

RICHARD GRAY GALLERY

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## Renowned sculptor Jaume Plensa unveils pieces at Ravinia, Millennium Park



**By Karen Berkowitz  
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Spanish sculptor Jaume Plensa grew up in a Barcelona household filled with books and music.

As a young boy, Plensa remembers crawling inside his father's piano to experience the music with all of his senses. From within a compartment beneath the instrument, he could feel the vibrations of the strings and smell the wood. He'd taste the dust while surrounded by the sounds of his father playing.

That connection to music, forged at a tender age, has influenced some recent pieces, including "Silent Music," which is finding a home this weekend at Ravinia Festival in Highland Park. The stainless steel sculpture is comprised of musical notes and symbols and stands more than 12 feet tall. It is being installed near KidsLawn, a new family-- friendly space on the festival's north lawn where youngsters can make their own music before selected concerts.

Plensa said he sees musical notes as an alphabet for communication that transcend the limitations of spoken language. "It's also an homage to my father and his piano, because the music was magic," said Plensa.

Around Chicago, the world--renowned artist is known as the creator of Crown Fountain, the towering display of rotating images that spout water in Millennium Park. In honor of the 10th anniversary of the iconic fountain, Plensa has also created four sculptural portraits of young women. "Jaume Plensa: 1004 Portraits" is so titled because the resin and bronze sculptures expand upon the 1,000 portraits of Chicago residents that rotate on the LED display at Crown Fountain. Plensa decided to expand on the original theme in honor of the anniversary.

“These four portraits are each individually awe--inspiring, but in this configuration also perfectly extend the powerful grandeur of Mr. Plensa’s Crown Fountain into the surrounding areas of Millennium Park,” said Donna LaPietra, chair of the Millennium Park Foundation. “We can think of no better way to celebrate our 10th anniversary than by hosting such an impressive array of works by one of the artists whose contributions to Millennium Park have made it a model for public spaces world--wide.”

The installation will open to the public June 18, and remain on display for free, public viewing through December 2015.

The largest sculpture, which is made of resin and stands 39 feet tall, will grace the entrance to the park at Michigan Avenue and Madison Street. It’s titled “Looking Into My Dreams, Awilda.” Three cast iron sculptural portraits named “Laura,” “Paula” and “Ines” will be added in the South Boeing Gallery immediately east of the Crown Fountain.

The fountain, which was installed in 2004, is made up of two 50--foot glass block towers that display the rotating images of Chicago residents. When the water feature is activated between mid--spring and mid--fall, each face smiles for a few minutes, then puckers its lips before a pipe embedded in the screen sends out a large stream of water, creating the impression that water is spouting — gargoyle--style — from the mouth of the person.

“My intention was not to fill up space with an object, but to create a new space where people are invited to enjoy water,” said Plensa, who drew inspiration from the gargoyles used in many grand, public fountains. Plensa’s work can be seen in Dubai, London, Liverpool, Nice, Tokyo, Toronto and Vancouver.

In Highland Park, “Silent Music” is on a long--term loan to the Ravinia Festival from the Joel and Carole Bernstein family collection.

“Kids are going to be able to crawl inside the sculpture, just as Plensa crawled under his father’s piano,” said Nick Pullia, director of communications for the Ravinia Festival.

Said the 58--year--old Plensa, “Ravinia is an ideal location. For me, it is always reason for celebration when a piece finds the right home.”