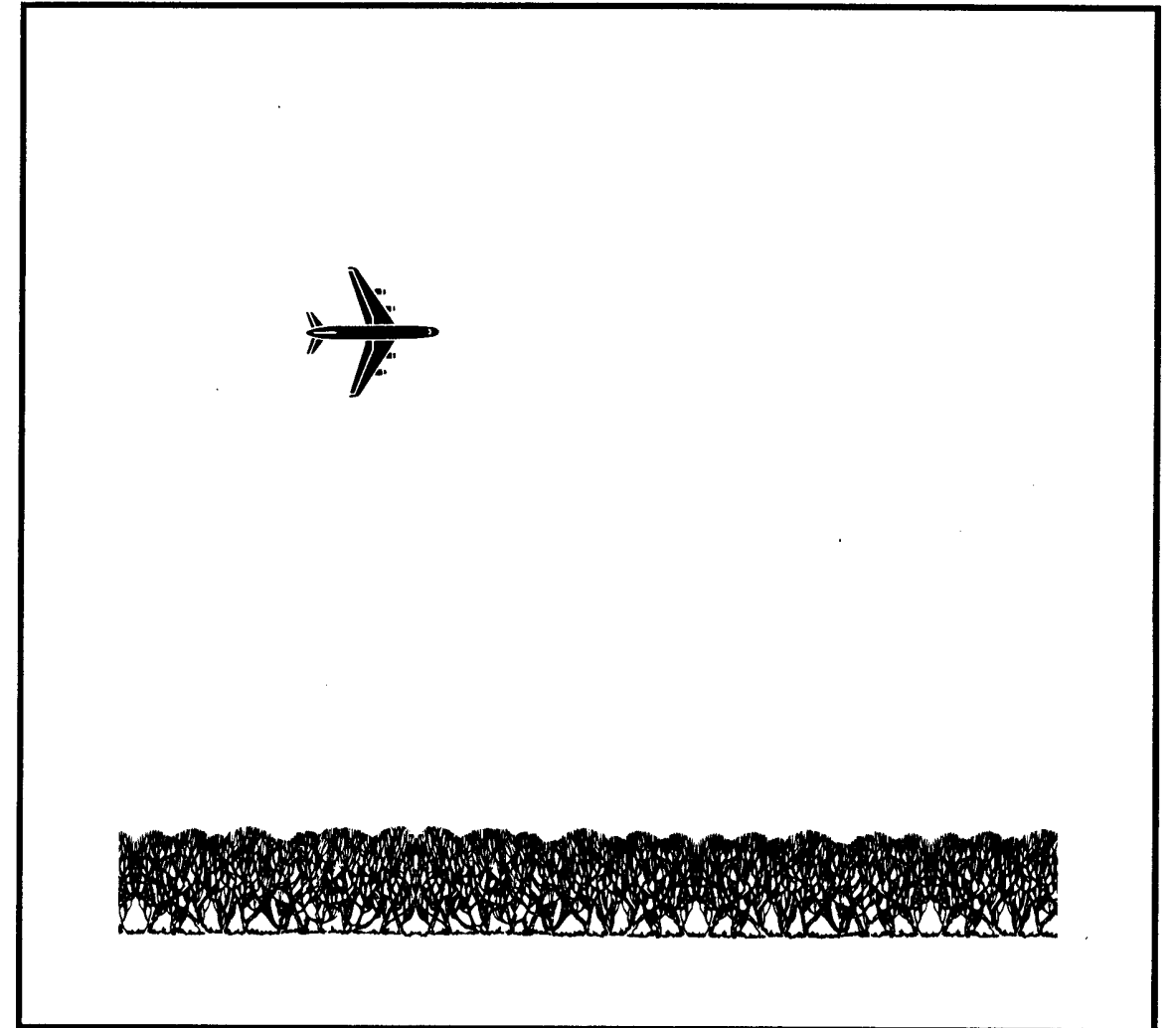


E S S E N T I A L M U S I C

DEPARTURE / RETURN



What is good is given back!

E S S E N T I A L M U S I C
GREENWICH HOUSE AUDITORIUM 27 BARROW STREET, NYC
APRIL 12, 1990

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D E P A R T U R E / R E T U R N

A p r i l 1 2 , 1 9 9 0

Wake for Charles Ives (1974)
for four tenor drums
Peter Cooper, John Kennedy, Eric Kivnick, Shannon Wood, *drum quartet*

James Tenney

Piano Sonata No. 2, "The Airplane" (1922)

Judith Gordon, *piano*

George Antheil

String Quartet No. 1 (1934) *
Allegro
Lento
Moderato
Presto

Ryan Brown & Aloyia Friedmann, *violins*
Lois Martin, *viola* David Bakamjian, *cello*

Johanna M. Beyer

Hocket for Henry Cowell (1974)
for four bass drums

James Tenney

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Crystal Canon for Edgar Varese (1974)
for four snare drums

James Tenney

Two Poems of Departure (1927)
Separation on the River Kiang
Taking Leave of a Friend

Lisa Saffer, *soprano*
Judith Gordon, *piano*

John J. Becker

Matachin Dances (1981)

Ryan Brown & Aloysia Friedmann, *violins*
John Kennedy, *rattle*

Peter Garland

Return (1939)

John Beck, Peter Cooper, Gary Fieldman, Eric Kivnick,
Shannon Wood & Charles Wood, *percussion*
Lisa Saffer, *wailer*
John Kennedy, *conductor*

Henry Cowell

* First Performance

ESSENTIAL MUSIC is devoted to the advocacy and development of new creative work which explores the nature, limits, and contexts of music and the arts, and the ways in which music and the arts can participate in the development of new spiritual, ethical, and ecological paradigms.

Since our start three years ago we have devoted a great deal of energy towards the establishment of a sense of context for 'new music'. History is important to us. Much of what we think is new, or revolutionary, really has its roots in the many decades of musical experiment and perceptual exploration that has taken place in this century. In addition to the presentation of exciting new work from our contemporaries we have, this year, focused on the exploring the idea of the 'American Experimental Tradition'. While this is just one of many important currents in recent musical history, it is one which has always had a special resonance for us. And while we intend, in the future, to continue to explore this tradition and its rich legacy, we will be trying to do so from a somewhat more global perspective.

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E s s e n t i a l M u s i c

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THE PERFORMERS

Cellist DAVIV BAKAMJIAN has degrees from the Yale School of Music and SUNY/Stony Brook. As a member of the Casa Verde Trio, he has undertaken six national tours and a recent tour of China. He performs with many area orchestras and chamber groups.

JOHN BECK lives in the Washington, D.C. area, and performs with area groups including the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony. A 1982 graduate of Oberlin College, he received a M.M. from Eastman before serving in the President's Own U.S. Marine Corps Band as percussionist and xylophone soloist.

Violinist RYAN BROWN is a member of the Atlantic Quartet and the Four Nations Ensemble, and has been a Concertmaster for Concert Royal and Chicago Citymusic. He is the Artistic Director of the Redwoods Summer Music Festival.

PETER COOPER is the Principal Timpanist of the Colorado Springs Symphony. A graduate of Oberlin and Julliard, he played timpani and percussion for 3 years in the Mexico City Philharmonic.

GARY FIELDMAN is a member of the Springfield (Mass.) Symphony, and freelances with orchestras in the New York area. He has played the drumset on Broadway and in area jazz groups, including with "The Way Out". With John Kennedy and Eric Kivnick, he is a member of Young Audiences' "Tamburi Trio", a percussion group which does performances and residencies in the New York City schools.

ALOYSIA FRIEDMANN was a winner of the Artists International Competition in 1986. She performs frequently with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Solisti New York, and plays baroque violin with the Bremner Quartet. She made her Broadway stage debut this year as the violinist in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice".

JUDITH GORDON's recent performances have included the Marlboro Festival and the N.Y. premiere of William Bolcom's Capriccio with Yo Yo Ma. She will give her New York solo debut on May 26th, 1990 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

JOHN KENNEDY, originally from Minnesota, founded Essential Music with Charles Wood in 1987. A graduate of Oberlin College, he has appeared as a soloist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He has been involved with the Spoleto Festival since 1983, where he is now Artistic Director of the 20th Century Music Series. Tonight marks his New York debut as a conductor.

ERIC KIVNICK, a native of Philadelphia, has been the percussionist for many Broadway shows, including "The King and I", "Mystery of Edwin Drood", "Anything Goes", and "Meet Me In St. Louis". He has composed music for area dance companies, and in 1989 his "New Moon Dances" was performed by Essential Music. In the 1970's, he toured the U.S. in a piano & percussion quartet performing the Bartok "Sonata".

LOIS MARTIN performs with many area ensembles, and is a member of the Atlantic Quartet, Fidelio Piano Trio, New York Chamber Symphony, and the ISCM Chamber Players.

LISA SAFFER received degrees from Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory. She sings with opera companies, orchestras, chamber music groups and contemporary music groups throughout the United States. She recently performed works of Knussen, Benjamin, and Maxwell Davies with the London Sinfonietta in London, and returns in 1991 to sing the title role in Berg's *LuLu* with the English National Opera.

SHANNON WOOD graduated in 1989 from the University of Michigan and now plays drumset in the New York area. Since 1988, he has been a member of the Spoleto Festival Orchestra, and has performed as a soloist at the Festival dei Due Mondi.

CHARLES WOOD is a composer, and designer and builder of new instruments and sound installations. On May 29, 1990 he will share a program of new work with composer Dary John Mizelle at Greenwich House Auditorium.

DEPARTURE / RETURN

"I believe in music: its spirituality, its exaltation, its ecstatic nobility, its humor, its power to penetrate to the *basic fineness* of every human being...I believe that a truly devoted musical work acts to humanize the behavior of all hearers who allow it to penetrate to their innermost being."

- Henry Cowell

"Music, like all other functions of social activity, cannot be divorced from the *total* matrix of human endeavor. To solve a problem we must confront it on all levels. And only when we come to grips with the collapse of the values of our industrial civilization, will we be able to build a new...viable, *living* culture and world."

- Peter Garland

From Henry Cowell to Peter Garland, America's experimental composers have been motivated with an extra-musical idealism, in a continuing quest to engage art and life as a form of social activism. For Cowell's generation in the 1920's and 1930's, united through his New Music Society and publications, this quest included a gleeful departure from European traditions, with the intent to establish a new and independent culture. Simply through the establishment of community, Cowell and his circle of friends were fueled and exhilarated with the knowledge that they were taking the first steps of a cultural journey.

Years later in the 1970's, another generation of composers was united in part by Peter Garland and his journal *Soundings*, again at an exciting time of cultural risk taking and upheaval, when the greening of America seemed so inevitable and sure. Garland's editorial wisdom embraced not only the newest scores and ideas, but also featured many lost or ignored works from Cowell's generation. By identifying and making the return to a point of departure, Garland and his circle enriched their own work through the cultivation of the roots and offshoots of an evolving American musical culture.

Tonight's program unites the work of these different generations, and the work of close colleagues and friends who, excepting Antheil, worked persistently in the advocacy of new American music. It is appropriate to connect, in concert, these composers who have strived so hard for connectedness in their music and their lives. For we can hear that beyond their efforts to cultivate the compelling feeling of cultural energy that is aptly known as a movement, their music communicates beautifully and eloquently.

James Tenney's *Three Pieces for Frum Quartet* is part of a series of homages Tenney has dedicated to early American experimentalists. Tenney, born in 1934 and currently residing in Toronto, is like Antheil and Cowell were, a noted pianist. He lived in New York during the 1960's, and among a dizzying array of activities, played with the ensembles of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, co-founded the Tone Roads Ensemble, and organized the first continuous public reading of the complete *Finnegan's Wake*. His substantial compositional and theoretical work has been the subject of tributes in complete editions of the journals *Soundings* and *Perspectives of New Music*. When asked at Telluride in 1988 who he would study with were he a young composer today, John Cage replied: "James Tenney".

Tenney has written: " *Wake* for Charles Ives' is a kind of 'round' involving the cyclic repetition of a two-bar rhythmic phrase occurring in several of Ives' works. After every two repetitions, a new 'voice' is added, playing the same phrase displaced a 32nd-note earlier than the corresponding notes in the first voice. As more and more voices are introduced in this way, the original figure is gradually submerged in a continuous series of 32nd-note pulses - its own, ever-widening 'wake' of sound. The piece was originally conceived for mechanical drum, designed and built by Stephen Von Huene, and on permanent display at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. *Hocket* for Henry Cowell' explores certain parallels between pitch-intervals and time-intervals first suggested by Cowell. In addition, various devices including the medieval "hocket", are used to create an illusion of spatial movement. *Crystal Canon* for Edgar Varese' is based on the snare drum 'theme' from *Ionisation*. Beginning with an initial fragment only, the complete figure is built up gradually in all four canonic voices. The resulting texture evolves by a process analogous to crystal growth - a process Varese often compared to his own music."

George Antheil was born in Trenton, New Jersey in 1900. As recounted in his autobiography, *Bad Boy of Music*, the *Airplane Sonata* was the first of his revolutionary pieces of "Machine Music" (which also included *Death of the Machines*, *Mechanisms*, and the *Ballet Mechanique*), and originated from a dream that he viewed as a prophecy. In early 1922, he became enchanted with a sixteen-year-old girl he had met in Philadelphia. One night during their romance, he had an extraordinary dream in which he heard what was his own music, unlike any music he had ever heard, coming from homes in a future world of great peace and nobility. Upon

TWO POEMS OF DEPARTURE

Separation on the River Kiang

Kojin goes west from Kokakuro
The smoke flowers are blurred
Over the river
His lone sail blots the far sky
And now I see only the river
The long Kiang, reaching heaven

Taking Leave of a Friend

Blue mountains to the north of the walls
White river winding about them
Here we go to make separation
and go out
Through a thousand miles of dead grass

Mind like a floating wide cloud
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
who bow over their clasped hands at a distance
Our Horses neigh to each other
as we are departing

Rihaku, translation Ezra Pound

O U R 1 9 9 0 - 1 9 9 1 S E A S O N !

1. Smash Season Opener:

John Cages's *The City Wears a Slouch Hat, a radio play* will receive its first performance since its premiere on a Chicago radio station in 1942. This long-lost work for percussion, sound effects and narrator is based on a short story by Kenneth Patchen and has been reconstructed from the original parts. Robert Ashley will appear as the narrator.

Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonata*, written in 1924 by the Dadaist painter, will be performed by Dary John Mizelle, who is the only person who has performed it (that we are aware of), other than Schwitters and Schwitters's son. A vocal tour de force, the *Ursonata* was described by Moholy-Nagy as "a poem of thirty-five minutes' duration containing four movements, a prelude, and a cadenza in the fourth movement. The words do not exist, rather they might exist in any language; they have no logical only an emotional context; they affect the ear with their phonetic vibrations like music." A unique experience.

Rounding out the evening will be something special from Robert Ashley.

2. Peter Garland: composer and publisher of *Soundings*. Few have done so much for those working within the 'American Experimental Tradition'. It's about time the favor was returned. A new work is promised (featuring Guy Klucevsek), as well as several of his more recent works. Garland has been a significant influence on Essential Music's orientation.

3. Annea Lockwood: a major new work, in a large space, incorporating images from the Lascaux cave paintings. For multiple didgeridoos, other winds, percussion, and projections.

4. James Tenney: a survey of this most influential composer and theorist's recent work, the first here in New York since the 1979 Reich Foundation retrospective concerts. Included will be the *Three Indigenous Songs, Critical Band, Glissade* and others.

5. May Day Extravaganza: we never seem to be able to get it scheduled on May Day, but our annual year-end grab-bag will feature a new work by Dary John Mizelle for a large array of percussion instruments, new work by Essential Music staff members (including Donel Young's *Leda and the Swan* for cello and soprano), and other stuff yet to be decided upon.

awakening, he wrote down as many of the fragments of the music as he could remember, but found the next day that they were an unsatisfactory representation of what he had heard. Some weeks later, the girl's mother abruptly whisked her to Europe to avoid Antheil's encroaching affection. In frustration, Antheil turned to his dream fragments. "...I suddenly turned to this piece of paper as though there, in its almost unintelligible scratchings, were the hieroglyphics through which I could escape into my true future - if only I could decipher them in time. I sat down at my piano and played them, over and over. Then grabbing a piece of music paper, I wrote as if by automatic writing a whole but very difficult piano sonata, the *Airplane Sonata*. I called it that because, as a symbol, the airplane seemed most indicative of that future into which I wanted to escape." Antheil then fangled a tour of Europe as a concert pianist with the primary intent of searching there for his love. Instead the kid from New Jersey rocked the European musical world and set to work upon his most important compositions.

Johanna M. Beyer was born in Leipzig in 1888, and lived in New York from 1924 until her death in 1944. During this period she was an active participant in New York's avant garde musical activities. She met Henry Cowell by taking his percussion class at the New School, which led to the publication of her *IV for Percussion* in Cowell's New Music Orchestra Series. During Cowell's incarceration in San Quentin, Beyer served without pay as his secretary, circulating his manuscripts and handling some of his correspondence. Despite composing over 50 works, her gender, shyness, and relatively early death by ALS have left her in utter obscurity. Two Essential Music retrospective concerts commemorating her 100th Birthday in 1988 (the first concerts ever devoted to her work) revealed magnificently innovative work that suggests she likely had an unacknowledged influence on the work of her male peers. Beyer composed four String Quartets, of which only the Second has been performed (in 1988).

John J. Becker (1886-1961) belongs, together with Cowell, Ives, Riegger and Ruggles, to the group known as the "American Five" of avant-garde music. He lived most of his professional life in the American Midwest, where he was a militant and controversial crusader for new music, and was extremely active politically and religiously as a Social Democrat. He was greatly influenced by Ezra Pound, both politically and artistically, having first been attracted to Pound's work after having received Pound's book *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* (1924). The lyrics for the *Two Poems of Departure* are from Pound's translations of the Chinese poet Rihaku and were first published in Pound's *Cathay* (1915).

Peter Garland was born in 1952 and lives in Santa Fe. The founder and editor of the journal *Soundings*, he has supported himself and the journal through the years with various non-music jobs including farm labor. In addition to composing, he has authored numerous essays, including the collection *Americas: Essays on American Music and Culture, 1973-80* (which includes a loving introduction by James Tenney).

The *Matachin Dances* are a set of six dances, the forth of which for violins alone, is subtitled "The Dance of Death" and dedicated to the memory of John Lennon. Garland gives a reference to the score's title by quoting from the Arizona State Museum catalogue *The Material World of the Tarahumara*: "When the soldier Bernal Diaz del Castillo entered Mexico City with the conquistador Hernando Cortes in 1519, he noted that, 'One part of the city was entirely occupied by Montezuma's dancers, of different kinds...and some danced like those in Italy, called by us Matachines...'. The matachine dance continues in popularity as a folk dance throughout Mexico and most of the American Southwest, especially among Indians. In the 450 years since the conquest of Mexico, forms of the matachine have diffused and changed, blending, perhaps, with native dances dating from pre-Spanish times which were similar to it." Garland has written in his essay "Americas": "...music has lost its sense of itself as DANCE, a premise which is still in parts of the world inseparable from it...MUSIC IS A PHYSICAL PHENOMENON, neither conceptual, nor purely 'aural'. This is the only place to start from." He sees the unity of music with dance as an approach to healing the separation of mind and body, and in enhancing our consciousness of the world through the knowledge of the body.

Henry Cowell led from 1897 to 1965 an indefatigable life as composer, performer, and immensely gnerous musical activist. (of anecdotal interest tonight is that he was for a time on the faculty of Greenwich House Music School.) Tragically, in the heyday of his New Music Society activities, Cowell was imprisoned in San Quentin from 1936 to 1940, ostensibly on a homosexual morals charge involving a minor. In light of his eventual pardon, unjustly long sentence, and the questionable circumstances surrounding the incident, it is still an open question that Henry Cowell may have been cut down at the height of his career for political reasons.

In any case, his imprisonment did not stop his composition, and whether or not its title holds any significance, *Return* was composed shortly before his parole. It is most notable for the brief appearance of a "wailer", or wailing human voice, in the coda, the part of which is carefully notated and described by Cowell. Although the work is in the Free Library of Philadelphia, it has been curiously overlooked and is not included in any existing bibliographies of Cowell's work.

- John Kennedy