

# MUSIC ACCORD

AARON JAY KERNIS

*Pieces of Winter Sky* (2012)

## Program Notes

The composer writes:

"*Pieces of Winter Sky* evokes the still, lingering, misty, gray winter sky - hovering, immobile. There is occasionally turbulence on the surface but underlying lyricism is at its core. Rather than affecting a narrative arc or clear dramatic progression, *Pieces of Winter Sky* is a sequence of short episodes, some closely related and connected in sequence, others strongly contrasting and sharply juxtaposed. Fragments of bird song, most notably the song of the Winter Wren (heard in slow motion), are played by the clarinet, beginning a middle section which features soloists from the ensemble - clarinet, cello, violin and piano. Flute/piccolo is often highlighted, and percussion provides an ongoing shimmer. The soundworld of *Pieces of Winter Sky* is unified by the resonant, sustained sounds of bowing - bowed piano, crotales, vibraphone, cymbals, and, in some performances, bowed glockenspiel. Schubert's aching, unyielding song cycle, *Winterreise* ("Winter Journey") echoes from the distant past - like faint, spiritual radio waves...."

One of the youngest composers ever to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize, Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960, Philadelphia) is among the most esteemed musical figures of his generation. His music is featured prominently on orchestral, chamber, and recital programs worldwide. He has won numerous awards in addition to the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, including the 2002 Grawemeyer Award, the 2012 Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, a Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and Grammy Award nominations, among others. Kernis serves as Director of the Minnesota Orchestra's Composer Institute, a program that gives young composers the opportunity to hear their works played by one of the world's great orchestras. He teaches composition at Yale School of Music and was recently appointed to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

## Reviews

"*Pieces of Winter Sky*," a piece commissioned by Hancher in league with the Music Accord consortium, is evocative of an environment Iowans know all too well: a cold, harsh winter. At times it reminded me of sleet hitting my face in sub-zero weather. At the same time, it has a kind of calm inside: lonely and still, with the quiet beauty of the end of a winter storm.

In the midst of the blizzard created by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis, birds are trying to sing, trying to find their voices. And, thankfully, they do. Their music will survive.

— Wallace Chappell, Hoopla

## Pieces of Winter Sky

Composer: Aaron Jay Kernis

Instrumentation: fl(pic), cl, perc, pf, vn(va), vc

Premiering Artists: eighth blackbird

Duration: 23'

[Publisher Contact](#)

[Artist Contact](#)

eighth blackbird official site

<http://www.eighthblackbird.org/>

## About Music Accord

Comprised of top classical music presenting organizations throughout the United States, Music Accord is a consortium that commission new works in the chamber music, instrumental recital and song genres. The Consortium's goal is to create a significant number of new works and to ensure presentation of these works in venues throughout this country and, if the occasion arises, internationally. Music Accord awards commissions principally to performers who are US citizens or reside in the US and assists these performers in selecting composers who are United States citizens or who reside in the United States.

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