, Gloria Cheng, and the Vancouver Symphony.

**SARAH LABRIE** is the librettist behind productions including Hopscotch (The Industry) and dreams of the new world (Los Angeles Master Chorale), co-producer of *Blindspotting* (Starz), and author of the upcoming memoir *The Anatomy Book*.

**WARREN LIU** is a poet and professor at Scripps College who teaches Asian American literature, experimental poetry, American poetry, and contemporary American fiction.

**MOLLY PEASE** is a versatile and experimental vocal artist and composer who incorporates improvisation, extended vocal sounds, and interdisciplinary collaboration into projects such as Inner Astronomy, Score for the Near Future, and ACKLAND. Recent performances include Björk's Cornucopia tour and The Industry's Sweet Land. Ongoing projects include LA Master Chorale, HEX, and Tonality.

**RENÉE REYNOLDS** is a writer, painter, and producer whose work has been featured in *Ping Pong*, *Unshod Quills*, Lilliput Press, and LARB.

**FAHAD SIADAT** is the artistic director of HEX, co-artistic director of The Resonance Collective, and a composer who is regularly commissioned by music ensembles, dance companies, and theatre troupes.

**BRIAN SONIA-WALLACE** is a poet, writer, educator, event organizer, and entrepreneur whose RENT Poet project creates collaborative poetry, mediated by the technology of the typewriter, with participants to inspire meaningful conversations with the public about their hopes, fears, memories, and dreams for the future.



**Rickerby Hinds**  
Librettist



**Veronika Krausas**  
Composer



**Sarah Labrie**  
Librettist



**Warren Liu**  
Librettist



**Molly Pease**  
Composer & Vocalist



**Renée Reynolds**  
Librettist



**Fahad Siadat**  
Composer & Vocalist



**Brian Sonia-Wallace**  
Librettist

**“One of the defining features of being a person in Los Angeles is being in a space where a lot of people come from a lot of different backgrounds and you’re just kind of thrown together in a lot of ways.”**

—Aron Kallay, pianist and co-curator of *Interstitial*

**“It’s all about the fluidity that exists between things in L.A.”**

—Veronika Krausas, composer and co-curator of *Interstitial*

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ◉ *Interstitial* presents stories about being between identities by six composers and six poets, performed by six singers and six musicians, all of whom are L.A.-based.
- ◉ Co-curator and composer Veronika Krausas describes *Interstitial* itself as being “between genres.”
- ◉ Following the performance, the creators, performers, and audience will discuss their interstitial experiences in L.A. in breakout groups.

## MUSICAL STORYTELLING

Co-curator and composer Veronika Krausas says *Interstitial* is sort of a cantata, sort of an opera, and sort of a song cycle. These are all different forms that bring together music and story.

A **cantata** is a vocal composition with instrumental accompaniment (as opposed to a sonata, which is a composition designed to be played by instruments). Often structured as a sung speech, a cantata can be written for one or multiple voices. The form dates back to 17th-century Italy (*cantare* is the Italian infinitive for “to sing”).

An **opera** is a full dramatic production entirely set to music (vocal and instrumental).

A **song cycle** is a group of related songs.

Other forms of musical storytelling include musical theatre and music videos.

## MULTIPERSPECTIVAL STORYTELLING

In fiction, “multiperspectivity” is a term used to describe a story told by multiple narrators. It’s a way to tell the same story from different points of view, each adding different layers or angles.

Group or multi-author works like *Interstitial* are another way to tell stories from multiple points of view. In this case, multiple artists approach a story or theme and collectively offer different perspectives.

## VOCABULARY CORNER

**interdisciplinary**—involving more than one artistic, academic, or scientific discipline. In the arts, the terms *interdisciplinary*, *hybrid*, *multi-genre*, and *genre-crossing* are all used to describe works that combine artistic genres, or blur the boundaries between genres.

**interstice**—a space that intervenes between things; a gap or break in something generally continuous; a short space of time between events (*Merriam-Webster's*)

**interstitial**—occurring in or being an interval or intervening space or segment; of, relating to, or forming an interstice (*Merriam-Webster's*)

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What themes did the six pieces explore? How do these themes relate to interstices?
- What are your experiences of L.A.'s interstices?
- What does it mean to be “between identities”?
- How do identity and place interrelate in your life? What is the relationship between your identity and the place you are from? Between your identity and the place where you currently live (if that’s different from where you are from)?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

### UPCOMING EVENTS AT VISIONS AND VOICES

- [\(Un\)Documents](#) at the Los Angeles Theatre Center  
**USC students can attend with Visions and Voices on 10/20:** [eventbrite.com/e/experience-la-undocuments-registration-410916019877](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/experience-la-undocuments-registration-410916019877)  
**Other performances — open to everyone: 10/12 through 11/20**  
[latinotheaterco.org/undocuments](https://latinotheaterco.org/undocuments)
- 10/25:** [Lido Pimienta in Concert](#)
- 11/3:** [Dahlak Brathwaite: Try/Step/Trip](#)
- 11/12:** [The Met in HD: Giuseppe Verdi's La Traviata](#)
- 2/15/23:** [A.I.M by Kyle Abraham: An Untitled Love](#)
- 3/8/23:** [Birds of No Nation: Afghan Women on Art, Gender, Freedom, and Exile](#)



(Un)Documents, October 20, 2022



Lido Pimienta in Concert, October 25, 2022



Dahlak Brathwaite: Try/Step/Trip, November 3, 2022

Photo: Janelle Jones



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## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**Andrew Justice** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](https://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### ARTICLES

- Carolyn Chen, “[Parts to Sing Empty](#),” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 18, no. 2 (2018): 35–38.
- Sarah LaBrie, “[The Neon Touch](#),” *The Literary Review* 63, no. 1 (2020): 1–2.
- Fahad Siadat, “[On the Voice: Categorizing and Notating Timbres for Vocal Ensembles](#),” *The Choral Journal* 61, no. 9 (2021): 53–64.
- Megan Anne Todd, “[Aesthetic Foundations & Activist Strategies of Intervention in Rickerby Hinds’ Buckworld One](#),” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 6 (2011): 148–70.

### BOOKS

- Molly Bendall and Gail Wronsky, [Bling & Fringe: \(The L.A. Poems\)](#) (Los Angeles: What Books Press, 2009).
- Victoria Chang, [Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation](#) (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2004).
- Brian Sonia-Wallace, “RENT Poet: Commodity, Respectability, and Scam in Los Angeles,” in [Art and the City: Worlding the Discussion through a Critical Artscape](#) (London: Routledge, 2017), 100–113.

### MUSICAL SCORES

- Saunder Choi, [American Breakfast: Eight Part Mixed Chorus](#) (See-a-Dot Music Publishing, 2018).
- Veronika Krausas and Akiko Yosano, [Midaregami \(Tangled Hair\): For String Quartet and Mezzo-Soprano](#) (Los Angeles: Veronika Krausas, 2007).

### STREAMING MEDIA

- Nicolas Lell Benavides, “Cuates,” on [In Tandem](#) (Ravello Records, 2022).
- Molly Pease, [Inner Astronomy \[Cantata\]](#) (4Tay Records, 2020).

