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Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble
4024 Everett Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602
www.vocisings.org & www.facebook.com/vocisings

Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble Mitchell Covington, Artistic Director
Edna Yeh, Assistant Conductor • Amy Belles, Piano

Northern Lights

Sunday, May 5, 2019, 7:00 pm

St. Mary Magdalen Church
2005 Berryman Street, Berkeley

Saturday, May 11, 2019, 7:00 pm

St. Perpetua Catholic Church
3454 Hamlin Road, Lafayette



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FAURÉ
Messe basse
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Missa Brevis in D

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Voci
WOMEN'S VOCAL ENSEMBLE

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Mitchell Covington & Edna Yeh (ex officio)



Voci Accompanist Amy Belles joined the UC Berkeley Music Department staff in 2018, having worked on the CSU East Bay Music Department staff under Dr. Buddy James from 2012–17. In addition to Voci, her choral accompanying includes work with Cantare Con Vivo, Cantabile Youth Singers, Oakland Symphony Chorus, Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir, and the Mt. Eden and Monte Vista High School choirs. A lover of musical theater, she has also worked as vocal director for Woodminster Amphitheater. Favorite performances include Schumann’s Symphonic Etudes, harpsichord in Handel’s Messiah, alto in Brahms’ German Requiem and accompanying in Davies Symphony Hall. Amy studied piano privately at post-graduate level with Zita Sandor and is a member of the Music Teachers Association of California.

Voci Singers



Ella Bacon
Janet Biblin
Julie Blade
Barbara Brenner Buder
Rachel Decker
Mishaela De Vries
Jeanne Eberhard
Meriel Ennik

Vicky Faulk
Margaret Garms
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Pauline Ma-Senturia
Terry Meyers
Michelle Pitcher
Nicky Reed

Karla Sagramoso
Lisa Sanders
Adina Sara
Lezak Shallat
Victoria Skeritt
Kathy Walrath
Marsha Wehrenberg
Edna Yeh

Read more about our Voci singers at vocisings.org/singers.php

About Tonight’s Program

Over the last 50 years there has been a flowering of choral music composition in the Baltic and Scandinavian countries of Northern Europe. Music for women’s voices, in particular, is being produced in abundance, with great diversity and exquisite quality. Much of this superb new music is rarely, if ever performed in the United States. Tonight, Voci will bring some of this extraordinary music to life.

The Baltic and Scandinavian regions experience long, cold winters and short, but highly celebrated summers. Their landscapes include vast tundra and almost limitless forest lands. This is all reflected in the music and poetry of these places. The music in tonight’s program is tied together by themes of darkness and light, winter, night, and stars in the sky.

“Tundra” by Ola Gjeilo, paints a tonal and poetic landscape which is sometimes bleak and sometimes vibrant. “Stars” by Ēriks Ešenvalds uses the ethereal sound of tuned water glasses to evoke the feeling of looking at the night sky above a snowy land. “Natt över Jorden” (Night over the Earth) by Karin Rehnqvist, presents an evolving picture of vast open spaces.

All of the music you will hear tonight was composed by living or recent composers from Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Norway, including renowned Swedish composer, Karin Rehnqvist and emerging Estonian composer, Galina Grigorjeva. The pieces span seven different languages, drawing on the rich cultural diversity of the region. The Ensemble will sing in two, three, four, six and eight parts, alternately exploring the details, the scale and the complexity of the region’s landscape and history.

Tonight’s program is designed to offer you the experience of entering into a world of long winters and almost limitless space. We invite you to be drawn in to a journey through wide forests, steppes and tundra. To listen to the stars shimmering. To hear the northern lights singing.

—Mitchell Covington

Program

Three Night Pieces

I. **Ljusfälten** (*The light fields*)

Karla Sagramoso, kulning

II. **När natten skänker frid** (*When the night gives you peace*)

III. **Natt över jorden** (*Now it's night over the earth*)

Lauliku Lapsepõli

(The Songster's Childhood)

Amy Belles, Mishaela De Vries and Sarah Grace Graves, solos

In Paradisum

(In Paradise)

Smieklis Man

(This is My Laugh)

On suuri sun rantas autius

(Great is the desolation of your shore)

Edna Yeh and Mishaela De Vries, solos

Mistä on pienet pojat teyty?

(What are little boys made of?)

Karin Rehnqvist

(Sweden)

Traditional Estonian

Arr. Veljo Tormis

Galina Grigorjeva

(Estonia)

Latvian Folk Song

Arr. Aldonis Kalniņš

Traditional Finnish

Arr. Matti Hyökki

Einojuhani Rautavaara

(Finland)

— INTERMISSION —

About Voci

Founded in 1991, Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble is recognized as one of the finest choral groups in the Bay Area. The ensemble continues to thrive 28 years later, holding fast to its mission of championing music written for women and by women, from all parts of the world and every century. Voci is dedicated to musical excellence in the performance of new and innovative music, as well as treasured repertoire within the classical choral tradition. It enjoys a reputation among Bay Area audiences and critics for its adventurous programming and elegant, passionate sound. Voci has performed with a wide range of artists and choruses at concerts, festivals and benefits and has commissioned and premiered over 25 new works from nationally- and internationally-recognized composers.



Artistic Director Mitchell Covington is an accomplished choral and orchestral conductor who has led many exquisite ensembles over a 30-year career. He has directed choirs and orchestras in performances in the United States and throughout Europe. Mitchell received a Bachelor of Music degree from San Francisco State University, where he studied choral conducting with Byron McGilvray and orchestral conducting with Lazlo Varga. He received a Masters degree in Conducting from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, graduating with honors. At USC he studied choral conducting with Rod Eichenberger, orchestral conducting with Hanz Beer and choral arranging with Morten Lauridsen. He was the founding director of Voci (then Voci Women's Chamber Choir) from 1991-95, directed the Bay Choral Guild from 1995-2001 and led a seven-choir music program with over 300 participants at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley for 23 years. Mitchell currently serves on the Executive Board of the American Choral Director's Association-Western Division and is the artistic director of the "Durufle in Paris" choral festival. He frequently serves as guest conductor and clinician for church and school choirs throughout the SF Bay Area and as an adjudicator and clinician for choir festivals and conferences. He is also an award-winning composer, whose compositions include works for orchestra, chorus, stage, film and television. After 23 years, Mitchell returned to Voci as guest conductor for the spring 2017 season and was appointed artistic director in summer 2017.



Assistant Conductor Edna Yeh joined Voci in spring 2008. She is the founder and former director of the Pacific Women's Chorus in San Diego and Concentus Women's Chorus in Rochester, New York. Edna currently serves as assistant conductor for Sacred & Profane Chamber Chorus and performs with the Dulcet Four, an *a cappella* quartet performing repertoire from the Great American Songbook and other classics. She received her Master of Music degree from the University of Texas at Austin, where she studied conducting with Morris Beachy and Craig Hella Johnson.

Northern Lights

Pulchra es amica mea, Thou art beautiful, O my love,
suavis et decora filia Jerusalem, sweet and beautiful daughter of Jerusalem,
Pulchra es amica mea, Thou art beautiful, O my love,
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem, sweet and comely as Jerusalem,
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata. terrible as an army set in array.
Averte oculos tuos a me Turn away thy eyes from me,
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt. for they have made me flee away.

Ola Gjeilo

Tundra

Wide, worn and weathered,
Sacred expanse
Of green and white and granite grey;
Snowy patches strewn,
Anchored to the craggy earth,
Unmoving;
While clouds dance
Across the vast, eternal sky.

Ola Gjeilo

Text: Charles A. Silvestri

Song of the Stars

(from Songs of the Lights)

We are the stars which sing
We sing with our light
We are the birds of fire
We fly over the sky.

Our light is a voice
We make a road for the spirit to pass over

Among us are three hunters who chase a bear.
There never was a time when they were not hunting.

We are the stars which sing
We sing with our light
We look down on the mountains.
This is the song of stars.

Eatnemen Vuelie

(Song of the Earth)

Deilig er jorden, Fairest Lord, Jesus,
Prektig er Guds himmel, Ruler of all nature,
Skøn er sjelenes pilgrimsgang! O thou of God and man the Son;
Gjennom de fagre Thee will I cherish
Riker på på jorden Thee will I honor
Går vi Paradis med sang. Thou my soul's glory and crown.

Frode Fjellheim

Three Heavenly Songs

I. Stars

*Tuned water glasses: Amy Belles, Margaret Garms, Terry Meyers,
Lisa Sanders, Kathy Walrath and Edna Yeh*

II. O salutaris hostia *(O saving victim, opening wide)*

Mishaela De Vries and Emily Kirk, solos

III. Benedictus es *(Blessed art Thou)*

Ēriks Ešenvalds

(Latvia)

Trolltog Op. 54 no. 3 *(Troll's Procession)*

Amy Belles, piano

Edvard Grieg

(Norway)

Two Nordic Pieces

I. Northern Lights

Karla Sagramoso, solo

II. Tundra

Mishaela De Vries, solo

Ola Gjeilo

(Norway)

Song of the Stars

(from Songs of the Lights)

Imants Ramiņš

(Latvia/Canada)

Eatnemen Vuelie

(Song of the Earth)

Frode Fjellheim

(Norway)

Composers

(in order of appearance in the program)

Karen Rehnqvist (b.1957) is one of Sweden's best-known and widely performed composers. The range of her music covers chamber, orchestral, stage and vocal music; one of her greatest strengths is the exploration of the relationship between folk music and art music. Rehnqvist has explored the dramatic vocal technique of *kulning*, a hauntingly beautiful call used by female herders to call back cattle who grazed in the forests and mountains of Sweden. This call can be heard at the end of our opening selection in this concert. In addition to receiving many prizes for her work, in 2009 Rehnqvist was appointed Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, making her the first woman to hold a chair in composition in Sweden.

Veljo Tormis, (1930–2017) was an Estonian composer who is regarded in Eastern Europe as one of the great contributors to the 20th century. He wrote an extensive body of choral music that exceeds 500 individual choral songs, most of them *a cappella* and based on traditional ancient Estonian folksongs. Tormis famously said of his settings of traditional melodies and verse: "It is not I who makes use of folk music; it is folk music that makes use of me." His work demonstrates his conviction that traditional Estonian music represents a treasure that must be guarded and nourished. With a population of only 1.4 million, Estonia boasts over a thousand choirs and tens of thousands of singers.

Born in 1962 in Simferopol, Ukraine, **Galina Grigorjeva** is a Ukrainian/Estonian composer who incorporates Slavonic sacred music and early European polyphony into her compositions, giving it a modernist setting. Paying utmost attention to the expressiveness and significance of each interval and intonation, Grigorjeva "orchestrates" polyphony with remarkable skill and grace, creating meaningful and beautiful harmonic flickers amidst the fluid texture. There is a lot of air and space for breathing in her music. Her compositions are appreciated for their remarkably subtle, yet animated melodic style. Following years of notable studies, Grigorjeva was appointed Composer-in-Residence at the NYJD Ensemble, a contemporary Estonian ensemble, for the 2006/2007 season. She now works as a freelance composer. The breadth of her compositions includes choral and orchestral works, as well as chamber music.

Aldonis Kalniņš (b.1928) stated, "What does the folk song mean to me? ... everything began with fieldwork expeditions. I began to like those people, and the songs themselves. Sometimes I would put one down in front of me, and it seemed that the melody was laughing in my face and saying—'well, what are you going to do with me?'...I realized that I belong to my people, and I want to express my regard for these people, this land, and if I can make a folk song light up, then to me that is an honor and a satisfaction." As a respected composer and musicologist, for over 30 years Kalniņš was the music editor of the publishing company Liesma, and has annotated more than 1,000 Latvian folk melodies, mostly songs, which he collected and reworked. His lyricism reflects his heartfelt yet tranquil perception through portraits and compositions in pastoral mood, as well as lively scenes from social life. He has received many awards for his significant work, particularly in the field of Latvian choral music.

Stars

Ēriks Ešenvalds

Text: Sara Teasdale

Alone in the night on a dark hill
With pines around me spicy and still,
And a heaven full of stars over my head
White and topaz; and misty red;

Myriads with beating hearts of fire
The eons cannot vex or tire;
The dome of heaven, like a great hill
I watch them marching, stately and still.

I know I am honored to be witness
Of so much majesty.

O salutaris hostia

(O saving victim, opening wide)

Ēriks Ešenvalds

<i>O salutaris hostia</i>	O saving victim opening wide
<i>Quae coeli pandis ostium.</i>	The gate of heaven to all below.
<i>Bella premunt hostilia;</i>	Our foes press on from every side;
<i>Da robur, fer auxilium.</i>	Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.

<i>Uni trinoque Domino</i>	To thy great name be endless praise
<i>Sit sempiterna gloria:</i>	Immortal Godhead, one in three;
<i>Qui vitam sine termino,</i>	Oh, grant us endless length of days,
<i>Nobis donet in patria.</i>	In our true native land with thee.

Benedictus es

(Blessed art thou)

Ēriks Ešenvalds

<i>Benedictus es Domine</i>	Blessed art thou,
<i>Deus patrum nostrorum.</i>	the Lord God of our fathers.
<i>Et laudabilis et gloriosus in saecula.</i>	And glorious and to be praised for all ages.
<i>Et benedictum nomen gloriae tuae,</i>	And blessed is the name of thy glory,
<i>quod es sanctum.</i>	which is holy.

<i>Et laudabile et gloriosum in saecula.</i>	And glorious and to be praised for all ages.
<i>Et Benedictus es</i>	Blessed art thou
<i>in templo sancto gloriae tuae.</i>	in the holy temple of thy glory.
<i>Et laudabilis et gloriosus in saecula.</i>	And glorious and to be praised for all ages.
<i>Et Benedictus es super thronum</i>	Blessed art thou on the
<i>sanctum regni tui.</i>	holy throne of thy kingdom.

<i>Et laudabilis et gloriosus in saecula.</i>	And glorious and to be praised for all ages.
<i>Et Benedictus es</i>	Blessed art thou
<i>super sceptrum divinitatis tuae.</i>	upon the scepter of thy divinity.
<i>Et laudabilis et gloriosus in saecula.</i>	And glorious and to be praised for all ages.

Aizpērnāja kumeliņ’ And before last year’s calf skin...
Bubināti bubināj’! Neigh, neigh a-neighing!

On suuri sun rantas autius

(Great is the desolation of your shore)

On suuri sun rantas autius, Great is the desolation of your shore,
sitā sentään ikävöin: but at least I miss it:
Miten villisorsan valitus How a wild duck’s wailing sounds
soi kaislikossa öin. in a bed of reeds at night.

Joku yksinäinen eksynyt, Someone lonely, lost,
joka vilua vaikeroi, who groans with chill,
Jok’ on kaislikossa kierrellyt Someone who has wandered
eik’ emoa löytää voi. in a bed of reeds and can’t find mother.

Sun harmajata aaltoas I have watched your
olen katsonut kyynelien, grey wave with tears,
Ens’ surunsa itkenyt rannallas My own youth has cried
mun on oma nuoruutein. its first sorrow on your shore.

On syvään sun kuvasi painunut Your picture has sunk deep
ja sitä ikävöin, and I miss that,
Olen villisorsaa kuunnellut I have listened to a wild duck there
mä siellä monin öin. for many nights.

Mistä on pienet pojat teyty?

(What are little boys made of?)

Mistä on pienet pojat tehty? What are little boys made of?
Pienet pojat on tehty estanoista, Little boys are made of frogs and snails,
sammakoista etanoista And puppy dog tails.
Koiranhäntä tuupsukoista. This is what little boys are made of.
Niistä on pienet pojat tehty.

Pienet tytöt on tehty sokerista kukkasista Little girls are made of sugar, flowers,
Inkivääristä, kanelista Ginger and cinnamon.
Niistä on tytöt tehty. This is what little girls are made of.

Traditional Finnish

Arr. Matti Hyökki

Matti Hyökki (b.1946) is an unparalleled figure in Finnish choral music. He led the YL Male Voice Choir (the oldest Finnish language choir, founded in 1883) as conductor from 1980 to 2010. Having earlier completed diplomas as church organist and music teacher at the Sibelius Academy, in 2003 he became the first graduate in Finland with a doctoral degree in choir conducting, with the YL Choir as his instrument. Since 2007, Hyökki has been Professor of Choir Conducting at the Sibelius Academy. He is a regular jury member at international choir competitions and has conducted numerous international choir workshops. Hyökki directed *On Surri Sun Rantas Autius*, which Voci performs tonight, while working with Electra Women’s Choir in Vancouver, Canada, as arranger and guest conductor.

At the time of his death at age 87, **Einojuhani Rautavaara** (1928–2016) was hailed as Finland’s finest composer since Jean Sibelius. His signature piece, which was inspired by nature, was *Cantus Arcticus*, composed in 1962, and features birdcalls he recorded in northern Finland near the Arctic Circle. In the piece, nature is cajoled to imitate art, with the tape-recorded (and subtly manipulated) bird calls entering only after an expansive, looping flute introduction. Rautavaara was known for the visionary breadth and lush mysticism of his compositions. He wrote a wide range of works in a variety of styles including a rich and pliable string sound and long, arching melodies that seem to reflect the expansive vistas of the Nordic countryside.

Latvian composer **Ēriks Ešenvalds** (b.1977), is one of the most sought-after composers working today, with a busy commission schedule and performances of his music heard on every continent. His works have been commissioned by leading orchestras from around the world, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, BBC Proms, Gewandhaus Leipzig, and others. He was hailed by the New York Times for his “ear for a good hook and knack for evocative effects.” The Guardian stated, “Ešenvalds has enjoyed enormous popularity with his complex, multilayered choral compositions, sometimes in eight or even 16 parts, often overwhelming in their rich, tonal colour and bursting with imagination.” Voci will perform three of Ešenvalds’ compositions in tonight’s concert.

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) was a Norwegian composer and pianist, and is considered one of the leading Romantic era composers. His use and development of Norwegian folk music in his own compositions brought the music of Norway to international consciousness. Grieg once explained: “The traditional way of life of the Norwegian people, together with Norway’s legends, history, and natural scenery, stamped itself on my creative imagination from my earliest years.” Composed between 1889–1891, *Trolltøgt* (Troll’s Procession), performed tonight, is part of a collection of 66 short pieces for solo piano.

Composer **Ola Gjeilo** (b.1978) moved from Norway to the United States to study composition at the Juilliard School, and now works as a full-time composer in New York City with over 30 published works which are performed throughout the world. Tonight’s concert features two works by Gjeilo: *Northern Lights*, which is about beauty—a “terrible,” powerful beauty; and *Tundra*, which describes an intensely barren terrain where the listener feels he/she is treading on sacred land.

Imants Ramiņš (b.1943) is a Canadian composer of Latvian descent. Best known for his choral compositions, he has been a recipient of many commissions, which have been performed worldwide. He is the founding conductor of the Prince George Symphony (1971), the Youth Symphony of the Okanagan (1989), NOVA Children’s Choir (1983), and AURA Chamber Choir (1979). In *Song of the Stars*, poetic text and music are closely interwoven within an eighth-note pulse throughout the piece within a constant changing of meter (3/8, 6/8 and 7/8), creating a chant-like quality.

Frøde Fjellheim (b.1959) is a Norwegian folk singer (specializing in the musical expression of the Sami people) and musician (piano and synthesizer). Fjellheim was educated at the classical program at Trøndelag Musikkonservatorium and lives in Trondheim, where he is a freelance musician and

Sing with Voci!

Voci is seeking experienced women choral singers in all voice parts to join the Ensemble for fall 2019 and beyond. **Auditions will be held during August**, until all positions are filled.

Visit our website (www.vocisings.org) to learn more, and contact Artistic Director Mitchell Covington at music@mitchellcovington.com to schedule an audition.

composer. He is best known for his band, Transjoik, and as the composer of the 2002 song “*Eatnemen Vuolie*,” which Voci will perform tonight, which is based on “yoiking” and was later adapted to become the opening musical number of the movie, *Frozen*. Yoiking is an art form which is meant to reflect or evoke a person, animal or place. The sound of yoik is comparable to the traditional chanting of some Native American cultures and shares some features with the shamanistic cultures of Siberia, which mimic the sounds of nature.

Translations

Ljusfälten

(The light fields)

*Jag har krafter. Jag fruktar ingenting.
Ljus är himlen för mig.
Går världen under—
jag går icke under.
Mina ljusa horisonter stå
över jordens stormande natt.
Träden fram ur det gåtfulla ljus fält!
Oböjlig väntar min kraft.*

I have strength, I fear nothing
The sky is bright before me.
If the world perishes—
I would not perish.
My bright horizons stand
above the earth's stormy night.
Let the trees appear out of the mysterious
fields of light!
Indomitable, my strength waits.

Karin Rehnqvist

När natten skänker frid

(When the night gives you peace)

*När natten skänker frid
låt dagen vara all
när dag ej plågar mer
och lugn mit öga bjuder
när hjärtat är med tröst
Med mod och livet utan sorg mig ninner
När natten skänker frid.*

When the night gives you peace,
let the day then conclude
day's suffering is past and peace my eye affords
my heart heavy with solace, heavy with courage,
and life awakened without grief
when night gives you peace.

Karin Rehnqvist

Natt över jorden

(Now it's night over the earth)

*Nu är det natt över jorden.
Darrande stjärna, gläns!
Världarna vandra så fjärran.
Mörkret är utan gräns.
Marken och mullen och mörkret,
varför älskar jag dem?
- Stjärnorna vandra så fjärran.
Jorden är människans hem.*

Now it's night over the earth.
Daring star, shine!
The worlds wander so far.
The darkness is without limits.
The field and the mole and the darkness,
why do I love them?
- The stars wander so far.
The earth is the home of man.

Karin Rehnqvist

Lauliku Lapsepõli

(The Songster's Childhood)

*Kuima ol'li väikokõnõ
al'leaa, al'leaa,
kas'vi ma sis kaunikõnõ
ol'li üte üü vannu
pääle katõ päävä vannu
imä vei kiigu kesä pääle.
Pan'de hällü palo pääle
pan'de par'dsi hällütämmä.
suvolinnu liigutamma.
Par'dsi ol'le pal'lo sõnnu
suvõlinnul liia' laalu'
par'ts säääl man mul pal'lo lauli
suvõlindu liiast kõnõli
säält mina lat's sis laulu ope
ul'likõnõ sõna' osasi
kõik mina pan'ni papõrihe,
kõik mina raiõ raamatuhe
selle minol pal'lo sõnnu
selle laajalt laalu viisi.*

Once I was just a little one,
then I grew very nicely,
and I was one night old.
After two days
my mother took my cradle
to a fallow field.
She put the cradle on the field
and set a duck in it to comfort me,
and a summer bird to rock it.
The duck had a lot of words,
and the summer bird
had much to say.
The duck and the bird
both sang to me a lot.
There, as a child, I learned songs
and many words.
All of this I put on paper,
all of it I etched into a book.
From this book I have many words.

Traditional Estonian

Arr. Veljo Tormis

In Paradisum

(In Paradise)

*In paradisum deducant te Angeli;
in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres,
et perducant te in
civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.
Chorus angelorum te suscipiat, et cum Lazaro
quondam paupere
æternam habeas requiem.*

May the angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs receive you at your arrival and lead
you to
the holy city Jerusalem.
May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus,
once a poor man,
may you have eternal rest.

Galina Grigorjeva

Smieklis Man

(This is My Laugh)

*Smieklis man, smieklis man
Uz Jānīti raugoties
Jānīt's galvu kustināj'
Sav' Anniti priecināj'
Jānītim brālītim, Treju ādu zābaciņ'
Ha ha ha ha ha ha.*

Laughing at, laughing at
Janitis looking:
Janitis shakes his head
To amuse his Anne
Janitis' brother had three skin boots
Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

*Suņa āda kaķa āda
Aizpērnāja kumeliņ'
Suņa āda rietin rēja
Kaķa āda ņaudet ņaud
Vau vau vau nau nau nau
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.*

Hound skin, cat skin
Last year's calf skin
Houndskin barks, a-barking
Cat skin meows, meowing
Bow wow wow, meow meow meow,
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Latvian Folk Song

Arr. Aldonis Kalniņš