

# Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, movies and more, edited by Rebecca Wallace



Veronica Weber



Above: Artistic director Sanford Dole, his back to the camera, leads the Bay Choral Guild in a recent rehearsal in Palo Alto. Above right: Mountain View composer Frank Ferko. Below right: Menlo Park composer and Bay Choral Guild singer L Peter Deutsch.

## THAT WEST COAST SOUND

CHORAL CONCERT HIGHLIGHTS CALIFORNIA, OREGON, WASHINGTON COMPOSERS

by Rebecca Wallace

Writings from far and wide have one thing in common at the Bay Choral Guild this month. They've all been given a West Coast interpretation, set to choral music by California, Oregon and Washington composers.

Words by St. Francis of Assisi will be in the company of writings by Pablo Neruda, Bret Harte and Michelangelo, to name a few. The program, "Pacific Passions," will be performed locally on March 20 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto.

"It's going to be an interesting concert. The pieces are modern but quite accessible," said Menlo Park resident L Peter Deutsch, one of the composers on the program. His new piece is based on an e.e. cummings poem, "love is

more thicker than forget."

Also local is Mountain View composer Frank Ferko, who thought of the late California poet Kenneth Rexroth when he heard the concert's theme. He chose three Rexroth poems about spring, and set them to music as a multi-part work.

The program features three world premieres: the pieces by Deutsch and Ferko, and Trevor Doherty's work based on Harte's "The Two Ships." Other composers include Eric Whitacre, who drew his text from Federico Garcia Lorca's "With a Lily in Your Hand"; and Kirke Mechem, whose cycle features poems by Sara Teasdale.

Sanford Dole, artistic director of the choral group, also contributed a piece. Its text is

"Prayer of Saint Francis."

For Deutsch, the program provides an unusual opportunity. Not only will he be premiering a new work as a composer, he'll also be performing. He has sung bass with the Palo Alto-based choral group for many years.

Deutsch has a Ph.D. in computer science and a background as a software engineer, but music has been a longtime interest. In 2003, he began focusing more seriously on composition. He studied music at Stanford University and then earned a master's degree in composition from California State University, East Bay, at the urging of his Stanford mentor, Giancarlo Aquilanti.

"School was what I needed, to go from being a dabbler in composition to someone who

could make some claim to knowing what I was doing," Deutsch said earlier this week in his living room, surrounded by records, a piano and an affable orange cat that occasionally interrupted the interview by jumping on the couch.

Deutsch's e.e. cummings-inspired work is titled "The Dimensions of Love." It, along with the poem, explores metaphors about the qualities of love.

Deutsch said he liked the poem's messages, as well as its playfulness, and he says his piece reflects that spirit. For instance, with the lines "love is more thicker than forget / more thinner than recall," Deutsch played with texture, moving from five voice parts to the high three parts.



From left, Olivia Ebrahimi, Rani Fischer and Carol Bucholz sing during Bay Choral Guild rehearsal in Palo Alto.



From left, Sandy Green, Jim Seidel, Stephen Boisvert and Lighty Goldenberg at rehearsal.

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The piece also takes the uncommon step of having all parts, men's and women's, begin on the same note in the same octave, the D above middle C. The voices then expand into different keys, concluding in D major.

While some composers have a favorite time, place or technique for writing, Deutsch said he doesn't have a set method (although he is fond of writing the beginning and the end first, and finishing in the middle). One thing he is set on is his love of the text in vocal pieces.

"I'm very word-oriented. I always approach vocal pieces as setting music to words," he said.

As for Ferko, he had very few words to work with in the three Rexroth poems he chose for his choral piece "The Spring of Life." But that wasn't a problem for him.

"A lot of his poems are very short, concise, almost like haiku, and I really like that miniature kind

Ferko used his style of harmonies across them. He calls the style tonal and conventional.

"My thinking as a composer has always gravitated toward the harmonies we hear in French music from about 100 years ago, like Debussy and Ravel," he said. "I use that as my point of departure and then embellish in my own way."

When composing, Ferko also was thinking of the Bay Choral Guild, which he has seen perform several times.

"Every group has a little bit different quality in their sound. I like to try to capture what I consider to be strong points or certain features," he said. The choral guild, he

said, has a "very nicely well-blended sound" that worked well with his colorful harmonies.

As a longtime composer and organist who has also been a choral director, Ferko has written for many vocal, instrumental, theater and dance groups, as well as individual singers. His choral piece "Stabat Mater," written in 1997-98 for the Chicago ensemble His Majesties Clerkes, has received particular acclaim.

Ferko, who is also a library cataloguer and archivist, moved here from Chicago about five years ago to work at Stanford University's Archive of Recorded Sound. The Bay Choral Guild has performed

pieces of his in the past, but this is the first work of his that they've commissioned.

Like Deutsch, Ferko often finds inspiration for his music in words, even in novels. Sometimes, he said: "Something in the text hits me and

I think: 'Oh my gosh, this is a very musical kind of text. I've got to do something with this.'"

But, he added, "The music comes at just about any time." An idea can come while he's walking, or be sparked by a color or sound.

"I'm very, very sensitive to colors and lighting," Ferko said, adding, "Rainstorms and thunderstorms in the Midwest are fantastic for writing music." He laughed. "I have experienced earthquakes here, but earthquakes don't seem to do anything for my musical mind." ■

**What:** The Bay Choral Guild presents a program of music by West Coast composers.

**Where:** St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 600 Colorado Ave., Palo Alto  
**When:** Sunday, March 20, at 4:30 p.m. A pre-concert lecture will take place at 4 p.m.

**Cost:** Tickets are \$25 general, \$20 for seniors, and \$6 for students.

**Info:** The program will also be presented on March 18 in Campbell and on March 19 in San Francisco. For details, go to baychoralguild.org.

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-Composer L Peter Deutsch

of quality," Ferko said in a phone interview.

Ferko said he enjoyed using the vivid imagery in the trio of poems, and the thematic and emotional differences among them.

In the first poem, "Spring," Ferko found the full-moon scene mysterious, and thus employed "dramatic musical movement" in his piece, he said. The second, "This Spring," seemed somber to Ferko, who tried to convey a feeling of "open, endless space." He decided that the third, "Spring Is Early," felt carefree, so he began with a four-voice fugue sung to the word "la."

To connect the poems together,



**NOTICE OF A PUBLIC MEETING  
of the Palo Alto  
Planning & Transportation Commission**

Please be advised the Planning and Transportation Commission (P&TC) shall conduct a **special meeting at 6:00 PM, Wednesday, March 23, 2011** in the Civic Center, Council Chambers, 1st Floor, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California. Any interested persons may appear and be heard on these items.

Staff reports for agenda items are available via the City's main website at [www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org) and also at the Planning Division Front Desk, 5th Floor, City Hall, after 2:00 PM on the Friday preceding the meeting date. Copies will be made available at the Development Center should City Hall be closed on the 9/80 Friday.

**NEW BUSINESS.**  
Public Hearing:

- 525 San Antonio Rezoning and Comp. Plan Amendment:**  
Request initiated by SummerHill Homes on behalf of A&D Protocol Transportations Inc. for a Zone Change from R-1 (8000) to RM-15 (Low Density Multiple-Family/Village Residential) and a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to assign the Village Residential Land Use Designation to a 2.65-acre site currently designated Single-Family Residential and in use as a preschool/daycare center. Applicant's plans following rezoning include submittal of applications for Architectural Review and a Tentative Map to replace the existing buildings with up to 26 single-family detached homes on individual parcels. Environmental Assessment: A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared.

Questions. For any questions regarding the above applications, please contact the Planning Department at (650) 329-2440. The files relating to these items are available for inspection weekdays between the hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This public meeting is televised live on Government Access Channel 26.

ADA. The City of Palo Alto does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. To request accommodations to access City facilities, services or programs, to participate at public meetings, or to learn more about the City's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), please contact the City's ADA Coordinator at 650.329.2550 (voice) or by e-mailing [ada@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:ada@cityofpaloalto.org).

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**Curtis Williams,**  
Director of Planning and Community Environment



**NOTICE OF A SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING  
of the City of Palo Alto  
Architectural Review Board (ARB)**

**8:30 A.M., Thursday, March 24, 2011** Palo Alto Council Chambers, 1st Floor, Civic Center, 250 Hamilton Avenue. Go to the Development Center at 285 Hamilton Avenue to review filed documents; contact Alicia Spotwood for information regarding business hours at 650-617-3168.

**Stanford University School of Medicine [10PLN-00397]:** Request by Stanford University School of Medicine on behalf of The Board of Trustees for the Leland Stanford Junior University for Architectural Review of Foundations in Medicine Building 1, containing approximately 185,000 square feet of research, office, and administrative support uses. This project is a component of the Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Project. Existing Zone District: PF (Public Facility).

**300 Pasteur Drive [10PLN-00399]** Request by Stanford Hospital and Clinics on behalf of The Board of Trustees for the Leland Stanford Junior University for Architectural Review of improvements to Welch Road, including widening of Welch Road at specific locations, creation of a new public street (Durand Way), roadway restriping, and other streetscape improvements. This project is a component of the Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Project. Existing Zone District: MOR (Medical Office and Research).

**795 Welch Road [10PLN-00396]** Request by Lucile Packard Children's Hospital on behalf of The Board of Trustees for the Leland Stanford Junior University for Architectural Review of a 521,300 gross square foot expansion to the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, including an additional 104 patient beds, underground parking and on-site landscaping. This project is a component of the Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Project. Existing Zone District: MOR (Medical Office and Research).

**Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Project- Design Guidelines:** Review of Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Project Design Guidelines

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**Amy French**  
Manager of Current Planning