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"American Still Life Music" Currents, directed by Fred Cohen

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Still Life

THE OBJECT IN AMERICAN ART, 1915 -1995
SELECTIONS FROM
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Friday, January 17, 1997, 7 p.m., Camp Concert Hall, Modlin Center for the Arts

LECTURE: "Still Life: A New Look at an Old Genre"
Lowery Stokes Sims, Curator of 20th Century Art,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and co-curator of the exhibition

CONCERT: "American Still Life Music"
CURRENTS, directed by Fred Cohen

Quintet
(after paintings by Edvard Munch)

Vivian Fine (b.1913)

- I. Mid-Summer Night
- II. Jealousy
- III. The Embrace

Ms. Gerster, Mr. West, Ms. Lazar,
Mr. Poplin, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Cohen

La Bonne Cuisine

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1994)

- I. Plum Pudding
- II. Ox-tails
- III. Tavouk Gueunksis
- IV. Rabbit at Top Speed

Ms. Cable, Mr. Hanson

Winter Pages

Ned Rorem (b.1923)

- I. A Mirror
- II. The sun that brief December day
- III. Around the house the flakes fly faster
- IV. Paris then
- V. Dorchester Avenue
- VI. Hesitations
- VII. Urged by earnest violins
- VIII. Moments fly by like a snowstorm
- IX. Rue des Saints-Pères
- X. Valse Oubliée
- XI. Stone Snowballs
- XII. Still Life

Mr. West, Mr. Hammel, Ms. Lazar,
Mr. Poplin, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Cohen

RECEPTION: Marsh Art Gallery, Modlin Center for the Arts

CURRENTS

Jennifer Cable *soprano*
Sandra Gerster *oboe*
Charles West *clarinet*
Fred Cohen *conductor*

Bruce Hammel *bassoon*
Terri Lazar *violin*
Douglas Poplin *cello*

TEXTS

1. Plum Pudding

Now first you take eleven pounds of juicy Concord grapes combined with equal parts of extra fine Tokays. (Be sure they are juicy;) And then you take two cups of so of bread-crumbs into which you melt a pound or so of butter, fat, or lard: (Use *Spry*; or use *Crisco!*) Eleven cups of sugar (either brown or white or powdered); a glass of milk, and half a glass of Bacardi or brandy; three eggs, and a lemon. Now mustard, powdered cinnamon, and ginger, all together making half a teaspoonful of condiment which you combine with half a teaspoonful of table salt.

2. Ox-tails

Are you too proud to serve your friends an ox-tail stew? You're wrong! For if you have enough of them you'll find you can make a fine ragout. Remove the tails which you have used to make the stew, and then you can bread them, and grill them, and prepare them with a sauce. You'll find them delicious and diff'rent and so tempting. Are you too proud to serve your friends an ox-tail stew?

3. Tavouk Gueunksis

Tavouk gueunksis, so Oriental! Put a chicken to boil, young and tender and sweet; then in the Arab manner you slice it up into pieces. Then boil flour and water, and add to it the chicken; then prepare it as above, in the manner we described for Mahallebi. Tavouk gueunksis, a Turkish heaven.

4. Rabbit at Top Speed

When you have a sudden guest, or you're in an awful hurry, may I say, here's a way to make a rabbit stew in no time. Take apart the rabbit in the ordinary way you do. Put it in a pot or in a casseroles, or a bowl with all its blood and with its liver mashed.

Take half a pound of breast of pork, finely cut (as fine as possible); add little onions with some pepper and salt (say twenty-five or so); a bottle and a half of rich claret. Boil it up, don't waste a minute on the very hottest fire. When boiled a quarter of an hour or more the sauce should now be half of what it was before. Then you carefully apply a flame, as they do in the best, most expensive cafes. After the flame is out, just add the sauce to half a pound of butter with flour, and mix them together. . . and serve.

NOTES

Winter Pages - Ned Rorem

During the early cold weeks of 1981 I began this Quintet in New York, completing it in Nantucket late in May. The suite of twelve pieces is a diary of the season, each entry leading to the next, reworking the same concerns which nevertheless shift their mood according to the weather. The whole represents a plateau from where, as the future grows narrower, the past seems more widely open to reinterpretation. Today I dwell autumnally — winterishly, if you will — upon my teens in Chicago where I wrote my first songs on American poetry, and upon my twenties in France where I continued to write songs on American poetry. This "dwelling" forms the core of *Winter Pages*.

My non-vocal works are songs without texts. Indeed, so firmly do I rely on the poor singer within me longing to get out that the music feels almost like verse

without words. Yet, since non-vocal music can never contain a uniformly identifiable program (music is music, not literature), I often, like many another "impressionist," take pains to suggest images through titles. A musical rose by another name smells differently.

1. *A Mirror* is so-named because the material backtracks at midpoint and rewinds itself in reverse. This very short curtain-raiser plants the seeds for most of the succeeding sections.

2. Whittier's *Snow-Bound* provides the canvas on which the solo bassoon paints the scene:

The sun that brief December day
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.

3. Three players — clarinet, violin, cello — evoke the opening lines of Hardy's *Birds At Winter Nightfall*:

Around the house the flakes fly faster
And all the berries now are gone. . .

4. *Paris then* is a waltz for clarinet and piano.

5. Dorchester Avenue, near Chicago's 57th Street, was home between the crucial ages of seven and seventeen, and where I learned the piano.

6. *Hesitations*: The title of this trio for strings and piano is made clear in the music.

7. This long central movement is a rondo for solo violin, supported and contradicted by the others. The title comes from Wilfred Owen's *Music*:

I have been urged by earnest violins
And drunk their mellow sorrows to the slake
Of all my sorrows and my thirsting sins.
My heart has beaten for a brave drum's sake.

8. Paul Goodman, the source for so many of my songs and an irreversible influence on my youth, closed his play *Stoplight* with these words:

. . . nothing to do but wait,
meantime the moments fly by like a snowstorm
and my time is slipping away.

9. On the Rue des Saint-Pères looms one of the many hotels which I once called home at five every morning.

10. *Valse Oubliée*, of course, is a title from Liszt.

11. Jean Cocteau, in his film, *Blood of a Poet*, incorporates the following stanza:

Ainsi partent souvent du collègue
Ces coups de poing faisant cracher du sang,
Ces coups de poing durs des boules de neige
Que donnent la beauté vite en passant.

I had already finished the penultimate soliloquy and called it *Cello alone*, when I discovered that Cocteau's phrase had subconsciously impelled the music. The cello gathers the sounds from the preceding movements and weaves them into a . . .

12. *Still Life* wherein the five instrumentalists sing together in a quiet, formal ending.

CURRENTS

CURRENTS is the University of Richmond's resident professional ensemble for contemporary music. Founded in 1986 by Fred Cohen, its goals are to bring fresh, spirited, and progressive programming of twentieth-century music to concert-goers in Richmond and throughout Virginia, and to commission and perform new works by emerging and established composers of concert music.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Starting the national tour at the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, this major exhibition of sixty-six paintings focuses on the importance of still-life painting throughout this century with American masterworks from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Still life is explored thematically through the works of fifty-nine artists, including Jennifer Bartlett, Stuart Davis, Jim Dine, Janet Fish, Marsden Hartley, Franz Kline, Georgia O'Keeffe, Horace Pippin, Fairfield Porter, James Rosenquist, Mark Tansey, Andy Warhol, and Max Weber.

The exhibition attests to the dramatic resurgence of interest in the still-life genre during this century, especially in recent decades. The selected works provide a comprehensive view of the various schools and styles of American art of this century. Ranging from cubist exercises to gestural interpretations and from expressionism to photorealism, the exhibition is arranged chronologically within six thematic divisions: flower paintings; table still life; interior and genre scenes; the iconic object; harvest, hunts, and bountiful settings; and still life and the landscape.

LOWERY STOKES SIMS

Lowery Stokes Sims is Curator of 20th Century Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and co-curator of the exhibition with Sabine Rewald, Associate Curator of 20th Century Art. Dr. Sims, on the staff of the Metropolitan since 1972, received her B.A. from Queens College of the City University of New York, her M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, and her M.Phil. and Ph.D. from the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. At the Metropolitan, she has participated in the organization of such exhibitions as *Ellsworth Kelly; Henry Moore: 60 Years of His Art; Charles Burchfield; I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin*; was curator of *Stuart Davis, American Painter*; and organized the installation of *Paul Cadmus: The Seven Deadly Sins*. Dr. Sims has written extensively on modern and contemporary artists, with a special interest in African, Latino, Native and Asian American artists.

The exhibition, *Still Life: The Object in American Art, 1915-1995, Selections from The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, remains on view through March 2 in the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, and is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The American Federation of Arts. It is made possible by a generous grant from Metropolitan Life Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the National Patrons of the AFA.

At the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, the exhibition is sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

Tonight's program was made possible with the support of the University of Richmond Cultural Affairs Committee.