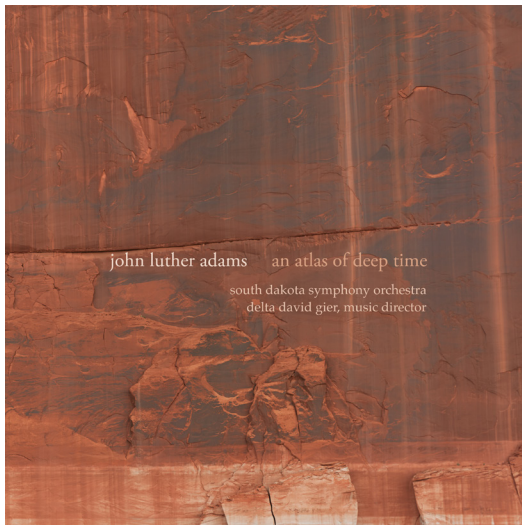


# UN – FINISHED SIDE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024  
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## John Luther Adams Maps Our Geological Journey with *An Atlas of Deep Time*

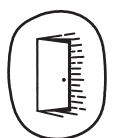
*Out on Cantaloupe Music on October 18, the work was commissioned by the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Delta David Gier.*



As Grammy-winning composer [John Luther Adams](#) puts it, his latest work *An Atlas of Deep Time* “...is grounded in my desire, amid the turbulence of human affairs, to hear the older, deeper resonances of the earth.” Commissioned and recorded with the **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of Music Director **Delta David Gier**, the piece taps into an ancient resonance that seems to hover imposingly, but benevolently, over our own existence — itself a blip in geological time.

“You can sit for a long time with the history of man like a stone in your hand,” said the late author and naturalist **Barry Lopez**, a lifelong friend to Adams. These words serve as the written invocation to a work that beautifully captures the sense of majesty, mystery and vulnerability that we, and the natural world, hold within us.

Writing for the *New Yorker*, journalist **Alex Ross** described the 2022 world premiere of *An Atlas of Deep Time* as “a craggier, denser, more unsettling score” than *Become Ocean*, the



Pulitzer-winning work for which Adams is most renowned. Even so, in the audacious hands of Gier and the SDSO, the “sounding immensity” of the performance itself “afforded the uncanny pleasure of being dissolved into something complete and great.” The work conjures the vastness of geological time—“deep time,” as John McPhee dubbed it in his book [“Basin and Range.”](#) The formal structure is modelled on the basin-and-range topography of western North America.

Adams states in his notes: *The earth is 4 billion 570 million years old. ‘An Atlas of Deep Time’ lasts roughly 42 minutes, which equates to a little under 100 million years per minute. At that tempo, the entire history of the human family is represented in the dying reverberations of the last 25 milliseconds of this music.*

The work has its origins in discussions that took place between Adams and Gier, who in 2016 had invited the composer to an SDSO performance of his Pulitzer-winning *Become Ocean*. The spirit of the SDSO won Adams over and also reminded him of his own past as a percussionist in the Fairbanks Symphony – “I’m used to audacious orchestras outside the cultural capitals who don’t know what they’re not supposed to be able to do.”

*“As often with Adams, I had the sense of entering a physically palpable space, one in which the mind can go roaming.”*  
— Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

“Over the ensuing years,” Gier recalls, “what would become *An Atlas of Deep Time* encompassed many ideas. There were several concepts that John had in mind, many of which would have intersected well with our orchestra. Ultimately for the premiere, he decided on five instrument groups spaced throughout the concert hall, in configurations that audiences have come to expect from a JLA performance. Everyone’s experience was quite unique depending upon where you sat — but the ‘basins and ranges’ are quite distinct, and the rising and falling contours of John’s piece utterly compelling, sweeping us all along the timeline of the history of our planet.”



# John Luther Adams

## AN ATLAS OF DEEP TIME

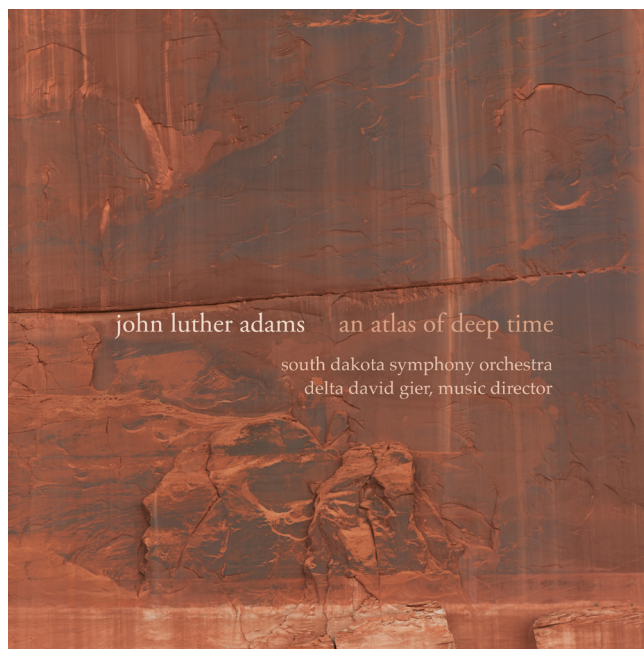
Release Date: October 18, 2024

Format: Digital, CD

\*stereo, 5.1 surround, & Dolby Atmos mixes

[Cantaloupe Music](#)

Commissioned and recorded by:  
**South Dakota Symphony Orchestra**  
Delta David Gier, music director



### TRACKS

I. an atlas of deep time (41:57)

### CREDITS

Produced by Nathaniel Reichman and John Luther Adams

Recorded by Mark Donahue at Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Washington Pavilion

Mixing and immersive mastering by Nathaniel Reichman

Percussion and piano recorded by the University of Michigan Percussion Ensemble  
Doug Perkins and Ian Antonio, Co-Directors

Recorded by Bill Maylone at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor, MI on August 3, 2022

Produced and edited by Doug Perkins

*Commissioned by and dedicated to the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra for its Centennial Anniversary. The world premiere was Sioux Falls, SD on April 30, 2022. The SDSO commission and recording was funded by First PREMIER Bank/PREMIER Bankcard*

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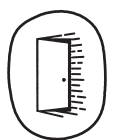
## NOTE BY JOHN LUTHER ADAMS

I am walking through a desert, on the bottom of the sea. A glint catches my eye. I stop and pick it up. White coral, a shard of a colony of creatures that lived here some 300 to 500 million years ago. I can't comprehend how long ago that was. Yet by that time, 80 to 90 percent of earth's history was already written in stone. This place where I'm standing now, wasn't here at all. The earth beneath my feet was much closer to the equator, rotated 90 degrees on the north-south axis, and submerged under warm tropical waters. I am walking in deep time.

*An Atlas of Deep Time* is grounded in my desire, amid the turbulence of human affairs, to hear the older, deeper resonances of the earth. The piece is scored for a large orchestra, arrayed in six instrumental choirs surrounding the listeners, and layered in six simultaneous tempos. Like the geologic layers of rocks beneath our feet, the densities and textures, the instrumental and harmonic colors are always changing, yet somehow the substance always seems to be the same.

The earth is 4 billion 570 million years old. *An Atlas of Deep Time* lasts roughly 42 minutes, which equates to a little under 100 million years per minute. At that tempo, the entire history of the human family is represented in the dying reverberations of the last 25 milliseconds of this music.

—John Luther Adams



## **JOHN LUTHER ADAMS**

For John Luther Adams, music is a lifelong search for home—an invitation to slow down, pay attention, and remember our place within the larger community of life on earth.

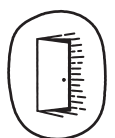
Living for almost 40 years in northern Alaska, JLA discovered a unique musical world grounded in space, stillness, and elemental forces. In the 1970s and into the '80s, he worked full time as an environmental activist. But the time came when he felt compelled to dedicate himself entirely to music. He made this choice with the belief that, ultimately, music can do more than politics to change the world.

In works such as *Become Ocean*, *In the White Silence*, and *Canticles of the Holy Wind*, Adams brings the sense of wonder that we feel outdoors into the concert hall. And in outdoor works such as *Inuksuit* and *Sila: The Breath of the World*, he employs music as a way to reclaim our connections with place, wherever we may be.

A deep concern for the state of the earth and the future of humanity drives Adams to continue composing. As he puts it:

*If we can imagine a culture and a society in which we each feel more deeply responsible for our own place in the world, then we just may be able to bring that culture and that society into being. This will largely be the work of people who will be here on this earth when I am gone. I place my faith in them.*

Since leaving Alaska, JLA and his wife Cynthia have lived in the Sonoran, Atacama, and Chihuahuan deserts, and in the wilds of Manhattan.



## **SOUTH DAKOTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

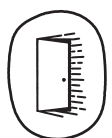
As the state's preeminent arts organization, the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra is nationally recognized as a driver for how an orchestra engages with its community. Founded in 1922 at Augustana University, the SDSO is now a fully professional 75-member orchestra with a history of performing in towns throughout South Dakota. The SDSO's 10 subscription concerts feature a diverse mix of classical and pops programming. The SDSO's home is the beautiful and acoustically superb Mary W. Sommervold Concert Hall at the Washington Pavilion. The orchestra's nine full-time musicians make up the Dakota String Quartet and the Dakota Wind Quintet. These two ensembles perform over 100 times annually in schools, hospitals, senior living communities, behavioral health and community centers throughout the region.

SDSO performances are heard by over 50,000 people including 18,000 children annually. To reach as many people as possible, orchestra concerts are livestreamed and available free of charge through a partnership with South Dakota Public Broadcasting. A robust digital library includes virtual recitals, music education videos, and podcasts.

The SDSO's award-winning Lakota Music Project has been recognized by the League of American Orchestras as a national model of cultural understanding and is the flagship community engagement program of the SDSO. With the Lakota Music Project as a foundation, the SDSO has fostered additional programs with the intention of celebrating cultural similarities and embracing classical music as a medium for collaboration. These programs are part of the larger Bridging Cultures initiative which have featured music from diverse cultures and backgrounds including Arab, Iranian, Indian, Filipino, Mexican, and Chinese composers.

Educating future audiences is a fundamental priority for the SDSO. Music education programs include the long-standing annual Young People's Concerts for over 3,000 third and fourth graders, the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra, Young Musician Concerto Competition, Music Composition Academies, and regular engagements throughout the academic year by the Dakota String Quartet and Dakota Wind Quintet in Sioux Falls Public Schools.

Known for engaging a community through classical music, Music Director Delta David Gier is also a champion of living composers. He is the 2022 recipient of the Ditson Conductor's Award for his championship of works by American composers. Underscoring the SDSO's innovative programming and community impact, a recent review in *The New Yorker* of the world premiere of John Luther Adams "An Atlas of Deep Time," describes the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra as "one of America's boldest orchestras."





## **DELTA DAVID GIER**

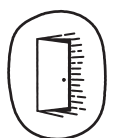
Delta David Gier has been called a dynamic voice on the American music scene, recognized widely for his penetrating interpretations of the standard symphonic repertoire, passionate commitment to new music, and significant community engagement.

Music Director Delta David Gier is nationally recognized for his championship of living composers and his ability to deepen an orchestra's impact in its community. Gier is the 2022 recipient of Columbia University's

Ditson Conductor's Award, which called him "the model of an engaged conductor," a sentiment echoed by writer Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker*, "...his group is the model of an engaged orchestra," adding that "the South Dakota Symphony is bolder and savvier in its programming than all but a handful of American ensembles."

The New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra are among the U.S. orchestras that Gier has conducted. In Europe, engagements include the Bergen Philharmonic (Norway), the Polish National Radio Symphony (with which he has made several recordings), and the Bucharest Philharmonic, along with many other orchestras in Italy, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey. In Central and South America he has had a long relationship with the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica and has conducted several orchestras in Mexico and Brazil. In Asia, Gier continues to enjoy a longstanding relationship with the Thailand Philharmonic and has conducted the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, as well as the orchestras of Qingdao and Hebei in China.

Maestro Gier has been Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO) since 2004. Under his direction, the orchestra has been lauded for its programming (including seven ASCAP awards). His series based on the Pulitzer Prize was called "an unprecedented programming innovation" by the Wall Street Journal and has included residencies with composers Jennifer Higdon, John Corigliano, Steven Stucky, Zhou Long, John Luther Adams, and Paul Moravec. During his tenure the SDSO has expanded its offerings with a complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, numerous world premieres, and semi-staged operas.

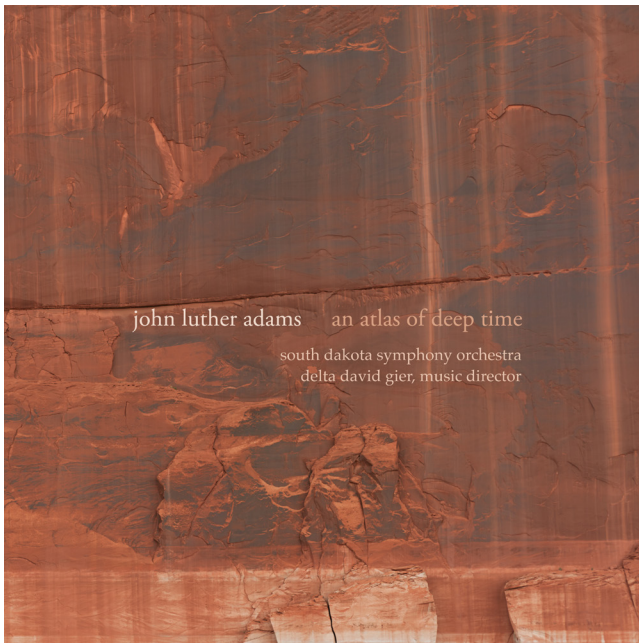




cantaloupe music

Cantaloupe Music is the record label created and launched in March 2001 by the three founders of New York’s legendary Bang on a Can organization—composers Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe—with Bang on a Can managing director Kenny Savelson. Cantaloupe has made a massive impact in the new music community, and has been recognized by critics and fans worldwide for its edgy and adventurous sounds. The label’s mission has been to provide a home for contemporary classical and post-classical music that is, in the words of Michael Gordon, “too funky for the academy.”

Throughout its nearly 20-year history, Cantaloupe recordings have been lauded by the New York Times, Rolling Stone, the Los Angeles Times, National Public Radio, the New Yorker, the Washington Post, The Guardian (UK), Billboard and Gramophone, among others. With over 100 titles in an ever-growing catalog that features recordings by the Bang on a Can All-Stars (Bang on a Can’s flagship ensemble), So Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Kronos Quartet and more, the label is home to the lion’s share of recorded music written by Gordon, Lang and Wolfe, and has also released key recordings of recent works by John Luther Adams (including the Pulitzer-winning *Become Ocean*, which also won a Grammy in 2015), as well as Glenn Kotche, Derek Bermel, Caleb Burhans, Florent Ghys, Kate Moore, Michael Harrison and an even wider range of emerging young composers.



THANKS. LET US KNOW IF YOU'D LIKE A PROMO.

