

21C Music Festival

A Thousand Thoughts

A Live Documentary with the Kronos Quartet

Written and Directed by Sam Green & Joe Bini

Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at 8:00 pm

This is the 1,143rd concert in Koerner Hall

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, violin

John Sherba, violin

Hank Dutt, viola

Sunny Yang, cello

Sam Green and Joe Bini, filmmakers

Brian H. Scott, lighting design

Brian Mohr, sound design

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

Philip Glass: Second movement from String Quartet No. 2 (company)

Terry Riley: Excerpt from *Requiem for Adam* *

George Crumb: Selections from *Black Angels*

10. "God-Music"

Excerpt from 1. "Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects"

Ryan Brown: "Pinched" *

John Adams: "Judah to Ocean" from *John's Book of Alleged Dances* *

Tanya Tagaq: Excerpt from *Sivunittinni* (arr. Jacob Garchik) **

Ken Benshoof: I. "Gentle, easy" from *Traveling Music* *

Fodé Lassana Diabaté: 5. "Bara kala ta" from *Sunjata's Time* (arr. Jacob Garchik) **

Terry Riley: "The Wheel" *

David Harrington: "Drone" from *Dirty Wars* *

Café Tacvba: Excerpt from "12/12" (arr. Osvaldo Golijov) *

Philip Glass: "Blood Oath" from String Quartet No. 3 ("Mishima Quartet")

Aleksandra Vrebalov: 7. "Chapel, Rainbows" from *The Sea Ranch Songs* *

Laurie Anderson: "Flow" (arr. Jacob Garchik) +

John Zorn: "Meditation (The Blue of Noon)" from *The Dead Man* *

Pérotin: Excerpt from *Viderunt Omnes* (arr. Kronos Quartet) +

Clint Mansell: Selections from *Requiem for a Dream* (arr. David Lang) +

"Lux Aeterna"

"Ghosts of a Future Lost"

John Oswald: Excerpt from *Spectre* *

Wu Man: II. "Silk and Bamboo" (inspired by Huanlege) from *Two Chinese Paintings* **

Ervin T. Rouse: Excerpt from *Orange Blossom Special* (arr. Danny Clay) +

* Written for Kronos

** Written for Kronos and composed for *Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire*

+ Arranged for Kronos

Presented in partnership with the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema as part of the Music on Film series.

THE MICHAEL AND SONJA KOERNER FUND FOR CLASSICAL PROGRAMMING

The Royal Conservatory's mission to develop future generations of musicians and to bring the world's greatest performers to Toronto has been made possible, in large part, due to the generosity of Michael and Sonja Koerner. In 2022, the Koerners invested \$10 million to create The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming, securing the future of the finest classical music concerts at Koerner Hall and our other performance venues. This latest investment, along with the naming of Michael and Sonja Koerner Hall, support of Glenn Gould School students through The Michael & Sonja Koerner Scholarships, the donation of The Michael and Sonja Koerner Early Instrument Collection, the naming of The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Cello Program and The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Chair in Cello, and support of the annual 21C Music Festival, underscores the Koerner family's dedication to music and to the RCM.

A bow made of wood and horsehair coated with resin from trees scrapes across a string, which makes vibrations in the hollow of the wooden instrument, which travel as a series of sound waves in the subtle matter of the air and, perhaps, penetrate the labyrinth of a human ear, or a hundred or a thousand, and this vibration is interpreted by the brain or the brains as information that might have, to use a word that means such vibrations, resonance as a source of pleasure or pain or sorrow. This is one way to describe a note of music on a violin. It is as ephemeral as the waves of the sea or ripples in water; it arises, it fades, it exists in time, and that ephemerality always speaks of mortality and the desire to transcend it, of motion that exists in time, of life that is itself a kind of motion, since we call the living animate and the un-living inanimate.

Human beings have acknowledged and transcended mortality with culture, with rites and songs, and other elaborations that can be passed on and bridge more than one human life, that can spread like ripples on a pond, like a sound, that can be reiterated. *A Thousand Thoughts* begins with the story of *The Lost Chord*, a song that was one of the first pieces of music recorded when technology made possible the conversion of live sound into tiny impressions on a wax cylinder (and later on phonograph records [*phono* for "sound," *graph* for "writing"]; these were literally devices for writing down sound], and then on magnetic tape, and then as digital data that shaved off some of the fuzz of the vibrations to make something perhaps a little pared down and cleaner than what sounded in the studio where the recording was made).

A Thousand Thoughts begins with the irony of *The Lost Chord*, because it was about music heard once and never recovered that offered some joy, some solace, some peace that then vanished, about the sense of loss that was tied to death and perhaps to the impossibility of hanging onto transcendent moments. Perhaps it begins with that story because in it is the desire of all art to transcend time, to shore something up against its depredations, and the particular contradictions of art that unfold in time, like music – that pleasure in the ephemeral, in sounds that can only exist in time itself. A note is heard, it fades, it is gone. There is no music outside of time, and time itself is full of the impossibility of keeping and the inevitability of change, that force that sometimes feels like liberation and sometimes like tragedy.

Kronos founder David Harrington described a quest analogous to *The Lost Chord*, saying "We have not created the bulletproof piece of music that will prevent harm from happening – you know, [that] a young child can wrap around herself or a grandparent can wrap around his family. We have not been able to do that yet, but I think it is possible, and I spend every minute of my waking life trying to find that."

A Thousand Thoughts, a thousand questions, mine, yours, ours, theirs, questions that perhaps open up things that definitive answers would only nail shut. Kronos Quartet's long trajectory offers a series of questions that are solid and answers that are elusive: How do you find a path between predictability and instability? How do you have both a clear identity and an open door that lets in new ideas and collaborators? How do you keep the faith that what you are doing matters? How do you make an art that grows like a tree, ring by ring, year by year, and stands as a testament? How do you keep it alive through all the changes, and how do you incorporate the change that is, as my photographic collaborator Mark Klett likes to say, the measure of time? Or how do you proceed as Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi said in some instructions for Zen Buddhist practice, "not too tight, not too loose," not so tied by custom and convention and the past, not so formless that you lurch and spill into whatever the present offers?

There was an old idea of immortality as transcendence, as beauty, as power that was less about living forever than about lifting someone out of themselves and the gloom and despond of mortality. There is also a particular beauty of mortality, of this light that will never shine the same way twice, of the spring that will be devoured by the summer, the youth that will be consumed by maturity, the freshness of beginnings and the ripeness of arrival.

The live music of the "live film" *A Thousand Thoughts* raises other questions, about irreproducible and evanescent experience, about the water that runs through your fingers, about the events that cannot be reconstituted. How do you swim upstream against what film and all our digital era has become, an immersion in other times and places than the present: in recordings, images, and reproductions? Once, everything happened and was then irretrievable, though you could sketch it or describe it in words on paper or spoken aloud, and then in the late 1830s came photography, promising exact replication of the visible, and half a century later came recorded sound, promising exact replication of the audible. They had photographs, then phonographs; they thought that they had conquered time; we had even more recording technology, even more data stored, even more ease in capturing every moment.

Did we conquer time or were we conquered by substitutes for presence? Did we give up the moment itself, the things themselves, for their reproductions? Did we fall into substitutes and fakes and lose our grasp on the moment, give up presence for absences and in the process lose ourselves that are also mortal, timebound, eternally changing, eternally invited to witness in the moment? Is there a way that thinking you will never die becomes a way to never live, like the person who tries to document the

moment so that in the future the past will be retrievable and only misses the present? The present, that pun in English for gifts and for now.

The foundation for modern cinema was laid when Eadweard Muybridge animated sequential photographs and when Edison captured recorded sound on his wax cylinders. The latter man saw it as an uncanny act, a reaching into the grave, a dance with the dead.

“In the year 1887,” Edison later remembered, “it occurred to me that it was possible to devise an instrument which would do for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear and that, by a combination of the two, all motion and sound could be recorded and reproduced simultaneously. I believe that in coming years by my own work and that of Dickson, Muybridge, Marey, and others who will doubtless enter the field, that grand opera can be given at the Metropolitan Opera House at New York ... with artists and musicians long since dead.”

He declares that cinema is a ghost dance, as I said somewhere else, that it is a raising of the dead or at least a fraternizing with the dead and the gone. It is not about presence but absence and the ability to be with who and what is absent. Harrington wanted to make a music that would protect a child from harm, but Edison aspired to revive the dead at least enough to make them sing for us. Perhaps in that is the difference between the present and the past recaptured.

Edison’s astonishing declaration raises as well questions Sam Green has tried to answer: What is live cinema? What is it to be fully present? What is it to have the thing itself and not its representation? What is it to be here and now in an age of being anywhere but here, and every time but this irreproducible moment? What is it to have a film mixed live before you, prone to accidents and serendipities, to be each time something distinct, of its time, and not outside it, to hear music as a vibration of horsehair and wood and the movement of muscles traveling through the air and then into the labyrinth of your ear, with all the nuances that get sanded down and painted over by a digital recording? What is the work of art in the age of digital reproduction, and what is it to be in the presence and the present?

- Rebecca Solnit

A Thousand Thoughts was commissioned by The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, Barbican, Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, Exploratorium, Christos V. Konstantakopoulos, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, MASS MoCA, Melbourne Festival, Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University through its Wexner Center Artist Residency Award program. Additional support was received from The DrumStick Fund, Genuine Article Pictures, JustFilms/Ford Foundation, Lear Family Foundation, Andrea Lunsford, The National Endowment for the Arts, Sundance Documentary Film Program with support from Open Society Foundation, Gottfried and Janet Tittiger, and Kenneth and Elizabeth Whitney.

This film was supported by Sundance Catalyst.

Kronos Quartet

For nearly 50 years, San Francisco’s Kronos Quartet – David Harrington (violin), John Sherba (violin), Hank Dutt (viola), and Sunny Yang (cello) – 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 1,000 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 *50 for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire*. 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 Award-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 *Mỹ Lai* (2022), an opera by Jonathan Berger and Harriet Scott Chessman. 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.

Kronos Quartet made its Koerner Hall debut on May 25, 2016, during 21C Music Festival 2016, and subsequently returned for the 21C Music Festival in 2016.

Sam Green

Sam Green received his Master's Degree in Journalism from the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied documentary with acclaimed filmmaker Marlon Riggs.

His most recent projects are "live documentaries" including *32 Sounds* (2022) with electronic musician JD Samson, *A Thousand Thoughts* (2018) in collaboration with the Kronos Quartet, *The Measure of All Things* (2014), and *The Love Song of R. Buckminster Fuller* (2012), which premiered at the Museum of Modern Art as part of the San Francisco International Film Festival. All four works are performed live, with Green narrating and musicians performing the soundtrack.

Green's 2004 feature-length film, the Academy Award nominated documentary *The Weather Underground*, tells the story of a group of radical young women and men who tried to violently overthrow the United States government during the late 1960s and 70s. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, was broadcast on PBS, included in the Whitney Biennial, and has screened widely around the world.

Green's previous short documentary, *The Rainbow Man/John 3:16*, follows the bizarre rise and fall of a man who became famous during the 1970s by appearing at thousands of televised sporting events wearing a rainbow wig. The film premiered at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival and has screened at festivals worldwide. "More than an exploration of life, *The Rainbow Man* is a parable about alienation, the media, and the meaninglessness that often defines American life." – Trevor Groth, Sundance Film Festival
Green's other short documentaries include *Julius Caesar was Buried in a Pet Cemetery, lot 63, grave c*, *Pie Fight '69* (directed with Christian Bruno), *N-Judah 5:30*, and *The Fabulous Stains: Behind the Movie* (directed with Sarah Jacobson).

Joe Bini

Bini was born in San Mateo, California to Aurora Cerro Bini and Louis John Bini. As a film editor, he has collaborated with Werner Herzog on 27 documentaries and feature films in 20 years, including: *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), *Invincible* (2001), *Grizzly Man* (2005), *Rescue Dawn* (2007), and *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

Bini edited Lynne Ramsay's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011) for BBC Films and Independent and *American Honey* (2016) with director Andrea Arnold. He edited the 2017 film *You Were Never Really Here*, directed by Ramsay.

Credits for A Thousand Thoughts

Directed, written, and edited by Sam Green, Joe Bini

Music performed by Kronos Quartet: David Harrington, John Sherba, Hank Dutt, Sunny Yang

Cinematography by Kirsten Johnson

Produced by Janet Cowperthwaite, Sam Green

Executive Producers Josh Penn, Maida Lynn, Kenneth & Elizabeth Whitney

Co-Producers Thomas O. Kriegsmann, Brendan Doyle

Lighting Designer, Performance Brian H. Scott

Sound Designer, Performance Brian Mohr

Produced in Association with ArKtype, C41 Media, The Department of Motion Pictures, Genuine Article Pictures

Motion Design Work-Order

Additional Cinematography Yoni Brook, Pete Sillen, Raf Fellner, Andrew Black, David Kaplowitz

Associate Producer Evan Neff

Assistant Editor Jonathan Rapoport

Sound Mix Rich Bologna

Colorist Ayumi Ashley

Footage Research Sierra Pettengill, Rosemary Rotondi & Anna Hudak

Sound Claudia Katanaygi, Judy Karp, Stephen Koszler, Doug Dunderdale & Paul Mendez

Production Assistance Sam Schnorr, Mike Reid, Chris Niesing, Forrest Pound, Tara Kutz, Evan Neff, Ariel Hahn & Raf Fellner

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