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Playing the Game? Approaches to Performing the Piano Music of Christian Wolff' lecture-recital

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The Getty Research Institute presents:

Works in Progress

Spring 2009

This year's "Works in Progress" series is organized as part of the GRI's 2008-9 research theme "Networks and Boundaries."



Philip Thomas, 2007. Photo by Grenville Charles

Playing the Game? Approaches to Performing the Piano Music of Christian Wolff

LECTURER/PERFORMER

Philip Thomas

RESPONDENT

Nancy Perloff

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

2:00-4:30 p.m.

Getty Research Institute Lecture Hall, The Getty Center

The 1950s was unquestionably the decade of experimental notational practice in which the performer's role was recast from one that involves interpretation to one that requires realization. From 1957 onward, the works of American composer Christian Wolff are marked in part for the obscurity and ambiguities of both the text instructions and the notations themselves. In *For Pianist* (1959), Wolff mapped his techniques of notational indeterminacy onto a work for solo piano. Bold and unusual, *For Pianist* is fueled by uncertainty and risk, and written in the knowledge that its first performer, David Tudor, would rise to the challenge. Philip Thomas discusses the demands facing the performer of *For Pianist*, relating it to earlier piano works by Wolff and to the performing tradition established by Tudor, as detailed in Tudor's archive at the GRI. The lecture is accompanied by performances of a selection of solo piano works by Christian Wolff from the 1950s.

Philip Thomas specializes in performing experimental notated and improvised music as a soloist and with leading experimental music group Apartment House. Recent solo projects include a survey of Christian Wolff's piano music and concerts of music composed by improvisers, which were subsequently released as *Comprovisation* (2007). Currently, he is senior lecturer in performance at the University of Huddersfield and is editing a collection of essays about Christian Wolff.

Nancy Perloff is curator of modern and contemporary collections at the GRI. She has worked closely with the David Tudor archive, organizing the exhibition *Sea Tails: A Video Collaboration* (2004) and the symposium *The Art of David Tudor: Indeterminacy and Performance in Postwar Culture* (2001). For the gateway to the GRI's digitized collections relating to the work of David Tudor, visit www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/digitized_collections/davidtudor.

Admission to this event is free. To attend, please make a reservation by visiting www.getty.edu or calling (310) 440-7300. Note, late arrivals cannot be guaranteed seating. Parking is free with a reservation, or \$10.00 per car without a reservation.

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lecture series



The Getty Research Institute

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