

21C Music Festival 2016

Kronos Quartet with special guest Tanya Tagaq

Wednesday, May 25, 2016 at 8:00 pm

This is the 619th concert in Koerner Hall

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, violin

John Sherba, violin

Hank Dutt, viola

Sunny Yang, cello

Tanya Tagaq, vocals

PROGRAM

Nicole Lizée: *The Golden Age of the Radiophonic Workshop [Fibre-Optic Flowers]* (Canadian premiere) *

Mark Applebaum: *Darmstadt Kindergarten* (Canadian premiere) *

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh: *Rəqs (Dance)* * ##

Fodé Lassana Diabaté: Selections from *Sunjata's Time* (arr. Jacob Garchik) * ##

3. *Nana Triban*

5. *Bara kala ta*

Tanya Tagaq: *Snow Angel* (arr. Jacob Garchik) (world premiere) * ##

Sivuntinni (arr. Jacob Garchik) (world premiere) * ##

Tanya Tagaq & Kronos Quartet: *Nunavut* *

INTERMISSION

Aleksandra Vrebalov: *My Desert, My Rose* * ##

Geeshie Wiley: "Last Kind Words" (arr. Jacob Garchik) (Ontario premiere) +

Laurie Anderson: *Flow* (arr. Jacob Garchik) (Ontario premiere) +

Mary Kouyoumdjian: *Bombs of Beirut* *

I. *Before the War* –

II. *The War* –

III. *After the War*

Please Note: The performance of *Bombs of Beirut* includes actual recordings of the sounds of warfare, including incoming missiles and the detonation of bombs, all at high decibel levels. These are loud sounds that continue for approximately four minutes. Audience members may wish to avoid this piece if there is any history of PTSD, anxiety disorders, or other psychological or medical conditions that would likely be exacerbated by exposure to such sounds.

Tanya Tagaq's appearance generously supported by Joanne Tod.

21C Music Festival Opening Night generously supported by Kris Vikmanis and Denny Creighton.

* Written for Kronos / + Arranged for Kronos

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh's *Rəqs*, Fodé Lassana Diabaté's *Sunjata's Time*, Tanya Tagaq's *Snow Angel* and *Sivuntinni*, and Aleksandra Vrebalov's *My Desert*, *My Rose* were commissioned as part of the Kronos Performing Arts Association's *Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire*, an exciting new commissioning initiative which is made possible by a group of partners, including the 21C Music Festival at The Royal Conservatory/Koerner Hall, Carnegie Hall, and many others. Beginning in the 2015-16 season, *Fifty for the Future* is commissioning 50 new works – 10 per year for five years – devoted to contemporary approaches to the quartet and designed expressly for the training of students and emerging professionals. The works are being created by an eclectic group of composers – 25 men and 25 women. Kronos is premiering each piece and creating companion digital materials, including scores, recordings, and performance notes, which are being distributed online for free. Kronos's *Fifty for the Future* presents string quartet music as a living art form. Kronos, Carnegie Hall, The Royal Conservatory/Koerner Hall, and an adventurous list of project partners, join forces to support this exciting new commissioning, performance, education, and legacy project of unprecedented scope and potential impact.

[Nicole Lizée](#)

The Golden Age of the Radiophonic Workshop [Fibre-Optic Flowers] (2012)

The BBC Radiophonic Workshop in the 1960s was a place where the role of electronic music in our sound world began to take shape and, in many ways, was defined for ensuing generations. A primordial aesthetic formed around the synthetic textures that emerged from the mother(s) of invention. New sounds were needed and wanted. The technology was simple but cutting edge. Delia Derbyshire coaxed a palette of otherworldly sounds from everyday objects (a favourite being a metallic green lampshade that produced a pure ringing tone when struck). The merging of the real with the unreal (on reel-to-reel) imbued this new music with a kind of pre-digital binary sheen. Positive and negative, aligning magnetically via ferric oxide, capturing the visionary results for positronic posterity.

This piece imagines a multi-sensory world in which the beauty of the artificial is integrated with the real in an organic way. Derbyshire spoke in a magazine interview of wanting to stop and smell the fibre-optic flowers. It is a beautiful image that aligns perfectly with The Golden Age. While the Radiophonic Workshop did not work with acoustic instruments in the traditional sense, this piece makes the kind of sound that might have been conjured had a string quartet been readily available. Sitting among the electronic bric-à-brac, I imagine the strings laying in wait for the moment when Delia might sneak in late at night and, in a moment of synergy, meld the wooden with the molten. The work is structured as a continuous movement where one sonic event unfurls or morphs into the next; akin to a vinyl record without track breaks. There are analogue sounds derived from hand-held proto-arcade games, turntables, reel-to-reel machines, and 4-track tape machines. Beats are played by the most analogue of data entry devices – the typewriter. In the end, these sounds all exist on equal footing as sources for musical expression in the post-Delia world.

The Golden Age of the Radiophonic Workshop [Fibre-Optic Flowers] was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by BBC Radio 3 and first performed by Kronos at the BBC Proms on July 24, 2012. - Nicole Lizée

[Mark Applebaum](#)

Darmstadt Kindergarten (2015)

Darmstadt Kindergarten consists of a 17-measure 'theme,' composed in two versions: instrumental and choreographic. The instrumental version is played conventionally on two violins, viola, and cello; the choreographic version calls for the players to substitute silent hand gestures – lavishly described in the score – for their instrumental sounds.

The instrumental 'theme' is repeated five times in immediate succession. During each successive statement one additional player is permanently removed from the instrumental group and instead plays the choreographic version. The hand gestures are executed at precise moments corresponding to the rhythms from the player's instrumental part. *Darmstadt Kindergarten* is thus a piece that is partly about memory; the audience is invited to 'hear' the instrumental material when later voiced by choreographed action. Music can indeed be expressed even in the absence of sound.

The title alludes to the famous summer music courses held in Darmstadt, Germany. For decades composers such as Cage, Boulez, Nono, and Stockhausen met to share their latest musical sounds and ideas. The festival came to be known as a hotbed of the most gritty, modernist contemporary music, stuff aimed decidedly at mature audiences and, as a consequence, sometimes lacking the ludic sense of play that makes childlike enterprise so appealing (and perhaps in need of rehabilitation). Commissioned originally for a Kronos Quartet's children's concert, I wanted to compose a piece that could appeal at once to audiences of varying age, experience, and affinity for levity, gravity, whimsy, and rigor, something worthy of a 'Darmstadt kindergarten.'

Darmstadt Kindergarten was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by the David Harrington Research and Development Fund.
- Mark Applebaum

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh

Rəqs (Dance) (2015)

Rəqs means 'dance' in Azerbaijani as well as in all other Turkic languages. In Azerbaijan, many different dances have existed since time immemorial: for men and women, heroic and lyric, fast and slow. And the tradition of accompanying all important life events with all kinds of dances has been preserved to the present day: engagements and weddings, harvest and farewells, birthdays, and even dates of death. There are also burial dances that accompany the farewell to the deceased person. In this respect, the dance tradition remains very strong and current in Azerbaijan today, especially in rural areas. In my new piece for the Kronos Quartet, I have attempted to reflect some of the rhythms and configurations of Azerbaijani dances.

- Franghiz Ali-Zadeh

Fodé Lassana Diabaté

Selections from *Sunjata's Time* (2015) (arr. Jacob Garchik)

Sunjata's Time is dedicated to Sunjata Keita, the warrior prince who founded the great Mali Empire in 1235, which at its height stretched across the West African savannah to the Atlantic shores. Sunjata's legacy continues to be felt in many ways. During his time as emperor he established many of the cultural norms that remain in practice today – including the close relationship between patron and musician that is the hallmark of so much music in Mali.

The word "time" is meant to denote both "rhythm," an important element in balafon performance, and "epoch," since the composition sets out to evoke the kinds of musical sounds that might have been heard in Sunjata's time, drawing on older styles of balafon playing which Lassana Diabaté has learned while studying with elder masters of the instrument in Guinea.

Each of the first four movements depicts a character who played a central role in Sunjata's life, and each is fronted by one of the four instruments of the quartet. The fifth movement brings the quartet together in equality to portray the harmonious and peaceful reign of this great West African emperor who lived nearly eight centuries ago. The third and fifth movements will be performed at tonight's concert.

3. ***Nana Triban***. Nana Triban was Sunjata's beautiful sister. When Sunjata went into exile, the sorcerer blacksmith wrested the throne from Sunjata's half-brother. So the people of Mande went to find Sunjata, to beg him to return and help overthrow Sumaworo. Sunjata gathered an army from all the neighbouring kingdoms. But it seemed that the Sumaworo was invincible, drawing on his powers of sorcery to evade defeat.

Finally, Nana Triban intervened. She used her skills of seduction to trick Sumaworo into revealing the secret of his vulnerability, escaping before the act was consummated. Armed with this knowledge, Sunjata was victorious, restoring peace to the land, and building West Africa's most powerful empire (dedicated to the cello).

5. ***Bara kala ta***. The title means 'he took up the archer's bow.' Sunjata was unable to walk for the first seven years of his life; as a result, his mother was mercilessly taunted by her co-wives: "Is this the boy who is predicted to be king ... who pulls himself along the ground and steals the food from our bowls?" (This is why he is called 'Sunjata,' meaning 'thief-lion.')

Finally, unable to take the insults any longer, Sunjata stood up on his own two feet – a moment that was immortalized in a well-known song, a version of which became the national anthem of Mali. In little time, he became a gifted archer and revealed his true nature as a leader.

This final movement makes subtle reference to the traditional tune in praise of Sunjata, known to all Mande griots. It brings together the quartet in a tribute to this great ruler – and the role that music played in his life.

- Lucy Durán

[Tanya Tagaq](#)

***Snow Angel* (arr. Jacob Garchik) (2015)**

***Sivunittinni* (arr. Jacob Garchik) (2015)**

Sivunittinni, or 'the future ones,' comes from a part of a poem I wrote for my album, and is the perfect title for this piece. My hope is to bring a little bit of the land to future musicians through this piece. There is a disconnect in the human condition, a disconnect from nature, and it has caused a great deal of social anxiety and fear, as well as a lack of true meaning of health, and a lack of a relationship with what life is, so maybe this piece can be a little bit of a wake-up.

In addition, there are four *Snow Angels* pieces – one was made for each member of Kronos. At each performance, one 'Snow Angel' will be presented before *Sivunittinni*.

Working with the Kronos Quartet has been an honour. We have a symbiosis that allows a lot of growth musically. They teach me so much, I can only hope to reciprocate. Kronos has gifted me the opportunity to take the sounds that live in my body and translate them into the body of instruments. This means so much because the world changes very quickly, and documenting allows future musicians to glean inspiration from our output. - *Tanya Tagaq*

Tanya Tagaq & Kronos Quartet

***Nunavut* (2006)**

The region known as Nunavut (which means "our land" in Inuit) is the newest and largest of the Canadian territories and has been home to the indigenous Inuit population for more than 4,000 years. Inuit throat singing is not singing per se, but more closely associated with vocal games or breathing games. Two women usually face each other – one leads, while the other responds – the leader produces a short rhythmic motif that is repeated with a short silent gap in between, while the other rhythmically fills in the gaps. Each singer uses the other's mouth cavity as a resonator. Sounds are either voiced or unvoiced through inhalation or exhalation. Thus, singers develop a breathing technique, somewhat comparable to circular breathing. Words and meaningless syllables are used in the songs – the words can simply be names of ancestors and the syllables often represent sounds of nature or cries of animals and birds. The game is such that both singers try to show their vocal abilities in competition, by exchanging these vocal motives. The first to run out of breath, or to be unable to maintain the pace of the other singer, will start to laugh or simply stop and lose the game.

Kronos's violinist and artistic director, David Harrington, first heard Inuit throat singing in 1981, and became convinced that the art form held great potential for a collaboration with Kronos; Harrington says, "Inuit throat singing is one of the most string-like sounds that I have ever heard come from the human voice." However, it was not until 2002 that he discovered a recording of Tanya Tagaq and realized immediately that he had found his collaborator. "She made every other Inuit throat singer sound like Mozart," Harrington explains. "It was clear that Tanya was the Jimi Hendrix of Inuit throat singing. Her voice sounded like four voices – it was as if she were carrying around a quartet in her voice!"

To compose *Nunavut*, Kronos recorded a broad range of Tagaq's sounds in order to map out her stylistic vocabulary. From there, Kronos created an underlying compositional structure out of Tagaq's "alphabet of sounds," a set of building blocks that allows for improvisation on the part of both quartet and singer. The performers engage in a call-and-response exchange, with the instruments of the quartet acting as the second voice in the throat song game.

Kronos extends special thanks to Osvaldo Golijov and Jeremy Flower for their contributions to the creative process that resulted in this work.

Henry Kolenko/Kolenko Productions was the Executive Producer of the world premiere tour of *Nunavut*.

Nunavut by Tanya Tagaq and the Kronos Quartet was commissioned by the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC, *CBC Television*, the Canada Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

- *Note provided by Kronos Quartet*

[Aleksandra Vrebalov](#)

***My Desert, My Rose* (2015)**

My Desert, My Rose consists of a series of patterns open in length, meter, tempo, and dynamics, different for each performer. The unfolding of the piece is almost entirely left to each performer's sensibility and responsiveness to the parts of other members of the group. Instinct and precision are each equally important in the performance of the piece. The patterns are (notated as) suggested rather than fixed musical lines, so the flow and the length of the piece are unique to each performance. The lines merge and align to separate and then meet again, each time in a more concrete and tighter way. The piece ends in a metric unison, like a seemingly coincidental meeting of the lines predestined to reunite. It is like a journey of four characters that

start in distinctly different places, who after long searching and occasional, brief meeting points, end up in the same space, time, language.

The writing of this piece, in a form as open and as tightly coordinated at the same time, was possible thanks to 20 years of exposure to rehearsal and performance habits of the Kronos Quartet, a group for which I have written 13 out of 14 of my pieces involving string quartet.
- Aleksandra Vrebalov

Geeshie Wiley

“Last Kind Words” (arr. Jacob Garchik) (c. 1930)

In March 1930, Geeshie Wiley recorded “Last Kind Words” in Grafton, Wisconsin, for Paramount Records. Beyond this, very little information is confirmed about this singer’s life, though there are reports that she came from Mississippi. She recorded a second song at the same session, “Skinny Leg Blues,” and provided backup for a few additional tracks. Nevertheless, her recording of “Last Kind Words” has given Wiley the reputation of being perhaps one of the great early blues musicians. Blues scholar Don Kent has written, “If Geeshie Wiley did not exist, she could not be invented: her scope and creativity dwarfs most blues artists. She seems to represent the moment when black secular music was coalescing into blues ... Moreover, despite her sensual voice, the persona she presents is as tough as Charley Patton: money before romance and she sweetly says, while extolling her sexual charms, that she is calmly capable of killing you ... [Last Kind Words] is one of the most imaginatively constructed guitar arrangements of its era and possible one of the most archaic. Although the lyrics date it to the late World War I era, its eight-bar verse structure appears to be older.”

The lyrics read, in part, “The last kind words I heard my daddy say: ‘If I die in the German war, please don’t bury my soul. Ah, child, just leave me out, let the buzzards eat me whole.’”

Jacob Garchik’s arrangement of “Last Kind Words” by Geeshie Wiley was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by the David Harrington Research and Development Fund.
- Note provided by Kronos Quartet

Laurie Anderson

Flow (arr. Jacob Garchik) (2010)

Laurie Anderson is one of America’s most renowned – and daring – creative pioneers. Her work, which encompasses music, visual art, poetry, film, and photography, has challenged and delighted audiences around the world for more than 30 years. Anderson is best known for her multimedia presentations and musical recordings. Anderson’s first album, *O Superman*, launched her recording career in 1980, rising to number two on the British pop charts and subsequently appearing on her landmark release, *Big Science*. She went on to record six more albums with Warner Brothers. In 2001, Anderson recorded her first album with Nonesuch Records, the critically lauded *Life on a String* followed by *Homeland* in 2010. (The original version of *Flow* is the final track on her 2010 Nonesuch album *Homeland*, and was nominated for a Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental.) Recent multimedia productions include *Delusion* (2010) and *Dirtday* (2011), the third in a cycle that also included the works *Happiness* (2001) and *The End of the Moon* (2004). Anderson collaborated with the Kronos Quartet on the 2013 work *Landfall*. Her visual and installation work has been presented since 1980 in major museums throughout the world. In addition, she has directed several films and recorded many works for film and dance.

Jacob Garchik’s arrangement of *Flow* was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by the David Harrington Research and Development Fund.
- Note provided by Kronos Quartet

Mary Kouyoumdjian

Bombs of Beirut

Lebanon, once the refuge where my grandparents and great-grandparents sought safety from the Armenian Genocide, became the dangerous home my parents and brother were forced to abandon during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). We often read stories and see images in the news about violent events in the Middle East, but we very rarely get to hear the perspective of an individual who lived through them. Inspired by loved ones who grew up during the Lebanese Civil War, it is my hope that *Bombs of Beirut* provides a sonic picture of what day-to-day life is like in a turbulent Middle East – not filtered through the news and media, but through the real words of real people.

The prerecorded backing track includes interviews with family and friends who shared their various experiences living in a time of war; it also presents sound documentation of bombings and attacks on civilians tape-recorded on an apartment balcony between 1976 and 1978.

Mary Kouyoumdjian offers her special thanks to the Kronos Quartet for making this piece a reality, to loved ones for sharing their lives and stories, and to Hagop T. Bazerkanian for sharing his home recordings of the Lebanese Civil War. She dedicates *Bombs of Beirut* to her family.

Mary Kouyoumdjian’s *Bombs of Beirut* was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet as part of *Kronos: Under 30 Project / #5* by Hancher at the University of Iowa, Syracuse University, the Board of Directors of the Kronos Performing Arts Association,

and individual backers of the *Kronos: Under 30 Project / #5* Kickstarter campaign. Additional support was provided by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Sally and Don Lucas Artists Residency Program at Montalvo Arts Center.

- Mary Kouyoumdjian

Bombs of Beirut

I. Before the War

I always fantasize about Lebanon before the Civil War
And I think about my parents, how they grew up
And the pictures that I have from when they were kids and my grandmother's stories
I just wish that that could've continued on instead of having the Civil War
I just imagine what an amazing place Lebanon would be right now
It's just a completely different world than what it was destined to be

I was born in 1950 in Beirut
There was no war during that time
I remember my childhood having [a] very peaceful life
Before the war it was a very normal life
No matter which neighborhood or which part of Beirut you were [in]
You can visit to any area of Beirut
There was no such thing that you will be scared to go [to] certain areas
You were free to go anywhere anytime in the middle of the night
Parties, restaurants, or you go to a movie, after the movie, after midnight
You go to any restaurant to eat, you come home in the morning four o'clock
Sometimes you don't even come home four o'clock, you go for breakfast early morning
Then you come home
It's a little Paris of [the] Middle East, because all over from different Arab countries ...
Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt
No matter where you were in The Middle East
People used to come [in the] summertime to Lebanon
The life in Beirut
We were born there

I was born [on] July 18, 1962
What I remember of the War?
I was in a monastery
I was sent to a monastery because apparently I was a very good boy
To become a priest
But it wasn't the War; it was the prelude to the War
It was like three ... four days they were fighting and whatnot
And the monastery was set up on the hills and
We were watching the gunfire actually going back from one side to the other side
But that was the prelude to the war, and I think it started in '75
It really exploded
They were collecting everybody and anybody that could hold a gun
Little kids with weapons bigger and taller than their own heights
By the time the War was going to start, I was shipped to Cyprus with my other two older brothers
So we were actually in Cyprus when the war erupted in Beirut
One of the good things that my father did was to ship us to Cyprus
Otherwise we would probably be in some group fighting and probably dead by now

II. The War

I was born in 1979
I was born on June 8, 1983
I left Lebanon in 1994
We left Lebanon in 1990
At the time I was born, there was no war

I remember

I remember

I saw everything

I remember our neighbours, I remember our house,
Every room in the house, the backyard and the chickens

Growing up at war I think

When you're five, when you're six ... you don't really know what's
going on

Because I was younger and my parents ... they did a fantastic job

They kept us in a positive happy environment

I have a lot of good memories

I didn't feel any fear, or I didn't think I was in danger

It was kind of fun sometimes

We didn't have to go to school

I would think that that's our life

You're a kid

The main war started in '75, 1975

It was very, very strange coming from Cyprus back to Beirut

Where they've had three ... four years of war already

Civil War

Because when we planned our wedding, our date was in May and

We didn't expect that fighting would start then

We couldn't wait until daylight because that night was the darkest night

I mean I've never seen black that black

We had to postpone the wedding because the church ...

It was in the same area where the fighting started

All the lights where off and everything

Apparently there was a ceasefire

But we couldn't sleep ... me and my two older brothers

Because we could hear the gunfire and rockets zooming by

In '76 I had my first child: your brother

And during the pregnancy we had the same thing

On and off ... the fighting

Luckily the hospital was right next to our area, so

Even while I was having the baby

The bombs were everywhere

They had to move my bed from one area to another

Of course there were other people too

But I after I had the baby, I had to go home

To feel safer, to be with my family

At that time we had never seen so much weapons and tanks and M-16s

As we moved deeper into the city going home

We realized what's been going on there

All the buildings destroyed

Then we started hearing stories about how they were killing people on the street

People ... they continued their normal lives, but

Any day, any small reason can start the fighting again

And that's what happened ... on and off

When it really really got bad, we used to go down to the basement

Basically the whole building used to go down

Whenever there [are] bombs going on

Everybody with kids, older people

Everybody has to go down

Everybody's in the basement, so

The bomb came from the parking side through that open window
He is a tall guy and he was standing, keeping everybody quiet and calm
Kids they cry, and you know ... it's a chaos

A bomb hit my building and my dad was injured
They know ... the kids are scared, they cry
He was trying to calm everybody

A bomb hit my building and my dad was injured
And what happened is when the bomb came from that side
He was the only one that was standing on his feet

A bomb hit my building and my dad was injured
He actually lost his legs
So the bomb came from that opening and ... right to his both legs
That's how he lost his both legs

You could see windows that had all these bullet holes around it and then [these] big old holes next to it
And we were just sitting on our beds and watching the city and
Seeing bullets flying from one side to the other side

Some were green and some were red
We were like "Wow! This can't be war. This is like almost Christmas ... fireworks or something!"
But it wasn't

The most interesting part was that when we were going sleep actually
When they were firing their tanks and whatnot
You could hear the sound
But then, cause I guess cause it was so quiet or something
You could almost hear the rumbling of stones or buildings falling down
We knew that it couldn't be good
It couldn't have been good

The whole building was gonna come down cause the bombs are
so powerful

You can hear that it's coming close to you
The sound that it makes, the bomb, you know it's coming to
your side and
You get ready by closing your ears or covering your head
You know it's going to hit somewhere close to you
But for us, it was like just staying between walls in the house

A bomb goes off and the shockwave from this bomb just rushed
through me
And I opened my eyes, and I just see the room, swaying like a wave
almost

I can just see the air in the room, in waves, in and out
You know that it's going and it's going to hit and as soon as it hits
You can hear the sound like
Boom!

Very powerful
And the whistling sound and the loud explosion
I could hear it, for example, it's like
Hearing very loud thunderstorms
You see something black is just passing through
That's the memory I have of the bombs

If it's at night, you can feel the fire
The light coming out of the bomb

III. *After the War*

It is home
Makes me happy

I have never been back to Beirut since I left

I think they have good life there
To stay there, for whatever reason, to protect their home
To not leave their homes and have to live through this hell
These people lived through Civil War
You can see after the War lots of buildings
Half of it gone
It was very emotional because
You lived in those neighbourhoods and
You go through those neighbourhoods and
You remember your childhood
Your good days [that] you were there

Kronos Quartet

Tanya Tagaq

Kronos Quartet last performed in Koerner Hall as part of Luminato 2010 and tonight marks its Royal Conservatory debut. Nicole Lizée's works have been performed at The Conservatory on several occasions, including last year's 21C. All other artists and composers are making their Conservatory debuts.