

Tom Christensen Ensemble

Ensemble members: Tom Christensen—woodwinds (composer)
Walt Weiskopf—woodwinds
Kermit Driscoll—bass
Satoshi Takeishi—percussion

Title of the commissioned work: New York School

Instrumentation:
woodwinds; bass; percussion

Composer's Statement:

"The music on this CD is based on the work of a group of painters and poets of the 1950's and 60's known as the New York School. A central figure in this school, Frank O'Hara wrote blunt, improvisational and often arcane poetry that was inspiring and challenging to use as a jumping off point for composition. As a curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, O'Hara often collaborated with artists like Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns and Grace Hartigan creating poems inspired by their paintings. In turn, they painted works based on his poems. In some cases I added a musical element to these collaborations. In others I used only a certain poem or painting as a starting point.

- 1) *Guardians* is inspired by the Pollock painting *Guardians of the Secret*.
- 2) *Further Digressions* was inspired by the O'Hara poem *Further Digressions on Number One*. I read the poem then went to MOMA to see Pollock's painting *Number One*. I saw in Pollock's work, not only the joy and energy that O'Hara described but the structure that held it together. The painting is made up of lines and dots in four basic colors, something I tried to reflect in the composition.
- 3) *In Memory of my Feelings* is one of O'Hara's most famous poems. It has an eerie dream-like quality, and is quite long and complicated. Jasper John's captured the poem's mood in a painting by same name.
- 4) *Asleep and Sleeping with Them* is modeled on a poem by one of O'Hara's contemporaries, Kenneth Koch. The poem's title *Sleeping with Women* is used as a kind of riff that is repeated throughout the poem. It has a humorous lilting quality that I tried to capture.
- 5) *Your Strange Son* is inspired by a beautiful poem by O'Hara titled *To My Dead Father*.
- 6) *Oranges (12 Pastorals)* is inspired by both the O'Hara poem and the series of paintings by Grace Hartigan. Just as Hartigan painted twelve small pieces each inspired by one of the sections of the poem, I composed twelve miniature pieces, each based on a 12 tone row.
- 7) *Little Elegy* is named for the O'Hara's last poem *Little Elegy for Antonio Machado*. This piece, my own elegy for Frank O'Hara is through composed except for the short cadenza. "

Length of the work: 47 Minutes
Recording: Available. Please contact the artist directly.

Stated Technical Requirements:
"2 microphones."

Contact Information:

Composer: Tom Christensen
Booking contact person: Tom Christensen
Phone: (201) 862-1676
Cell phone: (201) 370-3772
Email: tctenorsax@yahoo.com