

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program Presents

# 21st CENTURY CONSORT

October 21, 2006

Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium,  
Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program  
presents

# 21st Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

Peter Robinson, Manager

Elisabeth Adkins, Violin

Paula Akbar, Violin

Paul Cigan, Clarinet

Lisa Emenheiser, Piano

Gabrielle Finck, French Horn

William Sharp, Baritone

James Stern, Viola

Sara Stern, Flute

Rachel Young, Cello

Curt Wittig, Electronics

Saturday, October 21, 2006

Pre-Concert Discussion 4:00 p.m.

Concert 5:00 p.m.

Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium  
Smithsonian American Art Museum



The 21st Century Consort's 2006-2007 Season is sponsored by The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program and funded in part by generous contributions from The Cafritz Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and the Board and Friends of the 21st Century Consort.



Smithsonian  
Resident Associate Program

**Pre-Concert Discussion**

Christopher Kendall with David Froom

## Program

“AMERICAN RETROSPECULATIVE”

Poème Électronique . . . . . Edgard Varèse

Mr. Wittig

Suite for Toy Piano in five movements . . . . . John Cage

Ms. Emenheiser

Amichai Songs . . . . . David Froom

I. Now, when the waters are pressing mightily

II. In a man's life

III. The house of lovers

Mr. Sharp, Ms. Stern, Mr. Cigan, Ms. Finck, Ms. Logan, Ms. Atkins, Mr. Stern,  
Ms. Young, Mr. Kendall

INTERMISSION

### Charles Ives and His Sources

The Things our Fathers Loved

Charles Ives

*Little Annie Rooney* (1891)

Michael Nolan

Waltz (ca. 1895, rev. 1921)

Ives

*Nearer, My God, to Thee* (Bethany, 1856)

Lowell Mason

Down East (1919)

Ives

*Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* (Dorrnance, 1845) Isaac B. Woodbury

The Housatonic at Stockbridge (1921)

Ives

*Is That You, Mr. Riley?* (1883)

Pat Rooney

The Side-Show (1896, rev. 1921)

Ives

*Charlie Rutledge*

Lake Ponchartrain

Charlie Rutlage

Ives

Mr. Sharp, Ms Emenheiser

Sextet . . . . . Aaron Copland

Mr. Cigan, Ms. Emenheiser, Ms. Adkins, Ms. Akbar, Mr. Stern, Ms. Young

The audience is invited to join the artists in the lobby for an informal post-concert reception, sponsored by the Board and Friends of the 21st Century Consort.



## Notes and Texts

### *Note from the Artistic Director*

On behalf of all of us in the Consort, I want to welcome everyone to what I calculate is the ensemble's 32nd year on this earth. As if this were not enough cause for wonder, it is also remarkable to consider that in that first, far-off season, our very first concert took place on Saturday, October 25th at 2:00 pm in the National Collection of Fine Arts, now the Smithsonian American Art Museum! My chief memory of the concert was that the audience was far larger than any of us had expected, and the museum guards were in an absolute state about the proximity of standing audience members' behinds to the paintings on the gallery walls. The music wasn't bad either.

How extraordinary, then, to be back at this very museum, which may have changed more in the interim than the Consort. What a handsome new hall in a beautifully restored building. The collection and the artistic commitment to American art remain, and this is what provides such a wonderful aesthetic context for our concerts this year. Before making a few observations about this evening's program, I'd like to encourage in advance that you join us for the remaining concerts of the season:

### II. December 2, 2006: **SOUND OBJECTS**

Inspired by the SAAM Joseph Cornell exhibition, the program features music by Dexter Morrill, Paul Schoenfield, Richard Wernick and James Primosch that frames old forms and fragments in new boxes in much the way Joseph Cornell did with his art. We'll be

joined by the distinguished soprano Susan Narucki as vocal soloist.

### III. February 3, 2007: **ERROR OF THE MOON**

Joining the city-wide Shakespeare celebration, the Consort presents Susan Botti's riveting mono-drama on Desdemona with the composer as soprano soloist, along with other works reflecting the genius of Shakespeare and women.

### IV. April 7, 2007: **GAMES PEOPLE PLAY**

The season closes with a celebration of SAAM's Saul Steinberg exhibition, spinning a program of playful work mirroring the spirit of whimsy and satire of the artist's work. Featured will be a new work by composer Thomas Albert and soprano Lucy Shelton along with musical sketches based on Steinberg doodles, by Jessica Krash, Bruce MacCombie and James Fry.

As for this evening's program, we simply exult in the connection with this museum's collection, by mounting a speculative retrospective of American music. The modifier suggests the folly of seriously undertaking such an enterprise. Nevertheless, we hope the works selected do provide glimpses at some of the prominent moments of American music, acknowledging, however, that there are vast tracts missing. The problem is, we have to get our players over to the Kennedy Center for their 8:00 concert!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Manager of the Consort, Peter Robinson. Peter is a long-standing figure on the DC music scene as a jazz pianist, record producer and businessman. Somehow, this all emanated from roots in Kansas, as a Princeton English Major and as a staffer for congressmen. We're delighted he's agreed to make work with the Consort a new chapter in his career!

### **Poème Électronique**

Edgard Varèse

Having lived and worked in the U.S. after 1915, Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) composed most of his music in this country, and in fact his first "mature" work was *Amériques* for large orchestra (1921), which presages a creative life of groundbreaking sonic

experimentation. His works are positively bristling with fierce dissonance, extreme rhythmic complexity and compositional forms that moved in radical new directions. After composing a series of works for large orchestra and small ensembles featuring winds and percussion, Varèse developed a strong interest in electronic instruments then under development (theremin and ondes martenot). Soon the tape recorder would open a whole new landscape of electronic sound possibilities. Following a period spent in planning for a simultaneous radio broadcast from around the globe entitled *Espace* (it was actually performed as *Etude pour Espace* for chorus, pianos and percussion in 1947), Varèse concentrated on pieces incorporating new electronic media. *Poème Électronique* was created for the Philips pavilion at the Brussels Exposition of 1958. By the time he finished *Poème Électronique*, his second composition for tape, the composer was 75 years old. The eight-minute work remains a classic in the form, using both concrete (“real” sounds including machines and fragments of voice, organ, and percussion) and electronically synthesized sonorities. Hearing the piece today, admittedly without benefit of the elaborate multimedia presentation at the World’s Fair, one is simultaneously struck by its originality and also a kind of classicism of sound and style from an earlier century.

## Suite for Toy Piano

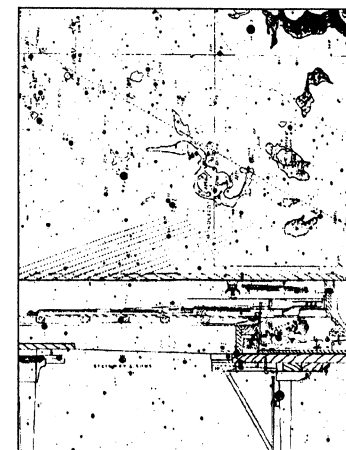
John Cage

John Cage, composer, philosopher and writer, was born in Los Angeles in 1912 and died in August 1992 a few weeks before his 80th birthday. His first works especially feature percussion or prepared piano; the rhythmic emphasis that grew naturally from these media led him quickly to working with dancers, particularly Merce Cunningham, his lifelong partner. By the late 1940s he was studying Eastern philosophies, especially Zen, and making use of the *I Ching*, the Chinese Book of Changes, to introduce elements of chance into his music. Indeterminacy played an increasing role in his music, particularly the kind of indeterminacy in which the form and elements of a composition are not known until its moment of performance. His guiding principle was the breaking down of the distinction between “art” and “life,” sensitizing audiences to the sights and sounds around them

at all times. As he wrote in *Silence* (1961):

Our intention is to affirm life, not to bring order out of chaos or to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we’re living, which is so excellent once one gets one’s mind and one’s desires out of the way and lets it act of its own accord.

Cage wrote his *Suite for Toy Piano* at Black Mountain College in North Carolina for Merce Cunningham. The *Suite* is among the composer’s most charming and whimsical creations, filled with characteristic irony and humor. Its five short movements use only nine consecutive white notes, and the score is replete with exaggerated dynamic extremes, from ppp to ff, that require a great deal of imagination in a toy piano realization. The first performance of the *Suite for Toy Piano* took place on 20 August 1948 at Black Mountain College, North Carolina.



## Amichai Songs

David Froom

David Froom was born in California in 1951. His music has been performed extensively throughout the United States by major orchestras, ensembles, and soloists, including, among many others, the Louisville, Seattle, Utah, and Chesapeake Symphony Orchestras; The United States Marine and Navy Bands; the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; the 20th Century Consort; the New York New Music Ensemble; the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt; violinist Curtis Macomber; and saxophonist Kenneth Tse. He also has had performances in England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, China, and Australia. His music is available on CD on the Delos, Arabesque, Capriccio, Centaur, Sonora, Crystal, Opus 3, and West Point Academy labels, and much of it is published by MMB Music, Inc.

Among the many organizations that have bestowed honors on him are the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Academy Award, Ives Scholarship); the Guggenheim, Fromm, Koussevitzky,

and Barlow Foundations; the Kennedy Center (first prize in the Friedheim Awards); the National Endowment for the Arts; and the state of Maryland (four Individual Artist Awards). He had a Fulbright grant for study at Cambridge University, and fellowships to the Tanglewood Music Festival, the Wellesley Composers Conference, and the MacDowell Colony. He has taught at the University of Utah, the Peabody Conservatory, and, since 1989, St. Mary's College of Maryland, where he is professor and chair of the music department. Mr. Froom was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Southern California, and Columbia University. His main composition teachers were Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, Alexander Goehr, and William Kraft.

The composer writes:

Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) was Israel's leading poet. From a family of Orthodox Jews who emigrated from Germany to Palestine in 1934, he participated actively in the birth and life of Israel, as a soldier, a teacher, and a writer of the first rank. He spent a few years in the United States, teaching as visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley and New York University, but always returned to his Jerusalem home. He was among the first poets of the new colloquial Israeli Hebrew (a language born, along with Israel, in 1948), and his writings reflect his love for his adopted homeland, his complex view of human relations, a knowing and sophisticated spirituality that does not shrink from questioning God, and a profound desire for a world of peace.

These three poems are recent translations by Leon Wieseltier (author and, for many years, the literary editor of the *New Republic*). To my ear, more than any other translator of Amichai's poetry, he shows an ear for the raw power and high musicality that my friends who read Hebrew tell me are hallmarks of Amichai's work.

Each of these three poems is full of spectacular images that, to me, cried out for musical embrace. Beneath the surface in each, though, is conflict and ambiguity: In the first, we hear of the strength needed to sing a small song. In the second, the burying in a second dream of dead resurrected in a first, an extremely dark image, shows the way we move beyond the past. In the third, we hope for the collapse of the "house of light" so the light can be released for all of us.

*Amichai Songs* was made possible by a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation. It is dedicated to Christopher Kendall, the 21st Century Consort, and William Sharp.

-David Froom

## I. Now, when the waters are pressing mightily

Now, when the waters are pressing mightily  
on the walls of the dams,  
now, when the white storks, returning,  
are transformed in the middle of the firmament  
into fleets of jet planes,  
we will feel again how strong are the ribs  
and how vigorous is the warm air in the lungs  
and how much daring is needed to love on the exposed plain,  
when the great dangers are arched above,  
and how much love is required  
to fill all the empty vessels  
and the watches that stopped telling time,  
and how much breath,  
a whirlwind of breath,  
to sing the small song of spring.

## II. In a man's life

In a man's life  
the first temple is destroyed and the second temple is destroyed  
and he must stay in his life,  
not like the people that went into exile  
far away,  
and not like God,  
who simply rose to higher regions.

In a man's life  
he resurrects the dead in a dream  
and in a second dream he buries them.

### III. The House of Lovers

A house full of lights  
is hidden in great darkness in the garden.

If we are lucky  
the house will collapse and the light will be set free  
for the whole world.

-Translations by Leon Wieseltier

"Now, when the waters are pressing mightily" from "Now and in Other Days," original Hebrew © 1956 by Yehuda Amichai. "In a man's life," © 2005 by the estate of Yehuda Amichai. Both originally published in these translations in *The New Yorker Magazine*. "The House of Lovers," © 2004 by the estate of Yehuda Amichai. Originally published in this translation in the *New York Times Review of Books*. Text and translation used with permission of the estate of Yehuda Amichai.

### Charles Ives and His Sources

Charles Ives (1874 - 1954) is universally recognized as one of the most original and quintessentially American composers. An insurance executive by profession, he composed prolifically in his spare time in almost every major genre. In relative isolation from the musical mainstream, Ives created far-reaching experiments in form, harmony, tonality, and rhythm, while nevertheless managing always to sound uniquely "Ivesian." His works are patriotic, religious, philosophical, political, or reminiscent of childhood and turn-of-the-century American life. As we will hear in William Sharp's selection of Ives' songs and their antecedents, the composer's music is filled with free associative quotes from traditional American songs, hymns, and marches as well as from sources as diverse as ragtime and the great European masters.

Nowhere does one get a more comprehensive grasp of Ives' range than in his songs. The songs heard this evening are all from Ives' 1922 compendium *114 Songs*, printed, at the composer's own expense, primarily for friends who had occasionally asked him for copies of some of his songs. Nevertheless, Ives decided to send the anthology to randomly selected professional musicians, teachers, critics, and publishers. The *Musical Courier* thought

the songbook was a practical joke. Yet *114 Songs* reached avant-garde musicians who were enthralled with its contents, feeling they had discovered a neglected genius, and spread the word through their circles. As for Ives, he explained his motives in the book's postscript: "Some have written a book for money; I have not. Some for fame; I have not. Some for love; I have not. Some for kindlings; I have not... In fact, I have not written a book at all—I have merely cleaned house. All that is left is out on the clothes line."

### Sextet

Aaron Copland

Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 14, 1900, and spent his childhood living above his parents' Brooklyn shop. By the age of 15 had already taken an interest in music and aspired to be a composer. His musical education reached its apogee with Nadia Boulanger at the Fontainebleau School of Music in Paris from 1921 to 1924. Returning from Paris, Copland decided that he wanted to write music that was "American in character" and identified jazz as the quintessential American idiom. The integration of jazz into his overall compositional voice, resulting in early works of extraordinary complexity such as the *Sextet*, corresponded to a broad rejection of writing music for the elite during the Depression. American folklore, revival hymns, and cowboy songs served as the basis for much of Copland's work during the subsequent period, at a time when conservatories were teaching more astringent methods of composition. Copland maintained that he wanted to say what he had to say in the simplest possible terms. It was during this second (vernacular) period that many of Copland's enduring favorites were composed. During the McCarthy era, Copland was called to testify before congress as a suspected Communist, and was black-listed. In 1953, his "A Lincoln Portrait" was pulled from President Eisenhower's inaugural concert due to the political climate. A compositional shift away from populism and toward a more abstract, "academic" style is sometimes associated directly with this political experience. Yet, like other composers, including Stravinsky, whose writing shifted toward the atonal during this period, Copland's musical voice remained unmistakably his own.

