|| San Francisco Performances || SAN FRANCISCO **ENCORES/NOTES** HOME TICKETS | EVENTS **Kronos Quartet** May 21 & 22 THEATERS **NOTES ON THE PROGRAM** SUPPORT SFP **Steve Reich** EDUCATION Born 1936 VIDEOS **Pendulum Music** KEEP INFORMED "A totally oddball piece" is composer Steve Reich's description of this rarely performed composition in relation to the balance of his work since the mid-1960s. Not only does DONATE TICKETS Pendulum Music forsake traditional instruments for a series of feedback pulses between microphones and amplifiers - the piece also features no written notes, relying instead on **ENCORES I NOTES** chance operations, as each microphone moves through space in a pendular arc. Fittingly enough, the composition itself was inspired by an act of chance. SITE MAP "I was spending the summer in New Mexico," Reich recalls, "living and working out there in '68. I went up to Boulder to collaborate with a friend of mine, William Wiley, who's a ABOUT US painter. We were trying to put together a 'happening' with sculpture, black light. While we were working on that, Bruce Nauman, who was a student of Wiley, stopped by. The three of us were in this room and I had one of these Wollensack tape recorders - they're these funky 1950s models with a cheap electric microphone. It was an old machine by then. I was holding the microphone, which was plugged into the back of the machine so it could record. The speaker was turned up. Being out West, I let it swing back and forth like a lasso. As it passed by the speaker of the machine, it went, 'Whoop!' and then it went away. "We were all laughing at this and the idea popped into my mind that if you had two or three of these machines, you would have this audible sculpture phase piece....It's me making my peace with [John] Cage. If it's done right, it's kind of funny." In his performance instructions for the finished work (revised in 1973), Reich states: "Three, four, or more microphones are suspended from microphone boom stands, or some other three to six-foot-high support, by their cables so that all hang the same distance from the floor and are all free to swing with a pendular motion. Each microphone's cable is plugged into an amplifier which is connected to a loudspeaker. Each microphone hangs a few inches directly above or next to its loudspeaker. Before the performance, each amplifier is turned up just to the point where feedback occurs when a microphone swings directly over or next to its speaker, but no feedback occurs as the mike swings to either side....The performance begins with performers taking each microphone [and] pulling it back like a swing....Performers then count off "one, two, three, four, release" and release all the microphones in unison. Thus, a series of feedback pulses are heard which will either be all in unison or not, depending on the gradually changing phase relations of the different microphone pendulums....The piece is ended sometime shortly after all microphones have come to rest and are feeding back a continuous tone by a performer pulling out all the power cords of the amplifiers." Despite its "oddball" qualities, Pendulum Music is a natural extension of Reich's more storied explorations of musical lines and rhythms moving in and out of synchronization, or "phase," including *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase* (both 1967) and *Drumming* (1970). Reich continued to pioneer new approaches to rhythm - and to find innovative raw materials for his music - in later works, such as 1988's celebrated Different Trains, commissioned for Kronos by Betty Freeman. In this powerful work, harking back to Reich's early speech pieces It's Gonna Rain (1965) and Come Out (1966), the Quartet's parts are inspired by the pitches and rhythms of recorded speech. The New York Times hailed Different Trains as a work of such astonishing originality that breakthrough seems the only possible." description....[It] possesses an absolutely harrowing emotional impact." More recently, Kronos Quartet commissioned Reich's Triple Quartet (1999). As the title implies, the piece actually comprises three simultaneous string quartet performances - on disc and in concert, Kronos performs live over two of its own pre-recorded parts. **John Zorn** Born 1953 Cat O' Nine Tails (Tex Avery Directs the Marquis de Sade) Turning a self-described short attention span into a creative asset, the ever daring composer, saxophonist, and New York "Downtown" music czar John Zorn developed a unique approach to composition in the 1980s and early '90s. Starting with discrete musical ideas - or "moments" - jotted down on file cards whenever inspiration struck, Zorn would create a new work by assembling the cards in a specific order. The resulting music is both endlessly surprising and relentlessly pulse-quickening - an experience often compared to rapidly pushing the pre-set buttons on a car radio, or to the constantly shifting, "jump cut" imagery of modern films and music videos. Cat O' Nine Tails, commissioned by Kronos and featured on the 1993 Short Stories album, is a perfect example of the form. In under 15 minutes, the piece brings together 51 distinct moments, from gently plucked tones to razor-sharp dissonance, and from stately classicism to country hoe-down to cartoon zaniness-with few passages daring to challenge the 10-second barrier. "It's a fun piece to play and a fun one to listen to," Zorn says. "A piece with a lot of drama and humor and many musical games hidden in the web of its inner details. Sly quotes and secret codes are scattered throughout my classical repertory, serving as both special tributes to the composers and compositions that feed my inspirations and, more importantly, as unifying devices to create structural integrity....This piece is subtitled 'Tex Avery Directs the Marquis de Sade, for obvious reasons. Beyond finding an echo of the infamous 18th-century author in the gleeful violence of the classic Warner Brothers cartoons of the 1940s and '50s, Zorn has long drawn stylistic inspiration from the soundtracks of composers like Avery's partner in 'toons, Carl Stallings. As Zorn describes it, when you listen to Stallings' music apart from the animated visuals, you "enter a completely new dimension: you are constantly being thrown off balance, yet there is something strangely familiar about it all." Zorn's own résumé would seem decidedly off balance, if there weren't something so strangely ingenious about it all. Already a budding composer of contemporary classical music by his mid-teens, Zorn dropped out of Webster College in St. Louis, inspired to pursue avant-garde jazz improvisation by the likes of saxophonist Anthony Braxton and other members of Chicago's influential Assocation for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. By the early 1970s, he had settled in Greenwich Village, performing solo sax concerts and beginning to compose the structured improvisations he called "game pieces." From early works like Lacrosse (1977) and Hockey (1978) to 1984's Cobra, widely considered the ultimate game piece, Zorn perfected a process of cueing musical events according to ever more sophisticated sets of improvisational rules. In keeping with sporting events, while the rules of a game piece remain the same over time, no two performances of a Zorn game piece ever sound alike. Beyond creating and directing (or "prompting") the game-pieces and composing and recording other noted file-card works like Godard (1985) and Spillane (1986), Zorn has led and written for a number of his own ensembles, including the Noir-infused Naked City and the hardcore improvisational trio Painkiller. Beginning with his 1992, album-length composition Kristallnacht, Zorn embarked on an exploration of his Jewish identity. This work has reached its fullest expression in the 10-year-old performing quartet and book of compositions called Masada - a project that weds traditional Jewish scales to a brash style of jazz reminiscent of Zorn's saxophone hero Ornette Coleman. Since the mid-'80s, following in the tradition of composers such as Ennio Morricone and Nino Rota, Zorn has also been a frequent and typically eclectic composer for film. To date, he numbers 13 volumes of Film Works releases on his own Tzadik record label, with styles ranging from rambunctious cartoon music to elegiac strings to bossa nova riffs traded between guitar and Chinese pipa - often, of course, all on the same album. **Scott Johnson** Born 1952 Three Movements from How It Happens (The Voice of I.F. Stone) It Raged Perfect Weapon What Would Have Happened The sorely missed voice of the great progressive journalist I.F. Stone brings both meaning and melody to Scott Johnson's *How It Happens*. Written for the Kronos Quartet, Johnson's major work has been excerpted on two Kronos discs of the last decade, Short Stories (1993) and Howl, U.S.A. (1996). Now ten years on from the work's completion, and a full 20 years since Stone delivered the lecture sampled by Johnson, the three movements presented in this program seem paradoxically tailored for our own times, evoking themes of war and religion, and of the dangers inherent in their meeting. Finding the music within the spoken word would seem to come naturally to Johnson, whose career since the 1980s has been heralded by bold acts of synthesis. An influential catalyst in bringing together the once fiercely separate traditions of classical composition and popular culture, Johnson has championed the use of rock-derived instrumentation in traditionally scored compositions. He has also incorporated taped, sampled, and MIDIcontrolled electronic elements into the framework of instrumental ensembles. Of his collaborations with Kronos, Johnson writes, "Although most of my work has involved electronic or amplified materials, my first composition for the Kronos Quartet (Bird in the Domes, 1986) was for an unaltered string quartet. In How It Happens, I have combined the two sound worlds using a process which I first developed in my 1980-82 composition John Somebody, in which the transcription and analysis of a recorded speaking voice provided the musical materials for its instrumental accompaniment. "When David Harrington suggested I.F. Stone's voice (in both senses of that term) as a topic, I was at first uncertain that I would find enough points of contact with a life devoted to the world of policies and politics: a field which often strikes me as a peculiar combination of hardball and air guitar. As a little reading soon proved, my vague notion of Stone had been little more than a few adolescent associations from the turmoil of the Vietnam era, and I was quickly won over both by [Stone's 1989 book] The Trial of Socrates and by the sound of Stone's recorded voice. "Stone's often expressive and animated voice immediately brought to mind some of the early observations which, in the late '70s, led first to my habit of transcribing the pitches and rhythms of speech, and eventually to John Somebody. The desire to convince someone of something seems to create a clear musicality in human speech, both in moments of personal persuasion and in public rhetoric. The speech contours of anyone engaged in oratory, anger, wheedling, or witticism generally show a wider pitch or dynamic range, or more consistent low pedal points, or all of the above. For example, listen to a sales person, your favorite newscaster, or better yet, a preacher. The low notes at the end of sentences will tend to be within a few semitones of each other, as if these people were singing with a rough inclination towards a tonal center, resolving to some fundamental tone at the end of a phrase. "In his work as a Washington journalist/polemicist/political philosopher, Stone was the insider's outsider, able to discuss the state of the emperor's clothing while still commanding the respect of those who preferred not to. His idealistic and democratic vision of the advancement of the human race as a whole was kept sharp by a no-nonsense reporter's eye and an intellectual's sense of history. Add a delight in humor, outrage and hyperbole, and the combination is as irresistible as Sam Spade casing a Supreme Court justice. To me, Stone seems to have been cut from the same cloth as that strain of maverick American composers who turn conflicting feelings of love for, and disappointment with, their parent culture into an engine driving their efforts." Clearly, Johnson has also translated his own cultural ambivalence into forward momentum as a composer and performer. Drawing extensively in his scores on musical elements and other sounds generally associated with the American vernacular, he has premiered many of his own works performing on the electric guitar. He has appeared at festivals, concert halls, and art museums throughout Europe and North America: first with self-performed compositions for solo electric guitar, tape, and electronics; later with an octet modeled on the American big band and rock traditions; and most recently with an electric quartet of violin, cello, electric guitar, and piano/synthesizer. His many honors include a 1999 Koussevitsky award, three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and numerous grants and commissions. **Mark Grey** Born 1967 **Bertoia I and II** For many, the name "Harry Bertoia" is synonymous with the ubiquitous "Diamond" chair this Italian-born American sculptor and furniture designer created for Knoll Associates in 1952. Formed of chromed steel wire in a flowing meshed pattern, Bertoia's chair pointed toward the space age with grace - in fact, Bertoia was fond of pointing out that, when looking at his chairs, you could see that "space passes through them." After this chair brought him fame and sufficient royalties to strike out on his own, Bertoia went on to further investigate this concept of space moving through metal - and the mirror concept of metal moving and resonating in space - in a fascinating and revolutionary series of what he termed "Sonambient®" sculptures. When struck, brushed, blown in the wind, or otherwise prompted to vibrate, these works created spectral sounds that were, somehow, both distantly familiar and like nothing ever heard before. Following a serendipitous encounter with these amazing works of visual and aural art and a visit to the Sonambient® Barn in rural Pennsylvania with producer Chuck Helm, David Harrington searched for a way to bring Bertoia's spell-binding sounds into Kronos' repertoire. He enlisted the help of San Francisco Bay Area-based composer and longtime Kronos sound designer Mark Grey, and as Grey tells the story: "It was one of those wonderfully clear spring days in San Francisco when David Harrington invited me to the Kronos studio to listen to a recording he had acquired while on tour. He sat us down and asked me to hold onto the seat because I was in for a wild ride. As the CD began I could not believe the sounds coming through the speakers. Huge metallic textures weaved through delicate chimes growing into massive gong stokes. Each complex sound easily sustaining up to one minute, if not three. The experience was baffling. How was this possible? Pieces 2, 3, 4, 8 are based on my favorite folksongs from my childhood in Hunan. I composed the melodies of the other four. Since then, choreographers Chiang Ching and Muna Tseng set this work to modern dance. Pianist Fou Ts'ong got to know this work through Chiang, and performed four of the pieces. In 2001 I met Lang Lang, and he told me he wanted to premiere the complete Eight Memories in Watercolor in his concerts, for which I am very grateful. I made slight revisions to the work, in renaming titles, order of the pieces, and overall structure, according to Lang Lang's suggestions. "All this was made possible through the sculptural vision and mastery of the late Harry Bertoia, of famed chair design. The instruments in this 1972 re-issue recording are beautifully crafted sound sculptures performed by Harry in his Sonambient® barn in rural Pennsylvania. After pondering the intense afternoon, David and I began to develop ideas of how to take audiences to this magical barn. For months we brainstormed the idea and finally, in 2001, visited the Sonambient® barn, where we met Val Bertoia, Harry's son, and Melissa Strawser who curates this retrospective museum of Harry Bertoia's lifelong dream in sculpture, sound, humanity through the arts, and a deep understanding of his place in the natural world. After visiting the barn, we realized transporting sculptures around the world was not practical and would probably damage the long plate-mounted rods, many of which also had metallic beaters attached to their tips. "We decided to use technology to solve our problem. Using a computer and infra-red sensors, Kronos now triggers sampled Bertoia sculptures and controls their timbral colors in realtime. The two Bertoia movements performed in Kronos' Visual Music program are composed improvisations recalling the rich open-form spirit of composer Earle Brown. Each quartet member plays a unique sculpture 'group' organized by classes of chimes, gongs, metallic sizzle and struck, as well as bowed and brushed instruments. Resembling performances on Theremin instruments, each of these virtual sculptures is 'activated' with one hand while the other controls long sustain, overtone colors, and dynamics. The choice of individual instruments in each sculpture group is randomly selected by the computer, so the quartet members have fresh interpretations in each performance.' **Bernard Herrmann** Born 1911 **Died 1975** The Day the Earth Stood Still "We have come to visit you in peace - and with good will..." Some 30 years before E.T. touched down on these earthly shores - and promptly decided to phone home - the far more dapper space alien Klaatu and his trusty robot, Gort, arrived with a simple message for the people of earth: Your choice is simple. Join us and live in peace or pursue your present course and face obliteration. We shall be waiting for your answer. The decision rests with you. Of course, by the time Klaatu delivers these fateful words in Robert Wise's 1951 sci-fi classic The Day the Earth Stood Still, the well-meaning extraterrestrial has already been shot by us trigger-happy humans (twice). But then again, Klaatu had put humanity a bit on edge, given his sudden arrival in a sleek flying saucer, Gort's habit of reducing rifles and tanks to scrap metal, and, most panic-inducing of all - that spooky theremin music! The man behind the haunting strains of theremin - that early electronic instrument with the appropriately unearthly sound - was the great American composer Bernard Herrmann. Throughout the film's score, Herrmann accompanied his portentous horns and ominous strings with the quavering tones of two theremins, one each for low- and high-register parts. The sound eerily resembled the human voice - so eerily, in fact, that Herrmann's electronic sounds in The Day the Earth Stood Still would go on to set the standard for alien visitation in a generation of science fiction soundtracks. Before composing the unforgettable score of this Cold War cautionary tale, Herrmann had already earned a reputation as one of the finest composers writing for film. His early credits included Orson Welles' landmark debut feature, Citizen Kane (1941), as well as scores for such 20th Century Fox films as Jane Eyre (1943) and The Ghost and Mrs. Muir (1947). He went on to even greater fame through his long and fertile collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock in films like The Trouble with Harry (1955), Vertigo (1958), North by Northwest (1959). In 1960, he once again sent chills down moviegoers' spines with perhaps his most celebrated work of all - the score for Hitchcock's terrifying Psycho. He concluded his prolific career in 1975 with music for a new breed of American psychopath in Martin Scorsese's Taxi Driver. Responsible for transforming Herrmann's symphonic music for The Day the Earth Stood Still into this program's quartet arrangement is the composer, pianist, and conductor Stephen Prutsman. A frequent Kronos collaborator, Prutsman arranged several pieces on the quartet's 2002 CD, Nuevo, and also contributed arrangements to the quartet's recent collaboration with singer Dawn Upshaw. In March of 2001, in the inaugural concert of The Silk Road Project, cellist Yo-Yo Ma performed a Prutsman arrangement with the New York Philharmonic. Stephen Prutsman is an Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient, as well as a past medalist at the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition and the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition (Belgium). He is also the founder of the International Chamber Music Festival in El Paso, Texas, for which he began serving as festival director in 1991. **Conlon Nancarrow** Born 1912 in Texarkana, Arkansas **Died 1997 Boogie Woogie #3A** A maverick's maverick, Conlon Nancarrow not only wrote innovative music, but invented his own painstaking technique for bringing his staggeringly complex works into being. To be specific, the American-born, Mexican-expatriated composer did not actually "write" his most celebrated works - he punched them, hole by hole, into player piano rolls. Using this system, in one of modern music's more striking paradoxes, Nancarrow would spend months or even years in composing short works for piano that flew by at dizzying speed, requiring more dexterity, precision, and digits on the keyboard than any human player Born and raised in Texarkana, Arkansas, Nancarrow grew up in a home with a player piano. Showing an early interest in music, he gave up his attempts to learn to play piano himself following an encounter with an uncompromising teacher, and turned instead to the trumpet and the burgeoning world of jazz. Following an abortive trip to college and more fruitful private studies with the likes of Roger Sessions, Walter Piston, and Nicolas Slonimsky, he took a job in a cruise ship band in 1936. Arriving in Europe at the end of one voyage, he joined the storied Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. After his side's devastating defeat in 1939, he stowed away in a ship and returned America, but the following year, fearing trouble with the U.S. government over his past political ties, he emigrated to Mexico City, attaining Mexican citizenship in Following his youthful exploits, Nancarrow fully channeled his adventurism into his music, in 1947 acquiring his own player piano and commissioning a machine for punching piano rolls. In 1981, he made his first visit to the U.S. since the late '40s, appearing in San Francisco at New Music America '81. The Kronos Quartet were among Nancarrow's most avid American supporters in the 1980s, showcasing the composer's String Quartet (1942) on their 1986 Nonesuch debut album. As the liner notes point out, this early Nancarrow work already exhibits the "manic rhythmic labyrinths" and jazz finesse to come in the later player piano compositions. Despite Kronos' audible relish in performing Nancarrow's Quartet, however, there seemed to be no way to pursue his music further. After all, the composer's player piano masterpieces would forever be off limits to a string quartet. Or would they? Enter the German-born, Seattle-dwelling composer, sound sculptor, and electronics trailblazer Trimpin. A collaborator and confidant of Nancarrow's in the 1980s, Trimpin designed an electronic system that could scan player piano rolls and convert the data of punched holes into the computer-friendly code of ones and zeroes. Furthermore, using a self-designed interface, Trimpin could manipulate player piano codes on his computer screen in seconds and play them back instantly on the player piano in his studio. When Nancarrow first witnessed Trimpin's magic, he was floored. "What you would see on the computer screen was the image of a player piano roll, along with the music notation," Trimpin recalls. "I showed Nancarrow how you can make something an octave higher, just on the computer. His jaw dropped. He said, 'What you just did would have taken me six months!' I told him that what I did was just editing - not composing, like he could. I also showed him a machine that could also print out the paper roll. He was just looking at that point, and not saying a lot." After the initial shock wore off, Nancarrow invited Trimpin down to his Mexican studio, where the two set to work converting Nancarrow's handmade piano rolls into digital information. In addition to preserving his legacy, Trimpin notes, Nancarrow was also interested in the potential for precision that the new technology offered, particularly in the realm of linking multiple pianos - or other instruments - in series, a project that had frustrated Nancarrow's past efforts using multiple rolls and a stopwatch. Kronos' David Harrington was also highly intrigued by the Nancarrow/Trimpin possibilities. In Trimpin's words: "About 10 years ago, David told me the quartet was particularly interested in Nancarrow's Boogie Woogie Study 3A. This piece has up to 8 separate voices, and toward the end, Nancarrow has a chord playing 11 notes." To begin to address the piece's formidable challenges, Kronos' longtime sound designer, Mark Grey, sampled the Kronos members performing a range of textures, from pizzicato notes to a range of bowing techniques. With this database of available sounds, Trimpin then began the Herculean task of identifying individual voices within Nancarrow's work and matching each voice, note by note, with appropriate Kronos sounds. "It was a very time-consuming process to separate out which notes belong to which voice," Trimpin says. "Nancarrow would sometimes use different note durations for different voices, so on the roll, he could remind himself which notes belonged to which voice, by counting the holes. He might use two holes punched for one voice, and four for another, so he could visually follow it. On the screen, of course, I can assign different voices to different colors." While Trimpin never counted the holes in the Boogie Woogie 3A roll, he says that some of Nancarrow's studies comprised some 6,000 to 8,000 individual punches. And while - to preserve his own sanity, no doubt - Trimpin also avoided counting the hours spent assigning Nancarrow's notes to Kronos' tones, he does recall that, over the 10-year transcribing period, "A few times I had a laptop with me on an eight-hour flight to Europe. I would work on this project, and just get a fraction of the work done." The finished result is well worth the effort. As Trimpin points out, with the variety of timbres heard in the Kronos version of Boogie Woogie 3A - a far greater range of sounds than is available on a player piano - the individual voices of the piece stand out and intertwine for the listener as never before. In this performance, Kronos adds a further layer of interest by playing some portions of the work live over their own pre-sampled, fasterthan-life accompaniment. As a side note, while this feat of player-piano-meets-the-computer-meets-the-musicians is surely a fascinating commingling of media and technological eras, this is not the only lesson that player piano technology has for our modern era. With regard to that little "dangling chad" problem in Florida back in November of 2000, Trimpin points out, "Sometimes, in Nancarrow's work, there'd be a dangling chad. But when you buy a player piano, they sell you a special pump to suck out all the chads. Obviously, they didn't have that in Florida. "At the time," Trimpin adds, affecting a tone of mock self-importance, "I thought, 'Why didn't they ask me to fix this problem 10 years ago?'" **Krzysztof Penderecki** Born 1933 in Debica, near Krakow, Poland Quartetto per archi Kronos revisits a group milestone - the quartet's first ever staged production (designed by Larry Neff), Live Video (1986)-in this reprise performance of Penderecki's early work for string quartet. One in a series of early '60s pieces that would garner the young Polish composer an international reputation, the Quartetto per archi overflows with musical events and textures. Layers of lightly tapping bows give way to the crackle of plucked strings, barely audible bowed harmonics, sudden low-register growls, and more. This is tantalizing music, the sound of intriguing extremes: high and low, gentle and harsh, explosive and hushed. Penderecki also brought this fearlessly inventive approach to writing for strings to his largeensemble works of the period, including 1959's critically acclaimed Anaklasis (featuring 42 strings) and the harrowing Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (1959-61), a ten-minute piece for 52 strings that remains one of the most popular of Penderecki's works throughout the world. It was also with the *Threnody* that the composer debuted a new form of optical notation for his work. Like so many inventions, this one was born of necessity. "I had to write in shorthand," Penderecki says, "something for me to remember, because my style of composing at that time was just to draw a piece first and then look for pitch....I just wanted to write music that would have an impact, a density, powerful expression, a different expression....I used to see the whole piece in front of me - Threnody is very easy to draw. First you have just the high note, then you have this repeating section, then you have this cluster going, coming - different direction from the one note, twelve, and back using different shapes. Then there is a louder section; then there's another section, then there is the section which is strictly written in 12-tone technique. Then it goes back to the same cluster technique again, and the end of the piece is a big cluster, which you can draw like a square and write behind it fortissimo....I didn't want to write in bars, because this music doesn't work if you put it in bars." Born in Debica, near Krakow, in 1933, Krzysztof Penderecki was introduced to music at an early age by his father, a lawyer and violinist. Enrolling at the Krakow Conservatory at the age of 18, he graduated in 1958 and was soon appointed professor at the Musikhochschule. In 1959, Penderecki's works Strophes, Emanations, and Psalms of David won first prizes in the 2nd Warsaw Competition of Young Polish Composers of the Composers' Union. Following the subsequent successes of Anaklasis and Threnody, Penderecki went on to compose such major works as the multiple award-winning St. Luke Passion (1966) and the opera The Devils of Loudon (1967), based on Aldous Huxley's book of the same title. His extensive body of work now boasts four operas and seven symphonies, including 1996's Seven Gates of Jerusalem (a.k.a. Symphony No. 7), commissioned by its namesake city for the "Jerusalem-3000 Years" celebrations. The recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, Penderecki numbers among his most recent honors a 1998 "Foreign Honorary Membership" in the American Academy of Arts and Letters; the 2000 Cannes Classical Award for "Living Composer of the Year"; the 2001 Prince of Asturias Award for the Arts; and the 2002 Romano Guardini Prize of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria. **Terry Riley** Born 1935 One Earth, One People, One Love from Sun Rings In the 2002 work Sun Rings, the wonders of technology meet the expansive and compassionate imagination of world-renowned composer Terry Riley, bringing the music of the spheres to life for this new millennium. The full evening-length composition includes sounds harvested from our solar system - the crackling of solar winds, the whistling of deep-space lightning, and other cosmic events - which create auditory landscapes triggered by Kronos using an interactive computer. This interplanetary musical story unfolds in a visual environment of breathtaking imagery gathered by NASA spacecraft and prepared for the project by Kronos in collaboration with the eminent visual designer Willie Williams. Given the literally galactic scope of Sun Rings, it is perhaps a touch ironic that the seeds of the project lay in a cardboard box in the University of Iowa physics department. Inside that box rested a store of audio-cassette tapes of cosmic phenomena recorded over some 40 years by Iowa's Dr. Donald Gurnett. The esteemed plasma physicist affectionately refers to these extraterrestrial sounds as "whistlers," because, as he told the Los Angeles Times, when lightning discharges in the plasma of space, "It's like the electrons get together and whistle." Like one of these bolts from the heavens - if a bit slower-paced - the Sun Rings project was born through a kind of chain reaction. From Dr. Gurnett, the story moves to Bertram Ulrich, curator of the NASA Art Program. Long intrigued by Gurnett's "whistlers" and a devoted fan of Kronos, Ulrich offered Kronos a commission to turn these seemingly random tones from outer space into music. Kronos' David Harrington, for his part, turned to longtime Kronos collaborator Terry Riley - the California-based father of Minimalism, consummate uniter of musical traditions and innovations, and deep well of spirituality in sound - who agreed to serve as the project's composer. (As a historical note, in what is either a manifestation of Karma or a happy coincidence for the Sun Rings project, Riley's very first composition for Kronos was entitled Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector.) On his approach to bringing together the music of Kronos and the sounds of outer space, Riley notes, "The 'spacescapes' that comprise Sun Rings...were written as separate musical atmospheres, with the intention to let the sounds of space influence the string quartet writing and then to let there be an interplay between live 'string' and recorded 'space' sound. In some movements the intention was to place the quartet in such a way that it felt like they were traveling through spatial atmospheres as a symbolic representation of the wanderings of space probes Voyager and Galileo as they moved through what must have been the quite incredible atmospheres of our solar system. In some cases, fragments of melody that I observed in these sounds became the basis for themes that were developed in the quartet writing." In exploring the musical possibilities for the piece, Riley and Harrington paid visits to Gurnett at Iowa and to Cape Canaveral, where they observed the workings of NASA in person, enthusiastically taking in a Space Shuttle launch while they were there. Despite this promising start, however, the project was nearly de-railed by the tragic events of September 11, 2001, after which all parties concerned questioned Sun Rings' relevance in the wake of the terrorist attacks and the impending war in Afghanistan. At this point, the Sun Rings chain reaction surprisingly continued, with a new and vital link. As the L.A. Times put it: "Riley heard poet and novelist Alice Walker on the radio talking about how she had made up a September 11 mantra - 'One Earth, One People, One Love.' It suddenly occurred to him that contemplating outer space could be a way to put the problems on Earth into perspective." As Riley told the *Times*, the concept of humanity's relationship to outer space also took on a spiritual dimension for him: "I thought about a prayer central that would be like a big operating system up there that funnels all the prayers from different people." Alice Walker's mantra not only gave Riley the inspiration to continue - it also provided a title and focal point for Sun Rings' concluding movement, the excerpt performed by Kronos in the present program. Furthermore, the sound of Walker's voice intoning the words "One Earth, One People, One Love" became an integral component of the movement itself. As David Harrington points out, the prayerful, even elegiac quality of Riley's writing in One Earth, One People, One Love grows naturally from the composer's previous work with Kronos. "The sonics are directly involved with - an extension of - the Cortejo Fúnebre en el Monte Diablo from the Requiem for Adam," Harrington says. "You can hear the Tibetan bell tolling on every downbeat." As Riley describes his fully realized, post-September 11 conception of *Sun Rings*: "This work is largely about humans as they reach out from Earth to gain an awareness of their solar system neighborhood....Space is surely the realm of dreams and imagination and a fertile feeding ground for poets and musicians. Ancient astrologers were aware of the significant influences of planetary movements on our lives. I feel these influences are somehow responsible for this amazing collaboration which has been so enthusiastically undertaken by all the participants responsible for its outcome. Do the stars welcome us into their realms? I think so or we would not have made it this far. Do they wish us to come in Peace? I am sure of it." Echoing the sentiment of One Earth, One People, One Love, Riley adds, "If only we will let the stars mirror back to us the big picture of the Universe and the tiny precious speck of it we inhabit that we call Earth, maybe we will be given the humility and insight to love and appreciate all life and living forms wherever our journeys take us." Sigur Rós Flugufrelsarinn ('The Fly Freer') Formed in 1994, the Icelandic group Sigur Rós is at the forefront of invention in today's international pop and rock (or, as some put it, "post-rock") scenes. Led by the ethereal vocals and hauntingly bowed guitar of Jón Thor ("Jónsi") Birgisson, the group leaves traditional song forms on some lower, less magical plane, slipping instead into ever-shifting environments of sound - sometimes coolly beautiful, more than occasionally unsettling, and always inspired. As CMJ New Music Report described the band's compelling aesthetic: "Sigur Rós deploys its somber lullabies with symphonic grandeur, stretching out its arching melodies, building tonal and emotional colors around them, and eventually conceding to a perfectly timed fade to black. It doesn't get much more sublime than this." It also doesn't get much more enigmatic. Beyond the difficulties for non-Icelandic speakers in understanding some of Jónsi's lyrics - along with the band's reluctance to provide authorized translations - there is the fact that Jónsi sings the remainder of his songs in a self-invented language he calls Hopelandish. Adding to Sigur Rós' departure from linguistic conventions, the group's 1999 breakthrough album, Agætis Byrjun, features very little writing and, in place of the usual liner notes, a booklet of cryptic drawings that (possibly) illustrate some of the songs' narrative themes. In an even further emphasis on music over semantics, the group's follow-up 2002 disc appeared with no song titles; no text but "Sigur-Ros.com" in the CD booklet; and just the band name and a cut-out in the shape of () on the disc's semi-opaque slipcover, revealing a murky black-and-white photograph beneath. (Even some of the band's most devoted fans have succumbed to the urge to invent an album title that can be spoken, however. Among the more intriguing Web-borne samizdat titles, inspired by the look of the cover's mottled parentheses, are "Black Cheetos" and "Two Sausages Kissing.") Fortunately, in the past three years, the critical and popular response to Sigur Rós has been anything but enigmatic. In addition to its early fans around the world - including fellow musicians like David Bowie, Beck, the band Radiohead, and, of course, Kronos - the group reached new audiences through the inclusion of one of its songs, Svefn-g-englar ('Dreams of Angels'), on the soundtrack for the film Vanilla Sky. In 2001, Sigur Rós earned still more recognition in this country as the winner of the prestigious Shortlist Prize for new In light of Sigur Rós' own wide-ranging music, it is no surprise to discover that the group's members are enthusiastic fans of the Kronos Quartet. After the two ensembles met following a Kronos performance in Reykjavik, they soon began to discuss some form of collaboration between the groups. The result is this quartet arrangement of Sigur Rós' composition Flugufrelsarinn (Icelandic for 'The Fly Freer'), from the Ágætis Byrjun disc. In its original, sung version, Flugufrelsarinn relates a parable of salvation and sacrifice, in which an unnamed narrator tries to rescue helpless flies in a lake from the jaws of the approaching salmon. In Stephen Prutsman's arrangement for Kronos, the work takes on a new delicacy while losing none of its essential mystery. Home | Tickets/Events | Theaters | Support SFP | Education | Videos | Keep Informed © 2001, SF Performances Donate Tickets | Encores/Notes | FAQ | Site Map | About Us Built by Cubik Media, Inc. Cubik (

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