



Photo from Cranbrook Upper School

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John Luther Adams’ “Sila” is rediscovered in Detroit in the midst of the pandemic

DETROIT (December 23, 2020)— Earlier this year, contemporary composer John Luther Adams’ “Sila: The Breath of the World” was performed by 32 of Detroit’s top professional musicians widely dispersed across the Quad at the Cranbrook Upper School. The recording of this performance premieres on January 23, 2021, at 7 p.m. on YouTube.

“For me, one of the highlights of the difficult year that’s just passed was this performance of ‘Sila: The Breath of the World,’” said Adams. “It’s a joy to hear these marvelous musicians playing together in such a beautiful space, to see people listening so deeply and to remember our deeper connections to one another and to the earth.”

Sila, a concept from Inuit culture, describes the force that breathes life into the world, from the weather to consciousness. Adams gained inspiration from this force to sculpt this outdoor piece.

This presentation draws upon Adams’ inspiration, reimagining the outdoor space to tell the story of “Sila.” The audience, the architecture and nature became deliberate players in the creation of this performance. The three elements were immersed between the musicians, blurring the separation between the performers, the stage and the audience.

“This is one of these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities,” said Greg Wittkopp, director of the Cranbrook Center of Collections and Research. “...to experience the architecture of Eliel Saarinen in a way that the architecture is literally merging with the sounds of the music of the great American composer John Luther Adams.”

As the music rang from the 16 brass and 16 percussion instruments, echoed off of the early 20th century Finnish architecture and whistled through the trees to the audiences’ ears, the performance created a personalized experience, at every angle, for each person in attendance.

“This is a beautiful spot to play the piece,” said David Jackson, professor of trombone at the University of Michigan and “Sila” musician. “It’s open enough that we can all spread out, but it’s all slightly enclosed with the buildings so we can all hear these wonderful chords that are undulating around the space.”

This recording of the presentation was created with the multi-dimensional experience in mind, using multiple cameras and microphones. By layering different angles and focuses, the recording recreates the emotional nature of the live performance in an artistic way.

The performance ended not with the final note of an instrument but with the meditative chorus of the musicians breathing through their instruments or megaphones, joined by the rustles from the trees and the occasional chirping of birds.

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“Sila” is just one of Adams’ compositions specifically designed for the outdoors. “Inuksuit,” “In the Name of the Earth” and, currently in progress, “Crossing Open Ground” are outdoor pieces designed with nature as a key player in their presentations. This collection of works by Adams is ideally suited for performance during a pandemic and influenced the decision to perform “Sila” at this time.

In his recent memoir, “Silence So Deep: Music, Solitude, Alaska,” he shares how his abrupt relocation to Alaska and exposure to the wilderness transformed his perspective of music, creating a meditative journey for him through the art form and inspiring the creation of these outdoor works.

This production of “Sila” was created in collaboration with three Detroit-based organizations and led by Doug Perkins, professor of percussion at the University of Michigan. The complimentary YouTube premiere will be presented by Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings and the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival.

Visit detroitchamberwinds.org or greatlakeschambermusic.org for more information. Register at: <http://bit.ly/2JeVPB2>

About Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings



**DETROIT
CHAMBER
WINDS & STRINGS**

Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings is an ensemble committed to bringing to life the body of repertoire that utilizes between six and 20 musicians. DCWS musicians are drawn primarily from the Detroit Symphony and Michigan Opera Theatre orchestras. Now in its 39th year, Detroit

Chamber Winds & Strings presents three distinct concert series: the Nightnotes Series, the Signature Series and Structurally Sound. More information at detroitchamberwinds.org.

About the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival



**GREAT LAKES
CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL**

The Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival was born in 1994 of a remarkable relationship between religious and cultural institutions. A secular event, the Festival is sponsored by three religious institutions (representing Catholic, Jewish and Protestant faiths) and Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings, a prominent musical ensemble that is an administrative partner for the Festival. Traditionally, for two weeks each June, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival presents more than 20 concerts in southeastern Michigan. Many of these performances occur in the venues of the Festival's 6 sponsors

- St. Hugo of the Hills Catholic Church, Temple Beth El and Kirk in the Hills. More information at greatlakeschambermusic.org

Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research



**Cranbrook
Center for
Collections
and Research**

Founded in 2012, Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research centralizes the Cranbrook story to increase awareness of - and access to - the diverse art, architectural, landscape, design, and historical resources that comprise the Cranbrook legacy. It is a part of Cranbrook Educational Community, a 501(c)3 non-profit whose National Historic Landmark

campus includes Cranbrook Academy of Art, Cranbrook Art Museum, Cranbrook House & Gardens, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Cranbrook Schools, and other cultural and educational programs.