

A Concordance of Leaves

LINER NOTES

Track Listing

1.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 1, Prologue	1:48
2.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 2, On drying racks tobacco leaves swim	6:32
3.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 3, The Question Factory	6:05
4.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 4, Today el youm	6:32
5.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 5, Scarved sisters are radiant	6:36
6.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 6, And though	6:37
7.	A Concordance of Leaves: No. 7, Because there is a word for love	6:18
8.	Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen	3:01
9.	Nymphes des bois	3:52

Total Time 48:25

Artists

Shanan Estreicher, Composer

The Queens College Vocal Ensemble

James John, Conductor

Andrew Wannigman, Baritone

Joseph Liccardo, Piano

The Queens College Vocal Ensemble:

Soprano

Samantha Constantino

Jessica DeGennaro

Maya Hussein

Melina Rosario

Alto

Marcella Grancaric

Lily Negraponte

Jeana Prentice

Noelle Richard

Nicole Ruiz

Rebecca Silver

Tenor

Evan Batsford

Lesly DeCastro

Terrance Pogue

Frank Wiederhold

Bass

Daniel Bauman

James Keesee

Aaron Ramsey

Michal Subernat

Todd Wachsman

Album Credits

Recorded January 18–19, 2023 at LeFrak Hall, Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College, Flushing, NY.

Producer and Mixing Engineer: Brian Forbes

Recording Engineer: Bill Siegmund, [Digital Island Productions](#)

Mastering Engineer: Kevin McNoldy, [Cphonic Mastering](#)

Cover Art: “Remains” by [Zahi Khamis](#)

Liner Notes for A Concordance of Leaves by Composer Shanan Estreicher, 2023

One of my primary aspirations as a composer has been to write a large-scale dramatic choral work. Four years ago, I encountered the book *A Concordance of Leaves*, by the American poet Philip Metres. Its language and social themes instantly struck a chord with me and I felt I had finally found the ideal text on which to base my new choral work. The poem was written after Metres attended his sister’s wedding in Palestine. While there are many implicit references to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in the poem, the overarching themes are community, love, and language.

I chose the format of a cantata because of its traditional interchange between solo voice and choir and in homage to J.S. Bach’s *Wedding Cantata* BWV 202. My work features a choir, a baritone soloist, who takes on the role of narrator, and piano accompaniment. The musical language for *A Concordance of Leaves* varies from movement to movement as it follows the structure and tone of the poem. Specifically, I drew on Renaissance and early Baroque polyphony, contemporary abstract and minimalist textures, and Middle Eastern folk song. Three movements that demonstrate this variety are “The Question Factory” with its dense, fast-paced counterpoint; “And though” which includes body percussion to loosely resemble a Palestinian *dabke* dance, as well as responsorial singing; and the final movement “There is a word for love” with its lush cluster harmonies and gently hypnotic triple meter.

Liner Notes for Shanan Estreicher’s A Concordance of Leaves by Poet Philip Metres, 2023

A Concordance of Leaves (first published as a chapbook by Diode Editions, later part of the book *Shrapnel Maps*, [published by Copper Canyon in 2020](#)) details a 2003 visit to the village of Toura in Palestine on the occasion of my sister Katherine’s wedding to Majed.

I’d been educating myself on Palestine and Israel since the early 1990s. My sister had come back from a summer at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah during the Intifada, shaken by settlers shooting at crowds, checkpoints, house demolitions, and prison torture. After the wedding, I developed a course to

teach Israeli and Palestinian literatures contrapuntally, in which students would have to wrestle with each narrative. On the last day of class, I showed photographs from the wedding and talked about what I had come to understand, having seen it with my own eyes and felt it with my own body.

Though I'd kept a thick journal from the wedding trip, many years passed before *A Concordance of Leaves* emerged. The bits of language from my journal slept in an untouched Word file for many years. Some believe that the soul lags seven years behind the present. When I looked at that file in 2010 and started working on it again, this poem kept calling to me, and I kept answering.

I chose the title *A Concordance of Leaves* because “concordance” contains multiple meanings that rhyme with the text—agreement, union, an index, etc. The “leaves” are not just the pages themselves (and each page is titled “leaf” in Arabic), but also the various flora woven throughout the poem, as well as the problematics of exile, which haunt Palestinian life.

Palestine is too big for any poem, any book. In *A Concordance of Leaves*, I wanted to pay attention to the life of this village, in all its beauty and tragedy, on the occasion of the gathering of two families. I wanted to testify to what I saw and felt, to the love of a village for a native son and for the family of strangers they greeted as their own.

I still recall how in Toura, the breeze, far from the sea, still carries the scent of the sea. How the evanescent patterns of light through the leaves painted themselves on the white walls of houses built by hand by the family, from materials drawn out of the earth. How we couldn't leave the village, one day, because the Israeli army had bulldozed all the roads to the village, and so we drove across the rutted path between olive trees. How olive trees, everywhere, grow—never straight, but always toward the light and into themselves.

In Toura, I first drank sage tea. The smell of sage reminds me of visiting South Dakota with my beloved (she taught at Pine Ridge Reservation); but if I scratch that scent even farther, and it also reminds me coming back to the canyons of San Diego which I used to explore as a little boy. If there's something that poetry can aspire to do, it's to be as primal as the scent of sage, as redolent of memory and the combination of thirst and slaking that is sage tea. To think that this tea is named after the mother of Jesus, who was to have stopped amid her sojourn to slake her thirst. We are all part of some sojourn, itself containing thousands of other sojourners and sojourns.

The Palestine of this poem also doesn't exist in quite the way that it did twenty years ago. Qalandia is no longer merely a no-man's land checkpoint; it's now a fully operational and mechanized Matrix of Control. The Wall continues to morph. A few years ago, I saw my brother-in-law in a YouTube video showing a Toura protest against the wall, which had separated a bride and groom from neighboring villages. Though he and my sister are no longer together, it was poignant to see him in the video, back in the fabric of the community. Yet *Concordance* testifies to the beauty of the union of my sister and this Palestinian man who remains my brother.

I am grateful to Shanan Estreicher, another one of my brothers, for working with my poems as lyrics for this beautiful piece, also called *A Concordance of Leaves*. He has given the poetic sequence, and the world that it contains, another life, one that will help us remember something that politics erases and history tells us to forget—that we are all a part of a single concordance.

Artist Bios

Shanan Estreicher is a composer and songwriter living in New York City. He studied music at the Manhattan School of Music and Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College.

He has composed orchestral, choral, and chamber music, art songs, and music for theater, TV, and film. His compositions have been performed at Carnegie Hall and featured on NBC, Lifetime, and Fox. His songwriting work includes five albums as a solo artist and with the alt-country group The Brown Trousers.

As a founding board member of the Chamber Orchestra of New York, Shanan has helped lead the ensemble to international success and acclaim. He has designed and launched an educational outreach program called Maestro Juniors for the orchestra that brings live classical music performances to title-one schools in New York City.

One of Shanan's greatest joys is sharing his passion for music with children. For over seventeen years he has taught music at a public school in Queens, NY. He is also the founder and director of the Queens County Choral Festival for elementary and middle school students.

Philip Metres is the author of twelve books, including *Fugitive/Refuge* (Copper Canyon 2024), *Shrapnel Maps* (Copper Canyon, 2020), *The Sound of Listening: Poetry as Refuge and Resistance* (University of Michigan, 2018), *Sand Opera* (Alice James, 2015), and *I Burned at the Feast: Selected Poems of Arseny Tarkovsky* (Cleveland State, 2015). His work—poetry, translation, essays, fiction, criticism, and scholarship—has garnered fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the Watson Foundation. He is the recipient of the Adrienne Rich Award, three Arab American Book Awards, the Lyric Poetry Prize, and the Cleveland Arts Prize. Metres has been called “one of the essential poets of our time,” whose work is “beautiful, powerful, magnetically original.” He is professor of English and director of the Peace, Justice, and Human Rights program at John Carroll University. He lives with his family in Cleveland, Ohio. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @PhilipMetres

James John is professor of music and director of Choral Studies at Queens College's Aaron Copland School of Music, where he directs the Queens College Vocal Ensemble, the Queens College Choral Society, and heads the graduate program in choral conducting. John also is artistic director of the Manhattan-based vocal ensemble Cerddorion, a select chamber choir dedicated to adventurous programs that span the breadth of the choral repertoire.

Under his leadership, the choral program at the School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region, with performances at state and divisional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, as well as performances in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and St. Patrick's Cathedral. His ensembles are featured on two recordings: *The Partsongs of Hamish MacCunn*, released by QC Vocal Ensemble with funding from the PSC-CUNY Research Foundation, and *Songs of Peace and Praise*, a compilation of choral music by Queens College composers, released on the NAXOS label.

John's guest conducting appearances include Brahms's *Requiem* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Tokyo Oratorio Society and Oratorio Sinfonica Japan, the annual *Messiah* Sing-In at David Geffen

Hall, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale, and honor choirs throughout New York State. As a teacher and scholar, John has served as guest lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany and presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in conducting from the Eastman School of Music.

Lauded for his “malevolent presence and a strong [baritone]” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) that was “utterly convincing” (*Broadway World*) in the role of Jigger Craigin for Union Avenue Opera’s *Carousel*, **Andrew Wannigman** is quickly garnering attention as a versatile singer-actor who is adept both vocally and dramatically in the wide-ranging baritone roles of opera, operetta, and musical theatre. Recent highlights include Andrews in the “groundbreaking” (*New York Times*) world premiere of *Stonewall* by Iain Bell and Mark Campbell with New York City Opera, Escamillo in Peter Brooks’ abridged *Carmen* with City Lyric Opera, and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Long Island Lyric Opera.

An avid recitalist and concert performer, Mr. Wannigman recently performed the baritone solos in Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs* with Westminster Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma City. Other concert performances include an alumni guest recital at Luther College as well as recitals in Boston, most notably at the acclaimed Jordan Hall. He has also been the soloist in masterworks such as Handel’s *Messiah*, Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, Beethoven’s *Mass in C*, and Mozart’s *Requiem*.

Mr. Wannigman is currently a member of the voice faculty of the Aaron Copland School of Music, and recently guest starred as Danilo in the college’s production of Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*.

Joseph Liccardo is active as a chamber musician, soloist, and music educator. Recent performances include recitals at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Bargemusic, the Chicago Cultural Center, Rockefeller University, Union College, Peabody Conservatory, Jordan Hall, as well as several tours of China. During the summers of 2013-2016, he participated in the Yellow Barn chamber music festival in Putney, Vermont, where he performed a wide variety of repertoire ranging from standard classics to new 21st century works. Since July of 2017, he has worked each summer at the Ravinia Festival Steans Music Institute, in Highland Park, Illinois as a collaborative pianist. In addition, for the past four seasons, he has collaborated with the Tom Gold Dance Company for their bi-annual productions in New York. He is an adjunct lecturer of piano at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, where he coordinates the piano repertoire class and teaches private piano lessons and chamber music. He is also on the faculty of the Eisman Center for Preparatory Studies in Music at the college, where he teaches private piano, chamber music, and group performance classes. In addition, he maintains a large private piano studio. Joseph holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, and a Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School. His primary teachers include Donald Pirone, Douglas Humpherys, and Robert McDonald.

The **Queens College Vocal Ensemble** is the Aaron Copland School of Music’s principal mixed choral ensemble, specializing in a cappella music from the Renaissance to the 21st-century. Comprised primarily of undergraduate performance majors, recent performances have included Bernstein’s Choruses from the ‘Lark’, Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s *Romancero Gitano*, Bach’s *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, BWV 106, Britten’s *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Monteverdi’s *Lamento d’Arianna*, Brahms’s *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 42,

Barber's Reincarnations, a program of Renaissance music from Spain and Latin America, Debussy's Trois Chansons, and annual appearances on the Live Music for Living Composers concert at Tenri Gallery in Manhattan. The Vocal Ensemble was invited to perform at the American Choral Directors Association Eastern Division Conference in New York City as part of a conducting master class with Jerry Blackstone of the University of Michigan, and is featured on two compact disc recordings: Selected Partsongs of Hamish MacCunn (2009), and Songs of Peace and Praise: Choral Music from Queens College, released in December 2017 on the Naxos label.

Queens College's Aaron Copland School of Music offers a variety of rigorous and distinguished courses of study. Well known for its traditional, classically based curriculum, eminent faculty, famous alumni, award-winning facilities, and a performance calendar that draws audiences from throughout the metropolitan region, the School of Music prepares students for graduate school as well as a range of careers in music—composing, performing, conducting, teaching, or managing. With more than 200 concerts and recitals by ensembles, students, faculty, artists-in-residence, and guest artists each semester, the School is home to a vibrant musical community, and offers a number of undergraduate and masters degrees, depending on a student's preferred career path. The vocal program includes three choirs, annual opera productions with orchestra, and a multitude of performance opportunities ranging from oratorio to chamber music. Recent opera productions include Mozart's Marriage of Figaro and Così fan tutte, Poulenc's Dialogues of the Carmelites and Britten's Rape of Lucretia. For additional information contact:

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A Concordance of Leaves

(All text by Philip Metres, from his book of poetry *A Concordance of Leaves* published by Diode Editions, except “Prologue”)

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 1, Prologue

as if I could not sing
except when you sing
—Pablo Neruda

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 2, On drying racks tobacco leaves swim

(excerpt from the original poem)

on drying racks tobacco leaves swim
wind turns the pages of the book
we can only read in the rough translation
of my soon-to-be-brother-in-law

& this is the brother of my soon-to-be-
brother-in-law, inhaling through the straw

of his cigarette: holds it between ring
& middle fingers, palm up: the unseen

& inaccessible sea caresses our strange faces—
blind & we wait for our lines to be read

& this is the cemetery, where the father
of his father’s father’s father’s father’s

father’s father’s father’s father’s father’s
buried, bodies marked by broken stone incisors

among neighbors we sip sage tea, *maramia*—
named after the mother of God—for sage slaked her desert tongue

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 3, The Question Factory

& our family will ask so many questions we will
be called The Question Factory

& you my future brother will write your answers
with my slowly disappearing hand

The Question Factory asks: what is a dunum?
Answer: *slowly disappearing land*

The Question Factory asks: what is that line
on your skull? Answer: *a failed poem*

*by one who tries to write over everything
already written over*

The Question Factory: why do you smile?
because I still have my teeth

: where are the doll's missing eyes?
in the back of my mind I believe
: in what?
I believe I hear a song

: why do you laugh?
because I still have my tongue

there is a song, & yet
I hear no singing

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 4, Today el youm

Today	<i>el youm</i>
My friend	<i>sadiqi</i>
Sweet/Beautiful	<i>halwa</i>
Tree	<i>shajarah</i>
Forbidden [shame]	<i>haram</i>
My name is	<i>ismi</i>
Listen	<i>isma'</i>
It means	<i>y'anni</i>
Sea	<i>bahr</i>
Here	<i>han</i>

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 5, Scarved sisters are radiant

scarved sisters are radiant with wide
mouths & waves & teeth & singing

& though there is the great unhappiness
framed in silent unsmiling faces

hammered on insides of houses
watching over all preparations

night is lifting the women
are drumming the tabla their voices inviting

a heart to break itself & open
a space another could nest inside

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 6, And though

(excerpts from the original poem)

& though the border guards will advise us
this is a dangerous time to visit

& though we had to lie & say we were tourists
& not guests at our sister's wedding

to spare ourselves the special interrogation
on the borders of fear / in Ben Gurion

& though some seaside café will split into
thousands of shards of glassy dreams

& these people will have had nothing to do
with it, & the bulldozers will doze their roads

so that every road ends in a wall
every car will pick a path through olive groves

& though we won't see the sea the wind
will haul it & the whole village will arrive at the village

the children will flock to every flat roof
to watch the village become the village

& see the wedding from enough distance
it looks like a story that could be entered

& though the sun will be too bright for the bride
to see much farther than her own eyes

& though the bullet in the groom will begin
to hatch in his side, & the stiches in his skull

will sing another verse in the book of dreams,
& though the bride's questions will beak their shell

years from now, now, now let there be dancing
in circles, let the village become flung arms

bringing bodies to bodies

A Concordance of Leaves: No. 7, Because there is a word for love

because there is a word for love in this tongue
that entwines two people as one

& there is a word for love in this tongue
that nests in the chambers of the heart

& a word for love in this tongue that wanders
the earth, for love in this tongue in which you lose

yourself in this tongue & a word that carries
sorrow within its vowels & a word for love

that exudes from your pores & a word
for love that shares its name with falling

Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen (anonymous)

Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen,
ich fahr dahin mein Strassen
in fremde Land da hin.
Mein Freud ist mir genommen,
die ich nit weiß bekommen,
wo ich im Elend bin.

Groß Leid muss ich jetzt tragen,
das ich allein tu klagen
dem liebsten Buhlen mein.
Ach Lieb, nun lass mich Armen
im Herzen dein Erbarmen
daß ich muss von dannen sein.

Mein Trost ob allen Weiben,
Dein tu ich ewig bleiben
stets treu, der Ehren fromm.
Nun muss dich Gott bewahren,
in aller Tugend sparen,
bis daß ich wieder komm!

Innsbruck, I must leave you
For I am traveling the road
to a foreign land.
Deprived of my joy
and knowing not how to get it back,
I will be in anguish.

I am burdened with great sorrow
which I can shed only
through the one dearest to me.
O my love, leave me not bereft
of compassion in your heart
that I must part from you.

My comfort above all other women,
I remain yours forever,
always faithful, in true honor.
And now, may God protect you,
safe in virtue,
till I return.

Nymphes des bois (Jean Molinet, 1435-1507)

Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines,
Chantres experts de toutes nations,
Changez voz voix tant clères et haultaines
En cris trenchans et lamentations.
Car Atropos, très terrible satrape,
A vostre Ockeghem attrapé en sa trappe.
Vrai trésorier de musique et chief d'œuvre,
Doct, élégant de corps et non point trappe.
Grant dommage est que la terre le couvre.
Acoustrez vous d'habits de deuil
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
Et plourez grosses larmes d'œul :
Perdu avez vostre bon père.
Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Cantus firmus:

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains,
Expert singers from all nations,
Turn your voices, so clear and high,
To rending cries and lamentation.
For Atropos*, the terrible ruler,
Has seized your Ockeghem in her trap.
The true treasurer** of music and its masterpiece
Learned, elegant in body and in no way old-fashioned.
It is a terrible loss that the earth covers him.
Put on your mourning clothes
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
And weep great tears from your eyes
Gone is your great father.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Cantus firmus:

Eternal rest give them, Lord,
And light perpetual shine on them.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

* One of the three Fates, whose role it was to cut the thread of human life with her shears.

** or "treasure"

