

# GLORIOUS RAVAGE

A panoramic song cycle by Lisa Mezzacappa

- I. Veta 4:08
- II. Make No Plans 6:16
- III. Heat & Hurry 7:16
- IV. Taxonomical 5:00
- V. Great Green Gloom 8:03
- VI. Soroche 4:42
- VII. For the Dusky Mourner 13:27
- VIII. Marianne 5:04
- IX. Shut Out the Sun 7:30
- X. City of Wonders 8:19

TT 69:44



Fay Victor  
Nicole Mitchell  
Kyle Bruckmann  
Vinny Golia  
Cory Wright  
Darren Johnston  
Michael Dessen  
Dina Maccabee  
John Finkbeiner  
Mark Dresser  
Lisa Mezzacappa  
Myra Melford  
Kjell Nordeson  
Tim Perkis  
Jordan Glenn

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LISA MEZZACAPPA • GLORIOUS RAVAGE

NEW WORLD RECORDS

# LISA MEZZACAPPA GLORIOUS RAVAGE



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**“I am doing what a woman can hardly ever do...,”** wrote British world traveler Isabella Bird in an 1872 letter from Hawaii. “And I can fall, I can fall into anything.” San Francisco Bay Area composer, acoustic bassist, and bandleader, Lisa Mezzacappa used those lines—and more from the writings of Bird and other women adventurers of the 19th and early 20th centuries—to fashion lyrics for her ten-part “panoramic song cycle for improvisers.” Sung by the extraordinary vocalist Fay Victor, those two lines might also be taken to reflect Mezzacappa’s place in the world of progressive and avant-garde jazz.

A certain mania is required to embark on the kind of adventures into the unknown undertaken by Isabella Bird, Louise Arner Boyd, Mary Kingsley, Annie Smith Peck, Fanny Bullock Workman, Marianne North, Ida Pfeiffer, and the other women Mezzacappa turned up as she put together *Glorious Ravage*. Similarly, with few cultural precedents and a do-it-yourself ethos, Mezzacappa, who had never previously approached a project of this scale, embarked on the several years-long journey of fundraising for, and eventually producing, this work for 15 musicians and four filmmakers, with only a glimmer of where the artistic idea might take her.

“The great thing, and the sometimes scary thing, about not being formally trained as a composer is, I have to create all the rules for each piece anew at the beginning of each project,” Mezzacappa has written. “It’s gotten to the point where each body of work has a completely different internal logic for how the music is researched, discovered, structured, assembled, inscribed. It is an extraordinarily impractical way of working; never quite at ease, the ground always shifting underfoot. But this forces me to keep reinventing myself, expand what I am capable of, develop new vocabulary, find some novel way of making connections between things that previously seemed distinct.”

Mezzacappa has described the creative impulse of the female adventurers, scientists, artists, activists, and writers who provided fertile fodder for *Glorious Ravage* as “imagining alternatives to the realities that surrounded them.” In her own case, she

has built a career, and brought forth an epic work, surrounded by certain realities of the jazz world that make little room for an unconventional musician from the West Coast.

Like Isabella Bird in her globetrotting, Mezzacappa approaches her musical projects with as much determination as imagination, and she grants herself the freedom to “fall into anything.” On her early 2017 CD *avantNoir*, for instance, Mezzacappa and her electro-acoustic sextet (comprising saxophone, electric guitar, bass, drums, vibraphone, and electronics, plus live Foley effects) play music inspired by the characters, settings, plot twists, and language of Paul Auster’s 1980s *New York Trilogy* and Dashiell Hammett’s hard-boiled detective stories and novels of the 1920s. In the original compositions for her *Organelle* project, Mezzacappa has drawn upon theories of cell biology, astrophysics, paleontology, zoology, and neuroscience to express, through sound, “the different ways that the human body, the natural world, and the cosmos mark and ‘experience’ the passing of time.” Her Bait & Switch “garage jazz quartet” plays original compositions Mezzacappa has based on the improvisations of such jazz pioneers as Ornette Coleman, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Eric Dolphy, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. And duo B, her collaboration with drummer Jason Levis, recently set itself the task of “learning, inhabiting, re-sculpting, a (relentless) 45-minute Cecil Taylor piano solo” for drums and bass.

None of these projects puts Mezzacappa anywhere close to the jazz mainstream, where (mostly male) bandleaders front quartets and quintets that gig in all the usual clubs and festivals around the country and the world. Her aesthetic is too varied, too fluid, perhaps too proudly West Coast to fit New York-centric expectations. *Glorious Ravage* takes Mezzacappa even further afield, as she incorporates jazz vocabulary at its most broadly defined, into a multimedia song cycle that is an outlier in the jazz world in its blending of artistic media and musical sources.

“I don’t think I have a choice of where the next music will take root,” she has noted. “I’m not looking for a new idea or a new topic, life is just barreling past— isn’t the goal to consume as much great, important, worthy stuff along the way? And

then there are some things that stick. The things that stick to me don't usually get unstuck, until I peel them off in the form of music. None of these projects is about anything, there is no narrative, there is no problem and no solution, there are no real issues. I do not think that there need to be, for artwork to be relevant and vital. I am just trying to pass along—continue, amplify, bend, fracture—some of the vibrations I am receiving, and pass them along through organized sounds.”

Defying expectations and conventions came early to Mezzacappa, who grew up in suburban Staten Island, New York, and was the first in her working class family to move away to go to college. She has said that it took her some time, and several careers, to give herself permission to finally pursue a life as an artist. She earned a B.A. in music (and biology) at the University of Virginia, and also worked as a journalist before receiving her M.A. in ethnomusicology from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2003. Living most of the 21st century in the Bay Area, Mezzacappa has followed her relentless curiosity into myriad collaborations with musicians, filmmakers, and video, sound, and visual artists from Northern and Southern California, New York, and Europe. She has led and co-led even more ensembles than those mentioned above, including the Lisa Mezzacappa Trio, BODABODA (a collaboration with Italian saxophonist Piero Bittolo Bon), the electro-acoustic chamber ensemble Nightshade, and an assortment of fleeting ensembles and recording projects with fellow improvisers. “One of my favorite things about being part of the music making in the Bay Area,” she says, “is that there are so many of us joyfully, rebelliously, meticulously making up our own rules.”

To realize her vision for *Glorious Ravage*, Mezzacappa drew on the deep and wide networks she has cultivated on the West Coast, where she has also been active for years as a music curator and organizer of concert series in both Los Angeles and the Bay Area. She created what she calls the Grapevine Orchestra, named for a notorious stretch of highway that winds from the southern San Joaquin Valley through the Tejon Pass into Southern California. Part of her intention was to show “what we

sound like out here, how we work,” and to help connect the Bay Area and Southern California music communities, which can be surprisingly isolated from each other. She has done that by bringing together some of the leading lights of the West Coast's free jazz and improvised music scenes. From the Bay Area she tapped pianist and harmonium player Myra Melford, trumpeter Darren Johnston, clarinetist and tenor saxophonist Cory Wright, oboe and English horn player Kyle Bruckmann, electric guitarist John Finkbeiner, violinist and violist Dina Maccabee, electronics innovator Tim Perkis, and drummer/percussionist Jordan Glenn. From the southland—Los Angeles, Irvine, Long Beach, and San Diego—Mezzacappa recruited contrabassist Mark Dresser, flutist Nicole Mitchell, multiple reeds and woodwinds master Vinny Golia, trombonist Michael Dessen, and vibraphonist/percussionist Kjell Nordeson.

But it was Brooklyn-based vocalist Fay Victor who provided the first kernel of inspiration for *Glorious Ravage*. Victor, whose performances and recordings with the Fay Victor Ensemble have drawn comparisons to both Betty Carter and Billie Holiday, is equally at home with blues and jazz standards, the bebop of Herbie Nichols, and free improvisation. Mezzacappa felt an immediate musical chemistry with Victor and was spurred to write new music, initially in a trio setting, for Victor to sing. Soon, she found herself thinking about journeys—initially hers and Victor's across the country—and that led her to delve into the letters, journals, travelogues, field notes, illustrations, paintings, and photographs of wayfaring Victorian-era women. She followed the exploits of pioneers in covered wagons on the Westward migration, and global explorers who ventured to Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian Highlands, the Peruvian Andes, the summit of the Hawaiian volcano Mauna Loa, West Africa, and the Arctic Circle.

After reading scores of accounts, Mezzacappa turned the words of Isabella Bird, Louise Arner Boyd, Mary Kingsley, Marianne North, and Ida Pfeiffer into lyrics, always with Fay Victor's unique vocal sound—her astounding range and timbre—and improvisational brilliance in mind. Victor transforms lines by Bird into free musical flights in “Veta,” “Make No Plans,” “Heat and Hurry,” and “Shut Out the Sun”; by Boyd in

“Taxonomical” and “Marianne”; by Kingsley in “Great Green Gloom”; by Peck and Workman in “Soroche”; and by North and Pfeiffer in “City of Wonders.” But while the words come from specific writers, Mezzacappa and her orchestra create something grander, something non-narrative and impressionistic that flows from the stories of all the different women she encountered in her research.

And they were not all privileged white, upper-class women. Along with one of her video collaborators, Konrad Steiner, Mezzacappa became intent on finding a place for the voices of the indigenous people who lived in the places visited by the women travelers—these European women may have been outsiders in their own cultures, but they were also products of imperialist systems and often held deeply ingrained colonial points of view. The song “For the Dusky Mourner” was based on the writings of Sarah Winnemucca—a Paiute activist and diplomat who grew up in Western Nevada and San Jose, California, in the mid-1800s, and wrote the first known autobiography by a Native American woman—as well as texts by French socialist writer and activist Flora Tristan.

With Victor’s voice at the core, and musical ideas percolating up from the texts, Mezzacappa tailored the open-ended structure of *Glorious Ravage* to the gifts, sensibilities, and personalities of the individual musicians. That required her to develop a bigger compositional framework than she had ever built before, and one that could both reflect and refract the multifaceted stories and personas of the women she met in her research *and* meet the challenge of keeping the composition, in her words, “open to the kind of collective wisdom that emerges from any given musical community.”

When *Glorious Ravage* premiered in late September and early October 2015—in the Gassmann Electronic Music Series at UC Irvine, the Angel City Jazz Festival at REDCAT in Los Angeles, and Brava Theater Center in San Francisco—it had yet another component. In addition to 14 musicians, Mezzacappa had engaged four filmmakers, in four simultaneous, open-ended collaborations, to create visual elements for the piece. Although their influence is seen here only in the still images that decorate

the CD packaging, the film, video, and animation by Alfonso Alvarez, Janis Crystal Lipzin, Kathleen Quillian, and Konrad Steiner were created in close collaboration with Mezzacappa over many months of discussion, sharing, and discovery.

The 70-minute recording is thus truly a community production. Many internal relationships between musicians had been forged over the years, and they were nurtured and expanded in an ongoing process of rehearsals, preview performances, the premieres, and the recording session itself. Mezzacappa has written that initial inspiration for her work “comes from a messy, unfocused, overwhelming, brilliant, seductive, and terrifying pool of sensations, ideas, gut reactions, intellectual concerns, moral ambiguities.” From that pool has bubbled up something that retains many of those qualities, but that also manifests focus, chemistry, communication, and an emergent sense of both order and transcendence.

Early on in “Veta” we are introduced to an almost bewildering panoply of instrumentation, from the opening drum rolls, complementary percussion, twisted electric guitar lines entwined with contrabass, and mysterious sounds, electronics, and extended reed techniques that create an atmosphere more than a story. A clarion trumpet spills into keening violin across a landscape. The orchestra, including careening reeds, comes together in shared commitment to form a collective identity out of freeform chaos until Johnston’s trumpet matches Victor’s last note and belies the phrase “I am really alone.”

No one is ever alone in this enterprise—solos and singing may stand out, the ground may suddenly fall away, and the contexts of rhythm, color, tone, and texture may shift too quickly to keep track of, but the togetherness, no matter how precarious, never disintegrates.

To some, “Make No Plans” will conjure echoes of Tom Waits or Captain Beefheart in its bass-and-percussion-heavy rhythms, Sun Ra in the chorus chant of “Keep free from false ties; they are the curse of life,” a hallucinatory carnival ride as Mitchell’s flute flutters over Nordeson’s vibes and Dessen’s trombone converses with the

orchestra before the whole ensemble moves like a kaleidoscopic symphony toward another satisfying resolution.

Because these musicians know no technical boundaries, they can turn each piece into a virtual suite, shifting from something bouncy, like bebop, to Melford's wildly cascading piano and Victor's no-holds-barred wordless, extemporaneous vocal explosions to almost microscopic fragments of sound to a dense web of interwoven "solos" that stop together on a dime. The slowly revolving, deep spaciousness of "Taxonomical" sets a soundscape for pops, spirals, and swirls that might evoke stems rising and buds unfolding. The coming and going of every instrument in "Great Green Gloom"—there's a snapping, snarling guitar solo, a bass run, a descending piano line breaking into whirlpools of chords and notes—and the snippets of tightly scored phrases create currents that are inseparable from the way Victor makes Mary Kingsley's words slither and creep.

Some interactions are pared down to a few musicians, such as the basses and voice on "Soroche" and the spare opening of "For the Dusky Mourner." The deep listening and attentiveness of the players is evident in their ability to create ethereal, diaphanous, and elegiac moods, to amass "little sounds" into coherent yet abstract patterns, to suggest natural phenomena (a purple sunrise, clouds thickening and shutting out the sun) or a film noir soundtrack, or to slip into the surprising guises of a jaunty post-rock band, or a swinging bebop combo from the Beat era of Bohemian San Francisco.

Both the cultural-historical grounding of *Glorious Ravage* and its blend of vocals and eclectic instrumentation at first listen seem, and in many ways literally are, unprecedented. But just as the individual musicians of the Grapevine Orchestra have been steeped to various degrees in modern and avant-garde jazz, classical, electronic and experimental new music, punk, rock, pop, blues, and international ethnic traditions, so Mezzacappa's majestic interdisciplinary, socially conscious, and musically eclectic project stands on a foundation built by radical forebears, from Max Roach, Oscar Brown, and Abbey Lincoln's 1960 *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* to

Ornette Coleman's 1972 groundbreaking *Science Fiction* (with vocalist Asha Puthli), and the boundary-blurring strategies of outliers Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, and especially Henry Threadgill.

"You are not going anywhere unless there's a wall in front of you," the artist Robert Rauschenberg famously said. Like the fearless, resourceful, and single-minded Victorian-era travelers to whom she draws our attention, Mezzacappa lets nothing impede her quest. *Glorious Ravage* is a musical exploration of what is possible. Soaring with it can trigger an experience of the sublime, similar to the altitude sickness that Isabella Bird, Ida Pfeiffer, and Annie Smith Peck fell into during their lofty adventures, an ecstatic mind state South Americans called *veta* or *soroche*. When Bird wrote in her letter from Hawaii, "This is the height of the last and most glorious ravage," she could not have foreseen that Lisa Mezzacappa would bring us another of equal magnificence.

—Derk Richardson

*Derk Richardson is an Oakland, California–based music journalist and radio programmer who writes for The Absolute Sound, Acoustic Guitar, and other publications, and hosts The Hear and Now on KPFA 94.1 FM Berkeley.*

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### Composer note

*Glorious Ravage* is a culmination of my 15 years as part of the extraordinary San Francisco Bay Area music community. These are the musicians who taught me how to be a composer, how to lead a band, how to cross genres fluidly and unapologetically, how to channel my curiosity and inspiration into rigorous artistic inquiry. My film collaborators, Janis Crystal Lipzin, Alfonso Alvarez, Kathleen Quillian, and Konrad Steiner are part of a diverse group of Bay Area moving-image artists, another pocket of creativity that has welcomed me into its anarchic, collective fray.

The idea for *Glorious Ravage*, the sound of this music, the desire to bathe the orchestra in moving images—all of this came from a need to hear these particular musicians, all phenomenal improvisers, together in one place. As I immersed myself in

the writings of these fascinating 19th century adventurers, and the themes of the work emerged, I knew this had to be Large, Expansive, Enveloping in scope and scale. I needed the music to perform the limitlessness of these women's imaginations, their craving to experience the unknown, their awe at the natural world; their addiction to adrenaline, and also to solitude. There were so many aspects of their written accounts, personal reflections, and life stories that to me sounded like music. Most compelling were the complexities, dissonances, ambiguities of their personalities and motivations—who had a petty jealous streak, who was a hound for publicity, who spouted Colonial-era nonsense while still making progressive, enlightened observations—and so this work embraces that interesting grey zone that seems to surround real, flawed, yet pretty interesting people.

The music and film explore all this in an impressionistic way, connecting one woman's words with another's story, bridging far-off locales through shared ordeals and obsessions. The process of how these stories and characters came to inhabit this music, and these films, unfolded as four simultaneous collaborations with Janis, Alfonso, Kathleen, and Konrad—each spinning out in its own direction and taking on a life of its own. The lush, abstract, richly textured film and video they created draws on archival material, handmade animation, hand-processed film, newly-shot footage in remote Western locales, and psychedelic digital effects to create a fluid, dynamic conversation with the music.

Here's a guide to some of the movements:

- The title “Veta” is taken from Austrian traveler Ida Pfeiffer's account of a Peruvian word for an ecstatic mindstate due to high altitude.
- “Make No Plans” evokes the freewheeling spirit of Isabella Bird, who was very proud of her horsemanship, enjoyed an occasional nip at the bottle, and lived to flout men's expectations of her abilities.

- Bird, who literally fell ill whenever she returned home to the British Isles of her birth, wrote vividly of her travels to Hawaii, Australia, the Colorado Rockies, Asia and the Middle East. “Heat and Hurry” is inspired by one of her first Hawaiian adventures, which culminated in a semi-mystical experience at the summit of Mauna Loa.
- A trip to the Louise Arner Boyd archive in Marin, CA, with my collaborator Janis uncovered a journal of field notes, in Boyd's hand, with sketches and descriptions of plants she had discovered on expeditions to the Arctic Circle. “Taxonomical” explores the collector's coveting of the specimen, the sensual quality of the Latin scientific plant names, and the sensory delight of communing with the textures and colors of the natural world.
- Mary Kingsley was famously proper, and also famously deadpan in the face of peril and discomfort, shaking off near-death run-ins with crocodiles, leopards, and insect-borne diseases, and soldiering on through unnavigable jungle terrain in the name of science and knowledge. The music (and animation) for “Great Green Gloom” pay tribute to her tireless energy and insatiable curiosity as a citizen scientist, drawn from her accounts of her ethnographic and scientific work in West Africa.
- The Americans Annie Smith Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman were powerhouse mountaineers, accomplished authors and influential suffragists at the turn of the 20th century. They lived to demonstrate women's capabilities as athletes—yet the two of them waged the most petty,

backstabbing rivalry as they competed for the women's world mountaineering record. The lyrics are taken from Peck and Bullock's heated correspondence in the pages of *Scientific American* in 1910; the title "Soroche" refers to a South American term for altitude sickness.

- "For the Dusky Mourner" reflects on the indigenous people on the other side of the Colonial system that made these Western women's travels possible—the people who were already there, the land they already inhabited. Sarah Winnemucca, a Paiute who grew up in Western Nevada and San Jose, wrote eloquently and movingly about her people's plight. These lyrics are drawn from a handwritten letter found in the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley.
- At a time when most Victorian women were content to mind the exotic plants in their domestic orangeries, English botanist and illustrator Marianne North traveled the world, making hundreds of paintings and generally having a ball tracking down rare specimens in their natural habitats.
- At the Louise Arner Boyd archive in Marin, boxes of expedition materials, equipment lists, photos and correspondence paint a picture of a methodical, charismatic, and indefatigable woman. "Shut Out the Sun" features archival video shot by Boyd herself on one of her Arctic explorations, and channels the wonder and beauty that took hold of this frivolous heiress-turned-concerned-scientist over the course of her travels.
- The music and imagery for "City of Wonders" were created as a layered collage to evoke the wild, ribald, irreverent, extravagant

chaos that was San Francisco and its environs during the Gold Rush. Accounts in the 1850s-70s by European visitors Ida Pfeiffer and Marianne North, and American women such as Dame Shirley, remind us that the city's earliest history as the nation's westernmost outpost of prosperity, was always fraught with economic, environmental, and moral hazards.

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### I. Veta

This is the height of the last and most glorious ravage,  
A ravage which has had no precursors, as it can have no successors.  
For I am really Alone.

—*Isabella Bird, letter from Hawaii, 1872*

### II. Make No Plans

No man now ever says  
of any difficult thing,  
that I could not do it.

(Keep free from false ties; they are the  
curse of life.)

I am doing what a woman  
can hardly ever do,  
leading a life  
fit to recruit a man.

And I can fall,  
I can fall into anything,  
I need make no plans.

—*Isabella Bird, letter from Hawaii, 1872*

### III. Heat & Hurry

I am shrieking, howling, roaring,  
After my glorious rathole.  
After my congenial life.  
After my altogether out of the world.

I am shrieking, howling, roaring,  
After my wild, windy beast-haunted den.

—*Isabella Bird, letter from the Colorado  
Rockies, 1879*

#### IV. Taxonomical

Polygonum viviparum,  
Nudicatum radicatum.  
Saxifraga flagellaris,  
Saxifraga rivularis.  
Saxifraga oppositifolia,  
Saxifraga cernuus!  
Aulacomnium turgidum,  
Aulacomnium palustre.  
Cochlearia officinalis,  
Cochleria groenlandica

—*from the Field Notes of Louise Arner Boyd,  
Greenland, 1928*

#### V. Great Green Gloom

You notice a peculiar smell—  
(that's the breath of the malarial mud,  
laden with fever).  
Chances are—you will be down  
tomorrow.

You can watch it, becoming incarnate,  
creeping and crawling and gliding.  
You can watch it, becoming incarnate,  
stretching and rolling.  
Laying itself upon the river in a kind of  
grim play.

Finally, crawling up the side of the ship—  
to come on board, and leave its cloak of  
moisture—  
that grows green mildew in a few hours  
over all.

—*Mary Kingsley, Travels in West Africa, 1897*

#### VI. Soroche

To the Editor  
of the Scientific American . . .

It may be regarded as certain  
that Huascan  
is above 23,000 feet  
and the loftiest mountain  
on this hemisphere

To the Editor  
of the Scientific American . . .

She has not the  
“honor of breaking the world's record,”  
for my two highest ascents  
debar her from that honor.

I don't say that I am convinced  
those figures are correct—  
but I don't dispute them.

—*Fanny Bullock Workman and Annie Peck,  
from correspondence in the pages of  
Scientific American, 1910*

#### VII. For the Dusky Mourner

If we had stayed there,  
it would have been only to starve.  
If pains were taken, they would  
willingly . . .  
If they could be made to believe . . .  
If this is the civilization awaiting us,  
God grant that  
We may never have to go.

—*Sarab Winnemucca, from a letter to the  
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Nevada, 1870*

Everywhere, I encounter moral anguish.  
Everywhere, proceeded from the  
prejudice that  
sets man against Providence.  
And I rage at the slow progress of  
human reason.

—*Flora Tristan, Peregrinations of a Pariah,  
1833*

#### X. City of Wonders

The redwood trees are all about those hills... some were fifteen feet in diameter  
and nearly three hundred feet high. They were gradually sawing them up for  
firewood, and the tree would soon be extinct. It is timber so hard that it sinks in  
water, and no worm can eat it there. It is invaluable for many purposes, and it broke  
one's heart to think of man, the civiliser, wasting treasures in a few years to which  
savages and animals had no harm for centuries.

—*Marianne North, Recollections of a Happy Life, 1892*

#### VIII. Marianne

Caryophyllaceae, Phleum alpinum  
Caryophyllaceae, Alopecurus alpinus!  
Vaginatum, lychnis Alpinum—  
Draba alpina, lychnis L.

—*from the Field Notes of Louise Arner Boyd,  
Greenland, 1928*

#### IX. Shut Out the Sun

Purple sun rose, (then clouds)  
Morning mist lifted up themselves,  
Showing purple sun.  
Rose lighted, clouds grew  
grew thick, grew grey.  
Shut out the sun.  
Freezing, frozen,  
snow white,  
frozen, frozen.

—*Isabella Bird, A Lady's Life in the Rocky  
Mountains, 1879*



San Francisco is unanimously declared the City of Wonders,  
and there are, indeed, only two forces  
capable of effecting such wonders—  
gold and despotism.

Much social recreation  
is going on at San Francisco,  
and whoever likes that sort of amusement  
may certainly pass every evening  
in public and private circles,  
and get more invitations than he can accept.

The superfluity of money in San Francisco  
is so great, and the prices so high,  
that no copper money is in use at all,  
and the people have no wish that there should be.

—*Ida Pfeiffer, A Lady's Second Journey Round the World, 1855*

Do not feel anxious about me.  
Some higher power  
leads me through strange, dark, thorny paths.  
Broken at times  
by glades that open down into  
prospects of sunny beauty.

—*Margaret Fuller in Italy, 1852*

**Lisa Mezzacappa** is a San Francisco Bay Area bassist, composer, improviser, and producer who has been an active part of California's vibrant experimental music community for more than fifteen years. Mezzacappa's activities as a composer and bandleader include ethereal chamber music, electro-acoustic works, avant-garde jazz, music for groups from duo to large ensemble, and collaborations with film, dance, sculpture, and installation art. As an improviser she has enjoyed longstanding partnerships with musicians on both coasts and across Europe. Recent projects include works inspired by noir crime fiction, scientific processes on micro and cosmic scales, Victorian lady adventurers, and vintage Italian science fiction comic books. She has released recordings of her music on the Clean Feed, NotTwo, No Business, Evander, and Edgetone labels, as well as on her own imprint, Queen Bee Records.



Photo by Heike Liss.

Oboist and electronic musician **Kyle Bruckmann** tramples genre boundaries in widely ranging work as a composer/performer, improviser, orchestral freelancer, and new music specialist. He is a member of sfSound, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Eco Ensemble, Splinter Reeds, and Quinteto Latino, and remains active within an international community of improvisers and sound artists. His most significant projects as bandleader or collaborator have included Degradient, EKG, Lozenge, and Wrack.

**Michael Dessen** is a composer and trombonist who creates music for improvisers and explores the artistic potential of technologies including live electronics, telematics, and networked scores. In addition to many collaborative projects, he leads

[www.lisamezzacappa.com](http://www.lisamezzacappa.com)

an electro-acoustic trio and performs solo on digibone, an animistic world of slide trombone and live electronics. He teaches at UC Irvine, where he co-founded a PhD program in Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology.

**Mark Dresser** is an internationally-renowned bass player, improviser, and composer. He has expanded the sonic and musical possibilities of the double bass through the use of unconventional amplification and extended techniques documented in more than 140 recordings, including thirty as a bandleader, co-leader, and soloist. He is a Doris Duke Impact Award Recipient and Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

Guitarist **John Finkbeiner** has performed and recorded with Darren Johnston's Broken Shadows Band, Lisa Mezzacappa's Bait & Switch, Sheldon Brown's Blood of the Air and Distant Intervals ensembles, Scott Larson's Franco Nero and the Vijay Anderson Quartet. He co-leads the Caribbean folk band Les Gwan Jupons and the dub outfit Guerrilla Hi-Fi, and is co-founder of New, Improved Recording, a creative music recording studio in Oakland, CA.

**Jordan Glenn** is a drummer, composer, bandleader, and general craftsman based in Oakland, California. Glenn grew up in Oregon drawing cartoons, taking dance classes from his aunt, and putting on plays with his sisters, and later began studying jazz, classical, and rock music. He has worked with Fred Frith, William Winant, Zeena Parkins, Roscoe Mitchell, ROVA sax quartet, Jack O' the Clock, Beep! and tUnE-yArDs. He leads the ensembles Mindless Thing, Beak, and Wiener Kids.

Composer, multi-instrumentalist and bandleader **Vinny Golia** (alto flute, soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, contralto clarinet, bass saxophone) fuses the rich heritage of jazz, contemporary classical, and world music into his unique compositions and improvisations. Golia has won numerous awards as a composer, and in 1982 created

the 50-piece Vinny Golia Large Ensemble to perform his compositions for chamber orchestra and jazz ensembles. As a multi-woodwind performer, he has amassed many awards in his decades-long career, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Jazz Journalists Association, and has released dozens of recordings.

Canadian trumpeter/composer/songwriter **Darren Johnston** has collaborated with a diverse cross-section of artists since his move to the Bay Area twenty years ago. A first-call instrumentalist, he has worked with jazz luminary Marcus Shelby, experimental icons like ROVA and Fred Frith, singer/songwriter Meklit Hadero, and Balkan brass band Brass Menazeri. As a bandleader and composer he has made his mark with the Nice Guy Trio, the Darren Johnston Quintet and the Broken Shadows Family Band.

**Dina Maccabee** (violin & viola) is a composer, songwriter, and performer comfortable in a variety of styles, from traditional string music to experimental composition. She has toured internationally with Julia Holter, Real Vocal String Quartet, Beth Custer Ensemble, and others, and she makes up half the songwriting duo Ramon & Jessica. Recent projects include a solo album of original music for viola and voice, the premiere of a new musical, *Sweet Land*, in St. Paul, MN, and the San Francisco staging of *Roses are Blue*, Ramon & Jessica's a cappella ensemble song cycle inspired by Gertrude Stein.

Pianist and composer **Myra Melford**, a Guggenheim Fellow, recipient of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Performing Artist Award, and the Alpert Award in the Arts for Music, is an internationally celebrated instrumentalist and bandleader. Her current groups include Snowy Egret, Trio M and Dialogue with Ben Goldberg. Her work is both grounded in the blues and free jazz of her Chicago birthplace and in her lifelong interest in meditation practices.

**Nicole Mitchell** is a creative flutist, composer, bandleader, and educator. Her projects include Black Earth Ensemble, Black Earth Strings, Ice Crystal, and Sonic Projections. Mitchell was the first woman president of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). She is a recipient of the Alpert Award in the Arts, and was among the first class of Doris Duke Artists. Mitchell is Professor of Music at the University of California, Irvine.

**Kjell Nordeson** (vibraphone, marimba & percussion) is a Swedish percussionist based in San Diego and San Francisco, CA, with a main focus on improvisation. Nordeson has toured extensively in North America, Europe, North Africa, and Japan, and has performed with many luminaries of contemporary music, including Mats Gustafsson, Peter Brötzmann, Ken Vandermark, Gerry Hemingway, Frank Gratkowski, and Stefano Scodanibbio. He is currently pursuing a PhD in music at the University of California, San Diego.

**Tim Perkis** is a well-known figure in the worlds of improvised and electronic music, having played his unique computer-based electronic instruments with hundreds of players, including many of the leading experimental and/or improvising musicians from Europe and the United States. He is also a founding member of the legendary computer network band The Hub, and director of the feature-length documentary film *NOISY PEOPLE* (2007).

Vocalist and composer **Fay Victor** has built a career in New York City and abroad singing inventive and open-minded music rooted in jazz song, bare-bones blues, and experimental soundscapes. Her warm jazz tone offset by a serious rock attitude and filtered through a master improviser's sense of possibility, Victor has collaborated with titans of improvised music on both continents such as Ab Baars, William Parker, Misha Mengelberg, Han Bennink, Anthony Braxton, and Roswell Rudd. She leads her own critically acclaimed and versatile ensembles such as the Fay Victor Ensemble and Herbie Nichols SUNG.

Reeds player **Cory Wright** (B), clarinet & tenor saxophone) has been involved in the jazz and creative music worlds for the past twenty years, including time spent in New York, Los Angeles, and his current home in the San Francisco Bay Area. Recent projects reflect his interest in blurring the distinction between composed and improvised music, and in combining the harmonious with the atonal, the grooving with the arrhythmic. He is a member of Bristle, Wiener Kids, the Nathan Clevenger Group and Goggle, and leads his own projects Green Mitchell and the Cory Wright Outfit.

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#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*avantNOIR*. Clean Feed CF401CD.

*Comeuppance*. Lisa Mezzacappa's Bait & Switch. NotTwo MW906-2.

*Cosmic Rift*. Lisa Mezzacappa & Nightshade. Leo CDLR613.

*What is Known*. Lisa Mezzacappa's Bait & Switch. Clean Feed CF192CD.

*X Marks the Question*. Lisa Mezzacappa Trio. Queen Bee QB001.

Producer: Lisa Mezzacappa

Engineer: Adam Muñoz

Recorded January 14–15, 2017 at Fantasy Studios, Berkeley, CA.

Mixed by John Finkbeiner at New, Improved Recording, Oakland, CA.

Additional sonic wrangling by Myles Boisen.

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions Inc., NYC

Cover art: Still image from film *Shut Out the Sun* by Janis Crystal Lipzin.

Back booklet cover: Still image from video animation *Marianne* by Kathleen Quillian.

Inside back cover: Still image from film by Louise Arner Boyd, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

CD label image: Still image from video animation *Great Green Gloom* by Kathleen Quillian.

CD tray image: Still image from video *For the Dusky Mourner* by Konrad Steiner.

All compositions by Lisa Mezzacappa © 2017 MezzTone Music (ASCAP).

This recording was made possible through funding from InterMusic SE, the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music. *Glorious Ravage* was created with support from the MAP Fund, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and Headlands Center for the Arts. Special thanks to Brava Theater, the Angel City Jazz Festival, the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at UC Irvine, and the de Young Museum for presenting this work. Thank you Roger Kim, David Weisberg, Harry Bernstein, Paul Dresher, Steve and Lauren Adams, Kyle Bruckmann, Tim Perkis, Jason Levis, Mark Clifford, Suki O'Kane, and Graham Connah for the added support.

*Glorious Ravage* is a collaboration with filmmakers Alfonso Alvarez, Kathleen Quillian, Janis Crystal Lipzin, and Konrad Steiner. To stream this complete work with its companion films, visit [gloriousravage.com](http://gloriousravage.com).

**This recording was also made possible by a grant from the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trust.**

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