



Brandon Palace

Saturday, April 7, 2018, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Seattle Symphony

Ludovic Morlot, *conductor*

PROGRAM

John Luther ADAMS (b. 1953) *Become Desert*
(California Premiere)
with the voices of Volti;
Robert Geary, *artistic director*
*Become Desert was commissioned by the
Seattle Symphony with the generous support
of Dale and Leslie Chihuly.*

INTERMISSION

Jean SIBELIUS (1865–1957) *Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43*
Allegretto
Tempo andante, ma rubato
Vivacissimo—
Finale: Allegro moderato

*This project is supported, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.
Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

Desert Music

Among the highlights of Ludovic Morlot's tenure as music director of the Seattle Symphony was the 2013 premiere of John Luther Adams' *Become Ocean*. Commissioned by the orchestra, this composition presented a large-scale sonic environment inspired by and modeled on patterns of oceanic tides, currents, and waves. The piece gained quick recognition for its accomplished craftsmanship and novel premise. "The music unfolds in the sonic equivalent of waves," wrote Anthony Tommasini, head music critic of the *New York Times*, after the orchestra performed it at Carnegie Hall, "with ... oscillating figures, rippling riffs, spiraling motifs, pulsating rhythms." Tommasini added that a listener "must enter into a ruminative state to experience this work on its own terms."

The Seattle Symphony will perform *Become Ocean* in Zellerbach Hall tomorrow afternoon. This evening, we hear the California premiere of a sequel to that work. *Become Desert* completes a trilogy with *Become River* and *Become Ocean*. (Adams composed *Become River* in 2010 for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, interrupting his work on *Become Ocean* to do so.) The composer, who spent four decades in Alaska before relocating to the desert of Mexico, has declared himself "highly suspicious of political art." Nevertheless, he writes in a preface to *Become Desert*: "Living in Alaska for much of my life, I've experienced first-hand the accelerating effects of anthropogenic climate change on the tundra, the forest, the glaciers, the plants, animals, and people of the Far North. Living in this desert by the sea, I've pondered from a new perspective the melting of the polar ice and the rising of the seas. And now I'm considering more deeply Chateaubriand's observation: 'Forests precede civilizations, and deserts follow....'"

Anyone who has spent time in a southern desert knows that light is a constant and imposing presence throughout the day. It shimmers, glares, sometimes softens. It can reveal the beauty of wide vistas and small details; it can be nearly blinding. And it is constantly changing. *Become Desert* renders desert light

into sound. The music evolves slowly and seamlessly, without episodic events or drama. It requires, and induces, a contemplative form of listening.

John Luther Adams***Become Desert* (California Premiere)**

Scored for five separate ensembles: Choir I – four flutes; four oboes; four clarinets; four bassoons; crotales. Choir II – eight horns; chimes. Choir III – four trumpets; four trombones; chimes. Choir IV – mixed chorus; handbells. Choir V – percussion; four harps; strings.

Among the paradoxes that define civilization in the early 21st century, perhaps none is more striking than the growing reverence for the natural world, and acknowledgement of our dependence on it, even as environmental crises deepen across the planet. Nearly half a century has passed since the first Earth Day observance marked the beginning of modern ecological consciousness and activism. Today, as nature is relentlessly degraded by human activity, three in four Americans say that environmental protection is an important issue for them.

The new environmental awareness has, inevitably, found its way into the arts. British sculptor Richard Long, for instance, has turned from conventional sculptural materials and procedures in favor of rearranging branches, stones, and other natural substances found *in situ* to form temporary outdoor sculptures. Seattle-based photographer Chris Jordan has created disturbing images that bring home the reality and cost of nature's despoiling.

Among today's creative musicians, none embodies the new environmental consciousness more than John Luther Adams. For some four decades, this American composer has made the sounds and processes of nature the source and subject of his work. Birdsongs, winds, the boom of ice breaking in the Alaskan wilderness, the electrical fields that produce the aurora borealis—these and much more have found their way into his music. A milestone in Adams' career came in 2013, when the Seattle Symphony, under the direction of Ludovic Morlot, gave the first performances of *Become Ocean*, a large orchestral piece it had commissioned. The work

attracted widespread notice and garnered the Pulitzer Prize for music composition in 2014.

With the success of *Become Ocean*, the orchestra commissioned Adams to write another composition, one that turns out to be a companion piece of sorts. This commission, which the New York Philharmonic and San Diego Symphony have joined in tendering, coincided with a major alteration in the composer's circumstances. Since the 1970s Adams had lived in Alaska, where the landscape and weather provided a frequent source of inspiration for his music. But having entered his seventh decade, he felt ready for a change. Accordingly, he left his adopted home state and now divides his time between New York and the Sonoran desert of northwest Mexico.

The latter location inspired his second composition written for the Seattle Symphony. "I used to say that if I ever left the tundra it would be for the desert," Adams observes. "Now, some 40 years after first coming to Alaska, I've finally made that move. As I've begun to learn the landforms, the light, the weather, the plants, and the birds, I've dreamed of music that echoes this extraordinary landscape." The music thus dreamed is *Become Desert*.

Though sonically quite different from the earlier work, *Become Desert* shares two important traits with *Become Ocean*. First is its conception as music for several ensembles that are distinct yet part of a larger whole. Adams has divided the orchestra for *Become Desert* into five ensembles, each with its own palette of sounds, and each stationed in a separate location. (The composer notes that the physical placement of instruments is a fundamental element of this piece.) One ensemble, made up of strings, harps, and percussion, is stationed on stage. The remaining four groups are placed at different spots around the auditorium. One of these ensembles consists largely of voices, which Adams, following a modern tradition that is now more than a century old, uses as though they were instruments rather than to convey a text. Their singing intones just one single-syllable word: *luz*, Spanish for "light."

The other unusual aspect *Become Desert* shares with *Become Ocean* concerns its musical

rhetoric—or, more accurately, lack of it. The composition is neither a picturesque tone painting of a desert scene nor a musical narrative of a desert journey. Nor does it offer vivid episodes, dramatic gestures, or intimations of human tragedy, triumph, or jest. Rather, it presents a sonic environment in which to immerse oneself. From the start, that environment is enveloped by sustained tones, played by the on-stage string section, that expand from a single pitch to form open, widely spaced chords, a luminous wash of sound at volumes that range from quiet to barely audible. Gradually the other ensembles join in, altering and enriching the sonic hue, much as daylight changes with the rising position of the sun. No less gradually, the music expands in volume and harmonic complexion, becoming a dense roar midway through its 40-minute duration. Then, in near-palindromic fashion, it reverses direction, slowly thinning and subsiding until it reaches the single tone on which it began.

Clearly, such music requires a different kind of attention than that we usually bring to the concert hall. A hint as to what this might be lies in a short poem by the Mexican writer Octavio Paz, which Adams has inscribed as a preface to the score of *Become Desert*. One line reads, in English translation: "Close your eyes and listen to the singing of the light."

Jean Sibelius

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Scored for pairs of woodwinds; four horns; three trumpets; three trombones; tuba; timpani; strings.

The music of Jean Sibelius has waxed and waned in popularity over the last century. Although he worked through the 1920s, Finland's great composer never adopted the innovations or the spirit of the modernist revolution that reshaped music after 1900. As a result, his work inevitably was caught up in the polemical battles over modernism versus Romanticism that raged for much of the 20th century. During his lifetime, Sibelius enjoyed international acclaim amounting, in some quarters, to adulation. But following his death, in 1957, his star was partially eclipsed by the growing appreciation of the early modernists, and the frequency

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with which his compositions were performed fell sharply.

Today it is possible to view Sibelius in a more objective light, and the past three decades have seen a significant revival of interest in his music: new recorded cycles of the complete symphonies, increasingly frequent performances of his works, and praise from a new generation of composers. Sibelius' ultimate place in the history of music will surely be as neither the savior his partisans hailed nor the arch-reactionary derided by his detractors. Rather, he may best be understood as a 19th-century composer whose hearty constitution allowed him to live and work well into the 20th century, continuing to use the rich tonal language of the late-Romantic era to create a powerful and personal body of music.

Sibelius' Second Symphony can serve to dispel two other misconceptions surrounding his music. Because the moods presented by his compositions are often intensely subjective, it has been assumed that their creation was guided by expressive rather than formal considerations. In fact, Sibelius achieved a remarkable mastery of tonal architecture. The Second Symphony reveals a four-movement structure in the classical mold: a strong opening in sonata form followed by a slow movement, scherzo, and rapid finale.

Then there is the notion that Sibelius was a nationalist composer whose music invariably reflected the rugged landscapes and spirited people of Finland. While Sibelius certainly drew inspiration from these sources, it should be

noted that he composed his Second Symphony not by some nordic fjord but in Italy, during a sojourn there in the winter of 1901–02.

The symphony opens with eight measures of throbbing chords. These function as a motivic thread binding the first movement: they accompany both the pastoral first theme, announced by the oboes and clarinets (and echoed by the horns), and a contrasting second theme consisting of a sustained high note followed by a sudden descent. The latter merits careful attention, since it will appear in several transformations later in the work.

A drum roll announces the second movement. Sibelius sketched the initial theme for this part of the symphony while considering writing a tone poem on the Don Juan legend, and much of the music that follows has an intensely dramatic character that seems suited to that story. Some of the most stirring moments involve variations of the second theme of the preceding movement.

Distant echoes of the series of chords that opened the symphony can be heard throughout the scherzo third movement: in the repeated notes that start both the violin runs at the beginning of the movement and the limpid oboe melody later on, as well as in the trombone chords that accompany a triumphant theme that appears near the movement's end. This latter passage leads without pause into the last movement, which begins modestly but builds to one of the most exultant finales in the symphonic literature.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The **Seattle Symphony**, under the leadership of music director Ludovic Morlot, is a vital part of Pacific Northwest culture and is recognized for its extraordinary performances, programming, recordings, and community engagement. With a dedicated subscriber base of more than 20,000 patrons, the orchestra performs or presents nearly 200 performances annually to an audience of 300,000 people. The organization's education programs, along with its nationally

recognized community engagement programs, bring music to nearly 65,000 people of all ages each year. In 2016, in response to a city and county "state of emergency" due to the homelessness crisis, the Seattle Symphony launched Simple Gifts, a multi-year initiative to bring the healing power of music to those who are experiencing homelessness.

In 1998 the Seattle Symphony inaugurated its new home, Benaroya Hall, noted for its archi-

tectural and acoustical splendor. Three years later the orchestra opened *Soundbridge* Seattle Symphony Music Discovery Center, where people of all ages explore the world of symphonic music through exhibits, classes, and live music presentations.

In 2014 the orchestra launched its in-house recording label, Seattle Symphony Media, which has released 17 discs and garnered rave reviews from critics, as well as several awards. The signature recording project of the orchestral works of French composer Henri Dutilleux resulted in three discs released individually over the course of three years and in a 3-disc box set, coinciding with the composer's centenary in 2016. In total, these releases received nine Grammy nominations and two Grammy Awards, Best Instrumental Performance (Augustin Hadelich, violin) for Volume 2 in 2016 and Best Surround Sound Album for Volume 3 in 2017.

Since its first performance on December 29, 1903, the Seattle Symphony has held a unique place in the world of symphonic music. During its formative years, it was the charismatic Sir Thomas Beecham who most developed the orchestra's skill and reputation. In 1954 Milton Katims began his 22-year tenure as music director, greatly expanding the symphony's education programs. Rainer Miedel, music director from 1976 until his death in 1983, led the orchestra on its first European tour in 1980. Gerard Schwarz was appointed music advisor in 1983, and music director in 1985. During his 26-year tenure, the Seattle Symphony made more than 140 recordings and garnered 12 Grammy nominations and two Emmy Awards.

The Seattle Symphony is now in its seventh season under the artistic leadership of Ludovic Morlot. During his inaugural season in 2011–12, the orchestra enjoyed critical acclaim for its performances of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*, as well as a season-long exploration of the music of Dutilleux. Morlot's second season was marked with further critical success, including Britten's *War Requiem* and the orchestra's first-ever performance of Messiaen's *Turangalila*.

The 2013–14 season included Morlot's first tour with the orchestra to Carnegie Hall. The

program—hailed by the *New York Times* as “a model of fresh artistic thinking”—featured works by Varèse and Debussy, as well as John Luther Adams' Pulitzer Prize-winning *Become Ocean*, which was commissioned and recorded by the Seattle Symphony and received a Grammy Award. Last week, the orchestra gave the world premiere of Adams' *Become Desert*. Additional highlights this season include explorations of the music of Berlioz, Stravinsky, and Bernstein; world premieres by David Lang and Andrew Norman; and a residency with composer Alexandra Gardner.

French conductor **Ludovic Morlot** has been music director of the Seattle Symphony since 2011. During his tenure, the orchestra has won three Grammy Awards and gave an exhilarating performance at Carnegie Hall in 2014, as reported in the *New York Times*: “The performance Mr. Morlot coaxed from his players was rich with shimmering colors and tremulous energy.”

During the 2017–18 season Morlot and the Seattle Symphony continue on their musical partnership, focusing particularly on the music of Berlioz, Stravinsky, and Bernstein. In addition, they will present exciting new works by John Luther Adams, David Lang, and Andrew Norman, and welcome Alexandra Gardner for a residency. The orchestra has many successful recordings available on its own label, Seattle Symphony Media. A box set of music by Dutilleux was recently released to mark the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth.

Also this season Morlot conducts at Seattle Opera for the first time (Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*), makes his debut with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and returns to the symphony orchestras of Atlanta and Houston. He has ongoing relationships with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and New York and Los Angeles philharmonics. Morlot also has a particularly strong connection with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, having been the BSO's Seiji Ozawa Fellowship Conductor in 2001 at Tanglewood and subsequently assistant conductor for the orchestra and their music director James Levine (2004–07). Since then he has conducted the BSO in subscription concerts in Boston, at

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Tanglewood, and on a tour to the west coast of the United States.

Outside North America, recent and future debuts include the Berliner Philharmoniker, Vienna Symphony (closing concert of the prestigious Wien Modern Festival), Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, MDR Leipzig, and Bergen Philharmonic orchestras. Morlot has conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall in London and on tour in Germany. Other recent notable performances have included the Royal Concertgebouw, Czech Philharmonic, Dresden Staatskapelle, Tonhalle, Budapest Festival, Orchestre National de France, Helsinki Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. Morlot also served as conductor-in-residence with the Orchestre National de Lyon under David Robertson (2002–04).

Morlot was chief conductor of La Monnaie in Belgium for three years (2012–14). During this time he conducted several new productions, including *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Jenůfa*, and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Concert performances, both in Brussels and Aix-en-Provence, included repertoire by Beethoven, Stravinsky, Britten, Webern, and Bruneau.

Trained as a violinist, Morlot studied conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in London and then at the Royal College of Music as a recipient of the Norman del Mar Conducting Fellowship. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 2014 in recognition of his significant contribution to music.

Ludovic Morlot is Chair of Orchestral Conducting Studies at the University of Washington School of Music in Seattle.

Volti's professional singers, under the direction of founder and artistic director Robert Geary, are dedicated to the discovery, creation, and performance of new vocal music. The ensemble's mission is to foster and showcase contemporary American music and composers, and to introduce contemporary vocal music from around the world to local audiences. The group has commissioned nearly 100 new works, by emerging as well as established composers.

A six-time winner of the prestigious ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, Volti boasts a 39-year track record of performing some of the most imaginative and innovative repertoire yet composed. Next concerts: May 4 at Noe Valley Ministry in San Francisco; May 6 at BAMPFA in Berkeley.

Volti

Robert Geary, *artistic director* • Barbara Heroux, *executive director*

Volti is a professional vocal ensemble usually comprising 16 to 24 singers, depending on the repertoire of any given concert. For this concert, because *Become Desert* has 16 chorus parts, 32 singers are participating, two on a part.

— www.VoltiSF.org —

Soprano

Lindsey McLennan Burdick
Yuhi Aizawa Combatti
Alice Del Simone
Shauna Fallihee
Amy Foote
Gabrielle Haigh
Andrea Mich
Phoebe J. Rosquist

Alto

Monica Frame
Tina Harrington

Stacey Helley
Emily Kusnadi
Sharmila G. Lash
Deborah Rosengaus
Rachel Rush
Celeste Winant

Tenor

Ben Barr
Will Betts
Julian Kusnadi
Ben Laboy
Matthew Perkins

Tim Silva
Jacob Thompson
Robert Vann

Bass

Jeff Bennett
Joel Chapman
Sidney Chen
Peter Dennis
Paul Flynn
Nathan Halbur
Chris Lewis
Philip Saunders

Robert Geary, founding artistic director of Volti, the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival, also serves as artistic director of the San Francisco Choral Society. His multi-dimensional commitment to the choral arts over nearly 40 years has led him and his choirs to national and international prominence. Under his direction for 39 seasons, Volti has become recognized as one of the most important and accomplished new-music ensembles in the United States.

Geary's dedication to today's choral music has fostered the careers of several leading composers and has led to nearly 200 new works. He has conducted and served as a clinician in dozens of countries. His choirs can be heard on recordings with many labels and have performed for radio, television, opera, orchestras, and music festivals nationally and internationally. Geary also has prepared his choirs for some of the world's leading conductors, including Helmuth Rilling, Robert Shaw, Kurt Herbert Adler, Edo de Waart, Krzysztof Penderecki, Herbert Blomstedt, Dale Warland, Kent Nagano, Michael Morgan, and Michael Tilson Thomas.



Sunday, April 8, 2018, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Seattle Symphony

Ludovic Morlot, *conductor*

PROGRAM

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| Jean SIBELIUS (1865–1957) | <i>The Oceanides</i> , Op. 73 |
| Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976) | Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia
from <i>Peter Grimes</i> , Op. 33a and 33b |
| | Dawn: Lento e tranquillo— |
| | Sunday Morning: Allegro spiritoso— |
| | Moonlight: Andante comodo e rubato— |
| | Passacaglia: Andante moderato— |
| | Storm: Presto con fuoco |

INTERMISSION

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| John Luther ADAMS (b. 1953) | <i>Become Ocean</i> |
| | <i>Become Ocean was commissioned by the Seattle Symphony with the generous support of the Lynn and Brian Grant family.</i> |

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To the Sea

Within the orchestral literature is a group of compositions inspired by the sea and endeavoring to evoke it through various musical devices. Probably the earliest is a concerto by Antonio Vivaldi titled *La tempesta di mare* (“The Storm at Sea”). Other notable examples include Felix Mendelssohn’s *Hebrides* Overture, with its own vivid sea storm, and Claude Debussy’s symphonic seascape *La mer*.

It is not surprising that the sea should have inspired these and other composers. The rise and fall of waves finds parallel in the rising and falling pitch of melodic lines. The varied movement of water produces rhythms that music readily can represent. Basses and low brass can suggest oceanic depths, violins and woodwinds intimate spray and foam.

Our concert presents further instances of music inspired by the sea. Jean Sibelius’ *The Oceanides* paints a musical portrait not only of the ocean but of mythological water nymphs who reside within it. Benjamin Britten’s Sea Interludes, from his opera *Peter Grimes*, are tonal pictures of sea and shore that double as expressions of mood and psychological state of the opera’s characters.

The second half of our concert brings a musical seascape as large in scope and ambition as *La mer*, but radically different from it: John Luther Adams’ *Become Ocean*, which the Seattle Symphony commissioned and premiered, and which won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 2014.

Jean Sibelius

The Oceanides, Op. 73

Scored for two flutes and piccolo; two oboes and English horn; two clarinets and bass clarinet; two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns; three trumpets; three trombones; two timpani and percussion; two harps; strings.

In ancient Greek legend, the Oceanides were daughters of Oceanus, god of the primordial water that encircled the world from its beginning, and Tethys, his wife and sister. Aeschylus, in his drama *Prometheus Bound*, describes them as “children of teeming Tethys and of him/who girdles all the world with stream unsleeping,/ Father Ocean. . .” Although descriptions are few

in classical Greek literature, we can imagine them as something like mermaids.

These sea nymphs are the subject of the tone-poem, by Jean Sibelius, that begins our concert. The Finnish composer wrote *The Oceanides* in 1914 for a music festival in Norfolk, Connecticut, and he conducted the work’s first performance during his only visit to America. At this time Olin Downes, longtime music critic of the *Boston Post* and *New York Times*, thought it “the finest evocation of the sea ever produced in music.” He went on to describe “free sonorities which reflect natural phenomena” and the music’s “picture of limitless and eternal power.”

It is curious, however, that Downes missed what seem to be fairly clear evocations of the Oceanides themselves. The work’s opening measures, with their gently rising and falling string figures, may convey the irregular motion of a calm sea, wide and empty. But the more sprightly phrases, presented moments later by the flutes, sound like vocal calls, then expand to evoke movement that is both playful and graceful. Here are the Oceanides, singing, swimming, and frolicking in their natural element. Sibelius recalls their theme from time to time, weaving it through the sea music, as the composition unfolds. Our final glimpse of Oceanus’ daughters comes with a closely harmonized phrase for clarinets shortly before the end. A widely spaced chord leaves us with an intimation of the infinite space and eternal presence of the sea.

Benjamin Britten

Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia

from *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33a and 33b

Scored for two flutes and piccolo (the 2nd flute doubling the 2nd piccolo); two oboes; two clarinets (the 2nd clarinet doubling the E-flat clarinet); two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns; two trumpets and piccolo trumpet; three trombones; tuba; timpani and percussion; harp; celeste; strings.

Benjamin Britten was among the great composers of opera active during the last century. His combination of an instinctively lyrical approach to music and keen sense of drama produced a series of deeply eloquent works for the theater, the first being *Peter Grimes*.



Seattle Symphony

Based on a story by the English poet George Crabbe, *Peter Grimes* tells of a rough fisherman whose sullen and unsociable demeanor leads to his persecution by the suspicious inhabitants of his isolated fishing village. The sea and bleak East Anglian shoreline provide an evocative background. Britten knew this coast well. He had grown up within sight of the North Sea and subsequently built a studio in an abandoned windmill near the coastal town of Aldeburgh. It was here, in 1944, that he composed *Peter Grimes*, and he vividly captured the atmosphere of the place in four “sea interludes” that link various scenes in the opera.

Dawn serves as a prelude to Act I. It is based on three motifs: an ethereal melody heard high in the violins and flute; a running figure that suggests the flight of birds; and a chorale-like theme for the brass. *Sunday Morning*, the second piece, juxtaposes pealing church bells—heard at the outset as horn calls and rhythmic figures in the woodwinds—with a broad melody assigned to the low strings and embroidered with elaborate figuration by the flute.

The third interlude, *Moonlight*, paints a nocturnal picture, its somber phrases for the strings and low winds flecked with flute, piccolo, per-

cussion, and harp tones. The final piece, *Storm*, prefaces the opera’s second scene. Here rising wind and turbulent waters indicate not only a meteorological event but the state of Grimes’ soul. Britten’s violent music suggests his protagonist’s tortured existence as much as the sea lashed by a gale.

In addition to the four interludes, Britten wrote a more extensive piece, a passacaglia, to bridge the two scenes of the opera’s second act. A centuries-old compositional procedure, passacaglia entails a melodic idea, usually introduced in a low register, that repeats continuously through the course of the piece. Against this recurring theme, the composer weaves an ever-changing contrapuntal fabric.

Britten establishes the recurring theme of his *Peter Grimes* passacaglia at the outset, scoring it for low strings (playing pizzicato) and timpani. The immediate restatement of this idea brings with it a lamenting soliloquy for solo viola, and most of the ensuing developments are related to its melody. Subsequent elaborations of the passacaglia subject are remarkably varied and shaped so that the music builds inexorably to a climax marked by thundering timpani strokes and a great tam-tam

crash. From this emerges a haunting reprise of the viola melody (now with an atmospheric accompaniment by celeste), then a final statement of the passacaglia theme, sounding as stark and unadorned as when we first heard it.

John Luther Adams

Become Ocean

Scored for three flutes; three oboes; three clarinets, the 3rd clarinet doubling on bass clarinet; three bassoons, the 2nd and 3rd bassoons doubling on contrabassoon; four horns; three trumpets; three trombones; tuba; timpani and percussion; two harps; piano; celeste; strings.

“Deep within the human imagination we sense that nature itself is our deepest source of creative forms and energy.”

The author of that observation, composer John Luther Adams, has made nature the source and subject of his music for some four decades. One of his earliest pieces consists entirely of instrumental renditions of birdsong, and the impact of the natural world on his music deepened greatly after the composer moved to Alaska, in 1978. There Adams composed impressions of the northern wilderness with titles such as *Dream of White* and *In a Treeless Place, Only Snow*.

But in recent years Adams has moved beyond writing musical impressions of his environment to incorporating natural processes into the structure of his compositions. He has done so by devising musical analogies to natural phenomena such as wind, the forming and melting of ice, and the change of seasons. As Adams says, “my music has led me beyond landscape painting with tones into the larger territory of ‘sonic geography’—a region that lies somewhere between place and culture, between human imagination and the world around us.” Or, as he stated on another occasion, “My music is going inexorably from being about place to becoming place.”

Become Ocean’s title comes from a poem by the American composer John Cage, written to his colleague Lou Harrison. Speaking of Harrison’s music, Cage concluded that its breadth and variety “make it resemble a river in delta.

Listening to it, we become ocean.” That phrase could not have failed to resonate for Adams, for it crystallizes the goal of blending music and natural processes.

The title also speaks specifically to the unusual nature of *Become Ocean* and how we, as listeners, might experience it. This is not an impressionistic seascape in the way that Debussy’s *La mer* is. It gives almost no hint of the kind of linear structure of most Western music—no clearly defined episodes, no building of tension leading to moments of resolution, no sense of a narrative or journey with beginning, middle, and end. It is not even a piece with themes and developments in any usual sense. As Ludovic Morlot observes, “It’s not about storytelling; it’s about landscape.”

Rather, *Become Ocean* is a sonic environment in which to immerse oneself. It affords an opportunity to experience through sound the rise and fall of waves, the pull of tides, the ceaseless motion of an environment that is ever present yet ever changing. As such, it fulfills Adams’ intention that in “all of my music, what I hope to do is create a strange, beautiful, overwhelming, sometimes even frightening landscape, and invite you to get lost in it, find your own way through it, and have your own experience.”

The musical substance of *Become Ocean* takes the form of waves of sound, both large and small. The orchestra is divided into three spatially separated ensembles—strings, woodwind, and brass—each with a contingent of percussion, piano, and/or harp. Each ensemble plays consistently at its own speed throughout the piece, with slowly changing chords sustained by the winds and rapid, rhythmically unchanging, repetitive figures for the other instruments. The combination of these events, unfolding in their respective tempi, produces pulsating fields of sound that change aural color as different instruments are deployed and the range of notes they sound expands and contracts.

Moreover, the music of each ensemble rides different dynamic arcs, crescendoing or fading in their own time, thereby forming long, slow waves of changing volume. The interaction of these dynamic waves causes the three instru-



John Luther Adams

mental groups to come to the fore or recede at different rates, thereby continually altering the music's composite timbre. Occasionally, the waves crest together, creating powerful climaxes. Those moments, however, carry none of the metaphysical import of climactic moments in, for example, a Beethoven sonata or Tchaikovsky symphony. Rather than rhetorical gestures signifying triumph or passion, they seem simply the result of impersonal forces at work—as when a particular alignment of moon and sun causes an exceptionally high tide. The music begins quietly, in the lowest registers of the pianos, harps, and strings. Some three-quarters on an hour later, it recedes back to the quiet, low rumble from which it emerged. That return to the beginning is perhaps the only way *Become Ocean* resembles any previous composition in the orchestral literature.

Ultimately, the workings of the musical processes that shape *Become Ocean* need not be analyzed or even noticed but, rather, simply experienced. Like all music, and more than most, this piece invites us to lose ourselves in a sonic world. To that end, it is worth considering the words of Uvavnuk, an Igluik shaman, words Adams has quoted in another context but that are relevant here:

The great sea
has set me adrift.
It moves me like the weed in a great river.
Earth and the great weather move me,
have carried me away,
and move my inward parts with joy.

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For background on the *Seattle Symphony* and *Ludovic Morlot*, please see pp. 16B–17B.

Seattle Symphony

Ludovic Morlot, *Harriet Overton Stimson Music Director*

Thomas Dausgaard, *Principal Guest Conductor*

Joseph Crnko, *Associate Conductor for Choral Activities*

Pablo Rus Broseta, *Douglas F. King Associate Conductor*

Gerard Schwarz, *Rebecca & Jack Benaroya Conductor Laureate*

FIRST VIOLIN

Open Position
David & Amy Fulton
Concertmaster
Open Position
Clowes Family Associate
Concertmaster
Cordula Merks ^
Assistant Concertmaster
Simon James
Second Assistant
Concertmaster
Jennifer Bai
Mariel Bailey
Cecilia Poelllein Buss
Ayako Gamo
Timothy Garland
Leonid Keylin
Mae Lin
Mikhail Shmidt
Clark Story
John Weller
Jeannie Wells Yablonsky
Arthur Zadinsky
Blayne Barnes ~

SECOND VIOLIN

Elisa Barston #
Principal
Michael Miropolsky ^
John & Carmen Delo
Assistant Principal
Second Violin
Kathleen Boyer ±
Gennady Filimonov
Evan Anderson
Natasha Bazhanov
Brittany Boulding Breeden
Stephen Bryant
Linda Cole
Xiao-po Fei
Artur Girsky
Andy Liang
Andrew Yeung
Caitlin Kelley ~
Elizabeth Phelps ~

VIOLA

Susan Gulkis Assadi
PONCHO Principal Viola
Arie Schächter ^
Assistant Principal
Mara Gearman
Timothy Hale
Penelope Crane
Wes Dyring
Sayaka Kokubo
Rachel Swerdlow
Julie Whitton ^
Amber Archibald-Sesek ~
Alexander Baldock ~
Sue Jane Bryant ~
Aaron Conitz ~
Joseph Gottesman ~

CELLO

Efe Baltacgil
Marks Family Foundation
Principal Cello
Meeka Quan DiLorenzo
Assistant Principal
Nathan Chan
Eric Han
Bruce Bailey ^
Roberta Hansen Downey
Walter Gray
Vivian Gu ^
Joy Payton-Stevens
David Sabee
Theresa Benshoof ~
Emily Hu ~
Charles Jacot ~
Page Smith-Bilski ~

BASS

Jordan Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Harold H. Heath
Principal String Bass
Joseph Kaufman
Assistant Principal
Ted Botsford ^
Jonathan Burnstein ^
Brendan Fitzgerald ^
Jennifer Godfrey ^
Travis Gore ^
Jonathan Green
Sam Casseday ~
Nina DeCesare ~
Braizahn Jones ~
Todd Larsen ~

FLUTE

Demarre McGill ^
Principal
Supported by David J. and Shelley Hovind
Jeffrey Barker
Associate Principal
Judy Washburn Kriewall
Zartouhi Dombourian-Eby
Robin Peery ~

PICCOLO

Zartouhi Dombourian-Eby
Robert & Clodagh Ash Piccolo

OBOE

Mary Lynch
Principal
Supported by anonymous donors
Ben Hausmann
Associate Principal
Chengwen Winnie Lai
Stefan Farkas ^
Dan Williams ~

ENGLISH HORN

Stefan Farkas ^
Ben Hausmann

CLARINET

Benjamin Lulich
Mr. & Mrs. Paul R. Smith
Principal Clarinet
Emil Khudiyev
Associate Principal
Laura DeLuca
Dr. Robert Wallace Clarinet
Eric Jacobs

E-FLAT CLARINET

Laura DeLuca

BASS CLARINET

Eric Jacobs

BASSOON

Seth Krimsky
Principal
Paul Rafanelli
Mike Gamburg ^
Edward Burns ~
Stefanie Przybylska ~

CONTRABASSOON

Mike Gamburg ^
Stefanie Przybylska ~

HORN

Jeffrey Fair
Charles Simonyi
Principal Horn
Mark Robbins
Associate Principal
Jonathan Karschney
Assistant Principal
Jenna Breen
John Turman
Danielle Kuhlmann
Matthew Berliner ~
Rodger Burnett ~

TRUMPET

David Gordon
The Boeing Company
Principal Trumpet
Alexander White
Assistant Principal
Christopher Stingle
Michael Myers

TROMBONE

Ko-ichiro Yamamoto
Principal
David Lawrence Ritt
Stephen Fissel
Carson Keeble ~

BASS TROMBONE

Stephen Fissel

TUBA

John DiCesare
Principal

TIMPANI

Open Position
Principal
Matthew Decker
Assistant Principal
PERCUSSION
Michael A. Werner
Principal
Michael Clark
Matthew Decker
Matt Drumm ~
Gunnar Folsom ~
Matt Grady ~
Blaine Inafuku ~
Rob Tucker ~

HARP

Valerie Muzzolini Gordon
Principal
Sophie Baird-Daniel ~
John Carrington ~
Matthew Tutsky ~

KEYBOARD

Joseph Adam +, *celeste*
Jessica Choe, *piano* ~

PERSONNEL MANAGER

Scott Wilson

ASSISTANT PERSONNEL MANAGER

Keith Higgins

LIBRARY

Patricia Takahashi-Blayney
Principal Librarian
Robert Olivia
Associate Librarian
Jeanne Case
Librarian
Rachel Swerdlow
Assistant Librarian

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Joseph E. Cook

ARTIST IN ASSOCIATION

Dale Chihuly

2017-18 SEASON

COMPOSER
IN RESIDENCE
Alexandra Gardner

HONORARY MEMBER

Cyril M. Harris †

+ Resident

† In Memoriam

^ On leave

* Temporary musician
for 2017-18 Season

Concertmaster for this
performance

± Principal for this performance

~ Extra musician