

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

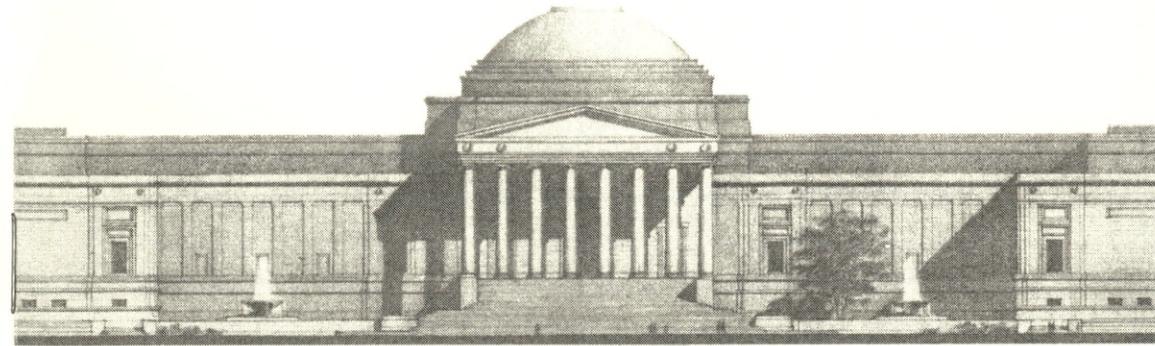
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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The Sixty-fifth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,606th Concert

Contemporary Music Forum

Steve Antosca, *music director*
Lina Bahn, *violinist*, Lura Johnson, *pianist*
Thomas Jones and William Richards, *percussionists*

Presented in honor of

Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965

Third concert of the Sixty-second American Music Festival

March 4, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Music of John Cage (1912–1992)

Amores (1943)

For prepared piano and percussion

Solo

Trio

Trio

Solo

Credo in US (1942)

For piano, percussion, and radio or phonograph

Trio (1936)

For percussion

Allegro

March

Waltz

INTERMISSION

Nocturne (1947)

For violin and piano

Third Construction (1941)

For percussion

Randy Eyles and Michael Zell, *guest percussionists*

*This concert is made possible in part by a grant from the
Randy Hostetler Living Room Music Fund of Washington, DC.*

The Exhibition and the Festival

Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965, on view at the National Gallery through April 29, includes some of Johns' (b. 1930) most important paintings, drawings, and prints, among them *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) and *Diver* (1962). Johns' early work was devoted to examining and reinventing the premises of painting during an era when painting practice was riddled with conceptual upheaval and doubt. Much of the music chosen for the Sixty-second American Music Festival was also the result of conceptual upheaval, as composers in the same period reexamined their own practices.

From 1955 to 1965, contacts between painters and composers were particularly fruitful in New York City. When the works of unorthodox composers such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, Ralph Shapey, and Stefan Wolpe were performed, artists faithfully attended. The era also saw the birth of performance art, in which dance, drama, music, painting, poetry, and sculpture might be brought together in one event. In his *Lecture on Something* (1959), John Cage said, "When starting to be abstract, artists referred to musical practices to show that what they were doing was valid; so nowadays, musicians, to explain what they are doing, say, 'See, the painters and sculptors have been doing it for quite some time.'" Johns enjoyed a long and close association with the world of ballet in particular, and in 1973 he designed the set and costumes for *Un Jour ou Deux*, working with Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham.

By 1955, the National Gallery's American Music Festival, an annual festival of music by American composers, was in its eleventh year. In the decade that followed, avant-garde composers such as Elliott Carter, David Diamond, Leon Kirchner, Walter Piston, Ralph Shapey, Virgil Thomson, and Stefan Wolpe were among the dozens of composers whose works were performed at the Gallery's festivals.

The Musicians

The Contemporary Music Forum is the new ensemble in residence at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Founded in 1973, the Forum is Washington's oldest ensemble of its type, and the *Washington Post* recently wrote: "It is no small achievement for a group uncompromisingly dedicated to contemporary chamber music to achieve such longevity." The Contemporary Music Forum has premiered hundreds of new works and performed pieces by more than five hundred contemporary composers.

Enjoying wide critical acclaim, the Forum has received grants from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Cafritz, Copland, Dreyfus, Kiplinger, and International Humanities foundations. The ensemble has taken advantage of the international diversity in the District of Columbia by collaborating with twenty embassies to perform works by composers of their countries'.

Concerts of the Contemporary Music Forum have been broadcast on WETA-FM and WETA-TV, and internationally on the Voice of America. To reach an even broader audience, the ensemble will present three concerts at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, including concerts for school children featuring music by Native American composers. In spring 2007 the Forum will travel to Paris to perform a series of collaborative concerts with Ensemble Aleph.

Program Notes

One of the leading figures of the postwar avant-garde, John Cage influenced writers, artists, choreographers, and other composers through his music, essays, lectures, and numerous interviews. It can safely be said that he had a greater impact on music in the twentieth century than any other American composer. The 1950s were a period of intense creativity for Cage, in which he experimented with notation in order to broaden the possibilities. In 1952 he created the work that has become his most famous and controversial, *4' 33''*, which consists of three movements, each completely silent. During the late 1950s he began his collaboration with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, forming a relationship that continued through and beyond 1973, the year in which *Un Jour ou Deux* was produced with set and costume designs by Jasper Johns.

For this concert in honor of *Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965*, the Contemporary Music Forum has chosen works that Cage composed during his years in Seattle, Washington (1936–1942), and his first five years in New York City (1942–1947), when he worked primarily with percussion ensembles. Since Jasper Johns and other artists became acquainted with Cage and his work in the early 1950s, this is the music they would have encountered. In his essay *The Future of Music: Credo*, Cage wrote, "Percussion music is a contemporary transition from keyboard-influenced music to the all-sound music of the future. Any sound is acceptable to the composer of percussion music."

Amores was written in 1943 and consists of four parts, the first and last of which are for the prepared piano alone. The second part is performed on nine tom-toms and a pod rattle, and the instrumentation for the third part is indicated by the title of the original version, *Trio for Seven Woodblocks, Not Chinese*, which dates from 1936. *Amores* is Cage's first concert work to include prepared piano, an innovation that Cage said, "released [him] from the sonic predictability of traditional notation." The piano is prepared with

nine screws, eight bolts, two nuts, and three strips of rubber. In this transformation, the instrument is used to express eroticism and tranquility. As suggested by the title and stated by Cage, *Amores* "is the quietness between lovers," a sentiment not often associated with his music.

Credo in US calls for four performers. In addition to the pianist, two percussionists play on muted gongs, tin cans, an electric buzzer, and tom-toms, and one performer plays a radio or phonograph, usually replaced in modern performances by a computer. The work was composed in the phraseology of the eponymous dance by Merce Cunningham and Jean Erdman, and was Cage's first collaboration with Cunningham. This was also the first time Cage used a radio or phonograph, incorporating music by other composers into his own work. For the premiere of *Credo in US*, a "tack-piano" was used (a piano with thumbtacks inserted into the felt of the hammers). In subsequent performances, pianists have also muted the strings at times or tapped the piano body as a percussion instrument.

In the score for *Trio*, Cage gave the following specifications: "Instruments include: 1st player: 3 woodblocks, 3 small tom-toms (wire brushes), bamboo sticks; 2nd player: tom-tom (wire brushes), bass drum; 3rd player: 3 woodblocks, tom-tom, bamboo sticks." Some historians cite *Trio* as Cage's debut as an experimental composer.

About his *Nocturne* Cage wrote: "In *Nocturne*, an attempt is made to dissolve the difference between string and piano sounds, [although] the convention of melody and accompaniment is maintained. The character of the piece is atmospheric and depends for its performance on a constant rubato and the sustaining of resonances."

Cage's *Constructions* are aptly named, as their structures are highly mathematical. In his *Third Construction*, Cage created twenty-four parts of twenty-four measures each. The four percussionists are assigned different phrase structures, each of which follows a proportion series that is a rotation of one of the others. The musicians perform on claves, a cricket caller, a conch shell, cowbells, a cymbal, drums, an instrument that imitates a lion's roar, *quijadas* (originally a jawbone), a ratchet, rattles, a *teponaxtle* (a wooden drum of Mayan origin), and tin cans.

An excerpt from an interview conducted late in Cage's life may help the listener appreciate this music: "I think it is true that sounds are, of their nature, harmonious, and I would extend that to noise. There is no noise, only sound. I haven't heard any sounds that I consider something I don't want to hear again, with the exception of sounds that frighten us or make us aware of pain. I don't like meaningful sound. If sound is meaningless, I'm all for it."

Program notes based on material provided by Steve Antosca

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

National Gallery Orchestra

Dalia Atlas, *guest conductor*

Ingrid Fliter, *pianist*

Music by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Saint-Saëns, and Schubert

Presented in conjunction with the
National Museum of Women in the Arts
and in honor of Women's History Month

March 11, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court