

**Houston, Texas – February 24, 2020 – Press Release:** Saint Julian Press is proud to announce the April 3, 2020 release of *LIKE A BIRD WITH A THOUSAND WINGS*, a new book of poetry by Melissa Studdard. Written to accompany composer Christopher Theofanidis' *The Conference of the Birds* for string quartet, this multimedia collection showcases images from the original musical score. The collection also includes quotes from Sholeh Wolpé's contemporary translation of Attâr's *The Conference of the Birds*, as well as illustrations by Italian artist Elisa Vendramin.

In a tyrannical, divided, and fearful time, we are gifted with travel in a state of grace and awe in Melissa Studdard's exquisite multi-genre book *Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings*. Her poetry brings together the ancient and contemporary, East and West, the individual and collaborative, and the arts of poetry, music, translation, and painting. Studdard writes in response to Christopher Theofanidis's composition, *The Conference of Birds*, a musical interpretation of the allegorical poem by the ancient



Persian poet Attâr, translated by Sholeh Wolpé. There are echoes here of the music-driven language of the ecstatic mystical poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Your wings / flame to flight—arching and lifting, / wimpling and waving. Soon / ... you are one again with the wonder / of dappled light." Studdard's poems transport us to the visionary world where art generates art and in which we communicate intimately with each other across the millennia and languages and the vast Earth's geography.

~ Alik Barnstone, author of *Dwelling*

A mosaic of beauty, *Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings* weaves together the brilliant poems of Melissa Studdard and the artistic genius of composer Christopher Theofanidis, along with artwork by Elisa Vendramin, creating a perfect combination of splendor. Studdard, who is one of the best American poets writing today, creates poems that exist with both an

exquisiteness and passion, poems where love is birdsong and breath; her work, so gifted, skillful, and tender *you want to give it / to everyone you meet*. Combine this with the striking elegance of Theofanidis's musical compositions on the page, visually bringing to mind the vision of birds on a wire and birds in flight.

~ Kelli Russell Agodon, author of *Hourglass Museum*

*Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings* is a cross-cultural dialogue and a significant literary and artistic contribution. It blends poetry and music to unsurpassed effect to tell the tale of perseverance, survival, and search for knowledge. The book is inspired by Attâr's poetical masterpiece, *The Conference of the Birds*, the story of a journey that starts with the birds' search for the legendary Simorgh only to end with the discovery of self.

~ Sheema Kalbasi, author of *Seven Valleys of Love*

These poems flow from the unmistakable voice of the Beloved, turning as they do through both breath and shadow to lift us toward an incandescent flight. We are at once saved by the mystic knowing of Attar deftly translated by Sholeh Wolpé whose quotations are both inspiration and counterpoint to the wisdom and originality unlocked in Studdard's sublime poetry. If everyone understood the authentic meaning of these verses and the empowerment of infinite existence, this purgatory we call earth would transform at once to heaven.

~ Lois P. Jones, author of *Night Ladder*

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