



**Philharmonie
Luxembourg**

Kronos Quartet

«Terry Riley:
Sun Rings»

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David Harrington, John Sherba violin

Hank Dutt viola

Paul Wiancko cello

Chœur de Chambre de Luxembourg

Antonio Grosu choral conductor

Willie Williams visual designer

Laurence Neff lighting designer

Mark Grey sound designer

Brian H. Scott lighting supervisor

Scott Fraser audio engineer

Kronos Performing Arts Association production management

Janet Cowperthwaite producer

Don Gurnett project advisor

David Dvorin recorded sound transformation

Mark Logue associate video director

R T L

Urban

19.05.24

Dimanche / Sonntag / Sunday

19:30 ~90' without intermission

Grand Auditorium

Terry Riley (1935)

Sun Rings for string quartet, chorus and pre-recorded spacescapes (2001)

Overture

Hero Danger

BeeBopterismo

Planet Elf Sindoori

Earth Whistlers

Earth/Jupiter Kiss

The Electron Cyclotron Frequency Parlour

Prayer Central

Venus Upstream

Sun Rings was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by the NASA Art Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Rockefeller Foundation's Multi-Arts Production Fund, Hancher Auditorium/University of Iowa, Society for the Performing Arts, Eclectic Orange Festival/Philharmonic Society of Orange County, SFJAZZ, The Barbican, London, University of Texas Performing Arts Center, Austin (with the support of the Topfer Endowment for Performing Arts), and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Additional contributions from Stephen K. Cassidy, Margaret Lyon, Greg G. Minshall and David A. and Evelyne T. Lennette made this work possible.

About *Sun Rings*

Terry Riley (2022)

The ten «spacescapes» that comprise *Sun Rings* were begun in August of 2001 and finished in July of 2002. They were written as separate musical atmospheres with the intention to let the sounds of space influence the string quartet writing and then to let there be an interplay between live «string» and recorded «space» sound.

In some movements, the intention was to place the quartet in such a way that it felt like they were traveling through spatial atmospheres, as a symbolic representation of the wanderings of space probes «Voyager» and «Galileo» as they moved through what must have been the incredible atmospheres of our solar system. In some cases, fragments of melody that I observed in these sounds became the basis for themes that were developed in the quartet writing. The addition of the two movements with the choirs was to further emphasize that this work is largely about humans as they reach out from earth to gain an awareness of their solar system neighborhood.

When Dr. Donald Gurnett handed me these original NASA recordings, which were to be the point of departure for this challenging adventure, my thoughts became filled with images stimulated by locales as distant as Jupiter and Uranus. I could almost feel myself propelled through space as one atmosphere gave way to another.

Space is surely the realm of dreams and imagination and a fertile feeding ground for poets and musicians. Ancient astrologers were aware of the significant influences of planetary movements on our lives. I feel these influences are somehow responsible for this amazing collaboration which has been so enthusiastically undertaken by all the participants responsible for its outcome.

Do the stars welcome us into their realms? I think so or we would not have made it this far. Do they wish us to come in peace? I am sure of it. If only we let the stars mirror back to us the big picture of the universe and the tiny precious speck of it we inhabit that we call Earth, maybe we will be given the humility and insight to love and appreciate all life and living forms wherever our journeys take us.

I dedicate *Sun Rings* to Dr. Donald Gurnett, whose brilliant mind has wandered the solar system and beyond for a lifetime, who inspired and launched all of us *Sun Rings* collaborators with his twinkle and the depth of his understanding, and who generously shared with us some of the Universe's secrets.

About *Sun Rings*

Willie Williams (2022)

Overwhelming as it was to be given the NASA archive as a starting point for a visual piece, it was clear to me that the performance environment for *Sun Rings* had to be more than just a planetarium experience or a physics lecture. The spectacular photographs from «Hubble» and «Voyager» have become so very well known that I was keen to find something less discovered, less familiar, so often what we are seeing during the performance is an abstraction based more loosely on the mood of the composition as a whole. Nevertheless, an amount of space imagery was naturally going to make up part of the design and spending time with Don Gurnett at the University of Iowa led me to sources of rare moving footage sent back to earth from spacecraft via a 1970s version of digital video.

Next to the imagined visions of space that we have seen in science fiction movies the raw images are extremely rough in quality, but their authenticity conveys enormous emotional power. Further inspiration for the visuals came quite directly from the «Voyager» missions. I discovered that there is informational material on board the spacecraft called «The Golden Record» which is addressed for the attention of anyone they happen to run into along the way. The extraordinary optimism of providing such material is only outweighed by the confidence of including diagrammatic instructions for said aliens as to how to playback videotape and vinyl recordings. The information package includes drawings of what human beings are and where our planet is located. Along with this there are photographs of everyday scenes from around the world – people, houses, roads, cars, animals, musical instruments – presenting the world as it was in 1977. (Several of the actual images from the «Golden Record» appear in the final movement of *Sun Rings*.)

The two «Voyagers» have now traveled far beyond our solar system, so I began to think of them as eccentric emissaries from our world, carrying information about us into deep space, not knowing that they have already become an anachronism; like senior citizens carrying school photographs of their grandchildren unaware that those they hold so dear have already grown up and changed beyond recognition.

I've had a life long fascination with astronomy, both in the very practical sense of spending nights stargazing and in a more personal sense, building my own picture of a relationship between cosmology and theology. Facing the enormity of the universe produces emotions that range from comforting awe to hopeless insignificance and Terry Riley's composition speaks to both these extremes. The nature of the subject matter always indicated that *Sun Rings* would be a contemplative work, but combined with Terry's response to 9/11, the piece walks the line between supplication and mourning, perhaps even verging on despair, whilst somewhere in space there is a permanent memory of more comfortable, more innocent times.

Kronos Quartet

For 50 years, San Francisco's Kronos Quartet has challenged and reimagined what a string quartet can be. Founded at a time when the form was largely centered on long-established, Western European traditions, Kronos has been at the forefront of revolutionizing the string quartet into a living art form that responds to the people and issues of our time. In the process, Kronos has become one of the most celebrated and influential groups of our era, performing thousands of concerts worldwide, releasing more than 70 recordings of extraordinary breadth and creativity. Through its nonprofit organization, Kronos Performing Arts Association (KPAA), Kronos has commissioned more than 1,100 works and arrangements for string quartet – including the recently completed «50 for the Future» library of free, educational repertoire. Kronos has received more than 40 awards, including three Grammy Awards and the Polar Music, Avery Fisher and Edison Klassiek Oeuvre Prizes. In 1973, David Harrington formed the group after hearing George Crumb's *Black Angels*. In addition to this formative work, Kronos began building its own eclectic repertoire for string quartet, performing and recording compositions by 20th-century masters (Sofia Gubaidulina, Astor Piazzolla, Alfred Schnittke), contemporary composers from around the world (Sahba Aminikia, Nicole Lizée, Vladimir Martynov), jazz legends (Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, Maria Schneider), rock artists (Jimi Hendrix, Sigur Rós, Pete Townshend), and artists who defy genre (Laurie Anderson, Trevor Paglen, Tanya Tagaq). Integral to Kronos' work is a series of long-running, in-depth collaborations with many of the world's foremost composers. One of the quartet's most long-standing and frequent collaborators is Terry Riley, whose work with Kronos includes *Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector* (1980), *Salome Dances for Peace* (1985–86), and *Sun Rings* (2002). Aleksandra Vrebalov has written more than 20 pieces for Kronos, including *Pannonia Boundless* (1998); *...hold me, neighbor, in this storm...* (2007); and *Beyond Zero* (2014), a multimedia meditation on World War I in collaboration with filmmaker Bill Morrison. The quartet has also collaborated extensively with Philip Glass, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh and with Steve Reich, whose string quartets *Different Trains* (1989), *Triple Quartet* (2001), and *WTC 9/11* (2011) were written for and recorded by Kronos.

Chœur de Chambre de Luxembourg

Uniting singers from 28 nations under the leadership of Antonio Grosu, the Choeur de Chambre de Luxembourg has won over audience and reviewers alike, particularly due to the richness of its sound and its interpretations. These include choral-orchestral repertoire performed alongside ensembles such as the Luxembourg Philharmonic, the Solistes Européens, Luxembourg, the Orchestre de Chambre du Luxembourg and the Musique Militaire Grand-Ducale. Intense ensemble work and the individual musical qualities of its members contribute to the development of a special sound just as much as the close collaboration between different cultures which the chorus represents. The chorus' most recent performance at Philharmonie Luxembourg dates back to April 2024.

Antonio Grosu choral conductor

In a sometimes standardized world, often characterized by routine, Antonio Grosu distinguishes himself through his striking, deeply-moving interpretations, as well as through his different, intense and unique vision, which brings about a true rediscovery of musical works. His courage to go beyond the comfortable and the conventional, to walk outside the too well-trodden path, offers a transformative experience. Musicians and the public alike have given witness that his concerts generate a transcendental atmosphere, which carries them into another dimension. Born in 1980, Antonio Grosu studied music and obtained a Master's Degree in direction and musical pedagogy at the «George Enescu» University of Arts of Iasi, Romania. He perfected his knowledge with Lucas Vis (Amsterdam) and Carlo Hommel (Luxembourg). In 2005, he started his career as Music Director at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady Luxembourg and continued his path with various orchestras. In 2012, he was chosen to conduct at the marriage of Luxembourg's Crown Prince, an event broadcast live in numerous countries. For the past few years, besides the symphonic repertoire and in collaboration with the Choeur de Chambre de Luxembourg and the European Academic Orchestra, he has specialized in the grand vocal-symphonic repertoire, which he masters with excellence – he has led with flair and ease symphonic configurations made up of more than 200 musicians, singers and soloists, playing and singing in perfect symbiosis, in sold-out concert halls. At Philharmonie Luxembourg, Grosu has most recently been conducting in April 2024.

Willie Williams visual designer

Willie Williams works with light and visual media to create performance environments and installations. He is best known for his 30-year working relationship with rock group U2, where his combination of hi-tech media and lo-tech eccentricity has received much acclaim, particularly their Zoo TV and 360 tours. Williams' work with George Michael, R.E.M. and David Bowie has also been highly regarded as being both conceptually and technologically groundbreaking. Performing arts projects have included collaborating

with Laurie Anderson, Marianne Faithfull and the Montréal-based dance company La La La Human Steps. He has an ongoing relationship with Kronos Quartet that includes the design of *Music from Four Fences* as well as *Sun Rings*. He has been honored by his peers via numerous industry awards, and his work has been profiled in *Time* magazine, *Creative Review* and *Wired*.

Laurence Neff lighting designer

Laurence Neff's work as the Kronos Quartet's lighting designer was synonymous and inseparable from Kronos performances for decades. From 1986 until his death in 2014, Neff designed many of Kronos' productions, including *Live Video* (the group's first fully staged concert), George Crumb's *Black Angels*, Tan Dun's *Ghost Opera* and Gabriela Ortiz' *Altar de Muertos*. Neff, who also acted as Kronos' Production Director, was responsible for the unique visual aspects of the quartet's concerts, having worked with the group on more than 1000 concerts. Neff also worked with the Paul Dresher Ensemble, George Coates Performance Works and other theater and dance companies including ODC San Francisco, Beach Blanket Babylon and Rinde Eckert.

Mark Grey sound designer

Mark Grey made history as the first sound designer for the New York Philharmonic at Avery Fisher Hall (*On the Transmigration of Souls*, 2002) and the Metropolitan Opera (*Doctor Atomic*, 2008; *Nixon in China*, 2011; *Death of Klinghoffer*, 2014; and several other productions). For over two decades, professional sound-design relationships have led Grey to premiere works by such artists and organizations as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers. He designed and toured extensively with Kronos Quartet for many years and has been a close collaborator of composer John Adams for more than two decades. As a composer, in 2008 Grey was composer in residence with the Phoenix Symphony, whose recording of his oratorio, *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*, was released the following year on Naxos Records. In 2011 two large-scale works by Grey received their world premieres: *Mugunghwa* (at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles) and *Fire Angels* (at Carnegie Hall). He has undertaken commissions for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and wrote the full-length opera *Frankenstein* for La Monnaie / De Munt in Brussels.

Don Gurnett project advisor

Don Gurnett started his engineering and science career by working on spacecraft electronics design as a student engineering employee in the University of Iowa Physics department in 1958, shortly after the launch of Explorer 1. After completing his B.S. in electrical engineering, he switched to physics, where he received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. He spent one year as a NASA trainee at Stanford University, and was hired as an assistant professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of

Iowa in 1965, with promotions to associate professor in 1968, and to professor in 1972. In 1962 he pioneered the study of space plasma waves and radio emissions with the launch of a very-low-frequency radio receiver on the Injun III spacecraft. Since then he has flown similar instruments to most of the planets in the solar system, most notably on the «Voyager» 1 and 2 flights to the outer planets, the «Galileo» mission to Jupiter, and the «Cassini» mission to Saturn. He is currently working on a spacecraft-borne radar to search for sub-surface water at Mars.

He is author of over 370 scientific publications, and has received numerous awards for his research. In 1998 he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. Until his retirement in 2019, he regularly taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in physics and astronomy, and supervised 50 graduate thesis projects.

David Dvorin recorded sound transformation

Emmy-nominated composer, author, and educator David Dvorin has had his music performed in numerous new music and multimedia festivals around the United States and Europe, including the Carmel Performing Arts Festival, Big Sur Experimental Music Festival, Music in the Mountains Festival, Wet Ink, Palais Idéal, Sound & Vision Festival, TechArt20xx, SEAMUS, Kansas City Electronic Music Arts and Alliance, 60x60 Project, FirstWorks/Pixilerations, and the Macedonian SOCOM Festival. His multimedia piece *As Alice*, written for the California E.A.R. Unit, was featured in the ensemble's 2011-2012 concert touring season. Dvorin is active as a performer on both guitar and electronics. Some of his current performance projects include his chamber-jazz duo Pull-String with violinist Matej Seda, and the electro-acoustic duo Zap! with multi-reeds player Randy McKean. Regarded internationally as an expert on Apple's Logic Pro software, his textbook, *Logic Pro 9: Advanced Music Production* has been adopted by educational institutions worldwide, and is the basis for Apple Computer's certified training. Dvorin is currently a professor of music composition and electronic music at California State University, Chico.

Prochain concert du cycle
Nächstes Konzert in der Reihe
Next concert in the series

19.10.24

Chilly Gonzales
Gonzo

19:30 90'

Grand Auditorium



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