

# Sonidos



Sounds of the Winter Solstice

*Sonidos*

Sounds  
of the Solstice



Candlelight Readings  
at an Earth Vespers Service  
to celebrate Winter Solstice

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2017

PLACITAS ♦ NEW MEXICO

SPONSORED BY THE  
Partnership for Earth Spirituality  
Joan Brown, *osf, President*  
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Leland Bowen, *Chair*

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Las Placitas Presbyterian Church  
7 Paseo de San Antonio  
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FIRST READING

WINTER SOLSTICE

*The first poem will be sung.*

Stephen J. Miller

Solstice calls us again to the rhythms of life  
As the earth has turns  
A dimmer sun burns in the sky.

The Southern half of our earth celebrates solstice too  
Our stars and moon,  
Now sing harmony's tune  
And we begin to see why

We are called by our Mother!  
We are called by Creation!  
We who are gifted with words  
Are called to the human vocation!

We are the creatures who speak;  
We give voice to the other!  
We listen first to the earth!  
And speak in the name of our Mother!

We listen to our ancestors  
To those who came before  
And then give voice to all cultures  
Especially to those who are voiceless and poor

Listen, Listen, Listen to the heartbeat of the universe.  
Listen, Listen, Listen to the heartbeat of the earth.

Listen to the animals! Listen to the plants!  
Listen to the soils and rocks! Listen to their chants!  
Listen to the water! Listen to the air!  
Listen to creation! Listen if you dare!

Listen! Listen!  
Listen!

SECOND READING

WINTER SOLSTICE FOR EVERYONE

Iris Gersh

Oh, what a long and cold night it is,  
We can hardly feel our hands.  
We hear the sizzle of the pine cones  
In the fire as we stamp our feet to keep warm.  
Oh, to be able to stand still, and  
Honor the change of seasons.

As we sing songs, and read poems, aloud,  
We know that inside our souls we will see  
The sun shine tomorrow, and the coming days.  
Our prayers are for each other in the cold months  
Ahead to congregate, to share our love, our fears,  
And to know we are all in this together.  
We hope that all our lives are testaments to  
Overcome, overcome trials, overcome sadness.

Music may be the balm. We may remember the sound  
Of tinkling sheep bells in the hills of Mycenae, Greece.  
Or hear the music that our ancestors sang, answering  
One stanza to another, like Gregorian Chants.  
We know that the days when we feel lonely, or  
Believe that we are undeserving of celebration, that  
Festivities and holidays are not only for the  
light-hearted, the festive brother or sister, these are  
the times that coming together in the ritual of  
winter solstice brings peace and light once again  
to each soul to last for a moment or more.  
Our internal rhythm beats to sounds of the past and  
the murmurs of quiet speaking we hear as comfort.  
At last we are in the realm of tribulations and grateful for  
The surrounding sonidos, so still and strong tonight.

THIRD READING

WINTER SOLSTICE SONGLINES RECOGNIZED

Martha Ritchie

For you my devastated heart cries.  
As I look up into soundless night skies.  
Loneliness in my searching face flies,  
While a small part of me each night dies.

Is life just full of empty songline lies?  
Hope, that a little more time buys?  
How hard and often one tries,  
As older we become more wise.

No matter what for you was life's drive.  
One's songline always valiantly strives.  
Above the inevitable to freshly rise,  
Reflecting mortality in its own eyes.

Wondering, if within the matrix's bias,  
I'll find you with no more good-bys.  
Or some other beat will be the guise,  
That will come forth to materialize.

So my mind clearly continues to visualize,  
With fear your notes may destabilize,  
I hope the overtures of our spirits will harmonize,  
With the music of our songlines to revitalize.

FOURTH READING  
FOR FREE

Jim Fish

*Read by John Green in loving memory  
of one of our most regular contributors,  
and our Placitas neighbor.*

At some point  
You reach the point  
You get beyond  
The expectation  
The anticipation  
And move  
Into acceptance  
    Appreciation  
    Celebration

The reckless exuberance  
Of springtime youth  
Slips into the distant past

The confining ambition  
For accomplishment  
And approval  
Over long summer days  
Slides into fall

You find yourself  
Sitting  
In front of a campfire  
Sipping  
A glass of wine  
Watching a waxing crescent moon  
As it dances with the scattered clouds  
Leading the edge  
Of an approaching cold front

Against the odds  
You made it here  
You earned today

You have purchased your season pass  
The rest comes  
For free

You accept  
    The fact  
    That you cannot do  
    Some things  
    You used to do

You appreciate  
    The fact  
    That you find yourself  
    Now  
    In a position  
    Such that  
    You can choose to do  
    What you do  
    That you can choose to focus on doing  
    What you can still do well

You celebrate  
    The opportunity  
    To put some time in  
    Helping some good cause

Helping  
In some small way  
Doing something  
You do well  
Something  
You enjoy doing anyway

You celebrate  
    The opportunity  
    To seize  
    Some small  
    Hedonist pleasure  
You find yourself  
On a late fall evening  
Sitting  
In front of a campfire  
Sipping  
A glass of wine  
  
With light snow  
Starting to fall  
  
The first flakes  
Of the coming ski season  
  
You toast the campfire  
  
You call each today:  
    A gift  
  
The possibility of each tomorrow:  
    A treasure

FIFTH READING  
SONIDOS DEL SOLSTICIO

Gregory Candela

Flashing in painfully slanted sunlight  
rattling in autumn breezes  
brittle yellow, then bronze  
cottonwood leaves, fall into air.

Through them, mice scabble in  
desiccant washes and arroyos.  
Mice and old men seek dens  
in sand and clay beds.

The homeless drag discarded, filthy rugs  
and stolen, stiff, paint-splattered tarps  
that scrape and scratch along behind  
them on Albuquerque asphalt and cement.

Before the cold night  
they sniff out a darkened  
side yard beneath an  
unforgiving, but safe, pyracantha.

Often they are quiet, hidden: under  
a full moon they babble and rave.

Every rock. Every plant. Every being  
hears the crystalline music of the spheres:  
in the long, cold night  
the harbinger of returning light.

SIXTH READING

IN PRE-DAWN LIGHT

Dante Berry

In Pre-dawn Light

a flock of pear-shaped shadows chatter.  
Sparrows perched in leafless trees  
calling forth the light to rise  
from behind the great stone mountain.

In pre-dawn light,  
cold and gray the shortest day,  
the portico at Alvarado Station  
creeks, as human forms emerge  
out of shadows, shoes shuffling  
plastic bags rustling.

In pre-dawn light,  
a diesel engine hums, hydraulics hiss  
a bus stops, some board the 66  
others lacking hope and means  
linger murmuring like pigeons.

SEVENTH READING

ST. LUCIA

*St. Lucia Day is a Swedish holiday celebrated December 13.*

Jules Nyquist

St. Lucia

Didn't move when arrested  
They came to her

St. Lucia

Stood her ground  
They set fire around her

St. Lucia

Was protected  
Fire didn't touch her

Tap, toe, tap

Left, right, left  
We dance hand in hand

Lines form a circle

Spiral leading us  
In a very old dance

Remember the old calendar

December 13 Winter Solstice  
Fire and return of light

St. Lucia

Wasn't harmed  
Oldest daughter wears a ring of candles

Our spiral

Coils tight  
With our dance

EIGHTH READING

THE WIND HAS A SOFT KISS

Richard Wolfson

The unkindled charity of exotic first snow  
where gravity sits upon the sanctity of a wall,  
as the river clammers, an unkempt train,  
the whoosh echo of devotion ticks along.

The blood clackled sky whistles Mozart memories,  
reverberations of a time before water,  
no clouds were hurt when earth first bubbled,  
the Poet's birth resuscitated a lull in creation

Words flare, like a rapper's chiasma,  
all medals gleam, like translucent rhymes.  
After mother locked all the doors,  
time hiccupped in synaptic confusion.

There is no explanation for the wind,  
nor a repository for unending love.

NINTH READING

UNTITLED

Gina Fredrickson

The moon rose twice that night  
and set waning  
While I walked silently westward  
with the seven sisters  
Sword ready, cloak complete  
Wind whipped my face  
until I reached the place  
to furtively wait for dawn

TENTH READING

MUSIC

Bernadette Perez

Between apple bough laden with blossoms  
The breeze floats, whispering winters arrival  
A late ripening

Leaves descend  
Shatter to the ground  
Breaking into pieces

Brittle specks of gold line the way  
Every step repeats a sequence

Those mornings we ran through fields  
Frolicking children filled with joy and laughter

I held my breath  
Slowly exhale  
I smell bread baking  
The squeaking hinge from oven door  
Brings a delightful high pitch cry

Fire burns hot  
Wood crackling  
The tea pot screams

Papa could hear Mother's footsteps  
Walking down the creaking hall  
She quietly sings a lullaby  
To send a child to sleep

Voices in my head snowball  
I listen while in transition  
I hear a howl from a hungry wolf

There is distance between us  
Harmonious soft lapping water  
Trickling scores of composition  
Performing at a nearby stream

Gratifying forms of emotion and expression  
Exposed within the elements  
Instrumental sounds producing a melody  
Hush .. so that I may hear  
Cold sneaking past the jackrabbit  
Swiftly forcing sudden change

Disturbance is vibrating at my door  
Echoes convey a wonder  
Winter solstice sets the tune  
Summer has been silenced

ELEVENTH READING

THE ONE STAR

Ann Hunkins

Everything the sun is made of, we are made of  
our eyes were made to see by her light,  
our skins made to walk under her rays,  
our bones of mountains, blood of iron,  
sinews of trees

The days have shrunk and shrunk  
lower and lower over frozen fields  
of gramma grass, frozen rivers,  
hibernating beavers and bears  
in nights grown long and thick

The squeak of a hairy woodpecker through icy air  
snow shadows so long noon leans like evening  
a still time, no hurry, things undone will have to wait  
naked wild rose bushes laced with frost,  
black willow branches bare over pale blue

In that dark before dawn, air cracking in the lungs,  
song rising in the blood, elk shifting in their snow beds  
as the stars pour through a sky cold and alive,  
are we so sure the one star will rise  
to warm us again? So sure?

TWELFTH READING

EXPECTING BEAUTY

Michelle Holland

She thinks the world stiff as principle  
may not give way to beauty, not anymore.  
There's a gasp that catches the edge  
of sunrise so similar to every other sunrise,  
right? When Charles I was hung at dawn,  
or the Titanic's band played on into  
the inevitable sinking,  
or the heaves of labor pushed out  
her wailing self into the early hours  
of another day, like any other day.  
You see where this is going?

Each strip of light ribbons down  
from the clouds, the stringy moon setting  
in the western orange morning glow,  
this time a crescent so thin,  
like a winking eye, a knowing grin,  
a solstice dawn. But, there's a catch  
these days, an astronomical reluctance,  
a whisper of resistance to rise again.

The math is there, beyond the eastern horizon  
on anyone's topography –  
could be the line of calm ocean,  
the rocky outcropping of a distant mountain  
that she still can't name, or closer,  
just along the knife of ridge outside  
her window. See the equations,  
dull scratches as on a blue-sky chalkboard,  
or in the hoary frost on the inside  
of the thin glass pane looking out.

Squint and the markings are there,  
a proof of sorts to remind the sun  
that even after such a long night, the day  
should begin again, and again tomorrow,  
no matter if the little girl at the window  
expects this gift as beauty or wants to witness  
another lit catastrophe. Her gasp creates the catch  
the sun feels. She has learned the world  
by heart, the equations that will send  
each day spinning toward inevitable night.

THIRTEENTH READING

ALONE TOGETHER

*In tribute to Max Roach and Clifford Brown*

Don McIver

*Silence* falls then my first snow-shoed step becomes an  
*accent* on a *splash cymbal*  
hit hard across the *rim*,  
a *trill* in the cold morning air  
as the wind blows water crystals in a cascading rainbow  
from the nearest pine tree  
like a slow finger drawn down a *leather skin*.

It's solstice in the mountains and I find myself alone  
with jacket stretched *taut*,  
footsteps *asyncoated* with my breath  
down-beat to the *thudding bass* of my *pulsing* heart.

In the cold mountain air just walking becomes a drum solo,  
a slow *rhythm* of *crashing cymbals*,  
a *roll* along a *snare drum*  
and the occasional *fill* from a rock broken loose and *thudding*  
down the mountainside.

Max Roach couldn't have composed a better tune:  
the silence builds to *crescendo*,  
my breath a rising *arpeggio* of exertion  
as I hike up to the ridgeline to enjoy the view.  
And suddenly, a quick cascading *roll*  
as I step upon the cold rock and look down upon the valley,  
the wind—a solo trumpet breaking through.

FOURTEENTH READING

A LENGTHY PAUSE

Kate Nelson

I am waiting to hear the cranes  
    Their distant warblings a sign of time  
I've heard by now before  
So faint, so far  
I would settle for that  
I am waiting for that

I am waiting to hear the snow  
    Break beneath my step  
    A luscious layer cooling the earth  
    Healing the soil  
I would revel in that  
I am waiting for that

I am waiting to hear my heart  
    Pulse boldly in my ears  
A thrum-thrumming wall against  
The babble of a tired year  
I am aching for that  
I am waiting for that

I am waiting to hear the longest night  
    Nestle deep into a hush-sh-sh  
    Let us numb the roar, gather the blanket  
And dream away a world of fear  
I am waiting for that  
Waiting for that  
Waiting for that

POETS

STEPHEN MILLER was interim pastor at Las Placitas between Elizabeth Lyman and Drew Henry. He's ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has served Disciples, UCC, and Presbyterian congregations as well as ecumenical organizations and the Presbytery of Santa Fe. He lives in Albuquerque with his wife and step-daughter, and has two grown children and four grandchildren. He writes songs and plays guitar and sings in the Celtic Coyote band.

IRIS GERSH grew up in the Catskills and has lived in Boston, Taos, Fort Lauderdale and Greece, and Albuquerque (since 2005). Lover of the high desert, avid traveler, writer, and teacher, she has been published in several literary magazines and writes stories for cruise ship magazines. She serves on the New Mexico State Poetry Society's board.

MARTHA RITCHIE is a Placitas resident. She and her husband, Burke, retired here from the San Francisco Bay area. A writer since high school, Martha taught learning disabled students in elementary and high school how to write for fifty consecutive years. She writes now, late at night, if she can't sleep.

JIM FISH passed away unexpectedly on June 5, 2017, while hiking on the Ignacio Chavez Mesa. Jim participated in almost all of the previous winter solstice poetry readings. Jim published *Firemiles* in 1975 while at Princeton University working on a Ph. D. in chemical engineering. *Jim and I* came out five years later. *A Sense of Play* was published January 2009. *Songs of the Landscape* was published in the spring of 2013. In addition to writing poetry, Fish sculpted wood and was the winemaker at Anasazi Fields Winery.

GREGORY LOUIS CANDELA has resided in New Mexico since 1972. He holds a doctorate in American and African American literature and is professor emeritus at University of New Mexico. Candela has published a volume of poetry (*Surfing New Mexico—2001*), six produced plays, and edited 6 volumes of poetry and prose. Recent publications include poems in the *Malpais Review*, *Adobe Walls*, *Sin Fronteras*, *Van Gogh's Ear*, *Cyclamens and Swords*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, *Elbow Room New Mexico* and *Italian Americana*. Currently, Candela is seeking a publisher for a book-length poetry manuscript, *Graveyards of New Mexico*.

DANTE BERRY lives in Jarales, NM, with Margaret, his wife of 35 years. He writes during his commutes to work. Inspired by people and events on city buses he has authored a new book titled *Writing the Routes, Bus Poems and Stories from Albuquerque*.

JULES NYQUIST is the founder of Jules' Poetry Playhouse in Albuquerque, NM. She took her MFA in Writing and Literature from Bennington College, VT. Her latest book of poems, *Homesick, then* is "part memoir, part paean to family, ancestry and place...an umbilical cord between the living and the dead." Her two previous books of poems, *Behind the Volcanoes* and *Appetites* (Beatlick Press), were finalists for the NM/AZ Book Awards. She has been interviewed by *NM Entertainment Magazine*, *Minnesota Reads* and other publications. Her website is [www.julesnyquist.com](http://www.julesnyquist.com)

RICHARD WOLFSON began writing after the death of his wife JoAnn, a poet, in 2004. Many of these poems come from dreams and shamanic journeys. He currently lives in Albuquerque with his second wife Vicki Bolen, who is an artist and collaborates with him on books, cards, and prints. Currently, he mixes comedy and poetry.

GINA FREDRICKSON: Gina's friend Ana got her to do this. That's all you need to know.

BERNADETTE PEREZ—A Poet possessing expression and creativity. In 1990 Bernadette received the Silver Poet Award from World of Poetry. Her work has appeared in *The Wishing Well; Musings* in 2010, *Small Canyons Anthology* in 2013, *Poems 4 Peace* in 2014. *Fix and Free Anthology* in 2015. She is the Vice President of the New Mexico State Poetry Society and member of Rio Grande Valencia Poets since 2005.

ANN HUNKINS is a former Fulbright scholar and National Endowment for the Arts grantee with an MA in poetry from UC Davis. She lived in Nepal for many years and worked for the UN High Commission on Human Rights translating for torture victims and war crimes witnesses during the Maoist conflict; she is at work on a book of poetry from that time. She lives in Santa Fe, NM.

MICHELLE HOLLAND is the author of two collections of poetry, "Event Horizon," included in *The Sound a Raven Makes*, published by Tres Chicas Press, and "Chaos Theory," published by Sin Fronteras Press. She spends her days waffling between Chimayo, where she lives, and Los Alamos, where she teaches.

DON McIVER has been a poet/coach of six Albuquerque Poetry Slam Teams, an award winning host/producer of KUNM's Spoken Word Hour and Afternoon Freeform, the author of *The Noisy Pen* and *The Blank Page*, editor of *A Bigger Boat: the Unlikely Success of the Albuquerque Slam Scene*. He also curates the poets of Sunday-Chatter and 516 Words and has been active in the New Mexico poetry community since 1997 though he's been writing poetry since mid '80s.

KATE NELSON, an award-winning journalist, is interim editor in chief of *New Mexico Magazine*, author of the biography *Helen Hardin: A Straight Line Curved*, and a freelance writer and editor. She has lived in Placitas since 1990, during which time she has memorized nearly every hiking trail—sanctioned and otherwise.

## About the event

For twenty years the Winter Solstice readings have been a regular offering of the Earth Care Fellowship at Las Placitas Presbyterian Church and The Partnership for Earth Spirituality, as part of the Earth Vespers series.

This year, 2017, we celebrate *Sonidos, Sounds of the Winter Solstice*, and welcome back the slowly stretching days at the Winter Solstice Candlelight Poetry Reading.

Fourteen poets from the Southwest read poems by the light of a single burning candle.

Between readings, a short interlude of silence provides a moment of contemplation at the close of another year.



1998



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