

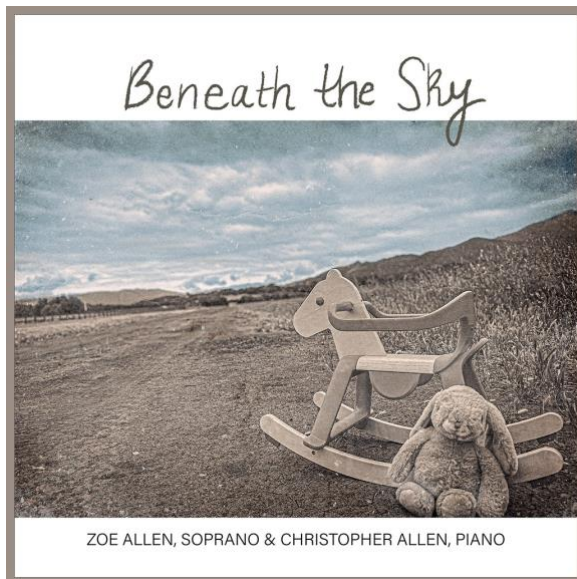
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On Tuesday, September 7, 2021
Shokat Projects releases

Beneath the Sky

A New Album by Zoe Allen and Christopher Allen
Featuring a Fascinating Program of Modern American Art Songs



“Zoe Allen invested dazzling coloratura soprano in Fire, the Princess, and the Nightingale.” THE ASPEN TIMES

“Conductor Christopher Allen ruled with a sure hand and a full heart, wringing passion and pathos out of his musicians in equal measure.” OPERA NEWS

Today, **Shokat Projects** welcomes the release of a unique new album from wife-and-husband team, soprano **Zoe Allen** and conductor/pianist **Christopher Allen**: ***Beneath the Sky***.

Led by the expressive, crystalline voice of Zoe Allen and the sensitive playing of Christopher Allen, and available as a digital and hard-copy album, *Beneath the Sky* is a gorgeous meditation on childhood, motherhood, family ties, and hope for the future.

Produced by the Grammy Award-winning **Elaine Martone** – a “luminary in the recording industry” (New York Times) – and recorded by **Sergey Parfenov**, *Beneath the Sky* features songs by Missy Mazzoli, Maury Yeston, Eric Whitacre, Juliana Hall, Steven Lutvak, Ricky Ian Gordon, Morten Lauridsen, Florence Price, a world premiere from Georgia Stitt (released as a single on August 21), and others

Zoe Allen curated this dynamic collection as a form of artistic expression of her personal journey into motherhood. She explains,

“When I became a mother, I faced a deep need to express my voice as an artist, as a woman, as a parent, partner, daughter, and creator. In wanting to better understand my own story, I turned toward music to see the world through my daughter’s eyes. In her first year of life, as I traveled the country with her, working, singing, and watching my husband conduct, I collected songs from my favorite American composers. In some cases I found songs written by Ives, Price and Barber, in which the music spoke to the experience of a mother or child; in other cases I asked contemporary composers to share or write a song specifically for the album. What resulted was a dynamic collection of multi- genre songs by iconic American composers from the early 20th

century to the present day, speaking broadly to the childhood experience. Halfway through the creative process, the pandemic set in, Christopher and I welcomed the birth of our son, and my need to express a personal perspective and experience felt ever more essential. Throughout the creative process, I felt buoyed by this incredible group of composers, our producer Elaine Martone, sound engineer Sergey Parfenov, and my husband, Christopher Allen as my musical and artistic collaborator. I am deeply grateful for their dedication and contributions to the telling of my story through song.”

On September 11, 2021, *Beneath the Sky* will be celebrated in Ojai, California, in a live performance by Zoe Allen and Christopher Allen, presented by Shokat Projects and benefiting the Ojai Music Festival’s BRAVO Education and Community Programs, a program committed to fostering the next generation of musicians and artists.

BENEATH THE SKY

SOPRANO: Zoe Allen

PIANO: Christopher Allen

BARITONE: Levi Hernandez

CHARLES IVES (1874-1954)

1. Tom Sails Away
2. The Childrens' Hour

(Poetry by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

3. The Circus Band
 4. Songs My Mother Taught Me
- (Poetry by Alfred Heyduk, translation
by Natalie Macfarren)

JULIANA HALL (b. 1958)

5. Silly Sallie
- (from Songs of Enchantment,
poetry by Walter de la Mare)

NICO MUHLY (b. 1981)

6. Winter-Time
- (from Friday Afternoons, poetry by
Robert Louis Stevenson)
With Levi Hernandez

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

7. Nocturne, Op. 13, No. 4
- (Poetry by Frederic Prokosch)

FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953)

8. Night (Poetry by Louise C. Wallace)
 9. To My Little Son
- (Poetry by Julia Johnson Davis)

STEVEN LUTVAK (b. 1959)

10. Far From Home
- (from Almost September, lyrics
by David Schechter and Steven Lutvak)
With Levi Hernandez

MAURY YESTON (b. 1945)

11. New Words

ERIC WHITACRE (b. 1970)

12. Goodnight Moon
- (Poetry by Margaret Wise Brown)

MORTEN LAURIDSEN (b. 1943)

13. Sure on this Shining Night
- (Poetry by James Agee)
With Levi Hernandez

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

14. Laurie's Song
- (from The Tender Land, libretto
by Horace Everett)

RICKY IAN GORDON (b. 1956)

15. Afternoon on a Hill
- (Poetry by Edna St. Vincent Millay)

MISSY MAZZOLI (b. 1980)

16. His Name is Jan
- (from Breaking the Waves, libretto by Royce
Vavrek after the film by Lars von Trier)

GEORGIA STITT (b. 1972)

17. Hold Fast Your Dreams (World Premiere)
- (Poetry by Louise Driscoll)

RICKY IAN GORDON

18. One Star
- (From The Grapes of Wrath, libretto by
Michael Korie after the book by John
Steinbeck)

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Shokat Projects,

PRODUCER: Elaine Martone, Sonarc Music

RECORDING ENGINEER, EDITOR, MIXING ENGINEER, AND MASTERING ENGINEER: Sergey Parfenov

PIANO TECHNICIAN: Luke Taylor
PIANO PROVIDED BY LA Steinway
COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: Zoe Allen
ALBUM DESIGN: Jenny Schuler
PHOTO CREDIT: Gabriel Gastelum

RECORDED AT The Art Barn, Ojai, CA on February 8-10, 2021

Soprano **Zoe Allen** has been recognized for her “dazzling coloratura” (The Aspen Times), and is equally at home with classical, musical theatre and contemporary repertoire. Notable performances include *Candide* with The Knights at the Ravinia Festival and Tanglewood Festival, a concert collaboration with Christopher Allen (piano) and the Ojai Music Festival, and in productions of *Street Scene* and *Don Giovanni* at Virginia Opera. She originated the role of Michelle in *Intruder- the Musical* at the New York Theatre Festival. In concert, Allen has appeared as Queen of the Night with the Albany Symphony, *Fire/Princess/Nightingale* with the Aspen Chamber Orchestra at the Aspen Music Festival, and in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Richmond Symphony. She has made featured solo appearances with The Knights Orchestra, The Orchestra Now, and Virginia Symphony Orchestra. On screen, she appears as the title role in Mary Lambert’s film *Pearl*, which premiered at the Sitges International Film Festival. In addition to her work as a singer, Allen is the founder of Shokat Projects, a production company dedicated to the commissioning of interdisciplinary artistic, visual and performance projects. Allen resides in Los Angeles with her husband, conductor Christopher Allen, and their children, Ella Grace and George.

Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award Recipient **Christopher Allen** is featured in *Opera News* as “one of the fastest-rising podium stars in North America.” He has led performances with the Atlanta Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Cincinnati Opera, National Symphony at Wolf Trap, Los Angeles Opera, Opera Philadelphia, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Washington National Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Florida Grand Opera, Atlanta Opera, Aspen Music Festival, Daegu Opera House in South Korea and China National Opera Orchestra. Allen’s career was launched by the Bruno Walter Conducting Award and Memorial Career Grant and has been fostered by Plácido Domingo and James Conlon, who brought him to Los Angeles Opera as Associate Conductor. At LA Opera, Allen led the musical preparation for the Grammy- winning opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*. He has been named a Musical America Artist of the Month and one of their “25 Stars Still Rising,” is an International Opera Awards nominee, and holds the Solti Foundation US Career Assistance Award and Young Alumni Award from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Allen has been heard on NPR speaking about the importance of the arts in American society. As an award-winning pianist, he has performed at Carnegie Hall, and on film in *La voix humaine* starring Patricia Racette and directed by James Darrah, which premiered at Opera Philadelphia.

Baritone **Levi Hernandez** has appeared with many opera companies in the U.S. from Opera Philadelphia and Boston Lyric to San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Chicago’s Lyric Opera as an artist in the Ryan Opera Center, The Metropolitan Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, El Paso, San Antonio, Detroit, Memphis, Nashville, Omaha, Minneapolis, Virginia, Kentucky, El Paso, Colorado Arizona Opera, and internationally at Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador as well as Komische Oper in Berlin, Germany. His summer festival credits include Bard Music Festival, Opera North, Charlottesville Opera and the Spoleto Festival. He has sung Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Houston Grand Opera, Arizona Opera and Chattanooga Symphony, Handel’s *Alexander’s Feast* with Music of the Baroque and *The Messiah* with The Apollo Chorus of Chicago. In addition to *Falstaff* with Intermountain Opera, he sang Marcello with Colorado Opera, *Inspector Kildare* in Elizabeth Cree with Chicago Opera Theater, *Alvaro* in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with San Diego Opera and Madison Opera. The El Paso, Texas native is a graduate of Westminster Choir College (BM), The University of North Texas (MM), The Academy of Vocal Arts and Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center.

For more information, visit:

shokatprojects.com

zoeallensoprano.com

christophergallen.com

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For ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, MEDIA MATERIALS and INTERVIEW INQUIRIES, please contact:

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