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## John Cage's Prepared Piano Reinterpreted by Eric Salzman

### World Premiere of *Five Dances for String Quartet* to be performed at the "John Cage at Bard College" Symposium

Friday, October 30, 2009, 7:30 p.m.  
Sosnoff Auditorium, Fisher Center

*New York, NY* – The first complete performance of *Five Dances for String Quartet*, Eric Salzman's take on John Cage's prepared piano, will take place on **Friday, October 30, at 7:30 pm** in Bard College's Sosnoff Auditorium, Fisher Center. The performance will be part of an all-Cage concert which itself will be a featured event on a three-day "John Cage at Bard College" Symposium, marking the installation of the Cage Trust and Cage archives at the Hudson Valley school in Annandale-on-Hudson.

Faculty and students of Bard College and the Bard Conservatory of Music will perform Cage's chamber works on two concerts and also participate in other symposium events throughout the three-day event which runs from Friday, October 30 through Sunday, November 1. Although some of the arrangements in *Five Dances for String Quartet* have been performed individually, including a performance and recording of the "Totem Ancestor" by the world renowned Kronos Quartet, this is the first time that the five will be performed as a suite under the title *Five Dances for String Quartet*. The performers, all Bard Conservatory players are Fangyue He, Yue Sun, Leah Gastler, and Laura Hendrickson.

Eric Salzman's *Five Dances for String Quartet* uses five of the keyboard works that Cage wrote for modern dance in the 1940s including works by Merce Cunningham, Pearl Primus, and Louise Lippold. The Cage prepared piano involves the insertion of wood, metal, rubber and other materials into the strings of the piano to alter the sound to amplify the piano sound with a variety of percussive colors. This remarkable invention enabled the composer to perform as a one-man band to accompany some of the great pioneers of modern dance in solo performance. As the piano preparations and non-traditional use of the pedal enabled Cage to change the normal sound of a grand piano, these string arrangements require the performers to use a preponderance of unusual playing techniques and timbres including (but not limited to) the range of sounds produced by the bouncing bow (*spiccato*), the wood of the bow (*col legno*), plucking the strings (various *pizzicato* techniques) and percussive effects on the wooden body of the instrument. Variations in bowing techniques include playing on the fingerboard (*sul tasto*), close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*) and extensive use of harmonics and *flautando* effects. These dances may be performed individually or as a set.

For further information and details about the concerts of October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> see the Fisher Center web site <http://fishercenter.bard.edu/>. For more information about the symposium call the Cage Trust at 845 835-8022.

**Eric Salzman** received widespread acclaim for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble's recent performances of his work *Jukebox in the Tavern of Love* – on a text by Valeria Vasilevski – at the Tenri Center, The Flea Theatre, and Bargemusic. According to the *New York Times*, this 'modern madrigal comedy' "...effectively blends elements of barbershop-quartet harmonizing, cabaret, Renaissance sacred music, polyphony, Tin Pan Alley and avant-garde effects". One of the pioneers of the new music theater, he has been working in the field since the 1960s. His *Three Last Words of Dutch Schultz* premiered and toured in

Opera in 2007. Salzman has worked in France, Québec, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Norway and elsewhere. He is Artistic Director of The Center for Contemporary Opera and his book on *The New Music Theater: Hearing the Body, Seeing the Voice* – with Thomas Desi – was recently published by Oxford University Press. Salzman's web site is [www.ericosalzman.com](http://www.ericosalzman.com).

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