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Boston Premiere of Julia Wolfe's Pulitzer Prize-Winning Work
Anthracite Fields

Performed by the Bang on a Can All-Stars & Chorus pro Musica

Conducted by Jamie Kirsch

Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 8PM



Berklee Performance Center | 136 Massachusetts Ave. | Boston, MA

Tickets: \$25-\$75 at <http://bit.ly/anthracitefieldsBOS>

More about *Anthracite Fields*: www.bangonacan.org/staged_productions/anthracite_fields

Watch an Excerpt: <https://youtu.be/exWULt21Z3g>

Boston, MA — On Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 8pm, New York's electric chamber ensemble, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, joins forces with Chorus pro Musica to perform Bang on a Can co-founding composer Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, conducted by Jamie Kirsch at Berklee Performance Center (136 Massachusetts Ave.).

Julia Wolfe's haunting, poignant and relentlessly physical *Anthracite Fields* for the Bang on a Can All-Stars and chorus is an examination of the coal-mining industry so musically and socially provocative that it netted the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Music. In *Anthracite Fields*, Wolfe draws on oral histories, interviews, speeches, geographic descriptions, local rhymes, and coal advertisements to create a work that gives an intimate look at a particular slice of American life. With visually stunning projections by scenographer Jeff Sugg and music that is at times elegiac, hard-driving, and tender, *Anthracite Fields* is a deeply moving oratorio which honors the people who persevered and endured in the Pennsylvania Anthracite coal region during a time when the industry fueled the nation. Mark Swed of *The Los Angeles Times* remarks, "[*Anthracite Fields*] captures not only the sadness of hard lives lost...but also of the

sweetness and passion of a way of daily life now also lost. The music compels without overstatement. This is a major, profound work.”

Named after the technical term for the purest form of coal, anthracite, *Anthracite Fields* was written after Wolfe did extensive research about the coal mining industry in an area very near where she grew up in Pennsylvania. She writes, “In some ways the piece is a return to my small town Pennsylvania roots. In looking north – the left turn onto route 309, the road-rarely-taken – I delved into a local history.” She continues, “My aim with *Anthracite Fields* is to honor the people who persevered and endured in the Pennsylvania Anthracite coal region during a time when the industry fueled the nation, and to reveal a bit about who we are as American workers.”

Cited by the Pulitzer committee as, “a powerful oratorio for chorus and sextet evoking Pennsylvania coal-mining life around the turn of the 20th Century,” the work premiered at the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia in April 2014 followed by a performance at the NY PHIL BIENNIAL in May 2014. *The New York Times* wrote, “In Ms. Wolfe’s polished and stylistically assured cantata, the overall coherence of the musical material helped her expressions of outrage to burn cleanly and brightly.”

The Bang on a Can All-Stars performing in Boston are Robert Black, bass; Vicky Chow, piano and keyboards; David Cossin, percussion; Arlen Hlusko, cello; Mark Stewart, electric guitar; and Ken Thomson, clarinets.

About Julia Wolfe: Julia Wolfe draws inspiration from folk, classical, and rock genres, bringing a modern sensibility to each while simultaneously tearing down the walls between them. The 2019 world premiere of *Fire in my mouth*, a large-scale work for orchestra and women’s chorus, by the New York Philharmonic with The Crossing and the Young People’s Chorus of New York City, received extensive acclaim — one reviewer called the work “a monumental achievement in high musical drama, among the most commandingly imaginative and emotively potent works of any kind that I’ve ever experienced.” (*The Nation Magazine*)

The premiere recording of *Fire in my mouth* is released on Decca Gold, and was recorded live during the world premiere. It has received two Grammy nominations (best contemporary classical composition; best engineered classical album). The work is the third in a series of compositions about the American worker: 2009’s *Steel Hammer*, which examines the folk-hero John Henry, and the 2014 Pulitzer prize-winning work, *Anthracite Fields*.

Wolfe’s music is distinguished by an intense physicality and a relentless power that pushes performers to extremes and demands attention from the audience. She has written a major body of work for strings, from quartets to full orchestra. Her music has been heard at venues throughout the world and has been recorded on Cantaloupe Music, Teldec, Point/Universal, Sony Classical, and Argo/Decca.

In addition to receiving the Pulitzer Prize, Wolfe was a 2016 MacArthur Fellow, she received the 2015 Herb Alpert Award in Music, and was named Musical America’s 2019 Composer of the Year. She is on faculty at the NYU Steinhardt School and is co-founder/co-artistic director of New York’s legendary music collective Bang on a Can. Her music is published by Red Poppy, Ltd. (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by Ricordi/Universal Music Classical.

About the Bang on a Can All-Stars: Known worldwide as some of the best contemporary musicians, the Bang on a Can All-Stars formed in 1992 and are recognized for their ultra-dynamic live performances and recordings of today's most innovative music. Freely crossing the boundaries between classical, jazz, rock, world and experimental music, this six-member amplified ensemble has consistently forged a distinct category-defying identity. With a massive repertoire of works written specifically for the group's distinctive instrumentation and style of performance, the All-Stars have become a genre in their own right.

Performing throughout the U.S. and internationally, the Bang on a Can All-Stars have shattered the definition of what concert music is today. The group's celebrated projects include their landmark recording of Brian Eno's ambient classic *Music for Airports* and Terry Riley's *In C*, as well as live performances with Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Don Byron, Iva Bittova, Thurston Moore, and others. Recent project highlights include *Road Trip*, an immersive and visually stunning concert collaboratively-composed by Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe to commemorate the 30+ year journey of Bang on a Can; the premiere performances and recording of Julia Wolfe's Pulitzer Prize winning *Anthracite Fields* including their recent sold out performance at Carnegie Hall; *Field Recordings*, a major multi-media project featuring over 30 commissioned works by Tyondai Braxton, Mira Calix, Anna Clyne, Bryce Dessner, Michael Gordon, Jóhann Jóhannsson, David Lang, Christian Marclay, Steve Reich, Caroline Shaw, Julia Wolfe; the world premiere and album release of *Cloud River Mountain*, a collaboration featuring Chinese superstar singer Gong Linna; and more. The All-Stars record on Cantaloupe Music and have released past recordings on Sony, Universal, and Nonesuch.

About Bang on a Can: Bang on a Can is dedicated to making music new. Since its first Marathon concert in 1987, Bang on a Can has been creating an international community dedicated to innovative music, wherever it is found. With adventurous programs, it commissions new composers, performs, presents, and records new work, develops new audiences, and educates the musicians of the future. Bang on a Can is building a world in which powerful new musical ideas flow freely across all genres and borders. Bang on a Can plays "a central role in fostering a new kind of audience that doesn't concern itself with boundaries. If music is made with originality and integrity, these listeners will come." (*The New York Times*)

Bang on a Can has grown from a one-day New York-based Marathon concert (on Mother's Day in 1987 in a SoHo art gallery) to a multi-faceted performing arts organization with a broad range of year-round international activities. "When we started Bang on a Can, we never imagined that our 12-hour marathon festival of mostly unknown music would morph into a giant international organization dedicated to the support of experimental music, wherever we would find it," write Bang on a Can Co-Founders Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe. "But it has, and we are so gratified to be still hard at work, all these years later. The reason is really clear to us – we started this organization because we believed that making new music is a utopian act – that people needed to hear this music and they needed to hear it presented in the most persuasive way, with the best players, with the best programs, for the best listeners, in the best context. Our commitment to changing the environment for this music has kept us busy and growing, and we are not done yet."

In addition to the People's Commissioning Fund, current projects include its festivals LOUD Weekend at MASS MoCA and LONG PLAY; the Bang on a Can All-Stars, who tour to major festivals and concert venues around the world every year; recording projects; the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA - a professional development program for young composers and performers led by today's pioneers of experimental music; Asphalt Orchestra, Bang on a Can's extreme street band that offers mobile performances re-contextualizing unusual music; Found Sound Nation, a new technology-based

musical outreach program now partnering with the State Department of the United States of America to create OneBeat, a revolutionary, post-political residency program that uses music to bridge the gulf between young American musicians and young musicians from developing countries; cross-disciplinary collaborations and projects with DJs, visual artists, choreographers, filmmakers and more. Each new program has evolved to answer specific challenges faced by today's musicians, composers and audiences, in order to make innovative music widely accessible and wildly received. Bang on a Can's inventive and aggressive approach to programming and presentation has created a large and vibrant international audience made up of people of all ages who are rediscovering the value of contemporary music. www.bangonacan.org

About Chorus pro Musica: Chorus pro Musica has built a superb reputation as one of the great choruses of New England. Known for innovative programming and high-quality performances, Chorus pro Musica has collaborated with such famed organizations as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Philharmonic, the Boston Ballet, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In recent years, the chorus has sung at Symphony Hall, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

The chorus consists of more than 100 highly talented musicians selected by audition. Repertoire consists of choral music from the Renaissance to the present, with emphasis on new and rarely performed choral music, as well as major works in collaboration with other music organizations.

The Chorus was founded in 1949 by the late Alfred Nash Patterson, one of the most influential forces in choral music in New England, and quickly built a superb reputation for its professional-level musical standards and innovative programming. www.choruspromusica.org