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<http://www.MondaviArts.org/pressroom>

For immediate release:

Empyrean Ensemble to Present Cage-inspired Works at Mondavi Center

December 10, 2007; Davis, California—The **Empyrean Ensemble**, a UC Davis Department of Music professional ensemble-in-residence, will present an eclectic program of works composed or inspired by revolutionary twentieth century American composer **John Cage** at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** on January 13, 2008. The ensemble will perform two works by Cage—including the famous *4'33''*—as well as a **Luciano Chessa** composition for turntable, wirelessly controlled flying blimp, and chamber ensemble; world premieres of works by **Craig T. Walsh** and **Pamela Z**, and a piece for clarinet and cello by **Derek Bermel** in a program entitled *in tHe sPirit oF CAGE*.

The event will begin at 7 pm on January 13 in the Mondavi Center's Studio Theatre on the UC Davis campus. Tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at MondaviArts.org. The event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center's **Creativity Project**, a year-long series of performances, panel discussions, and other events examining the creative process that will culminate with performances by the **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** in April 2008.

If the "spirit" of John Cage could be put into words, perhaps it could be described as one of restless experimentation that challenged the most basic notions of what music is and what composers do. Widely considered one of the most influential musicians of the twentieth century, Cage developed his own system of atonal composition, was among the first "serious" musicians to experiment with the use of electronic devices in his works, and pioneered chance procedures in composition. A frequent collaborator of choreographer **Merce Cunningham**, Cage (1912-1992) challenged fundamental assumptions regarding music, sound, composition, and meaning. His most notorious piece is undoubtedly *4'33''*, a composition consisting of four minutes and 33 seconds of silence. He is especially well-remembered at UC Davis for his 1969 stint as artist-in-residence at the Department of Music.

The Empyrean Ensemble will perform *4'33''*, as well as Cage's *A Musicircus* as part of the January 13 event. Also on the program are two works commissioned by the Mondavi Center, Craig T. Walsh's *Cookin' the Books* and Pamela Z's *Twenty Answers*, as well as Luciano Chessa's *Inkless Imagination IV*, and Derek Bermel's *Coming Together*.

The Empyrean Ensemble, currently celebrating its twentieth anniversary, is a professional ensemble-in-residence at the UC Davis Department of Music devoted to the performance of contemporary music. Through compelling performances and diverse programming, the ensemble offers audiences an opportunity to hear original works by emerging and established composers alike. It has premiered more than 200 works and performed throughout California, including appearances at many prominent music festivals and concert series. The Empyrean Ensemble has two full-length CDs released under the Centaur and Arabesque labels and has been the featured ensemble on others.

Founded in 1988 by composer **Ross Bauer**, the Empyrean Ensemble consists of a core group of musicians with extensive experience in the field of contemporary music. Co-directed by Department of Music faculty members **Kurt Rohde** and **Laurie San Martin**, the Empyrean Ensemble lineup includes **Terrie Baune** (violin), **Tod Brody** (flute), **Chris Froh** (percussion), **Peter Josheff** (clarinet), **Thalia Moore** (cello), and **Ellen Ruth Rose** (viola). Guest performers for the January 13 event will include **Shane Anderson** (turntables), **Terry Berlier** (video, wirelessly controlled blimp), Luciano Chessa (mini-bass musical saw), **David Moschler** (conductor), **Michael Orland** (piano), **George Thomson** (conductor), and Pamela Z (voice and electronics).

Also participating in the *in tHe sPirit oF CAGE* event will be a set of local artists inspired by Cage's philosophies about sound, art, chance, and space, who have contributed works that will be on display in the lobby outside the Mondavi Center's Studio Theatre on the evening of the performance. Included are *Kardex*, an interactive installation by **Robin Hill** with **Sam Nichols**; *Quartet*, a sound installation by **Christopher Burns**; and selected works by students from the **UC Davis Program in Technocultural Studies**.

Composer and violist Kurt Rohde lives in San Francisco. Recipient of the Charles Ives Fellowship and the Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, and commission awards from the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation of Harvard University, the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Hanson Institute for American Music. He was a recipient of the Berlin Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin. Rohde is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory at **Johns Hopkins University**, the **Curtis Institute of Music**, and **SUNY Stony Brook**. He has taught composition at **UC Santa Barbara**, was composer in residence at the Yellow Barn Music Festival, and guest composer at the Wellesley Composers Conference.

Laurie San Martin is a faculty member in the UC Davis Department of Music where she teaches music theory and composition. A native of Berkeley, she holds degrees from UC Davis, **UC Berkeley**, and **Brandeis University**, where she studied composition, clarinet, and conducting. Her music has been performed in the United States and in Italy by such ensembles as **Speculum Musicae**, **eighth blackbird**, **EARPLAY**, the **Warebrook Contemporary Music Festival**, the **Left Coast Ensemble**, and the **SF Contemporary Music Players**. She has received awards from the International Alliance for Women in Music, the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer's Awards, the Margaret Blackwell Memorial Prize in Composition, and a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The Mondavi Center's Creativity Project is a season-long exploration of how artists create intended to support the creation of new works and engage audience members in a deeper relationship with contemporary art by creating a context for understanding how the work came to be. The Creativity Project includes performances by **Sideshow Physical Theatre**, the Empyrean Ensemble, **Mala Punica**, **Kronos Quartet**, and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Through interviews, panel discussions, podcasts, and more, community members will have an opportunity to explore the creative process with each of the artists involved. For more information on the project, visit www.MondaviArts.org/aboutus/creativityproject.cfm.

“We are excited to present the Empyrean Ensemble in this multifaceted event celebrating the adventurous and eclectic spirit of John Cage,” said Mondavi Center Executive Director **Don Roth**. “We hope the art installations and other Creativity Project activities taking place in conjunction with this performance make it even more meaningful for everyone involved.”

What: **Empyrean Ensemble**
 in tHe sPirit oF CAGE

When: Sunday, January 13 · 7 pm

Where: Jackson Hall
 Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
 University of California, Davis

Admission: \$29 Adults • \$14.50 Students, Children

Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
 866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
 <http://www.MondaviArts.org>
 530.754.5402 [TDD]

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