

# PREMIERES



what is good is given back

## ESSENTIAL MUSIC

WASHINGTON SQUARE CHURCH, NYC  
Wednesday, May 15, 1996

## P r o g r a m

*The Pool* (1994-96) ♥ with the “*Cobbling Hymn*” *Tune* (1996) ♥

Mitchell Clark

*Lay With Me* (1996) ♥

Charles Wood

*Parting Hands* (1996) ♥

Larry Polansky

## I n t e r m i s s i o n

*The Character of American Sunlight* (1996) ♥

Jerome Kitzke

*Love Songs* (1993)

Peter Garland

When The Rain Comes

Black Sands (Cha-Cha)

“Qué Me Muero de Amor . . . “

Maria Candelaria (Interlude)

Leaves, Turning (Coda)

Maya Gunji, John Kennedy, Mark Suter, Charles Wood, percussion  
Judith Gordon, piano Ni Lan, violin

John Kennedy and Charles Wood, Artistic Directors

♥ Premiere

Essential Music’s series of concerts this season in New York is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts. These concerts, and other activities of Essential Music, are also made possible through the very generous support of the *Friends of Essential Music* .

## *Become a Friend of Essential Music!*

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.

To address these goals through a primarily musical context, Essential Music presents new and/or neglected music from a movement that has its roots in the early 20th-Century avant-garde and American Experimental Tradition, and that has through the years spawned a vital body of experimental music throughout the world. We seek through our programming to define, advocate, and provide a forum for this movement among our contemporaries in New York and beyond, as well as to help define its historic lineage.

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John Kennedy and Charles Wood

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### *Spoletto Festival USA*

May 30 - June 5, 1996

Essential Music returns to Charleston, South Carolina for the Twentieth Century Perspectives series, including a presentation of John Cage's Europera 5 at the historic Dock Street Theatre.

### *Lincoln Center Festival 96*

July 30 - August 4, 1996

Essential Music expands to a 112-musician orchestra to perform the New York premiere of Ocean with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, under the stars in Damrosch Park.

August 4, 1996

Essential Music performs For Samuel Beckett at the Society for Ethical Culture as part of the Festival's Morton Feldman retrospective.

## UPCOMING CD RELEASES

### *William Russell: Made in America*

The (nearly) complete works of William Russell, experimentalist and contemporary of Henry Cowell, John Cage, and Lou Harrison. "a superb recording" - N.Y. Times. Currently available from Mode Records.

### *John Cage: Rare Early Work*

First recordings of Cage's Fads and Fancies in the Academy and the long-lost Cage/Patchen radio drama The City Wears a Slouch Hat. Mode Records, July 1996.

### *John Cage: Five, Seven, Thirteen*

Recordings of the late number pieces Five, Seven, and Thirteen. Mode Records, Fall 1996.

### *Cornelius Cardew: The Great Learning*

The first complete recording of Cornelius Cardew's major work, an epic 7-hour rendering of Cardew's improvisational score after Confucius. Mode Records, Spring 1997.

## ESSENTIAL MUSIC ON THE INTERNET

Essential Music now has a web site under construction! For information on upcoming events and CD releases, or for information on experimental composers and musicians, come visit us at:

[essentialmusic.com](http://essentialmusic.com)

## Notes on Tonight's Program

*The Pool* is a meditation on the fates of elephants whose tusks became the ivory for piano key covers, as manufactured in towns along the Connecticut River, such as Deep River and Ivoryton, during the later 19th Century. It is also a more general elegy for the plight of elephants throughout the history of their contact with humankind.

In a performance of *The Pool*, several chords are played, the piano keys for each chord depressed silently and held for a free duration. The chords used in *The Pool* are the opening chords of a number of later 19th- and very early 20th-Century American piano compositions, and works of a number of American composers—among them Amy (Mrs. H.H.A.) Beach, Stephen Foster, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and Edward MacDowell—are drawn upon for these chords. The pianist performs with the playback of the sounds of African elephants. The loudspeakers are placed inside of the piano, and the unmuted strings—that is, those strings of the silently played chords—are free to vibrate sympathetically with the playback sounds.

The tape part is in nine large "phrases," and is prepared following a graphically notated score in which sounds (and their changing volume levels) are indicated by shapes derived from maps of the pre-modern and modern ranges of large wild mammals in Africa. The present realization of the tape includes a variety of elephant vocalizations, and other sounds such as birds, a distant airplane, and a jeep engine, also find their way into the mix.

*The Pool* is part of a larger set of Connecticut/New England-related piano pieces of mine which also includes *A Book of Music for Piano* (1987-94) and *Lionsroar* for pianola (1987/1995). In performance, *The Pool* may be followed, as it is here, by the "*Cobbling Hymn*" *Tune* (1996), a melody based on a piano piece from *A Book of Music for Piano*. *The Pool* can also be presented as an installation; the tape is repeated continuously (or, ideally, several realizations of it are played back-to-back), and—with some sort of lock devised for the piano's sostenuto pedal—one chord is used for each day of the installation.

The tape sources used here include recordings supplied by Dr. Katy Payne, who has conducted research into elephant communication since the 1970s. The tape was realized with the help of composer Carl Stone. I'd like to thank each of them for their generous contributions to the realization of this piece.

"... the ivory workers of the Connecticut River Valley learned the art of cutting tusks into thin wafers to be glued onto sugar pine or basswood and formed into piano keyboards. From mid-century on, their product dominated the booming piano business, to the near-exclusion of competitors. When Paderewski barnstormed the country on behalf of Steinway & Sons, when Scott Joplin composed "Maple Leaf Rag," when countless young ladies in their parlors executed "The Dying Poet"—more or less skillfully—they played on ivory that most probably came from either Comstock, Cheney & Co. of Ivoryton or its larger rival, Pratt, Read & Co., four miles north in Deep River. To supply what amounted to a national mania for the piano, Pratt, Read alone was at one point cutting 12,000 pounds of ivory a month. Tusks then averaged sixty or seventy pounds apiece, so the ghosts of well over a thousand elephants trooped through its workrooms each year. No one kept count of the human ghosts left by the ivory trade, but they were certainly more numerous. Henry M. Stanley, the explorer, once wrote that every pound of ivory 'has cost the life of a man, woman, or child' in Africa. The factories in Deep River and Ivoryton required a pound and a half of ivory to make a single keyboard."

Richard Conniff, “When the Music in Our Parlors Brought Death to Darkest Africa”, *Audubon* vol.89 no.4 (July 1987), 76-93

- Mitchell Clark

***Lay With Me*** was conceived as an overture, of sorts, to a larger musical treatment of the life of El Nino de los Scats (or, Our Little Boy of the Scats), an almost entirely unknown mystic that traveled extensively throughout North America during the earlier years of the century, and whom was revered by his followers (the “Scatantes”) for his powers of healing.

The work is dedicated to Peter Garland, with whom I was visiting earlier this year at his home in Madrid, New Mexico when I first learned (not from Peter, though) of El Nino.

- Charles Wood

***Parting Hands*** is a set of 17 variations on the old American shape note tune “Parting Hand” by William Walker. The song is about leaving a gathering and was often used to end meetings of the Sacred Harp, a society of shape note singers. *Parting Hands* was written for John Kennedy and Charles Wood and is still a work in development.

- Larry Polansky

***The Character of American Sunlight***. The epigraph running through the score of this new work for my friends in Essential Music reads:

A ghost comes to catch a train to the place where it can see the character of American sunlight. That light, which “long ago gave up its claim on innocence”, now searches, as it must, to illuminate the darkness of the American human nature. Recognizing this, the spirit is pleased and catches the train back home to everywhere.

The essence of these words comes from the historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, Henry James and Drex Brooks’ *Sweet Medicine*, a photographic essay of Indian massacre, battlefield, and treaty sites. In 1887, James said, speaking of America: “the light of the sun seems fresh and innocent, as if it knew as yet but few of the secrets of the world and none of the weariness of shining...A large juvenality is stamped upon the face of things, and in the vividness of the present, the past, which died so young and had time to produce so little, attracts but scanty attention.” Native nations then and now reject this Eurocentric view, as should all Americans. In 1995, Ms. Limerick said of the same light: “Shining on North America, the sun that now lights Brooks’ photographs long ago gave up its claim on innocence. Illuminating the events of the Indian/White wars, the sun came to know quite a few of the most unsettling ‘secrets’ of human nature. To try and forget those secrets diminishes the human spirit...”

My work is a simple dance and prayer that we not forget. The title is Ms. Limerick’s. Thanks to her, Henry James, and Drex Brooks. Special thanks to John Kennedy and Charles Wood.

- Jerome Kitzke

The marimbula has long fascinated me, as an African transplant and continuance in the New World, especially in the Caribbean-Gulf of Mexico regions. It was prominent in early Cuban son groups, Dominican merengue music, Jamaican mento and elsewhere. Its only occurrence in the contemporary classical repertoire that I’m aware of is in the Ritmicas 5 and 6 of Amadeo Roldan, and the Three Cuban Pieces of William Russell.

In ***Love Songs*** I have attempted a kind of miniaturization. Not a series of isolated miniatures, but something with continuity and momentum. To put as many ideas as will fit and cohere, and eliminate to a certain extent the element of “transition”. The influences are obvious, from popular musics. There is also poetic-musical inspiration from the trouvère/troubadour traditions of southern Europe during the Middle Ages, and from aspects of Japanese poetic form.

*Love Songs* is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Elizabeth Tracy Garland, who died during the time this piece was being composed

- Peter Garland

## The Likely Suspects

**Judith Gordon** gave her New York recital debut at the Metropolitan Museum of Art *Introductions* series. She has concertized extensively in the U.S., Spain, Switzerland, Austria, and Mexico as soloist and partner to outstanding instrumentalists in recitals and chamber music. Festivals have included Tanglewood, Marlboro, Spoleto, and Mendocino. Recently, Ms. Gordon made her debut as soloist with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops.

**Maya Gunji** performs with many of New York’s leading musical organizations, including the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the New York Philharmonic, and the Metropolitan Opera. On Broadway, she played the production of “The Threepenny Opera” featuring Sting, as well as “Man of La Mancha”, and is a member of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra.

**John Kennedy** founded Essential Music with Charles Wood in 1987. Since 1990, he has been Director of the 20th Century Perspectives new music series at Spoleto Festival USA. He performs with many area musical ensembles including the Orchestra of St. Luke’s. He has authored and led many educational programs for New York Young Audiences including their Classical Music Month programs. His compositions have been performed at many venues in New York including the Kitchen and Here, and at festivals throughout the U.S. and Europe. He is Associate Editor of the Johanna Beyer Project for Frog Peak Music.

**Ni Lan** is a member of the Sebastian String Quartet and performs with many area orchestras including the American Symphony Orchestra. He is also a member of the Sarasota Opera Orchestra. This is his first appearance with Essential Music.

**Mark Suter** has performed with the Costa Rica National Symphony, as well as at both the American and Italian Spoleto Festivals. In New York he performs with the Stamford Symphony, on Broadway, and is a member of the Manhattan Samba Group and various other Brazilian/Cuban music groups.

**Charles Wood** is a composer and designer of new musical instruments and sound installations. His work has been presented at the Spoleto Festival USA, Aspekte Salzburg Festival, Zurich June Festival, at The Kitchen, at Roulette, and at The Performing Garage in New York City, Minneapolis’ Southern Theatre, by Los Angeles’ Antenna Repairmen, and by The California Ear Unit. His instruments have been exhibited at Lincoln Center’s “Out Of Doors”, and at the Walker Gallery in Seattle.