



ARGUS QUARTET

noise/SILENCE

Digital World Premiere | April 25, 2021

CLARA KIM, violin

GIANCARLO LATTA, violin & viola

MAREN ROTHFRITZ, viola

AUDREY CHEN, cello

PAUL WIANCKO, cello

Produced by Five Boroughs Music Festival, The Noguchi Museum, and the Argus Quartet

A Xuan Films Production

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noguchi

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PROGRAM

noise/SILENCE

CLARA KIM, violin

GIANCARLO LATTA, violin & viola

MAREN ROTHFRITZ, viola

AUDREY CHEN, cello

With special guest, PAUL WIANCKO, cello

Selections from *Curiosity Cabinet* (2009)

Momentum

Á Propos

ROLF WALLIN (b. 1957)

String Quartet in Four Parts (1950)

Quietly Flowing Along

Slowly Rocking

Nearly Stationary

Quodlibet

JOHN CAGE (1912–1992)

Modes for String Quartet (1968)

I. Moderato

II. Adagio

III. Allegro

DOROTHY RUDD MOORE (b. 1940)

Vox Petra (2018)

PAUL WIANCKO (b. 1983)

Selections from *Curiosity Cabinet*

Barcarole 2

¡Arriba!

WALLIN

Recorded April 5 & 6, 2021 at The Noguchi Museum, Queens, NY

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By the Argus Quartet and Michael Unterman

The language we use to describe sound is rich with metaphor: both noise and silence can be deafening; we speak of both “brain chatter” and a “quiet mind”; noise can be “white” or “static.” It’s been said that “silence is the sharper sword.” As humans, noise and silence can both empower and oppress us -- from the cheering of a crowd to something left unsaid by a loved one, from chirping birds to an incessant alarm.

noise/SILENCE explores the endless possibilities that exist on the spectrum from silence to sound, emptiness to saturation, a drop in the ocean to the ocean itself. Recorded and filmed at the Isamu Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, Queens, on April 5 and 6, 2021, this performance of the program has the feeling of a homecoming, the setting finding kindred cause with the music and revealing many direct connections as well.

There are few spaces in New York City that invoke such a sense of quietness as the Noguchi Museum; immediately upon entering into the concrete pavilion of “Area 1” – where Paul Wiancko’s **Vox Petra** was filmed – hushed silence is not an unusual reaction as one is greeted by giants of basalt and granite. But from that silence, the gentle noise of the surroundings soon arises in one’s awareness: the clang of banners, bamboo leaves rustling in the adjacent garden, the chirping of birds, and the in-and-out fades of passing cars. In the context of this recording then, while some might feel a performance marred by such sounds, here they were embraced as a reflection of experiencing this music in this space.

While the Noguchi Museum is certainly awe-inspiring, it is by no means sacrosanct, with unmistakable streaks of humor and experimental curiosity throughout. Drawing on these qualities are four short movements from the Norwegian composer Rolf Wallin’s set of miniatures, **Curiosity**

Cabinet, performed beside and adjacent to Noguchi’s “Jack in the Box,” “Floor Frame (Remembering India),” and “Planet in Transit #1.”

About his piece, Rolf Wallin writes:

During at least half a millennium, kings, scientists, rich merchants and others have reserved large or small rooms to contain remarkable natural and man-made objects: unicorn's horns, wondrous corals and giant pearls, artificial nightingales, mermaids' skeletons, breathtaking artefacts, deformed creatures in glass jars. And above it all: a stuffed crocodile appearing to walk upside down under the ceiling.

These Cabinets of Curiosities were efforts to make a representation and mapping of the Universe, both its physical and mystical domains. Athanasius Kircher had this inscription painted on the ceiling of his museum: 'Whosoever perceives the chain that binds the world below to the world above will know the mysteries of nature and achieve miracles.'

I don't expect this collection of musical miniatures to achieve miracles, but I hope it can serve as a small cabinet of musical curiosity for the curious listener.

Here, the Argus Quartet performs four of eleven “Curiosities”: a deafening moto perpetuo on (mostly) one note, a whiff of wind, a séance of gentle percussion and melody, and a final exclamation.

In an interview, John Cage once recounted a story of Isamu Noguchi: “One evening when I was still living at Grand Street and Monroe, Isamu Noguchi

came to visit me. There was nothing in the room (no furniture, no paintings). The floor was covered, wall to wall, with cocoa matting. The windows had no curtains, no drapes. Isamu Noguchi said, 'An old shoe would look beautiful in this room.'"

Both Cage and Noguchi had a propensity for saying much with little, or as Cage put in in this often quoted excerpt from his "Lecture on Nothing":

I have nothing to say
and I am saying it and that is
poetry as I need it .

Cage's ***String Quartet in Four Parts*** relies on the performers to describe the ideal character and personality of silence through sound. By designing a collection of note clusters and arranging them in various orders, Cage abandons a sense of traditionally-moving harmony. Instead, a melodic line emerges, passing note by note between the players. The movements are threaded with repetitions, mirrors, and palindromes, but the overall sense is one of complete meditation, not of rigidity.

The Quartet is divided into four movements, each of which relates to a season as well as the force associated with it in Indian philosophy. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter are correlated with creation, preservation, destruction, and quiescence, respectively. In Cage's Quartet, these are reflected in Quietly Flowing Along (Summer), Slowly Rocking (Autumn), Nearly Stationary (Winter), and Quodlibet (Spring).

Like other works on this program, and like Noguchi's sculptures, Dorothy Rudd Moore's music is at once richly structured, quirky, and whimsical, at once emphasizing form and line as well as lightness and, at times, humor. As a child, Moore (b. 1940) studied piano at the Wilmington School of Music in Delaware, and learned to play clarinet so

she could join her high school's all-male band. She graduated from Howard University in 1963, and in 1968 she co-founded the Society of Black Composers in New York City. In the 1960s and 70s, she taught voice, piano, and ear training courses at Harlem School of the Arts, New York University, and Bronx Community College. Since then, Moore's music has been performed and recorded world-wide and is admired for its high level of artistry and its seriousness of purpose.

Modes for String Quartet showcases Moore's mastery of musical form and architecture. In the first movement, *Moderato*, the four voices enter one by one in canon, with each instrument transitioning roles from melody to accompanimental counterpoint as subsequent voices join in. In the second movement, *Adagio*, this dense texture gives way to chromatically sculpted lines that showcase different pairs of instruments - first the two violins in duet, followed by the viola and cello -- before all four instruments enter into a dialogue. The final *Allegro* takes flight with accents and mixed meters that give the music a dance-like quality. The piece exudes an ecstatic vibrancy and all-embracing warmth, both reflected here amongst the glow of hand-made lanterns designed by Isamu Noguchi and painted by FUTURA2000.

Of the works featured in *noise/SILENCE*, Paul Wiancko's ***Vox Petra*** is the only one that directly responds to the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi. This makes tonight's performance particularly special, as it is the first time the work has been performed in the Noguchi Museum, adjacent to the works that inspired it. Wiancko writes:

I approached this composition as an extension of the way Noguchi approached stone – with a freedom of intention despite working within a medium of strict limitations. Much of Noguchi's work feels as though it turns inwardly on itself while emotionally and aesthetically transforming the space around it – like nature itself. This piece aspires to that fundamental

balance; adjoining textures compete for space as it attempts to look within itself in order to express something powerful. Essentially, this is music that Noguchi's stone sculptures might sing if they had a voice.

As the piece concludes, Noguchi's approach to stone is expressed explicitly, with the sound, replicated on string instruments, of chiseling and sweeping, sounds that once filled the workshop that still stands across the street from the museum.

Each of the works on this program finds its own way to this "fundamental balance" between inwardness and a reaching out into surrounding space, between silence and noise. The space where we encounter music or art affects how we perceive it. Every concert hall, every gallery, puts its own stamp on the sounds, images, textures, and works that fill it, and the Noguchi Museum is no exception. With this concert we hope to invite you into an intimate conversation between this space and texture, shape, and form, both sculptural and musical, constant and fleeting.

As racist discrimination, harassment, and violence continue to afflict and challenge our society, Five Boroughs Music Festival, the Argus Quartet, Paul Kenji Wiancko, and Xuan wish to share the following statement written by Isamu Noguchi, whose artwork surrounds these performances.

In 1942, Noguchi submitted himself to the Poston War Relocation Center, an internment camp in the Arizona desert for individuals of Japanese descent, created as a result of Executive Order 9066. This was of his own volition; as a resident of New York he was exempt from the order, making this remarkable choice out of a sense of solidarity and in the hopes of leading art projects for those incarcerated at the camp. He recounted his experiences in an essay entitled "I Become a Nisei," which begins:

(To be hybrid anticipates the future. This is America, the nation of all nationalities. The racial and cultural intermixture is the antithesis of all the tenets of the Axis Powers. For us to fall into the Fascist line of race bigotry is to defeat our unique personality and strength.)

For more on Noguchi's time at Poston and the full text of "I Become a Nisei," see The Noguchi Museum's guide to the 2017-18 exhibition [Self-Interned, 1942: Noguchi in Poston War Relocation Center](#).

GUIDE TO THE ARTWORKS

Appearing in Selections from *Curiosity Cabinet* (Rolf Wallin)



Isamu Noguchi, *Jack in the Box*, 1984. Hot-dipped galvanized steel.



Isamu Noguchi, *Floor Frame (Remembering India)*, 1970. Yellow Sienna marble, black Petit Granite, black fabric pillow cushion and salix matsudana (curly willow) branches.



Isamu Noguchi, *Planet in Transit #1*, 1968–72. Swedish granite.

Appearing in String Quartet in Four Parts (John Cage)



Isamu Noguchi, *To Bring to Life*, 1979. Basalt.



Isamu Noguchi, *The Seeker Sought*, 1969. Basalt.



Isamu Noguchi, *The Sun at Midnight*, 1973. Granite.



Isamu Noguchi, *Magic Mountain*, 1984. Mikage granite.



Isamu Noguchi, *The Roar*, 1966. White Arni marble.

Appearing in Modes for String Quartet (Dorothy Rudd Moore)



Isamu Noguchi / FUTURA2000, Hand-painted Akari. Paper, bamboo, metal, aerosol. Exhibition: *Futura Akari*, The Noguchi Museum, November 11, 2020 – April 25, 2021. Photo: Nicholas Knight.

Futura Akari presents a group of Akari light sculptures designed by Isamu Noguchi from 1952–86 and hand painted by FUTURA2000 in 2020. The installation includes two cosmic paintings by Futura: *El Diablo*, 1985, and *Downfall*, 2014.

Appearing in Vox Petra (Paul Wiancko)



Isamu Noguchi, *Brilliance*, 1982. Basalt.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



The [ARGUS QUARTET](#) is dedicated to encouraging the joys of human connection, community, and discovery by bringing a wide-ranging repertoire to life through bold and meaningful programming and a vibrant commitment to collaboration and education. Praised for playing with “supreme melodic control and total authority” and “decided dramatic impact” (*Calgary Herald*), the Quartet has quickly emerged as one of today’s most dynamic and versatile ensembles, winning First Prize at both the 2017 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition and the 2017 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Since then, increasingly busy concert seasons have taken Argus to some of the country’s most prestigious venues and festivals, including Carnegie’s Weill and Zankel Halls, Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Ravinia Festival, the Albany Symphony’s American Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West. Highlights of the 2019-20 season included a debut performance for Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series and a return engagement in New York for the Schneider Concerts at the New School.

Argus has worked with many of today’s leading musical voices, including Martin Bresnick, Chris Cerrone, Ted Hearne, Garth Knox, Andrew Norman, Christopher Theofanidis, and Augusta Read Thomas. Recent commissions include new quartets by Katherine Balch, Donald Crockett, GRAMMY nominee Eric Guinivan, Hermitage Prize winner Thomas Kotcheff, and Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Juri Seo. Argus’s recording of Seo’s works for string quartet was released in May 2019 on Innova Recordings. The Quartet has received grants from the Koussevitsky Foundation, Chamber Music America, and the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in support of their commissioning efforts.

From 2015-17, the Quartet served as the Fellowship Quartet in Residence at the Yale School of Music under the guidance of the Brentano Quartet, and from 2017-19 held the position of Graduate Resident String Quartet at the Juilliard School, where they worked closely with the Juilliard String Quartet. They have also held residencies at New Music on the Point, working with the JACK Quartet, and at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence.

Education and outreach are an important part of the Argus Quartet’s mission. The Quartet has worked with students through residencies and masterclasses at Yale and Princeton, James Madison University, Rockport Music, the Milken School, the Young Musicians Foundation, California State University Long Beach, and Los Angeles City College.

Based in New York City, the Quartet was founded in Los Angeles in 2013, where its members shared many meals at their favorite taco truck on Argus Drive.



[PAUL WIANCKO](#) has led an exceptionally multifaceted musical life as a composer and cellist. As a performer, he has collaborated with Midori, Yo-Yo Ma, Richard Goode, Mitsuko Uchida, Nico Muhly, and members of the Guarneri, Takács, JACK, Parker, Orion, and Juilliard quartets. Chosen as one of Kronos Quartet's "50 for the Future", Paul's own music has been described as "dazzling", "compelling" (*Star Tribune*) and "vital pieces that avoid the predictable" (Allan Kozinn). His 25-minute quartet *LIFT* is featured on the Aizuri Quartet's Grammy-nominated album *Blueprinting*, one of NPR's top 10 classical albums of 2018.

As a college student, Paul was simultaneously winning international cello competitions (which led him, most notably, to Poland to perform the Lutoslawski Cello Concerto with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra) and recording strings for local punk bands in his dorm room. That duality is embedded in Paul's artistic DNA, and over the years has

resulted in close collaborations with a wide range of artists, from Chick Corea, Etta James, Norah Jones, Jóhann Jóhannsson, and Max Richter, to members of Arcade Fire, The National, Blonde Redhead, Dirty Projectors, Wye Oak, and many others.

An avid chamber musician, Paul's performances with Musicians From Marlboro have been described as "utterly transparent" and "so full of earthy vitality and sheer sensual pleasure that it made you happy to be alive" (*Washington Post*). In 2009, he joined the award-winning Harlem Quartet, with whom he spent 3 years performing and teaching extensively throughout the US, Europe, South America, and Africa. Paul currently writes and performs as a member of Owls, Ayane & Paul, and the American Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Winner of the S&R Foundation's Washington Award for Composition, Paul has been invited to be composer-in-residence at the Caramoor, Spoleto USA, Angel Fire, Twickenham, Newburyport, Portland, and Methow Valley Festivals. Recent commissions include works for the Aizuri, Parker, St. Lawrence, Kronos, Eybler, and Attacca Quartets, yMusic, Alexi Kenney, Tessa Lark, David Byrd-Marrow, and the Raleigh Civic Symphony. NPR recently wrote, "If Haydn were alive to write a string quartet today, it may sound something like Paul Wiancko's *LIFT*."

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Since 2007, [FIVE BOROUGHES MUSIC FESTIVAL \(5BMF\)](#) has brought virtuosic chamber music performances of the highest caliber to every borough of NYC, cultivating new audiences for the genre and encouraging music lovers to look beyond Manhattan for outstanding performances. Lauded as “imaginative” by *The New York Times*, “enterprising” by *The New Yorker*, and “vital” by WQXR’s *Operavore* blog, 5BMF’s commitment to musical outreach and diverse programming has distinguished it as a standout presence in the New York City arts community from its earliest days.

5BMF’s artist roster of over 300 individual performers and ensembles is comprised of talented emerging artists and distinguished musicians alike, representing an incredibly diverse range of musical genres and styles. Its venues are just as eclectic, and have included performing arts spaces, cultural centers, and historic New York City landmarks such as Federal Hall, Pregones Theater, Flushing Town Hall, King Manor Museum, Brooklyn Historical Society, the Alice Austen House, and the Staten Island Museum, to name merely a few.

As champions of new music, 5BMF has commissioned over 50 composers and presented world premieres of their works all across New York City, most notably the two borough-wide tours of its *Five Borough Songbook* Volumes I and II. 5BMF’s outreach initiatives continue to expand every year, and have included program-related interactive lectures and discussions, public masterclasses with world renowned performing artists, and free public programming.

Founded in 1985 by Japanese American sculptor **Isamu Noguchi** (1904–1988), [THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM](#) was the first museum in America to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to show their own work. Located in Long Island City, Queens, New York, the Museum features open air and indoor galleries in a repurposed 1920s industrial building and an internationally renowned outdoor sculpture garden.

In addition to maintaining Isamu Noguchi’s archive and catalogue raisonné, the Museum exhibits a comprehensive selection of sculpture, models for public projects and gardens, dance sets, and his Akari light sculptures. Thematic installations drawn from the permanent collection, together with special exhibitions related to Noguchi and the milieu in which he worked, offer a contextualized view of Noguchi’s art and illuminate his enduring influence. The Museum coordinates loans and exhibitions of Noguchi’s works worldwide; distributes his Akari light sculptures and other designs; and collaborates with contemporary practitioners across disciplines (visual artists, designers, musicians, dancers, poets, and more) to develop programming. In the spirit of Isamu Noguchi’s artistic vision, education programs and community partnerships at The Noguchi Museum encourage exploration and discovery while honoring diversity, affirming the value of each individual’s unique interpretations.

The Noguchi Museum is located at 9-01 33rd Road (at Vernon Boulevard), Long Island City, New York. For hours of operation please visit www.noguchi.org/visit.