

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY

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Experiments in the Studio: an MCDC new music series

An Evening with Gordon Mumma

Monday Nov. 19 at 8:30 PM

Five New York City Premieres

New York, NY—Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) presents the second concert of *Experiments in the Studio* on Monday November 19 at 8:30 PM in the Merce Cunningham Studio. This concert celebrates the music of **Gordon Mumma** (whose primary activity with MCDC was 1966–1974 as composer/performer), bringing five pieces to New York City for the first time. Performers include Gordon Mumma (piano and live electronics), Jenny Lin (piano), and Conrad Harris (violin and live electronics).

The program includes six solo compositions spanning the last 50 years. Five of the six compositions will be **New York City premieres** (all except *Yawawot*): *Sixpac Sonatas* (1980s), seven *Dedications* (1990s), *Gambreled Tapestry* (2007), *Etude on Oxford Changes* (1957–60), *Yawawot* (2003), and *Rendition Series* (2006). *Dedications* and *Gambreled Tapestry* were arranged specifically for this concert. The *Dedications* include David Behrman, Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, James Klosty, Jackson Mac Low, David Tudor, and Christian Wolff.

From Gordon Mumma's program notes:

The *Sixpac Sonatas* have elements of Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas and John Cage's prepared-piano sonatas. The order of the six sonatas is determined by the performer. The seven *Dedications* are a special arrangement of solo piano pieces for this concert. Each dedication occupies only one or two score pages, each one to three minutes in duration. *Gambreled Tapestry* for solo piano was composed for this performance as an encore to the *Dedications* group. A gambrel is a symmetrical two-sided sloped structure, often used in roof design for efficient use of space. Here it is applied to a tapestry-like structural flexibility of the musical composition. *Etude on Oxford Changes* was requested by the carillon virtuoso and campanologist Percival Price (1901–1985). Price used it in lecture-demonstrations about the compositional procedures of change-ringing, comparing them to serial techniques of composition. The violin solo is structured following the series of the first 34 sections of a classical Oxford (England) change-ring of six bells. *Yawawot* was a request by Conrad Harris for a solo violin piece, and it includes an electronic music soundscape. It was premiered in 2004 at Merkin Hall, with music by other composers of the Sonic Arts Union. *Rendition Series* is a construction set of eight individual sections titled *Ex Streams*, with an obligato electronic component. The pianist chooses the order of

the *Ex Streams*. When used, the obligato electronic component is inside the piano, to enhance the foreground and background sonorities. The *Rendition Series* was a request by the Gaudeamus Festival in Amsterdam, and premiered at the 2006 Novembermusik Festival in Den Bosch.

Gordon Mumma (b. 1935 in Framingham, Massachusetts) lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan from 1953 to 1966, where with Robert Ashley he co-founded the Cooperative Studio for Electronic Music and the ONCE Festivals of Contemporary Music. From 1966 to 1974 he was, with John Cage and David Tudor, one of the three composer-musicians with MCDC, and performed on international tours with Robert Ashley, David Behrman, and Alvin Lucier in the Sonic Arts Union. His musical compositions include works for acoustical instruments (mostly solo piano and chamber music) as well as for electronic and computer resources. Mumma has made concert tours and recordings in North and South America, Japan, and Europe. His best-known engineering design was for an electronic music live-performance system at Expo '70 (Osaka, Japan). A large collection of his solo piano music, performed by the Belgian virtuoso Daan Vandewalle, is forthcoming in 2008. Now Professor Emeritus, Mumma was Professor of Music at the University of California from 1975 to 1994. He has been the Darius Milhaud Professor at Mills College, and taught at Brandeis University, University of Illinois, the Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Darmstadt Germany), and the Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea (Buenos Aires; Montevideo; and Santiago, República Dominicana). In 2000 Mumma received the biennial John Cage Award from the Foundation for the Contemporary Arts. Since 2004 he has been a Canadian resident, associated with the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

Experiments in the Studio celebrates Merce Cunningham's commitment to commissioning more new music by American composers than any other single choreographer, and the historic relationship between Merce Cunningham and John Cage, Founding Music Director of MCDC. The composer/performers in this series represent a vibrant history of avant-garde music and multiple generations of contemporary composers working and performing together, from the 1950s through today.

Experiments in the Studio, spring 2008:

Jan 7 George Lewis, Fast Forward, Zeena Parkins, John King

Feb 4 An Evening with Christian Wolff

Mar 31 An Evening with Takehisa Kosugi

May 5 Richard Teitelbaum, Miguel Frascóni, Marina Rosenfeld, David Behrman

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