

Kronos Quartet, Degenerate Art Ensemble Breed Cross-Disciplinary Art

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The Kronos Quartet performing in Warszawa, Poland in July 2006. • Photo by Henryk Kotowski

An exciting experimental collaboration will soon be presented by two groups both originating in Seattle: Kronos Quartet will celebrate its 40th anniversary with Degenerate Art Ensemble (DAE) at the Neptune Theatre on November 16.

“We have been sending out vibes into the universe for quite a while trying to connect with Kronos,” said Joshua Kohl, DAE’s co-founder and co-director (together with Haruko Nishimura). “They are heroes of mine and of most of us Degenerates.”

DAE reports that this collaboration has been a long-time dream for the local cross-disciplinary performance group.

“They are the ultimate role model for groups like ours,” Kohl said. “They follow their love of music as a guide, and put all of their energy, powers and technical mastery to the service of it.”

This motivated DAE to contact Kronos Quartet, which eventually resulted in a

conversation about DAE's work.

"Kronos's David Harrington asked me what we are working on that I was most excited about musically," Kohl said, "and this piece, 'Warrior,' which was still under development at the time, was something I was extremely excited about."

In "Warrior," DAE combines a string quartet with six singers and dance by Nishimura. "It is the latest part of our ongoing series of portraits of imaginary woman icons called 'Predator Songstress,'" Kohl said.

After further conversation, DAE and Kronos Quartet agreed that, as one part of Kronos Quartet's full program, the two groups will present a multi-disciplinary version of DAE's "Warrior."

"When David saw the video of the first performance of 'Warrior,' he said that he immediately thought that it would be a great addition to their 40th anniversary concert," Kohl said. "We were especially psyched that David got excited about doing the piece with the singers and the dance and all."

The collaboration, rewriting, and rehearsal process for this version of "Warrior" has been full of discovery. Nishimura's choreography has been revised, and Kohl said that the two groups have brainstormed ways to utilize amplification to create a surround-sound experience.

Collaboration will also involve a wide variety of guest singers, including Dohee Lee (a Oakland based Korean born experimental singer), John Osebold (lead singer/composer of the band Awesome), SoulChilde (Seattle based performance artist and singer), Korby Sears (composer and organist and founder of the performance art troupe Seattle School), Paul Moore (composer and music director for Dayna Hanson), and Campbell Thibo (singer for the choir Esoterics).

DAE hopes to continue working with Olson Kundig Architects (OKA) to bring the full version of "Predator Songstress" to additional stages in the near future.

"We are thinking that this project will continue to unfold for the next couple of years with multiple iterations in different forms and locations," Kohl said. And they expect this performance with Kronos Quartet to provide long-lasting inspiration for their future work.

Kronos Quartet performs with special guest Degenerate Art Ensemble on November 16, at Neptune Theatre, 1303 NE 45th St., Seattle.