

The Wind in High Places (2011)

John Luther Adams
(b. 1953)

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Performance time: 16 minutes

Gordon Wright was the friend of a lifetime. For 30 years, Gordon and I shared our two greatest passions: music and Alaska. Gordon was my musical collaborator, my next-door neighbor, my fellow environmentalist and my camping buddy. The Wind in High Places is a triptych evoking special moments and places in our friendship. Over the years, I've utilized string quartet in several large ensemble works. But, at the age of 59, I finally composed my first string quartet.

I've long been enamored with the ethereal tones of Aeolian harps — instruments that draw their music directly from the wind. The Wind in High Places treats the string quartet as a large, 16-stringed harp. All the sounds in the piece are produced as natural harmonics or on open strings. Over the course of almost 20 minutes, the fingers of the musicians never touch the fingerboards of the instruments. If I could've found a way to make this music without them touching the instruments at all, I would have.

-John Luther Adams

Carolina Heredia (b.1981)
Ausencias/Ausências/Absences
Performance Time: 20 minutes

-I Violeta
-II Alfonsina
-III Ana C.

This work was premiered by JACK Quartet on March 8, 2016 at the University of Michigan

Program Notes

This work takes its artistic impetus from the last writings of three South American female poets who took their own lives: Violeta Parra (1917-1967) from Chile, Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938) from Argentina and Ana Cristina Cesar (1952-1983) from Brazil.

I have become increasingly interested in exploring my culture as the root of my artistic personality and the source of my inspiration. I felt inspired by the poetry of fellow South American women and especially compassionate by the last writings of those who committed suicide. I began exploring this poetry in my pieces Alejandra (2011) and Dejade Caer (2012), both inspired by Argentinean poet Alejandra Pizarnik.

Virginia Woolf's suicide letter to her husband sparked my interest in the suicides of female artists. I couldn't help but feel compassion for somebody suffering so much that it would lead to this final, fatal decision. I feel emotionally compelled to explore the cultural and gender attachments of these figures, and examine how their art acts as a reflection of these intense emotions. Empathy through art can be a strong mechanism to develop our understanding of one another, I aimed to explore these writings as an attempt to remember and embrace these artists in their suffering, to honor their cultures, lives, and art; and to raise awareness about these powerful internal struggles.

I began my research in May 2015, traveling to Santiago de Chile, Mar del Plata in Argentina and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil where I conducted interviews with relevant figures and scholars that illuminated my understanding of these poets' lives, oeuvre and moral identities. I most importantly,

gathered audio material that served as a primary source for the electronic elements involved in the piece. Among others, you will hear Violeta Parra's own *Quatro Venezolano* (small guitar with four strings) in the first movement, the sound of the sea and the wind from Mar del Plata, home city of Alfonsina Storni in the second movement, and an archival recording of Ana Cristina Cesar reciting one of her poems in the third movement.

These are selections of the poems I used as inspiration for each movement:

Mvt. I - Violeta

Gracias a la Vida

Violeta Parra

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me two stars, which when I open them,
Perfectly distinguish black from white
And in the tall sky its starry backdrop,
And within the multitudes the one that I love.
Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me this heart that shakes its frame,
When I see the fruit of the human brain,
When I see good so far from evil,
When I see within the clarity of your eyes.
Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me laughter and it gave me tears.
With them I distinguish happiness from pain
The two elements that make up my song,
And your song, as well, which is the same song.
And everyone's song, which is my very song.
Thanks to life.

Mvt. II - Alfonsina

I'm Going to Sleep

Alfonsina Storni

Teeth of petals, bonnet of dew,
handfuls of herbs, oh sweet nursemaid,
turn the earthly sheets down for me
and prepare my quilt of carded moss.
I'm going to sleep, my nursemaid—lay me down;
put a lamp on the nightstand for me,
or a constellation, whichever you like—
both are fine; turn the lights down a bit.
Now leave me alone and hear the buds break ...
as you're rocked by a heavenly foot from above,
and a bird zigzags you a path
so that you can forget ... Thank you. Oh, a favor:
if he calls again
tell him not to insist, for I have gone away.

Mvt. III – Ana C.

Samba Canção

Ana Cristina Cesar

So many poems I lost,
So many I heard, for free, by phone
I did everything for you to like me
I was a vulgar woman, half witch, half beast,

modernist giggling scratched in the throat
roguish, a whore, uncouth, a vandal
perhaps Machiavellian.
Until one day I dig my heels in,
I provided myself with measures
I dealt, greedy
I did so much, maybe wanting the glory
maybe merely your affection
but so, so much I did