Love Stories, Cosmic Comics, and Conscious Eating

New works by Carolina De Roberts, Lisa Mezzacappa Six, and Sophie Egan.

Cantoros by Carolina De Roberts

Five cantoras — or women who sing — come together in Uruguay during the brutal era of the revolutionary 1970s on isolated Cape Polonio with a sole lightkeeper. This novel about queer love traces their lives from their secret sanctuary to their homes and daily routines in Montevideo as they try to live as gay women when homophobia carried serious societal consequences such as torture and disappearance. Prompted by the author’s discovery of once hidden queer life in Uruguay, this book follows Raimina, Flaca, Anaís “La Venus,” Paz, and Malena over 35 years on their journeys to build lives expressing their true selves. The author teaches at San Francisco State University and lives in Oakland with her wife and two children. She is also the author of The Invisible Mountain, Perlu, and 2.

— Judith M. Gallman

Cosmicomics by Lisa Mezzacappa Six

If East Bay bassist Mezzacappa were as active on the New York jazz scene as she is here, she’d be as heralded as such avant-garde composer-instrumentalists of her approximate generation as pianist Kris Davis, guitarist Mary Halvorson, and saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock. A relentless project developer, Mezzacappa based the 11 pieces here on author Italo Calvino’s Cosmicomics stories. Complex but listener-friendly written passages, many in the “avant-noir” vein, open out into sprawling improvisations. Amalgams of experimental jazz, rock, and electronics — alternately dreamy and thorny, compact and free-ranging, and reminiscent of British band Henry Cow 40-plus years ago — are brilliantly realized by tenor saxophonist Aaron Bennett, electric guitarist John Finke, vibraphonist Mark Clifford, electronics wizard Tim Perks, drummer Jordan Glenn, and Mezzacappa on acoustic bass. — Derek Richardson

How to Be a Conscious Eater: Making Food Choices That Are Good For You, Others, and the Planet by Sophie Egan and illustrated by Iris Gottlieb

Looking for a neat little guide to conscious eating? This tome is it. It’s jam-packed with tidbits from San Francisco author Sophie Egan, a science writer who can explain complicated concepts simply. And the illustrations by Iris Gottlieb help cement myths, facts, and fictions into memorable charts, graphs, and pictures. Egan, who holds a master’s degree from UC Berkeley, suggests adhering to a conscious eater’s checklist that addresses whether what you eat is good for you, good for others, and good for the planet. She places what we eat into four broad categories: food from plants, food from animals, food from factories, and food from restaurant kitchens. Each segment is color-coded and offers five top takeaways. — JMG