

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM**

“Compelling, bracing, and, at times, astonishingly beautiful.” – The Boston Globe, on the Callithumpian Consort

Gardner Museum Launches *Avant Gardner* Contemporary Classical Series
*New concert series celebrates cutting-edge classical music—including three world premieres—
in three adventurous programs this season featuring Boston’s Callithumpian Consort*



***Avant Gardner* Concerts | September 17, 2009 * January 21, 2010 * March 18, 2010 | 7:00 PM**

BOSTON, AUGUST 31, 2009 —Home to the longest-running museum music program in the country, under the direction of esteemed violist **Scott Nickrenz**, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum further expands its musical offerings this fall with the launch of *Avant Gardner*: a new contemporary classical series set to shake up Boston’s new music scene with an edgy slate of musical offerings from modern composers—including the world premieres of three new works.

In three dynamic programs this season, *Avant Gardner* serves up music from the 20th and 21st centuries on Thursday evenings as part of *Gardner After Hours*, the museum’s popular series of evening events. All three concerts feature performances by the **Callithumpian Consort**, a Boston-based new music ensemble, under the leadership of **Stephen Drury**.

“With three world premieres, a lineup of some of the most exciting works of the 20th and 21st century, and a superb young ensemble on board for the inaugural season, *Avant Gardner* is coming out swinging,” says Scott Nickrenz, the Gardner Museum’s Music Director. “The three programs we’ve put together for this year illustrate the range and depth of contemporary music that we hope *Avant Gardner* will contribute to the Boston musical community as well as to the wider world of new music performance and appreciation.”

“Isabella Stewart Gardner was a devoted champion of the music and musicians of her time, catalyzing new ways of thinking about music in this country and abroad,” says **Anne Hawley**, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director* of the Gardner Museum. “*Avant Gardner* continues Gardner’s legacy of supporting contemporary music and encouraging the exchange of ideas between living composers and local musicians.”

Avant Gardner’s inaugural concert on September 17th features works by 20th- and 21st-century Japanese composers, including Jo Kondo, Toru Takemitsu, and Toshio Hosokawa. Kondo, recently lauded as “one of Japan’s most

eminent composers” by *The Boston Globe*, will be honored as a special guest at the concert, where he is expected to speak briefly and join the musicians and audience members for an informal reception around the museum’s courtyard following the performance.

On January 21st, *Avant Gardner* celebrates some of today’s most cutting-edge sounds with a program of music by young composers Adam Roberts, Nicholas Vines, and Lei Liang, including two world premiere performances: a new piece by Adam Roberts and a collaborative work created by all three composers. The three are rising stars on the contemporary music scene: Australia’s *Sydney Morning Herald* called Vines “a composer engaged with thoughtful aesthetic ideals,” and the *Contemporary Music Review* heralded Liang as “one of the important Chinese composers of the new generation.”

The season concludes on March 18th with a performance centering around the premiere of a work composed by Christian Wolff for the Callithumpian Consort—*Songs from Brecht: The Exception and the Rule*—along with works by Ives, Cardew, and Cowell. One of the most notable composers of our time, Wolff has received the Award in Music from the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as the John Cage Award for Music, among other honors. *Songs from Brecht* is co-presented with the New England Conservatory Christian Wolff Festival (March 15-17, 2010) as part of a “dual premiere”: NEC will host a concert performance of the songs on Wednesday, March 17th, and the Gardner will offer a staged production incorporating the Brecht dialogue with the songs on the following evening.

Avant Gardner performances are held in the Gardner Museum’s intimate Tapestry Room, an incomparable setting in the heart of one of the most unique and important art collections in the world. After the concert, guests are invited to join the performers and composers (when present) for an informal reception around the courtyard. Tickets to *Avant Gardner* concerts include admission to the museum’s three floors of galleries and all *After Hours* activities, which take place from 5:30–9:30pm.

CREATING A NEW SERIES: AVANT GARDNER

Despite 20 successful years as the Gardner’s *Curator of Music*, renowned violist and music director Scott Nickrenz is adamant about not resting on the laurels of the established and beloved music program he has created. “It’s essential to be constantly shaking music up and taking chances with it,” he says. “We can’t keep falling back on the pillow of Mozart and Brahms – wonderful as they are, we also need to be celebrating and exploring the music of today.”

In his search for fresh new voices for the Gardner’s vibrant music program, he approached pianist and conductor Stephen Drury, who serves on the faculty of New England Conservatory. Drury and Nickrenz collaborated to create three programs for the inaugural season of *Avant Gardner*, all of which will be performed by the Callithumpian Consort, a new music ensemble founded by Drury.

“I’ve known Steve Drury for a long time and have great admiration and faith in his ear and his work,” says Nickrenz. “I love his musical taste, his flair for the bizarre, and his willingness to take chances. The combination of all these qualities makes him an ideal partner for creating the first season of *Avant Gardner*.”

Touted as “[a] courageous new music band” by *The Boston Globe*, the **CALLITHUMPIAN CONSORT** is a contemporary music ensemble dedicated to the proposition that music is an experience. The group consists of a core group of soloists, but is fundamentally flexible in size and makeup, allowing the ensemble to tackle a broad range of repertoire and musical projects. The Consort’s repertoire encompasses a huge stylistic spectrum, from the classics of the last 50 years to avant-garde works and experimental jazz and rock. The ensemble is active in commissioning and recording new works. They have worked with composers John Cage, Lee Hyla, John Zorn, Michael Finnissy, Franco Donatoni, Lukas Foss, Steve Reich, Helmut Lachenmann, John Luther Adams, Frederic Rzewski, Christian Wolff, and many others. Recordings are available on Tzadik, New World, and Mode records.

MUSIC AT THE GARDNER

Lauded as “an invaluable chamber music destination” (Jeremy Eichler, *The Boston Globe*), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum music program is America’s longest-running museum concert program—offering classical, jazz, and new music performances throughout the season that showcase emerging artists alongside seasoned masters; special programs with thematic links to exhibitions and the collection; and even a free classical music podcast, *The*

Concert, and online music library. The program is directed by *Curator of Music* Scott Nickrenz, who celebrates 20 years at the museum this season.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AT THE GARDNER: A LEGACY OF SUPPORT

During Isabella Gardner's lifetime, the museum was filled with music, hosting visits and performances by well-known and emerging musicians including composers Gustav Mahler and Vincent d'Indy, pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski, soprano Nellie Melba, and cellist Pablo Casals. Gardner was an avid supporter of young composers, including Charles Martin Loeffler – whose *Pagan Poem* (dedicated to Isabella Gardner) was premiered at the museum four years before its "official" premiere at the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Gardner also encouraged women in the arts, inviting female composers from the Manuscript Club, a musical organization that presented the works of young composers, to perform at the museum.

Avant Gardner is the successor to the Gardner's successful series of contemporary classical concerts presented in collaboration with New York's Miller Theatre, which the *The Boston Globe* credited with "energiz[ing] the city's musical life."

AVANT GARDNER CONCERTS | PROGRAM DETAILS:

SELECT THURSDAY EVENINGS OF CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSIC • PART OF GARDNER AFTER HOURS
A collaboration with the Callithumpian Consort, "[a] courageous new music band" (The Boston Globe)

Thursday, September 17, 7:00 p.m.

NEW JAPAN

Special guest Jo Kondo

Discover innovative works from 20th- and 21st-century Japanese composers including Kondo's *Aquarelle* (1990) and *Standing* (1973), Hosokawa's *Vertical Time Study I* (1992), and Takemitsu's *Toward the Sea* (1981).

Thursday, January 21, 7:00 p.m.

HOT BUTTERKNIFE KNIGHT

Music from the new generation: Adam Roberts, Nicholas Vines, and Lei Liang

Hear music from some of today's freshest creative voices including the premiere performance of a collaborative work created by all three composers.

Thursday, March 18, 7:00 p.m.

CENTURY CLASSICS

Special guest Christian Wolff

Join us for a world premiere written for the Callithumpian Consort by Christian Wolff—*Songs from Brecht: The Exception and the Rule*—co-presented with the New England Conservatory Christian Wolff Festival (March 15-17, 2010), along with works by Ives, Cardew, and Cowell.

TICKETS

\$23 General Public; \$18 Seniors; \$15 Members; \$10 College Students; \$5 Children ages 5-17 (children under 5 not admitted to concerts). Concert tickets include admission to the museum's three floors of galleries, including the special exhibition gallery, and all *Gardner After Hours* activities.

Tickets may be purchased by phone through the museum's Box Office at 617 278 5156 (open Tues.–Sun., 10am–4pm), online via www.gardnermuseum.org, or in person at the museum entrance at 280 The Fenway (Tues.–Sun., 11am–4pm).

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 617 566 1401 www.gardnermuseum.org • Green Line E train or #39 bus to Museum • Hours: Tue.–Sun., 11 am–4:45 pm • Tickets: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors; \$5 students; FREE members, children 18 & under, all named “Isabella,” and everyone on their birthday

Modeled after a 15th-century Venetian palazzo surrounding an interior courtyard garden, the century-old Gardner Museum houses one of the most remarkable art collections in the world, featuring works by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael, Degas, and Sargent. Changing exhibitions, the oldest museum music program in the country, evening events, and seasonal courtyard garden displays enrich the collection and provide ongoing inspiration for all.

The piano is dedicated as the Elliot Forbes Hamburg Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse. Its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. The Tapestry Room chairs are a gift from Charles O. Wood III and Miriam M. Wood. Artistic programming is made possible, in part, by the Barbara Lee Program Fund. The Museum receives operating support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Avant Gardner is made possible, in part, by the support of JoAnne and Charles Dickinson.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

For details on these—and all Gardner Museum—concerts:

Brittany Duncan Publicist, Music & Public Programs p 617.278.5106 f 617.264.6096 bduncan@isgm.org

For general information about the Gardner Museum:

Katherine Armstrong Public Relations Director p 617.278.5107 f 617.264.6096 karmstrong@isgm.org

EDITORS’ NOTE: Gardner Museum Music Director Scott Nickrenz and Callithumpian Consort Artistic Director Stephen Drury are available for interviews. High-resolution images of performers and composers are also available upon request, and photographers/members of the press are welcome to attend and cover *Avant Gardner* rehearsals and performances through advance arrangement with the press office.