

יתגדל (Yitgadal) 1. ascending viewpoint (for bill colvig) 2. descending viewpoint (for lou harrison).

(Written for performance by the Nova Ensemble, North Texas State University, conducted by Elizabeth McNutt, 11/16/15)

יתגדל was written in memory of my beloved friends Bill Colvig and Lou Harrison, while I was temporarily living at their house after Lou had passed away. Since the 1950s, Lou and Bill lived on top of a mountain in Aptos, California, overlooking the Monterey Bay, on a street called Viewpoint Road. Bill, a tireless walker, often walked up and down the long hill to get groceries.

In this piece, the *harmony* instruments, or strings (including the guitar), are tuned to a set of just intervals, and play only natural harmonics, in order to generate as many rationally tuned chords as possible. The form of the piece is straightforward: a curve over time from maximum “dissonance” to “consonance” (“descending”), or vice versa (“ascending”). This curve is the result of a simple mathematical function that measures the “complexity” of rational intervals. In this case, a computer program composes a series of chords, in the strings, from maximum (or minimum) complexity (given the tunings, and the possible natural harmonics) to the minimum (or maximum). The harmony instruments also move freely from close to freer unison (and vice versa) over the course of the piece.

The *melody* instruments only play one note, the “fundamental” (C) in rhythmic unison with the harmony instruments. The harp is retuned to the harmonic series on C, and along with the untuned percussion, punctuates the verses of the Hebrew prayer. The rhythm of the piece is a kind of “averaged” transcription of the Hebrew prayer, spoken by student Sarah Meyers and myself.

יתגדל was commissioned and premiered by the New Century Chamber Players, Los Angeles, conducted by David Rosenboom. To the best of my knowledge, this is only the second performance of the piece.

Larry Polansky
Santa Cruz, California
11/3/15