





### Collage of Koleda Carols / 1

*Bulgaria, collected by Rajna D. Kacarova, composite arrangement by Janet Kutulas*

Originally a pre-Christian Slavic winter holiday, *Koleda* is now associated with Christmas throughout the Balkans. These two carols appear in a small book, published in 1934, which Janet picked up during her travels in Bulgaria. *Koleda* carols were often personalized to specific members of a household. The first carol in this collage, “Pogodil se Janko junak,” is dedicated to a young man engaged to be married. The second, “Zvünnalo mi jasno zvünče,” is sung to a young girl.

#### *Podgodil se Janko junak*

“Janko has gotten engaged to a girl from Drjanopole. To his wedding he’s invited his brother-in-law, the bright sun; his sister-in-law, the moon; his wedding party, the tiny stars; and the Lord Himself as his best man.”

JANET KUTULAS *opening solo*  
SHIRA CION *supporting vocals*

### *Zvünnalo mi jasno zvünče*

“A little bell rang out clearly at the crossroads. It wasn’t a bell, rather it was a young girl, Elenčica, whose little brother was a shepherd. She called to him to wake him up: ‘Get up, for your sheep have all scattered to the edge of the green field into the yellow millet!’ Her brother answered, ‘My sheep aren’t all alone. Before them walks St. Elias, at their side walks St. George, and behind them walks the Lord Himself, playing a honey-sweet flute. As he plays he gathers together the gray flock.’”

KELLY ATKINS, CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN *duet*

### *Zapovedi blaženstv* *The Beatitudes / 2*

*Russia, composed in 1998 by Vladimir Martynov (b. 1946), from the repertoire of Sirin Ensemble, arranged for treble voices by Caitlin Tabancay Austin*

*The Beatitudes* are eight blessings sung as the Third Antiphon at the Divine Liturgy in

Slavic Orthodox practice. They call upon the listener to embody the ideals of mercy, spirituality, and compassion.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who weep, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those that are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when you are offended and persecuted, and when they say all kinds of evil lies about you for my sake; Rejoice and be glad, for your reward shall be great in the heavens.”

KELLY ATKINS, CORINNE SYKES, NATALIE BARTLETT, CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN, BARBARA BYERS, MICHELE SIMON, SHIRA CION, JANET KUTULAS *soloists*



### D-oi roagă / 3

*Transylvania, Romania, arranged by Peter Simcich*

This *colindă*, or carol, is one of many collected by Béla Bartók in Transylvania around 1909, and set for piano in his 1915 collection *Romanian Christmas Carols*. Kitka’s dear friend Peter Simcich created a sparkling vocal arrangement of the original melody and invented a laudatory refrain to complement it.

“The young bridegroom prays on the mountain, hoping to stir the quiet wind up. The wind blows over the mountaintop, through the sheltered spots, through the stony valley. At the mossy boulder, it stirs the green-leaved bramble and flushes out the sorrel stag. The stag, however, turns to the youth and says: ‘Hold on, hold on, don’t be too hasty! Instead, come along with me. I’ll take you down to the Ford of Jordan, and there we’ll meet nine other ashen-hued stags. You can kill all ten of us, and then use our antlers to put gables on your house, make a fence with our ribs, roof your house with our hides, and then paint the house with our blood.’ Praise the Lord God Almighty!”

### Mze shina da mze gareta / 4

*Guria, Georgia, traditional, from Ensemble Mzetamze*

This ritual ring dance song was traditionally sung by women to celebrate the birth of a son. Georgian ethnologists connect its intriguing text to ancient astral cults.

“Sun within and Sun without, Sun, come inside the house! A boy has been born to us. His father is not at home—he has gone to town to get a cradle. The sun has set and the moon has risen.”

KELLY ATKINS, KRISTINE BARRETT,  
JANET KUTULAS *trio*



### Momci koledarci / 5

*Šop region, Bulgaria, from the repertoire of the Philip Koutev Ensemble via Tzvetanka Varimezova. Music and lyrics by Stefan Dragostinov*

In Bulgaria, *koledari* carolers are typically groups of festively dressed young men, who are accompanied by an elder. They traditionally make their rounds from midnight on Christmas Eve to dawn on Christmas Day.

Each caroler carries a *gega*, a ritual walking stick. The *koledari* visit each and every house in their village to chase away demons and bestow blessings for health, wealth, fertility, and happiness.

“The young caroling men traveled along the roads, singing praises to God. They passed the nights, treading along the roads, so much that their walking sticks broke. Last night, at midnight, they arrived at the spacious courtyard of the master of the house. They sang *Koleda* songs. The master of the house rejoiced and gave the carolers gifts.”

CORINNE SYKES *solos*

### Three Yiddish Lullabies / 6

*Yiddish, from Ethel Raim, arranged by Barbara Byers and Kitka*

The trailblazing American folk singer and song collector Ethel Raim shared these three striking lullabies with Kitka. As is the case in many old world lullabies, comforting melodies provide a cathartic vehicle for the singer to express stories that are often dark and sorrowful.

### Dremlen feygl oyf di tsvaygn

*Text by Leah Rudnitsky (born 1916 in Kalvarija, Lithuania, died c. 1944 in an Estonian concentration camp). From Ruth Rubin's book, Jewish Folk Songs, New York: Oak Publications, 1965*

Rubin writes about Leah Rudnitsky: “The shooting of 4,000 Jewish men, women and children at Ponar (outside of Vilna, Lithuania) on April 5, 1943, left a grievous impression on the young poet, who herself, soon after, perished at the hands of the Nazis. A three-year-old child, wandering in the streets after the roundup moved this poet to write this lullaby. The melody may have been adapted from a song by the Soviet composer [Artur] Polonsky.”

“Birds are dozing on the branches. Sleep my dear child. By your cradle, in the field, a stranger sings you to sleep. It was at your cradle she stood, filled with joy. And your mother, oh, your mother will never come back to you. I saw your father running under showers of stones, and his orphaned cry flew across the fields.”

BARBARA BYERS *soloist*



### Hayda-lu-lu

*As sung by Mordkhe Schaechter (born 1927 in Černivci, Ukraine, died in 2007 in the Bronx, New York City). Recorded by song collector Leybl Kahn in 1954*

“*Hayda-lu-lu* my little one, my beautiful one, *hayda-lulinku*. Father has gone to the woods, my child. He will bring you a little bird. Father has gone to the field, my child. He will bring you a little flower.”

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN *soloist*

### Az di vest batsuln brider

*Text by Moishe Leib Halpern (born 1886 in Zlotšev, Galicia (in contemporary Ukraine), died 1932 in New York City), melody by Leibu Levin (born 1914 in Câmpulung, Romania, died 1983 in Herzlia, Israel). From the singing of Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman (born 1920 in Vienna, Austria, died in 2013 in the Bronx, New York)*

“When you have means, brother, you can travel in a fancy carriage. If you don't, brother, you go by foot on stones and thorns. Close your eyes, *Hayda-lu-lu, lu*.

Like a wild dog you'll be chased away from doors and gates, and where you spend your day, you will not spend the night. You'll sit yourself upon a stone, beating yourself about the head and heart, and mother Rukhl (Rachel) will cry over your dark fate. When the Messiah can no longer take your pain, he will sit upon a stone and beat upon himself."

CORINNE SYKES *soloist*

### Kur bijāti ziemassvētki / 7

*Latvia, traditional, from the Skandinieki Latvian Folklore Ensemble, arranged by Kitka*

"Who knows where Christmas has been all night long? In the horse stable, the cow shed, or beyond the hill at the farmstead?"

KELLY ATKINS & JANET KUTULAS,  
BARBARA BYERS & SHIRA CION *lead duets*  
PETER MAUND *percussion*

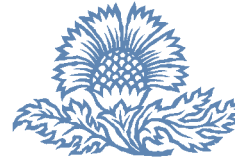


### Zamuči se Božja Majka / 8

*Vukmanovo, Southeastern Serbia, from Svetlana Spajić, arranged by Kitka*

"The Holy Mother labored from St. Ignatius Day until Christmas Eve. Then the Holy Mother gave birth to the Christ Child. She named St. John his godfather. On Holy Friday the church was swept clean in the middle of Heaven amongst the clouds. The liturgy was sung by nine priests, nine seminary students, all of the bishops, and twelve monks. The Holy Mother heard them, and said, quietly, 'Be still, forest. Be still, waters! Let us listen to them sing! The forest and the waters became still, but the aspen would not keep still. The Holy Mother cursed it: 'Oh for God's sake, aspen tree! Why do you not listen to the nine priests, to the nine students, to all of the bishops, and the twelve monks? May every tree blossom, and bear fruit. May the aspen blossom, but bear no fruit! Each tree blossomed, and bore fruit. The aspen blossomed, but bore no fruit.'"

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN, MICHELE SIMON *soloists*  
KELLY ATKINS, JANET KUTULAS *harmony vocals*



### Što se beli gore Šar-Planina / 9

*Štrpce, region of Sirinička Župa, Kosovo, traditional, from Svetlana Spajić*

The lyrics to this tune incorporate Slavic antithesis, a common stylistic device in Balkan traditional songs in which the poet poses a question, then offers incorrect answers that lead, in the end, to the truth of the matter. The Bulgarian song "Koledna zvezda" also features this form of quizzical storytelling.

"What gleams white up on Šar Mountain? Is it snow or a flock of sheep? It's neither snow nor a sheep flock. If it were snow it would've melted. If it were a flock, it would've scattered. It was Milka's tent, in which she lay sick, grief-stricken because her brother was enslaved by the Turks and then hanged."

KELLY ATKINS, SHIRA CION *duet*

### V hospodaron'ka / 10

*Kutkir, Busk, Lviv region, Ukraine, from the repertoire of the Kurbasy Ensemble of Lviv, arranged by Corinne Sykes and Shira Cion*

"At the house, a new light shines. Glory be to our dear God in Heaven! New light, new tables. On these tables, three candles burn. Three candles burn, three guests sit. The first guest is the bright sun. The second guest is the moon. The third guest is the delicate rain. The sun says: 'Oh, when I rise, I will warm up the mountains and the earth.' The moon says: 'Oh, when I rise, I will light up mountains and valleys; mountains, valleys, highlands, and fields.' And the rain says: 'Oh, when I fall, I will sprinkle rye and wheat. Rye and wheat and all vegetation.' The master of the house comes out and is joyful. And in his joy, he gives thanks to God."

CORINNE SYKES, NATALIE BARTLETT,  
KELLY ATKINS, JANET KUTULAS,  
CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN *soloists*  
PETER MAUND *percussion*





### Zvezda večernica / 11

*Šop region, Bulgaria, from the repertoire of the Philip Koutev Ensemble via Tzvetanka Varimezova, music and lyrics by Stefan Dragostinov*

In Slavic mythology the Evening Star was a female deity associated with the planets Venus and Mercury. By some accounts she was a virgin goddess, and according to others she was the wife of the Moon god and mother of all the stars. Christian lore incorporated the Evening Star into the Nativity story as the Star of Bethlehem.

“The evening star shone way up on high. It lit up the broad earth and even further afar.”

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN,  
MICHELE SIMON *duet*  
KELLY ATKINS, NATALIE BARTLETT,  
SHIRA CION, CORINNE SYKES *quartet*



### Alilo / 12

*Megrelian, traditional, from Tsalenjikha, Samegrelo, Georgia. Kitka learned this song from Carl Linich of Trio Kavkasia*

The word *alilo* is a cognate for “alleluia,” and it is also the general term for a Christmas or New Year’s carol in Georgia. As in the West, Georgian carolers wander from house to house sharing songs describing the Nativity and offering blessings for the year to come. The singers are often invited inside and offered food, drinks, and gifts. This *alilo* was originally recorded in 1967 by Yvette Grimaud, a French musicologist who conducted extensive fieldwork in Georgia.

“Alleluia! May Christ bring us Christmas. I bring heralds of Christmas. On the twenty-fifth of the month, Christ was born in Bethlehem. May our host prosper. It’s time for a sweet dinner. May peace reign here!”

JANET KUTULAS *opening solo*  
KELLY ATKINS, JANET KUTULAS,  
MICHELE SIMON *trio*



### Koledna zvezda / 13

*Bulgaria, from the Bulgarian Women’s Choir Angelite, music and lyrics by Stefan Dragostinov*

Some believe the Bulgarian word for Christmas, *Koleda*, has origins in the ancient Roman winter *Kalendae* festival, dedicated to the beginning of the solar year. Others say it is derived from the word *kolo* (wheel). *Koljada* was also the name of the old Slavic winter god, who brought up a new sun every day.

“A star shone in the maiden’s courtyard. Little God, Mother of God. There grew a tall tree. The treetop reached to the clear sky. The tips of the branches touched the highest earth. On a branch, a bird sings. How it sang... praise the Lord! On the treetop, a golden apple. It is not a golden apple... it is the young Christ Child.”

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN, BARBARA BYERS,  
SHIRA CION *trio*  
KELLY ATKINS, MICHELE SIMON,  
CORINNE SYKES *trio*



### Ščo v pana khazjajna / 14

*Pekariv, Černinivs’ka region, Ukraine, traditional, from Božyči Ensemble*

This carol is sung on the feast of *Malanka*, Ukrainian New Year’s Eve. The birch tree in Slavic folklore is a symbol of a pure, unmarried woman. The goldsmith represents a destiny-making god. In ancient tradition, the smith required a piece of someone’s body (a lock of hair, a drop of blood) to incorporate into his work to forge a positive future for his customer. In this song, the bark symbolizes this ritual sacrifice.

“At the home of the master of the house, in his courtyard, oh generous New Year’s Eve, in the midst of his grapevines stood a birch, slender and tall, with a broad canopy of leaves. On the way to the birch tree was a beaten path. Who wore this path down? The girl Haločka walked this path as she went to fetch water. Reaching for the tree, she peeled off its bark, put it on a plate, and carried it to the goldsmith.”

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN *opening solo*

## K'viria / 15

*Svaneti, Georgia. Composed by Ilia Paliani (1886–1966). From the repertoire of the Rustavi Choir and the Kartuli Ensemble*

A pre-Christian pagan hero and son of gods, K'viria served as a mediator between the supreme god (Ghmerti) and humanity, as protector of society and instrument of divine justice. Paliani's composition draws deep inspiration from ancient Svan ritual chants indigenous to the high Caucasus mountain range of Northwestern Georgia.

"Oh, K'viria! Sun of the Heavens, K'viria! Almighty K'viria!"

CORINNE SYKES *solos*



## Heyamoli / 16

*Lazona (a region on the Black Sea coast divided by the Turkish and Georgian border), arranged by Tamar Buadze, inspired by a melody found in the collection of folklorist Grigol Chikhikvaidze*

Kitka learned this Laz love song from the Georgian women's choir Tutarchela on an

unforgettable rainy afternoon in Tbilisi in 2010. Laz is an endangered South Caucasian language, related to Megrelian, Georgian, and Svan.

"Let's say one or two words about your beauty. I'm abandoning my mother and father and I'll be yours, your slave. Everyone's wishes are fulfilled, but you are not satisfied, my dear."

JANET KUTULAS, KELLY ATKINS *lead duet*

## Bel veter due / 17

*Rhodope region, Bulgaria, arranged by Nikolaj Kaufman*



This folksong was originally a monophonic tune that accompanied a *pravo horo*, a spiraling line dance in 2/4 rhythm.

"A fresh wind blew, making the forest trees sway. Three snows melted, three rivers flowed down, carrying with them three herbs. The first herb was my first love. The second herb was my second love. The third herb was the one who has forsaken me."

## Vetar vee / 18

*Šop region, Bulgaria, traditional, from Kremena Stancheva and Vasilka Andonova*

"The wind blows, the forest sways. Along the forest, a young bachelor roams."

SHIRA CION, JANET KUTULAS *duet*



## Oj z-za hory / 19

*Klušnykivka, Ukraine, traditional, from Mariana Sadovska*

"From behind the mountains and the bay, black clouds are approaching. Rain is starting to fall, and the blue sea is flooding the boat. Our boat is sinking, oh brothers!"

CORINNE SYKES *opening solos*

## Mirangula / Zimuška / 20

*Composite arrangement by Elizabeth Setzer*

This track fuses an excerpt from the opening verses of an ancient epic song in the Svan language with a haunting traditional winter song that we first heard sung by the Russian folk-metal band Arkona.

## Mirangula

*Svaneti, Georgia*

"Mother's Mirangula, mother's boy, she had only you. She brought you dinner in the tower. Mirangula was not there, mother's Mirangula."

KELLY ATKINS, CAITLIN TABANCY AUSTIN, MICHELE SIMON *trio*

## Zimuška

*Siberia, Russia, traditional, from the repertoire of Masha Scream Arkhipova*

"Winter, winter, freezing and frosty. Oh, winter, don't freeze over, for the sake of a good fellow. Oh, as with a husband and his wife who could not live together in cold discord. In coldness they could not live. The woman tormented her husband, and invited him into the garden. She invited her tormented husband into the garden, the garden no longer green, and hanged him."

SHIRA CION, JANET KUTULAS, CORINNE SYKES *trio*



## Fly, Trembling Spirit / 21

*Composite arrangement by Kelly Atkins and Janet Kutulas*

The pentatonic harmonies of Greek Epirus and an iconic American Sacred Harp tune merge in this musical meditation on impermanence.

### *Skifkin i yis ki i thalassa*

*Epirus, Greece, traditional, from the repertoire of Musiko Polytropo, directed by Iannis Kaimakis*

“The earth and the sea were torn apart and the sun came in, and out came a partridge, like the sun, like the moon. A young man saw her and caught her by the hand. ‘Let us go, girl, to my mother, for her to treat us.’ ‘Why should I come, young man? I do not know your name.’”

CAITLIN TABANCAY AUSTIN *soloist*



## Idumea

*Kentucky, USA, American Sacred Harp/shape-note tradition; text by Charles Wesley (1707–1788); music by Ananias Davisson (1780–1857); arranged by Caitlin Tabancay Austin*

“And am I born to die, to lay this body down? And must my trembling spirit fly into a world unknown—a land of deepest shade, unpierced by human thought, the dreary regions of the dead, where all things are forgot? Soon as from earth I go, what will become of me? Eternal happiness or woe must then my portion be.”

MICHELE SIMON *solos*

### *Stis Elenis to krevati*

*Epirus, Greece, from Christos Govetas, composite arrangement by Kelly Atkins and Janet Kutulas*

“Around Eleni’s bed were doctors. In French they told each other that she had no life left in her. Her arms, which the sun had never touched, were gazed upon by the doctors.”

SHIRA CION *lead vocals*

## A gute vokh / 22

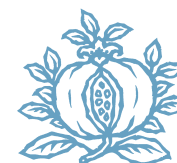
*Yiddish, melody by R. Kalmanovsky, from Adrienne Cooper, Lorin Sklamberg, and Gerry Tenney, arranged by Shira Cion*



In the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath ends on Saturday evening after the first three stars appear in the sky. The Sabbath greeting and blessing, *A gute vokh* (“a good week”) is spoken after *Havdalah*, a ritual marking the separation of sacred Sabbath or holiday time and the workweek to come. The *Havdalah* ceremony involves burning a multi-wicked candle, blessing a cup of wine, and smelling sweet spices.

“A good week, a healthy week! Oy, we wish to all Jews, and to all fine good people who are gathered here, that we should all be healthy. We will drink wine until the dawn. Oy, God should give to everyone what he needs, according to his desire. Oy, bread to eat, clothes to wear, and Kiddush wine for *Havdalah*.”

SHIRA CION *lead vocals*  
DAN CANTRELL *accordion*



Additional information about the songs, including full lyrics sheets, can be found at [www.Kitka.org/EveningStar](http://www.Kitka.org/EveningStar)





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**Kitka** is an American women's vocal arts ensemble that cultivates global community and cross-cultural understanding through the practice of harmony singing. Inspired by traditional Balkan, Slavic, and Caucasian songs and vocal techniques, Kitka also strives to expand the boundaries of folk music as a living and evolving expressive art form through the creation and performance of new music for women's voices.

Kitka began in 1979 as a grassroots group of singers who shared a passion for the stunning dissonances, asymmetric rhythms, intricate ornamentation, lush harmonies, and resonant strength of Eastern European women's vocal music. Kitka has since evolved into a professional touring and teaching ensemble, earning international recognition for its artistry, versatility, and fresh approach to folk music.

#### The Women of Kitka

[Kelly Atkins](#)  
[Caitlin Tabancay Austin](#)  
[Kristine Barrett](#)  
[Natalie Bartlett](#)  
[Barbara Byers](#)  
[Shira Cion](#)  
[Erin Lashnits Herman](#)  
[Janet Kutulas](#)  
[Michele Simon](#)  
[Corinne Sykes](#)

#### Also available from Kitka/Diaphonica Recordings:

*I will remember everything* (2016)  
*Cradle Songs Songbook* (2009)  
*Cradle Songs* (2009)  
*Sanctuary: A Cathedral Concert* (2008)  
*The Rusalka Cycle: Songs Between the Worlds* (2007)  
*Wintersongs Songbook* (2005)  
*Wintersongs* (2004)  
*The Vine* (2002)  
*Nectar* (1999)  
*Voices on the Eastern Wind* (1993)

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