

JACK
Quartet

Presented by AMP--
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July 22 2007
the Tank
NYC

program

Cat O' Nine Tails (1988).....**John Zorn**
ca. 13' (b. 1953)

String Quartet No. 1, Op. 1 (1959).....**György Kurtág**
ca. 15' (b. 1926)

- break -

String Quartet in Four Parts (1950).....**John Cage**
ca. 17' (1912-1992)

Correspondence (1992).....**Peter Eötvös**
ca. 16' (b.1944)

JACK Quartet

John Pickford Richards (viola)

Ari Streisfeld (violin)

Christopher Otto (violin)

Kevin McFarland (cello)

- ABOUT THE WORKS -

The **JACK Quartet** formed with an appetite for today's most demanding string quartet repertoire. Comprised of violist John Pickford Richards, violinists Ari Streisfeld and Christopher Otto, and cellist Kevin McFarland, the quartet has given high-energy performances in Europe and North America including appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Lucerne Festival, University of California at San Diego, and Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Michoacán.

The members of the JACK Quartet met while attending the Eastman School of Music where, in addition to learning standard repertoire, they pursued period, non-western, and popular performance styles. The quartet has studied with the Arditti Quartet at the Pro-Bio Foundation Summer School for Contemporary Quartet Music and members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain at the Lucerne Festival Academy and has worked closely with composers Helmut Lachenmann, Matthias Pintscher, Samuel Adler, and Robert Wannamaker.

John Pickford Richards on John Zorn and *Cat O' Nine Tails*:

Genre-breaking American composer and performer John Zorn is among the most dynamic and independent musicians today. Entering the New York scene playing the saxophone, Zorn took inspiration from such figures as Ornette Coleman and Carl Stalling and quickly became versatile as an experimental improviser, composer, arranger, and producer. After releasing several critically-acclaimed albums on the Nonesuch label, Zorn formed his own Tzadik Records label, allowing him to release multiple albums each year of otherwise often-overlooked avant-garde music.

Cat O' Nine Tails is in many ways the product of an earlier collaboration between Zorn and the Kronos Quartet to create *Forbidden Fruit*, a work for string quartet, vocalist, and turntablist that exists only in recording. The Kronos Quartet, inspired by the experience, asked Zorn to write something performable, thus *Cat O' Nine Tails* was composed. The work consists of more than 100 short musical segments seemingly shuffled as a deck of cards and played through relentlessly and recklessly, as if navigating through a gag box of musical styles.

Ari Streisfeld on György Kurtág and his *String Quartet No. 1*:

György Kurtág was 33 years old when he wrote his *String Quartet No. 1*. His designation of this quartet as opus 1 can be seen as a decisive break from his earlier compositions. It was written upon returning to Budapest after a pivotal year spent studying in Paris with Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen. While in Paris, Kurtág also came into contact with the art psychologist Marianne Stein who suggested that he set clearly defined limits within his composition. Stein even suggested limiting his material to possibly only two notes. This idea became a defining structural element to Kurtág's music, starting with the *String Quartet No. 1*. Within the work, Kurtág wrote short melodies and phrases sometimes only two notes long. However, those two notes could be the most expressive notes imaginable. He often wrote several different musical instructions over these two notes to stress to the performer the extreme expressivity of the music. Kurtág once said, "I keep coming back to the realization that one note is almost enough . . . one note to sum up the essence of a sensation, a happening, a shriek, a sob, a gesture."

- ABOUT THE PERFORMERS -

Kevin McFarland on John Cage and his *String Quartet in Four Parts*:

John Cage was arguably the most influential American composer and musical thinker of the twentieth century. He studied composition with Henry Cowell and Arnold Schönberg, though he was also strongly influenced by a number of visual artists, writers, and political thinkers, including Marcel Duchamp, Henry David Thoreau and Buckminster Fuller, to name a few. He was a prolific writer himself, and his essays, anecdotes, and poetry have been collected in many published volumes. Additionally, he collaborated extensively with the dancer Merce Cunningham. Cage was renowned as an innovator for his invention of the prepared piano, use of chance operations to generate compositions, and experimental musical notations. He was often regarded as somewhat of a provocateur for creating pieces that strongly broke with tradition by using unusual sound sources, superimposing many simultaneous musics in performances that included film and theatrics, and most infamously, for *4'33"*, a "silent" piece in which the performer makes no intentional sounds, but rather, the musical content comprises the incidental and ambient sounds heard in the concert space for the work's duration.

String Quartet in Four Parts may be a provocative work, but unlike some of his later compositions it could hardly be considered scandalous at all. It is similar in compositional method to his early percussion works in that each movement employs a "gamut" of sounds, that is, musical motives that are never transposed, fragmented, or altered, but rather occur in the same exact manner each time and are juxtaposed in different ways. The four movements or parts represent the four seasons. The first movement, "Quietly Flowing Along," is evocative of Cage's summer spent in Paris in 1949, interspersing melodic fragments with triadic outbursts and more dissonant chords. The second, "Slowly Rocking," represents autumn in New York, consisting of gently, rhythmically swaying chords and harmonies. The third, "Nearly Stationary," embodies winter and uses a minimum of material to achieve a kind of harmonic stasis. The fourth, "Quodlibet," is about spring and as the title implies is the most melodic and contrapuntal of the parts, sounding a bit like early music at times, and is also by far the shortest in duration at about one-and-a-half minutes.

Christopher Otto on Peter Eötvös and his *Correspondence*:

Composer and conductor Péter Eötvös was born in Székelyudvarhely, Transylvania in 1944. He has been a member of the Stockhausen Ensemble, music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and is currently principal conductor of the Dutch Radio Chamber Orchestra. His compositions reflect his love of the theater, his experience as a conductor, and his unique sense of humor.

Correspondence portrays a musical narrative in three scenes based on letters between Leopold Mozart in Salzburg and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Paris during the turbulent year 1778. In the first scene, Leopold (represented by the second violin and cello) criticizes Wolfgang (represented by the first violin and viola) for being impetuous and capricious. At the end of the first scene and beginning of the second, the instruments are held in the cello position and played in caricature of a French dialogue. The third scene features a pizzicato viola solo representing the sound of Wolfgang's calligraphy, recognizing and lamenting the imminent death of his mother. Throughout the quartet, the dramatic elements of the dialogue including the sound of the words as well as the moods and motives of the writer and reader are portrayed musically by the intervals, contours, timbres, articulations, and rhythm of the quartet.

John Pickford Richards holds degrees from the Interlochen Arts Academy and Eastman School of Music where his primary teachers were David Holland and John Graham. He is a member of Payton MacDonald's Super Marimba Project and Alarm Will Sound, bringing him into close contact with such composers as John Adams, Wolfgang Rihm, Meredith Monk, and Steve Reich at venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and The Roxy. John has performed as soloist with the Pasadena Symphony Orchestra, Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Ossia New Music, The All-American Rejects on MTV's TRL, and recently performed the solo part to Luciano Berio's *Chen II* at the Lucerne Festival Academy under the direction of Pierre Boulez. He taught for three years at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and has also taught at summer camps, in city and rural public schools, and in continuing education.

Ari Streisfeld began playing the violin at age six. He grew up to the sounds of the Philadelphia Orchestra, studying with members Paul Arnold and Yayoi Numazawa, and went on to study with Zeitlin at the Eastman School of Music, where he worked with such composers as Steve Mackey, Bernard Rands, Robert Morris, Carlos Sanchez Gutierrez, Ricardo Zohn Muldoon, and David Li. As a member of Chicago-based Dal Niente, Ari has performed Morton Feldman's Piano and String Quartet at the 2006 Chicago Sound Field Festival and Salvatore Sciarrino's *Six Caprices* at New Music Chicago's Sonic Impact Festival. Ari attended the Music Academy of the West, New York String Orchestra Seminar, Kent/Blossom Music, and the Lucerne Festival Academy. As a composer, he was a recipient of the 2000 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award. Ari currently studies at the Northwestern School of Music with Almita Vamos.

Christopher Otto studied composition at the Eastman School of Music with Martin Bresnick, David Liptak, and Robert Morris and has been pursuing a degree at the University of California San Diego. As a violinist, Christopher has premiered many compositions and worked with such composers as Harrison Birtwistle, Pierre Boulez, Helmut Lachenmann, and Steve Reich. Christopher has participated as composer and performer in such contemporary music festivals as the Lucerne Festival Academy, Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Karlheinz Stockhausen Courses, Inst and Festival for Contemporary Performance at the Mannes College of Music, June in Buffalo, and Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Michoacán.

Kevin McFarland received a Bachelor's Degree in Composition from the Eastman School of Music. While a student there he was a highly active performer of contemporary music, including frequent concerts with the school's Ossia New Music and Musica Nova ensembles, and over one hundred premieres of works by faculty and students. He is a member of the Tarab Cello Ensemble group dedicated to the commissioning and performance of new music for cello octet. He currently lives in Pennsylvania where he works as a math tutor and enjoys making electronic music in his time.

