

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 5, 2008

Media Advisory

Contact: Anne Brooks Pfister
510.642.0448 - annepf@msri.org

Legacy of John Cage explored in concert and discussion Happening at MSRI

■ WHAT – “THE JOHN CAGE LEGACY: CHANCE IN MUSIC AND MATHEMATICS”

The legacy of John Cage lives on in the work of the avant-garde “Music Committee” of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Members (David Behrman, Stephan Moore, Takehisa Kosugi, and Christian Wolff) of this group of experimental composer/performers will appear in a concert followed by a discussion with mathematician/magician, randomness expert Persi Diaconis, Professor of Statistics and Mathematics at Stanford University, and moderated by Bob Osserman, Special Projects Director at the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI). For more information, please visit: http://www.msri.org/calendar/specialevents/SpecialEventInfo/358/show_specialevent

■ WHEN – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008 at 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

■ WHERE – Simons Auditorium at MSRI, 17 Gauss Way, Berkeley (near the intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd. and Centennial Drive). For a map & directions: www.msri.org/about/directions/index.html

■ HOW – FREE ADMISSION! Presented by MSRI in association with Cal Performances.

■ WHO – The Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s “Music Committee”:

TAKEHISA KOSUGI, Music Director, was born in Tokyo in 1938. His multi-media music has been presented at international festivals during the past two decades and sound installations have been exhibited in Europe, the United States and Japan. He studied musicology at Tokyo University of Arts where he graduated in 1962. His event pieces of 1960s were introduced by Fluxus to the world. During the 1960s in Japan he cofounded the Group Ongaku, the first Japanese group for free improvisation and event, and the Taj Mahal Travellers, an electro-acoustic/multi media band for free music in various environments. Kosugi came to the United States in 1977 in order to compose and perform for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and has been associated with the company since that time. He has been a DAAD artist in Berlin and a guest lecturer at the Hochschule Bildende Kunst in Hamburg.

DAVID BEHRMAN has been active as a composer and artist since the 1960s. Over the years he has made sound and multimedia installations for gallery spaces as well as musical compositions for performance in concerts. Most of his pieces feature flexible structures and the use of technology in personal ways; the compositions usually rely on interactive real-time relationships with imaginative performers. Working at Columbia Records in the late 1960s, he produced the “Music of Our Time” series of new music recordings for Columbia Masterworks, which presented works by Cage, Oliveros, Lucier, Reich, Riley, Pousseur and other influential composers. Behrman toured as composer/performer with the Cunningham Dance Company in the early Seventies and again from time to time in more recent years. In the ‘60s and ‘70s he assisted John Cage with several projects. Merce Cunningham commissioned him to compose music for several repertory dances, including “Pictures” in 1984. He was co-director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College in 1975-1980 and has taught also at Cal ARts, Rutgers, and the Technical University in Berlin. He has been a member of the Avery Graduate Arts Program faculty at Bard College since 1998.

STEPHAN MOORE is a composer, audio artist, and sound designer in New York City. He has graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Western Michigan University, and Interlochen Arts Academy. In 2006 and 2007, he co-curated the month-long Points in a Circle festival at Issue Project Room in Brooklyn. His creative work centers around the collection and use of real-world sound, the creation and perception of sonic environments, and technological manifestations of improvisation and interactivity. Recent performances and installation artworks make use of a large multi-channel array of his Hemisphere speakers. He performs regularly with Scott Smallwood in the electronic duo Evidence, and with a variety of musicians, live-video artists, and dancers. He has created custom music software for a number of composers and artists, and has taught courses in sound art and electronic music at Maryland Institute College of Art, Peabody Conservatory, Massachusetts College of Art, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Simon’s Rock College of Bard. He is currently the Sound Engineer and Music Coordinator of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

-- continued --

The “Music Committee” membership (continued)

CHRISTIAN WOLFF was born on March 8, 1934 in Nice, France. He has lived mostly in the United States since 1941. Wolff studied piano with Grete Sultan, composition (briefly) with John Cage. Though mostly self-taught as a composer, the work of John Cage, Morton Feldman, David Tudor and Earle Brown have been important to him, as well as long associations with Cornelius Cardew and Frederic Rzewski. A particular feature of his music is the various freedoms it allows performers at the time of performance as well as the variable results possible for any one particular piece, for which various new notations have been invented. Underlying notions in the work are shared freedom, self-determination and democratically-spirited collaboration.

Christian Wolff’s music has been performed throughout the world, especially in Europe and the United States. His compositions include works for piano(s), miscellaneous keyboards, instrumental solos, chamber groups, unspecified groups of players and sound sources, tape, chorus and orchestra. A number of pieces, starting in 1953, have been performed and commissioned by Merce Cunningham and his dance company; his work has also been used by the dancer Lucinda Childs. Wolff has been active as a performer and as improviser with Takehisa Kosugi, Steve Lacey, Christian Marclay, Keith Rowe, William Winant, the group AMM, Kui Dong and Larry Polansky. His writings on music (up to 1998) are collected in *Cues: Writings and Conversations*, published by MusikTexte, Cologne.

He received academic training in Classics and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Wolff has taught Classics at Harvard and, from 1971 to 1999, he was professor of classics and music at Dartmouth College. He is a member of the Akademie der Kuenste in Berlin and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

- **PANELIST: PERSI DIACONIS** is a mathematician, statistician, and former professional magician. He left home at 14 to travel with sleight-of-hand legend Dai Vernon, and dropped out of high school, promising himself that he would return one day so that he could learn all of the math necessary to read William Feller’s famous two-volume treatise on probability theory, *An Introduction to Probability Theory and Its Applications*. He returned to school, learned Feller, and is now the Mary V. Sunseri Professor of Statistics and Mathematics at Stanford University. He is particularly known for tackling mathematical problems involving randomness and randomization, such as coin flipping and shuffling playing cards. He has also written on probability questions that arise in methods of casting the hexagrams in the I Ching, the ancient Chinese method of divination also used by Merce Cunningham to decide the order in which dancers should make certain steps.
- **MODERATOR: ROBERT OSSERMAN** came to MSRI as Deputy Director in 1990 and has served since 1995 as Special Projects Director. He is Professor *Emeritus* at Stanford. Before joining MSRI he was Mellon Professor for Interdisciplinary Studies at Stanford. He has been involved with MSRI’s outreach activities to the general public that are related to mathematics, including the “Fermat Fest” in 1993. He has engaged in lively conversations with such luminaries as playwrights Tom Stoppard (*Arcadia*) and Michael Frayn (*Copenhagen*), biographer Sylvia Nasar (*A Beautiful Mind*), playwright David Auburn (*Proof*), comedians Steve Martin and Robin Williams in the 2002 event, “Funny Numbers” in San Francisco. He is the author of the book, *Poetry of the Universe: A Mathematical Exploration of the Cosmos*, which provides an introduction to cosmology for a non-technical audience and in which composers and mathematicians also play a role.

- **DETAILS** – Reporters are welcome to attend a private post-event Reception with the speakers. *Please* RSVP your attendance (seating will be limited) to Anne Pfister at annepf@msri.org or 510.642.0448.

- **PHOTOS** – By request, photos are available.

The **Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI)**, www.msri.org is one of the world’s premiere centers for research in the mathematical sciences, and has been advancing mathematical research through workshops and programs since its founding as an independent institute in 1982. More than 2,500 mathematical scientists visit MSRI each year in Berkeley, CA, many for stays of up to one academic year. The Institute has been funded primarily by the National Science Foundation with additional support from other government agencies, private foundations, academic and corporate sponsors, and individual donors.