

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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2009 COMPOSERS' SHOWCASE FEATURES MEREDITH MONK PERFORMANCE MARATHON ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, AT THE WHITNEY



Meredith Monk
Photo: Jesse Frohman

Historic Return to the Whitney for Grammy-nominee Meredith Monk

New York, December 18, 2008 – On Sunday, February 1, 2009, the Whitney Museum of American Art presents *Meredith Monk Music at the Whitney*, a one-day-only performance marathon, featuring the work of the eminent composer, choreographer, and multi-disciplinary artist. The Grammy-nominated Monk, whose groundbreaking exploration of the voice as a musical instrument has made a lasting mark, first performed at the Whitney nearly forty years ago. The four-hour February 1 event is a special highlight of the 2009 season of the Whitney's Composers' Showcase series; it begins at 2:00 pm in the Museum's third-floor Peter Norton Family Galleries. Tickets are included with the price of museum admission.

The Composers' Showcase series is curated by Limor Tomer, the Whitney's Adjunct Curator for Performing Arts. In addition to the Monk marathon, the new season's showcases feature Dafnis Prieto (January 30), Lukas Ligeti (February 6), Lisa Bielawa (February 13), Dave Burrell (February 20), and Jenny Scheinman (March 6). These programs, in the Whitney's Lower Gallery, take place on select Friday evenings at 7:00 pm; tickets are included with museum admission, which is pay-what-you-wish on Friday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 pm. Details follow below.

Meredith Monk's long relationship with the Whitney began in 1970 when she gave the first full concert of her music as part of the Museum's legendary Composers' Showcase series. Now, in a historic return, Monk performs early material from "A Raw Recital," as well as recent large ensemble work with her Vocal Ensemble, The M6, and other artists dedicated to continuing Monk's unique legacy.

Monk (b. 1942) is a composer, singer, director/choreographer, and creator of new opera, music theater works, films, and installations. A pioneer in what is now called "extended vocal technique" and "interdisciplinary performance," Monk creates works at the intersection of music and movement, image and object, light and sound, in an effort to discover and weave together new modes of perception. Her exploration of the voice as an instrument, as an eloquent language in and of itself, expands the boundaries of musical composition, creating landscapes of sound that unearth emotions, energies, and memories. During a career that spans more than 40 years, she has been acclaimed by audiences and critics as a major creative force in the performing arts. She is currently nominated for a Grammy Award for classical "best small ensemble performance." On March 5, *Ascension Variations*, a site-specific version of her latest work, *Songs of Ascension*, will be performed in the Guggenheim Museum's Rotunda, as the opening live performance element of the upcoming exhibition *The Third Mind*.

Since graduating Sarah Lawrence College in 1964, Monk has received numerous awards including the prestigious MacArthur "Genius" Award in 1995, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Brandeis Creative Arts Award, three "Obies" (including an award for Sustained Achievement), two Villager Awards, two "Bessie" awards for Sustained Creative Achievement, the 1986 National Music Theatre Award, the 1992 Dance Magazine Award, and a 2005 ASCAP Concert Music Award. In 2006 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and named a United States Artists Fellow, and holds

honorary Doctor of Arts degrees from Bard College, the University of the Arts, The Juilliard School, the San Francisco Art Institute and the Boston Conservatory. Her recordings *Dolmen Music* (ECM New Series) and *Our Lady of Late: The Vanguard Tapes* (Wergo) were honored with the German Critics Prize for Best Records of 1981 and 1986. Her music has been heard in numerous films, including *Nouvelle Vague* by Jean-Luc Godard and *The Big Lebowski* by Joel and Ethan Coen.

Although best known for its visual art exhibition program and collection, the Whitney was founded to present and support the work of artists working in all creative disciplines, and has long encouraged experimental overlap between mediums and genres, where enduring new discoveries are made. During its 40-year-old history of presenting the performing arts, the Whitney has introduced numerous American composers, musicians, and others whose insights, vision, and talent have changed the course of American and world music, dance, and cross-disciplinary experimentation.

Composers' Showcase

Based on the acclaimed series that took place in the Whitney's galleries during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, the Composers' Showcase series was revived by Whitney Live in 2006 to celebrate artists of extraordinary vision and individuality. Focusing on the impact and originality of an artist's body of work, this series presents a vibrant mix of genre-crossing, risk-taking composers who often lead their own ensembles. The series has presented composers of extraordinary vision and individuality including Duke Ellington, Virgil Thomson, Aaron Copland, Ned Rorem, John Cage, Morton Feldman, William Bolcom, Terry Riley, Gil Evans, Elliot Carter, Cecil Taylor, Lukas Foss, and many others.

In October 2006, the Museum hosted a daylong celebration of the music of Steve Reich performed by the Alarm Will Sound, So Percussion, and TACTUS ensembles. In May 2007, the Whitney hosted a three-day mini-festival featuring the brashly inventive Dutch composer Jacob Ter Veldhuis, a sound collagist and masterful musician who, prior to the festival, was practically unknown in this country, save for a few dedicated and passionate performers. In 2007-08, John Hollenbeck, J. G. Thirlwell, Andy Biskin, Nick Didkovsky, and Tristan Perich were each featured composers.

In addition to Meredith Monk, the featured artists in the 2009 Composers' Showcase are as follows:

January 30 - Dafnis Prieto

A native of Santa Clara, Cuba, who arrived in New York in 1999, Dafnis Prieto has had a powerful impact on the Latin and jazz music scenes. As inventive a composer as he is a percussionist, Prieto's music combines jazz and world rhythms and a mix of composed and improvisational styles. On January 30, he performs as the The Pro-Verb Trio, with Kokayi on vocals and Jason Lindner on keyboards.

February 6 - Lukas Ligeti

Lukas Ligeti draws upon Downtown New York experimentalism, contemporary classical music, jazz, electronica, and world music to create a compositional style that is uniquely his own. He has founded several intercultural experimental groups including Beta Foly, formed after many trips to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and, more recently Burkina Electric, a joint project with Maï Lingani, a singer from Burkina Faso.

February 13 - Lisa Bielawa, featuring Susan Narucki, soprano, and The Knights

Composer-vocalist Lisa Bielawa takes inspiration for her work from literary sources and close artistic collaborations. She explores the ritualistic and phenomenological nature of music making and listening, employing instrumental forces that are both dramatic and intimate in their use of time and space. *The New York Times* describes her music as "ruminative, pointillist and harmonically slightly tart."

February 20 - Dave Burrell featuring Billy Martin, percussion

Distinguished composer-pianist Dave Burrell is a performing artist of singular stature on the international contemporary music scene. His dynamic compositions, with blues and gospel roots, recall the tradition of Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, and Duke Ellington.

March 6 - Jenny Scheinman

Violinist/composer Jenny Scheinman grew up playing folk music with her family in northern California, studied at Oberlin Conservatory, and has been performing as a jazz violinist since she was a teenager. She has performed and recorded extensively with Bill Frisell, as well as Norah Jones, Madeleine Peyroux, Nels Cline, Vinicius Cantuaria, Marc Ribot, and Myra Melford, and, in the last several years, has released four recordings of original music.

Funding for Whitney Live is provided by the Amphion Foundation, The Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Helen Keeler Burke Charitable Trust, and Whitney Live Producers.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate,

the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. First housed on West 8th Street, the Whitney relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown New York at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

“Progress”	Through January 4, 2009
Between the Still and Moving Image	Through January 4, 2009
Corin Hewitt: Seed Stage	Through January 4, 2009
Signs of the Time	Through January 11, 2009
Alex Bag	Opens January 9, 2009
Artists Making Photographs	Opens January 16, 2009
Synthetic	Opens January 22, 2009
Elad Lassry: Three Films	Opens January 22, 2009
William Eggleston	Through January 25, 2009
Alexander Calder: The Paris Years	Through February 15, 2009
Sites	Opens February 19, 2009
Jenny Holzer	March 12, 2009-May 31, 2009
Dan Graham: Beyond	Opens June 25, 2009

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$15 for adults; Members, children (ages 11 and under), and New York City public high school students free. Senior citizens (62 and over) and students with valid ID: \$10. There is a \$6 admission fee for a pass to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6-9 pm. For information, please call 212-570-3600 or visit whitney.org.