

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.

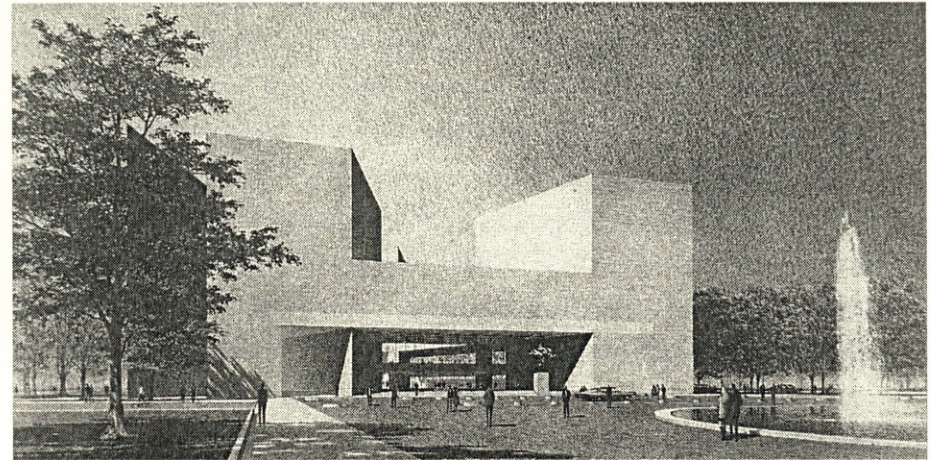
Please note that late entry or reentry of
the East Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

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

National Gallery of Art
2,605th Concert

Alan Feinberg, *pianist*

Presented in honor of

Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965

Second concert of the Sixty-second American Music Festival

February 25, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

John Cage (1912–1992)

Bacchanale (1938)

Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997)

Three Two-part Studies (1940)

Morton Feldman (1926–1987)

Palais de Mari (1986)

INTERMISSION

Charles Ives (1874–1954)

The Celestial Railroad (1910–1913, adapted 1925)

The Alcotts (1915)

Milton Babbitt (b. 1916)

Playing for Time (1977)

Robert Helps (1928–2001)

Music for Left Hand: Three Studies (1975)

Étude 1: For Ian Underwood

Étude 2: For Tison Street

Étude 3: For Rudolph Kolisch

Helps

Three Song Transcriptions (1998)

Schilflied (Felix Mendelssohn)

Chanson pour Jeanne (Emmanuel Chabrier)

Testament (Henri Duparc)

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 Musician

Alan Feinberg has forged a remarkable career based on musical exploration. His intelligence, integrity, and affinity for an unusually wide-ranging repertoire place him among those few artists who are able to build a bridge between the past and the present. He has more than three hundred premieres to his credit, for works by such composers as John Adams, Milton Babbitt, John Harbison, Charles Ives, Steve Reich, and Charles Wuorinen. Feinberg has toured several times with The Cleveland Orchestra under Christoph von Dohnányi, playing Brahms' *Piano Concerto no. 2* and the premiere of Shulamit Ran's *Concert Piece*.

Often on the cutting edge, Feinberg was featured on the opening night of the San Francisco Symphony's American Mavericks Festival and at the New York Philharmonic's Horizons Festival, the tenth anniversary concert of the American Composers Orchestra, the New York 92nd Street Y's Berio Sequenza Marathon, and in act 1 of the first performance of John Adams' opera *Nixon in China*, for the Guggenheim Museum's Works in Progress Series.

Feinberg also enjoys an outstanding reputation abroad. He has appeared at the music festivals of Bath, Bergamo, Berlin, Brescia, Budapest, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Geneva, and Huddersfield, and he was the first pianist invited by the Union of Soviet Composers to represent American contemporary music with performances in Saint Petersburg (then Leningrad) and Moscow. Among his many recordings are four solo CDs for Decca that survey American music. Alan Feinberg appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists of Lafayette, California.

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.

Born in 1912 in Texarkana, Arkansas, Conlon Nancarrow was active in his early years as a trumpeter, playing jazz and other types of popular music. He attended the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music from 1929 to 1932 and later studied composition and counterpoint in Boston with Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, and Nicolas Slonimsky. Of his studies, Nancarrow reported, "The only formal studies I did that were important were the studies I had in strict counterpoint with Roger Sessions. That was the only formal training I ever had. And they were rigid! I'd do this strict counterpoint exercise, and then I'd take a piece of my music and say to him, 'What do you think of this?' 'Very interesting' [Sessions would say]. 'Where's your counterpoint exercise?'" Nancarrow composed frequently for the player piano, partly because he was convinced that other musicians could deal with only moderately difficult rhythms. He went so far as to say, "As long as I've been writing music I've been dreaming of getting rid of the performers."

Morton Feldman was born and raised in New York City. In 1949 he met Cage, and the two developed an artistic association that proved crucial to music in America in the 1950s and beyond. Cage encouraged Feldman to trust his instincts, which helped Feldman create his totally intuitive compositions. Instead of using a formalized system for composing, Feldman worked from

moment to moment, from one sound to the next. Feldman's friends in 1950s New York included composers Earle Brown and Christian Wolff and painters Philip Guston, Jasper Johns, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, and Mark Rothko. The painters in particular influenced Feldman to search for his own sound world, one that was more immediate and more physical than any he had explored before. From this he developed a graph notation form of music that relies heavily on player improvisation.

One of Feldman's last compositions, *Palais de Mari* was written for pianist Bunita Marcus, who asked Feldman to condense the material and techniques from his long pieces into a shorter work. The title was taken from a photograph of the ruins of an ancient palace in East Asia that Feldman observed at the Louvre Museum in Paris. *Palais de Mari* is a concise version of his late mature style, consisting of quiet, sparse, and asymmetrical repetitions of short phrases. Timbral changes shift subtly; articulated by silences, they lend a sense of beauty and mystery to the work.

Although Charles Ives was much older than any of the other composers represented in the American Music Festival (he died in 1954 at age eighty), he noted and appreciated the work of several of them and encouraged his fellow New Englander Elliott Carter through letters and personal contact. Virgil Thomson spoke for most twentieth-century American composers when he referred to Ives as "the father of us all, whether we knew it or not." An adherent of transcendentalism who drew inspiration from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Ives believed music to be suffused with a unique spiritual quality. His music is distinctly American, frequently quoting patriotic songs, hymns, and marches.

Milton Babbitt provided the best description of his approach to composition when he said, "I believe in cerebral music, and I never choose a note unless I know why I want it there." As a student in New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Babbitt immersed himself in the intellectual milieu of the city, developing a lifelong engagement with analytical philosophy and reading widely such journals as *Symposium* and *Politics*. Babbitt studied privately with Sessions and eventually enrolled for graduate work with him

at Princeton University. Babbitt's music has at times evoked heated controversy. Some of his more severe critics call his music inaccessible and irrelevant, but his adherents find that he has undertaken a systematic and comprehensive exploration of the twelve-tone compositional universe.

Pianist and composer Robert Helps, like so many of his colleagues whose works are included in this festival, was a pupil of Sessions'. Helps was not only an effective proponent of his own works, but also devoted much effort to performing and recording works of other composers, including Babbitt, George Perle, Mel Powell, Arnold Schoenberg, and Sessions. Inspired by Helps' example, Alan Feinberg has recorded much of Helps' music, and the resulting CDs have so far garnered three Grammy awards.

Program notes by Sorab Modi

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Contemporary Music Forum

Music by John Cage

Presented in honor of

Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965,
as part of the Sixty-second American Music Festival

March 4, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court