

Photography by Shelley Kusnetz

National Conference 2007

CMA members from across the country convened in New York City in January to learn, listen, perform, share ideas, celebrate achievements—and plan for the future.

Harmonic Convergence: Finding Community in Diversity”—CMA’s 2007 conference theme—expressed a challenge: How do we move into the future, a united community enriched by what is best in our past and inspired by new ideas?

From Friday morning until Sunday night, major conference events explored and demonstrated aspects of the Harmonic Convergence theme, while seminars and workshop sessions tackled chamber music’s specific, practical concerns in four areas: Performance, Programming, Education, and Leadership. And throughout the weekend, CMA’s musician members displayed their artistry in formal concerts, demonstrations, and—for the first time this year—ensemble showcases.

CMA president Phillip Ying championed inclusiveness, observing that the spirit of chamber music derives from the greatness of its traditional repertoire but also from its “collaborative, dynamic, flexible, adaptable, innovative, creative energy.” He defined the field’s main challenge as the need to “look outward and keep pace with change.” Critic and writer John Rockwell, the keynote speaker, argued that drawing firm generic boundaries around chamber music is difficult, if not impossible, observing that change must be accomplished “judiciously” but that it is ultimately irresistible.

Thorny theoretical questions left center stage on the conference’s second day, when the real-life accomplishments of the Kronos Quartet, whose enormous repertoire of chamber music works has crossed innumerable generic and national boundaries,



Composers Chen Yi, Alvin Singleton, and Simon Shaheen—with moderator Phillip Kennicott (far right)—discussed their experience of creating music in times of political adversity in China, the U.S., and the Middle East.



Dorothy Lawson, cellist of Ethel, and composer Victoria Bond



The 2007 Conference chair, fortepianist Andrew Appel



Critic John Rockwell, the keynote speaker



Violinists Kelly Hall-Tompkins and Terrance Patterson (of the Ritz Chamber Players) and CMA board member, cellist Christopher Rex



Phillip Ying, CMA president, addressed the membership.

became the focus. This year, Kronos violinists David Harrington and John Sherba, violist Hank Dutt, cellist Jeffrey Zeigler, plus former cellist Joan Jenrenaud, came to the conference to receive CMA's highest honor, the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award. In addition to being feted at the Awards banquet and interviewed onstage by Juilliard dean-designate Ara Guzelimian, the Kronos took up CMA's invitation to curate the conference's Saturday concert, creating a program that featured the young Afiara Quartet (playing Kronos commissions by Aleksandra Vrebalov, John Zorn, and Peteris Vasks), as well as an array of Kronos collaborators—pipa virtuoso Wu Man; Ukrainian bandurist Julian Kytasty, percussionist Robert Schulz, and Lee Knight, the American folksinger.

For the twentieth year, CMA collaborated with ASCAP in giving Awards for Adventurous Programming, presented on Saturday afternoon by Frances Richard, ASCAP's vice president and director of concert music. A second concert featured performances by CMA grantees—eighth blackbird, Tom Harrell and Baptiste Trotignon, and Music from Copland House.

The events concluded on Sunday evening with annual Awards Banquet and the presentation of two major honors: the National Service award for the Kronos Quartet and the biennial Cleveland Quartet Award, presented to the young Jupiter String Quartet by the CQ's founding cellist (and former CMA president), Paul Katz.





Attendees begin to crowd into the exhibit area during a break between sessions.



Conference chair Appel and Kronos violinist David Harrington during a concert intermission

Kronos collaborator: Wu Man, performing a Chen Yi work on the pipa.



Afiara Quartet performing a Kronos commission



Jonah Sirota of the Chiara String Quartet

Avery Sharpe



Saint Petersburg Quartet

Heather Holden, Arc Duo

Bradley Colten, Arc Duo



Tom Harrell



Cross-Cultural Jam Session: Wu Man, pipa; Julian Kytasty, bandura; and Lee Knight, banjo.



Panelists Sarah Rothenberg, of Da Camera of Houston, Helen Haynes, and Michael Wilpers, of the Smithsonian Institution, spoke on programming for diverse audiences



CMA's Susan Dadian with Helen Haynes, Director of Cultural Affairs of Montgomery County Community College



Frances Richard of ASCAP



Triple Helix cellist Rhonda Rider, with dancer Alina Ashjian



Introducing the Kronos at the Awards Banquet: Judith Sherman

Charlotte Schroeder, Phillip Ying, John Rockwell, Laura Sewell, and Margaret M. Lioi



Margaret M. Lioi, Cheryl Ikemiya, of the Doris Duke Foundation, and Chris Kim



Past and present members of the Kronos Quartet accepting the National Service Award from Phillip Ying (far right)