

CHAN CENTRE

presents



SAT OCT 26 / 8 PM

Kronos Quartet



Canada

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, violin
Gabriela Díaz, violin
Ayane Kozasa, viola
Paul Wiancko, cello

Brian H. Scott, Lighting Designer
Scott Fraser, Sound Designer

PERFORMANCE

8PM Chan Shun Concert Hall

Sun Ra (arr. Jacob Garchik) / Outer Spaceways, Inc. +

Aleksandra Vrebalov / Gold Came From Space *

Jlin (arr. Jacob Garchik) / Little Black Book **

Traditional (arr. Kronos, transc. Ljova) / Tusen Tankar (A Thousand Thoughts) +

Steve Reich / Triple Quartet *

in three movements (played without pause)

INTERMISSION

Terry Riley / Good Medicine from Salome Dances for Peace *

John Coltrane (arr. Jacob Garchik) / Alabama +

Nicole Lizée / Black MIDI *

I. Kronoscope

II. The Tuning Fork

III. Pictionary Night

IV. MIDI in the Schools

V. The Problem with Black MIDI

VI. The Scarf

VII. 1978

VIII. Cassette Culture

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

* Written for Kronos

** Written for Kronos Fifty for the Future

+ Arranged for Kronos

This event is programmed by curator-in-residence Jarrett Martineau

Photography and videography are prohibited.

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łá tã ná Chan Centre for the Performing Arts łamãt
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The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts is situated
within the heart of Musqueam traditional territory

The Chan Centre would like to thank the Chan Endowment Fund and the
UBC Faculty of Arts for their continued support.

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts welcomes all Chan Centre Youth
Pass guests in attendance at tonight's performance and gratefully
acknowledges Chan Family Foundation for
making this program possible.

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, violin
Gabriela Díaz, violin
Ayane Kozasa, viola
Paul Wiancko, cello

For 50 years, San Francisco's Kronos Quartet has reimagined what the string quartet experience can be. One of the most celebrated and influential groups of our era, Kronos has given thousands of concerts worldwide, released more than 70 recordings, and collaborated with many of the world's most accomplished composers and performers across many genres. Through its nonprofit organization, Kronos Performing Arts Association (KPAA), Kronos has commissioned more than 1,100 works and arrangements for quartet. Kronos has received more than 40 awards, including the Polar Music, Avery Fisher, and Edison Klassiek Oeuvre Prizes.

Integral to Kronos' work is a series of long-running commissioning collaborations with hundreds of composers worldwide, including Terry Riley, Aleksandra Vrebalov, Tanya Tagaq, Philip Glass, inti figgis-vizueta, Fodé Lassana Diabaté, and Steve Reich. In its most ambitious commissioning effort to date, KPAA has recently completed *Kronos Fifty for the Future*. Through this initiative, Kronos has commissioned—and distributed online for free—50 new string quartet works written by composers from around the world.

In recordings, Kronos has collaborated with artists including Wu Man, Zakir Hussain, Asha Bhosle, Mahsa Vahdat, and Nine Inch Nails. Kronos has performed live with the likes of Paul McCartney, Allen Ginsberg, Rokia Traoré, David Bowie, Rhiannon Giddens, Caetano Veloso, and The National, among many others.

The quartet tours for several months each year, appearing in celebrated venues, including Carnegie Hall (New York), Palacio de Bellas Artes (Mexico City), the Barbican (London), the Muziekgebouw (Amsterdam), Shanghai Concert Hall, Suntory Hall (Tokyo), and the Sydney Opera House.

Kronos' expansive discography on Nonesuch includes three Grammy-winning albums—Terry Riley's *Sun Rings* (2019), *Landfall with Laurie Anderson* (2018), and Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite* (2003)—along with dozens of other acclaimed releases. Kronos' most recent recording is *Songs and Symphoniques: The Music of Moondog* (2023), a collaboration between Kronos and the Ghost Train Orchestra revisiting Moondog's vital and uplifting music for a new generation. Kronos' work has also featured prominently in many films, including the "live documentary" *A Thousand Thoughts*, written and directed by Sam Green and Joe Bini, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018.

Based in San Francisco, the nonprofit KPAA staff manages all aspects of Kronos' work, including commissioning, concert tours and local performances, recordings, education programs, and an annual *Kronos Festival* in San Francisco.

Sun Ra (1914-1993)

Outer Spaceways Incorporated (arr. 2023)

Arranged by Jacob Garchik (b. 1976)

Sun Ra was one of the most unusual musicians in the history of jazz, moving from Fletcher Henderson swing to free jazz with ease, sometimes in the same song. Portraying himself as a product of outer space, he “traveled the spaceways” with a colorful troupe of musicians, using a multitude of percussion and unusual instrumentation, from tree drum to celeste.

Sun Ra, who enjoyed cloaking his origins and development in mystery, is known to have studied piano early on with Lula Randolph in Washington, DC. His first noted professional job was during 1946-47 as pianist with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra at the Club DeLisa on the South Side of Chicago. In addition to playing piano in the band he also served as one of the staff arrangers. Finding his calling as an arranger, he put together a band to play his compositions. In the 1950s, he began issuing recordings of his unusual music on his Saturn label, becoming one of the first jazz musicians to record and sell his own albums. Sun Ra’s band became a central part of the early avant-garde jazz movement in Chicago, being one of the first jazz bands to employ electronic instruments. In 1960, he moved his band to New York, where he established a communal home for his musicians, known as the Sun Palace, and by 1970s, the Sun Ra Arkestra and its various permutations began touring Europe extensively. An outsider who linked the African-American experience with ancient Egyptian mythology and outer space, Sun Ra was years ahead of all other avant-garde musicians in his experimentation with sound and instruments, a pioneer in group improvisations and the use of electric instruments in jazz.

Jacob Garchik, multi-instrumentalist and composer, was born in San Francisco and has lived in New York since 1994. At home in a wide variety of styles and musical roles, he is a vital part of the Downtown and Brooklyn scene, playing trombone in groups ranging from jazz to contemporary classical to Balkan brass bands. He has released 5 albums as a leader, including “The Heavens: the Atheist Gospel Trombone Album”. He co-leads Brooklyn’s premiere Mexican brass band, Banda de los Muertos. As a trombonist Jacob has worked with many luminaries of jazz and the avant-garde, including Henry Threadgill, Steve Swallow, Lee Konitz, Laurie Anderson, Anthony Braxton, and George Lewis. In 2018 he won the “Rising Star – Trombone” category in the Downbeat Jazz Critic’s Poll. Jacob also plays accordion, tenor horn, and tuba.

About *Outer Spaceways Incorporated*, Jacob Garchik writes:

“Sun Ra recorded ‘Outer Spaceways Incorporated’ many times. To create this arrangement, I listened to as many renditions as I could find—abstracted solo piano concerts, instrumental Arkestra odysseys with long, freely improvised introductions, electro-acoustic versions, and the swinging version with June Tyson singing that appears in the film *Space is the Place*. In place of the often raucous solo section that followed the vocal versem, I made a little ‘shout chorus’ for Kronos that tried to capture the time-traveling feeling of Sun Ra; that you are listening to music that exists in past, present, and future all at once.”

This remix was created for the Red Hot + Ra series—a large-scale, multi-album multimedia series featuring many artists offering their interpretations of and tributes to the music of Sun Ra. Illustrating Sun Ra’s profound influence on contemporary culture around the world, the series also aims to raise awareness about climate justice. Outer Spaceways Incorporated is part of the Red Hot + Ra album curated by Kronos’ David Harrington, released in 2024.

Aleksandra Vrebalov (b. 1970) Gold Came From Space (2023)

The 2024 Grawemeyer Music Prize recipient Aleksandra Vrebalov defines her work as an opportunity for healing, service, connection, and a celebration of humanness. Her 100+ works, diverse in aesthetics, genre, and medium, are often inspired by urgent personal concerns and explore themes of identity, place, and belonging.

Living through the wars in former Yugoslavia, Vrebalov has been inspired by the friction between the public and the private side of heroism—like in *Beyond Zero: 1914-1918*, the 2014 multimedia collaboration with Kronos, or her opera *The Knock*.

Vrebalov's works—ranging from concert music and opera to music for modern dance and film—have been performed by the Kronos Quartet, Cincinnati and Glimmerglass Opera, Serbian National Theater, English National Ballet, Rambert Dance, Sybarite5, Gottinger Symphonie, ETHEL, Dusan Tynek Dance Company, Ijsbreker, Moravian Philharmonic, Belgrade Philharmonic, and Providence Festival Ballet, among others. Her works have been recorded for Nonesuch, Cantaloupe, Innova, Centaur Records, Vienna Modern Masters, and Ikarus Films.

About *Gold Came From Space*, Aleksandra Vrebalov writes:

“Gold Came From Space — a meditation on the beauty and purity of soul incorruptible by earthly dealings and on the nobleness of work guided by love and truth — is a singular journey driven by curiosity, passions, memories, and exploration of my deep creative connection to Kronos Quartet and our place as creators who together crossed over from the XX into the XXI century.

“The dramatic narrative of the piece is abstract and distorted with islands of harmonic and melodic grounding. The piece unfolds through the juxtaposition of contrasting, extreme qualities of musical parameters: rhythm is amorphous and driven, harmony emerges from and dissolves into noise, the texture vacillates between sparse and dense, and fragmented circular patterns—timestoppers—propel into linear cohesion. The overall structure follows 17 harmonics descending towards the mothertone, and 17 turns of the spiral in the Fibonacci sequence spiraling down to 1. The piece, much like nature, follows the contours of these phenomena, but it never conforms to their theoretical precision.

*“Sporadic references to a chord, a pattern, or a line from *The Sea Ranch Songs*, *Beyond Zero 1914-1918*, and *ilektrikés rhimés* do not sound like quotes; they form the fabric of a new context, celebrating where we—Kronos and I—have musically come from over 25 years of collaboration.*

“Gold Came From Space is a space of gathering of old friends, an imaginary session of philosophers and alchemists, a picture a little diffused and out of focus whose image slowly gets revealed as the eye adjusts.

“My purpose - to create beauty, and to create it with others, for ourselves and for others, for the world to be more loving and wonder-full, has been fulfilled many times with Kronos, as well as with The Friends of Kronos at The Sea Ranch who commissioned this work. I am immensely grateful for it.”

Aleksandra Vrebalov's Gold Came From Space was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by The Friends of Kronos at The Sea Ranch, as part of the KRONOS Five Decades Project, which celebrates the quartet's 50th anniversary.

Jlin (b. 1987)
Little Black Book (2018)
Arranged by Jacob Garchik (b. 1976)

About *Little Black Book*, Jlin writes:

“I chose the name *Little Black Book* because there is a black notebook that I own that I literally write down every creative idea I have in it. It is my book of absolute freedom. The book is very special to me, as it was given to me on my twenty-first birthday by my eldest cousin. When Kronos approached me about doing this project I was quite ecstatic, and immediately knew I wanted to take this on from a perspective of absolute freedom of sound. I didn’t care how crazy it sounded, I just wanted the instruments and choice of instruments to be free. Freedom was my goal no matter how left-field or unconventional. I love that Kronos decided to play this track as they deemed fit versus trying to follow what I did.”

Jlin’s *Little Black Book* was commissioned as part of *Kronos Fifty for the Future*, which is made possible by a group of adventurous partners, including Carnegie Hall and many others.

Launched in the 2015/16 season, *Kronos Fifty for the Future* is an education and legacy project that has commissioned—and distributed for free—the first library of contemporary repertoire for string quartet. Fifty new works have been commissioned, and scores and parts, as well as supplemental learning materials that include recordings, videos, performance notes, and composer interviews, are available on kronosquartet.org.

Traditional (Sweden)
Tusen Tankar (A Thousand Thoughts) (arr. 2005)
Arranged by Kronos Quartet, transcribed by Ljova

Tusen Tankar is a traditional Scandinavian folk song, which recounts a timeless, mournful tale of unrequited love. The English translation of the original lyrics reads, in part: "A thousand thoughts oppress me/ For love of one who can't be mine./ ...All I can feel is the pain I bear/ And it's all for you, my dear."

Kronos' arrangement is based on a recording by the Swedish folk band, Triakel, built around the haunting vocals by Emma Härdelin. Triakel consists of Emma Härdelin (vocals and fiddle), Kjell-Erik Eriksson (fiddle) and Janne Strömstedt (harmonium). All three are well-established in the forefront of Swedish folk music. The group has toured throughout Sweden and also played in about fifteen different European countries. They have also appeared in Japan and several times in the United States and Canada. Triakel has recorded one single CD (*Innan Gryningen*, 1999) with Benny Andersson, and five full-length CDs of their own. The first was released in May 1998 and the latest in February 2011.

According to Triakel, the first two verses of *Tusen Tankar* were taken from a version by Swedish singer Thyra Karlsson, while the third verse can be traced back to Danish origins.

Kronos' arrangement of *Tusen Tankar* was commissioned for Kronos by the Angel Stoyanof Commission Fund.

Steve Reich (b. 1936) Triple Quartet (1999)

Steve Reich has been recognized internationally as one of the world's foremost living composers. Starting in the 1960s, his pieces *It's Gonna Rain*, *Drumming*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Tehillim*, *Different Trains*, and many others helped shift the aesthetic center of musical composition worldwide away from extreme complexity and towards rethinking pulsation and tonal attraction in new ways. He continues to influence younger generations of composers and mainstream musicians and artists all over the world.

Born in New York, Reich graduated with honors in Philosophy from Cornell University and studied at Juilliard with William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti. After receiving his M.A. in Music from Mills College, Reich studied drumming at the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana and traditional forms of cantillation (chanting) of the Hebrew scriptures in New York and Jerusalem. Reich founded his own ensemble, Steve Reich and Musicians, which since 1971 has frequently toured the world, performing at venues as diverse as Carnegie Hall and the Bottom Line cabaret.

Reich's 1988 piece *Different Trains*, written for Kronos, marked a new compositional method, rooted in *It's Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*, in which speech recordings generate the musical material for musical instruments. In 1990, he received a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition for *Different Trains* as recorded by Kronos on Nonesuch. He has gone on to win Grammy Awards for his piece *Music for 18 Musicians* and an album of his percussion works by Third Coast Percussion. His *Double Sextet* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009.

He received the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, the Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge award in Madrid, the Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, and the Gold Medal in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has been named Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, and awarded honorary doctorates by the Royal College of Music in London, the Juilliard School in New York, and the Liszt Academy in Budapest, among others.

About *Triple Quartet*, Reich writes:

"*Triple Quartet* is dedicated to the Kronos Quartet. It is for three string quartets. For Kronos or any other single string quartet to perform the piece they must prerecord quartets two and three and then play the quartet one part along with the prerecorded tape. Alternately, the piece can be played by twelve players with no tape.

"The piece is in three movements: fast-slow-fast. It is organized harmonically on four dominant chords in keys a minor third apart: E minor, G minor, B-flat minor, C-sharp minor and then returning to E minor to form a cycle. The first movement goes through this harmonic cycle twice with a section about one minute long on each of the four dominant chords. The result is a kind of variation form. Rhythmically, the first movement has the second and third quartet playing interlocking chords while the first quartet plays longer melodies in canon between the first violin and viola against the second violin and cello. The slow movement is more completely contrapuntal with a long slow melody in canon in all twelve voices. The third movement resumes the original fast tempo, maintains the harmonic chord cycle but treats all the previous material in the piece more freely."

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Steve Reich's Triple Quartet was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, David A. and Evelyne T. Lennette, Patricia Unterman and Tim Savinar, and Meet the Composer/Arts Endowment Commissioning Music/USA, which is made possible by generous support from The Helen F. Whitaker Fund, and The Catherine Filene Shouse Foundation.

Terry Riley (b. 1935)

Good Medicine

from *Salome Dances for Peace* (1985-86)

Terry Riley first came to prominence in 1964 when, with the groundbreaking *In C*, he subverted the world of tightly organized atonal composition then in fashion and pioneered the musical aesthetic known as minimalism. Following *In C*, he quit formal composition in order to concentrate on improvisation, and devoted himself to studying North Indian vocal techniques under the legendary Pandit Pran Nath. In 1979, Riley began notating music again when both he and Kronos were on the faculty at Mills College in Oakland. This four-decade-long relationship has yielded dozens of works for string quartet, including a concerto for string quartet, *The Sands*, which was the Salzburg Festival's first-ever new music commission; *Sun Rings*, a NASA-commissioned piece for choir, visuals, and space sounds, the recording for which won the 2020 Grammy for Best Engineered Album, Classical; and *The Cusp of Magic*, for string quartet and pipa. Kronos' album *Cadenza on the Night Plain*, a collection of music by Riley, was selected by both *Time* and *Newsweek* as one of the 10 Best Classical Albums of the Year in 1988. The epic five-quartet cycle, *Salome Dances for Peace*, was selected as the #1 Classical Album of the Year by *USA Today* and was nominated for a Grammy in 1989.

Good Medicine is the last section of *Salome Dances for Peace*. About *Salome* Riley has said:

"The idea for *Salome Dances for Peace* came out of an improvisation theme from *The Harp of New Albion*. I realized this was potentially a whole new piece. Around that time, David Harrington called me and asked me to write another string quartet.

"I thought that it should be a ballet about Salome using her alluring powers to actually create peace in the world. So Salome in this case becomes like a goddess who—drawn out of antiquity, having done evil kinds of deeds—reincarnates and is trained as a sorceress, as a shaman. And through her dancing, she is able to become both a warrior and an influence on the world leaders' actions.

"I'm always trying to find ways that I can, besides doing music, to contribute to world peace, or maybe neighborhood peace or home peace. I told David that when we first started that I thought we ought to create a piece that can be played at the United Nations on special holidays. It would not be just a concert piece but a piece that could be played as a rite."

Salome Dances for Peace was commissioned for Kronos by IRCAM and Betty Freeman, and recorded by Kronos for Nonesuch Records.

John Coltrane (b. 1926)
Alabama (1963, arranged 2017)
Arranged by Jacob Garchik (b. 1976)

John Coltrane isn't usually the first artist that comes to mind when thinking about the politically outspoken improvisers who changed the course of jazz in the 1950s and early '60s. While vanguard bandleaders and composers such as Charles Mingus, Max Roach, and Sonny Rollins coupled their creative breakthroughs with powerful statements denouncing white supremacy and supporting the struggle for civil rights, Coltrane channeled his energy into spiritual masterpieces like *A Love Supreme* and *Meditations*. But no musician ever responded to an atrocity with more soulful, anguished humanity than Coltrane's "Alabama," a piece the saxophonist wrote in the aftermath of the infamous 1963 KKK bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church that killed four little girls. Released on the 1964 album *Live at Birdland* (Impulse!), but actually recorded in the studio just weeks after the bombing, the elegy features Coltrane's classic combo with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Elvin Jones.

Coltrane structured "Alabama" around the speech that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave in the church's sanctuary three days after the bombing, moving from unfathomable sorrow to steely determination. Kronos commissioned Jacob Garchik to create an arrangement as part of Carnegie Hall's winter 2018 festival "The '60s: The Years that Changed America," with the intention of premiering "Alabama" as an encore for that concert, "but we ran out of time," David Harrington says. "Now we have this beautiful version, where each one of us gets to pay homage to the sound of John Coltrane."

"Alabama" isn't Kronos' first Trane ride. Working with tenor sax great Joe Henderson, the quartet performed a Jimmy Heath arrangement of Coltrane's sublime ballad "Naima" back in the '80s, a collaboration that went undocumented. But Harrington only discovered "Alabama" recently after *Songlines* editor Jo Frost wrote about listening to the piece on the same day that white supremacists marched in Charlottesville. Coltrane's music is timeless, but "Alabama" is infuriatingly timely once again. Harrington quickly sought out the recording and was struck again by Coltrane's elemental power, "one of the most central sounds in American music," Harrington says. "Minutes later I was in touch with Jacob."

For Garchik, the assignment came as something of a surprise. Though the jazz trombonist is widely respected on the New York scene, his work for Kronos usually involves arranging "all kinds of music I'm not familiar with from faraway places," he says. "This was close to home. I tried to capture the subtly and simplicity of 'Alabama' with an arrangement that lets the quartet concentrate on the beautiful lines that Coltrane created. I kept the melody intact, but focused on the recitation part at the beginning, and accentuated its intensity. It's a very striking and mysterious piece, unlike anything else that Coltrane wrote."

Program note by Andrew Gilbert

Nicole Lizée (b. 1973)

Black MIDI (2017)

Called “a brilliant musical scientist” (CBC), “breathhtakingly inventive” (Sydney Times Herald, Australia), and lauded for “creating a stir with listeners for her breathless imagination and ability to capture Gen-X and beyond generation” (Winnipeg Free Press), award-winning composer and video artist composer **Nicole Lizée** creates new music from an eclectic mix of influences, including the earliest MTV videos, turntablism, rave culture, Hitchcock, Kubrick, Alexander McQueen, thrash metal, early video game culture, 1960s psychedelia, and 1960s modernism. She is fascinated by the glitches made by outmoded and well-worn technology and captures these glitches, notates them, and integrates them into live performance.

Lizée’s compositions range from works for orchestra and solo turntablist featuring DJ techniques fully notated and integrated into a concert music setting, to other unorthodox instrument combinations that include the Atari 2600 video game console, omnichords, stylophones, Simon™, vintage board games, and karaoke tapes. In the broad scope of her evolving oeuvre she explores such themes as malfunction, reviving the obsolete, and the harnessing of imperfection and glitch to create a new kind of precision.

In 2001 Nicole received a Master of Music degree from McGill University. After a decade and a half of composition, her commission list of over 50 works is varied and distinguished and includes the Kronos Quartet, Carnegie Hall, the New York Philharmonic, the BBC Proms, the San Francisco Symphony, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, l’Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and many others. Her music has been performed worldwide in renowned venues including Carnegie Hall (NYC), Royal Albert Hall (London), Muziekgebouw (Amsterdam) and Cité de la Musique (Paris) – and in festivals including the BBC Proms (UK), Huddersfield (UK), Roskilde (Denmark), Bang On a Can (USA), Classical:NEXT (Rotterdam), All Tomorrow’s Parties (UK), Other Minds (San Francisco), C3 (Berlin), Ecstatic (NYC), Switchboard (San Francisco), Melos-Ethos (Slovakia), Casalmaggiore (Italy), and Dark Music Days (Iceland).

Lizée was recently awarded the prestigious 2019 Prix Opus for Composer of the Year. In 2017 she received the SOCAN Jan. V. Matejcek Award. In 2013 she received the Canada Council for the Arts Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music. She is a two time JUNO nominee for composition of the year. She is a Lucas Artists Fellow (California) and a Civitella Ranieri Foundation Fellow (Italy). In 2015 she was selected by acclaimed composer and conductor Howard Shore to be his protégée as part of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards. *This Will Not Be Televised*, her seminal piece for chamber ensemble and turntables, placed in the 2008 UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers’ Top 10 Works. Her work for piano and notated glitch, *Hitchcock Études*, was chosen by the International Society for Contemporary Music and featured at the 2014 World Music Days in Wrocław, Poland. Additional awards and nominations include an Images Festival Award (2016), Dora Mavor Moore nomination in Opera (2015), Prix Opus nomination (2013), two Prix collégien de musique contemporaine, (2012, 2013) and the 2002 Canada Council for the Arts Robert Fleming Prize for achievements in composition.

Nicole was the Composer in Residence at Vancouver’s Music on Main from 2016–18. She is a Korg Canada and Arturia artist.

About *Black MIDI*, Nicole Lizée writes:

“This piece is an interpretation of the underground phenomenon known as Black MIDI. This can be defined as a microgenre that is created using Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI). Music notation software and MIDI sequencers are recklessly and arbitrarily ‘blackened’ by layering thousands of notes or MIDI data. This has extended into the color world via software sequencers and drum machines.

“This definition is merely the starting point for the piece. I believe the genre has potential for expansion into territory for which it was never intended. In its current state the amount of notes and speed of the notes are Black MIDI’s sole identifiers. The interpretation can be expanded to include splicing, spontaneous tempo and meter changes, metric modulation, accelerandos, extreme stretching or slowing down of material, dropped frames, pixelation, etc. Using string quartet, orchestra, and film this piece in its original version explores what Black MIDI could be: how it could be reimagined using live musicians in meticulous synchronization with film, emphasizing its inherent beauty and mysticism.

“In the spirit of David Lynch, John Carpenter, and David Cronenberg, the work is constructed as a quasi-documentary or series of film shorts and/or television episodes of a fictional TV drama where each scene is set up and subsequently enhanced and manipulated by the performers. The piece tells a story of how what begins as artificially imposed MIDI commands can then spur the imagination and cross into the analogue or human world. The visuals magnify this reinterpretation, taking MIDI out of its purely data context and into an impressionistic and hallucinatory one.”

Nicole Lizée’s Black MIDI was commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Peter Oundjian, Music Director with financial support from The Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada for performances during the 150th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada [March 2017]. The work was written for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Kronos Quartet.

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