



# The Ginkgo Light

*Arthur Sze*

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**The Ginkgo Light** Arthur Sze

“Classically elegant.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

Sze's free verse emphasizes at once how difficult, and how necessary, it is for us to imagine our world as a system whose ecologies and societies require us to care for all their interdependent parts." —*Publishers Weekly*

“Sze’s list-laden sequences capture the world’s manifold facts one by one, then through discursive commentary exact from them a sense not only of aesthetic order but of universal cause and effect.”—*Boston Review*

"Sze...here captures the energy of life in overshadowed daily events....His poems mine everything from geography, history, and biology to philosophy and nature, interweaving them to create a complex and luminous poetic texture....His poetry is an experience of awakening and pleasure that all serious students of contemporary poetry should have." —*Library Journal*

"Whether incorporating nature, philosophy, history, or science, Sze's poems are expansive. They unfold like the time-slowed cinematic recording of a flower's blooming...Sze has a refreshingly original sensibility and style, and he approaches writing like a collagist by joining disparate elements into a cohesive whole." —*Booklist*

A temple near the hypocenter of the atomic blast at Hiroshima was disintegrated, but its ginkgo tree survived to bud and bloom. Arthur Sze extends this metaphor of survival and perseverance to transform the world’s factual darkness into precarious splendor. “Each hour teems,” Sze writes, as he ingeniously integrates the world’s miraculous and mundane—a woodpecker drilling a utility pole or a 1300-year-old lotus seed—into a moving, visionary journey.

*Mayans charted Venus’s motion across the sky,  
poured chocolate into jars and interred them  
with the dead. A woman dips three bowls into  
hair’s fur glaze, places them in a kiln, anticipates  
removing them, red-hot, to a shelf to cool.  
When samba melodies have dissipated into air,  
when lights wrapped around a willow have vanished,  
what pattern of shifting lines leads to Duration?*

**Arthur Sze**, one of America’s leading poets, is the author of nine books of poetry and translation. He is professor emeritus of creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts and just completed a term as Poet Laureate of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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