Chicago Humanities Festival 2009

Laughter
Guerrilla Girls
Marga Gomez
Don Byron

Thursday–Saturday,
November 10–14, 2009

Photo by Cori Wells Braun

Museum of Contemporary Art
mcachicago.org

Chicago Humanities Festival

Photo by Cori Wells Braun
Welcome

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) and the MCA, Chicago, welcome you to the 20th-annual festival.

CHF creates opportunities for people of all ages to support, enjoy, and explore the humanities. The organization accomplishes this by creating annual fall and spring festivals, by presenting programs throughout the year that encourage the study and enjoyment of the humanities, and by maintaining an online home for the humanities community on its website.

This year’s festival, titled Laughter, includes more than 90 events at 19 venues around Chicago’s Loop and Hyde Park neighborhoods, and features concerts, theater performances, exhibits, discussions, lectures, and films. For more information and tickets visit chicagohumanities.org or call the box office at 312.494.9509.

Join us for Stages, Sights & Sounds, CHF’s nationally-recognized spring festival. Its more performance-based programming appeals to a wide audience, including children and families. The 11th Stages, Sights & Sounds (formerly known as the Chicago Children’s Humanities Festival) will take place in May 2010 at several of Chicago’s favorite theater venues, including the MCA. Please check the CHF website at chicagohumanities.org for more information in early 2010.

Have you been on the CHF website lately?

Newly launched in August 2009, the CHF website offers lectures, slideshows, and materials from CHF’s 20-year archive. Programs included in the 2009 festival will become available in the late fall and winter. Commentary, including blogs and ongoing conversations, are a central feature of the site. Create an account, share a festival itinerary, and join the conversation at chicagohumanities.org.

Laughter

Tuesday, November 10
Guerrilla Girls
Feminist Masked Avengers

Wednesday, November 11
Marga Gomez
Long Island Iced Latina

Directed by David Schweizer

Saturday, November 14
Don Byron
The Music of Mickey Katz

Don Byron, clarinet and emcee
JD Parran, woodwinds
Charles Lewis, trumpet
Jacob Garchik, trombone
Todd Reynolds, violin
Daniel Kelly, piano
Kenny Davis, bass
Ben Wittman, drums
Jack Falk, lead vocal
with Michael Kozakis, xylophone

Titles will be announced on stage from the following song list:

Prologue: . . . shed no tears before the rain (Don Byron)
Frailach Jamboree (Mickey Katz)
Haim Afer Range (adapted from Home on the Range, traditional)
Mamaliege Dance (Nat Farber and Mickey Katz)
Sweet and Gentle (Monterrey Portal and George Thorn)
Litvak Square Dance (Mickey Katz)
C’est Si Bon (Jerry Seelen, Henry Betti, and Andre Hornez)
Trombonik Tanz (Nat Farber and Mickey Katz)
Bar Mitzvah Special (Louis Singer and Nat Farber)
Dreidel Song (traditional)
Seder Dance (Mickey Katz, adapted from Sabre Dance by Khachaturian)
Paisach in Portugal (adapted from April in Portugal by Raul Ferrao and Jimmy Kennedy)
Berele’s Sherel (Benny Gill and Nat Farber)
Kiss of Meyer (adapted from Kiss of Fire by Lester Allan and Robert Hill)
Wedding Dance (Mickey Katz)
16 Tons (Ernie Ford)
Sunrise, Sunset (Sheldon Harnick)

Marga Gomez and Don Byron are presented by the Chicago Humanities Festival in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Guerrilla Girls are presented by the Chicago Humanities Festival in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Ellen Stone Belic; and Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media, Columbia College Chicago.

Marga Gomez’s Long Island Iced Latina was originally produced by the Puerto Rican Touring Theatre.
Guerrilla Girls is a group of anonymous, radical feminist artists dedicated to exposing sexism, racism, and corruption in the art world, film industry, and popular culture. Adopting the names of dead female artists like Frida Kahlo and Kathe Kollwitz, they are best known for their creative poster campaigns and public appearances wearing full jungle drag.

Guerrilla Girls have appeared at more than 90 universities and museums, as well as in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the New Yorker, Bitch, and Artforum; on National Public Radio, the BBC and CBC; and in many art and feminist texts. They have authored stickers, billboards, posters and other projects, as well as several books including The Guerrilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art and Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls’ Guide to Female Stereotypes.

They are part of Amnesty International’s Stop Violence Against Women Campaign in the United Kingdom and are exploring possible activities with Greenpeace. Their campaigns have included the unveiling of anti-film industry billboards in Hollywood timed with the Academy Awards; large-scale projects for the Venice Biennale, Istanbul, and Mexico City; and a non-appearance in 2007 at the Museum of Modern Art-organized symposium Feminist Future: Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts. They have examined the museums of Washington DC in a full-page article in the Washington Post, and exhibited large-scale posters and banners in Athens, Bilbao, Rotterdam, Sarajevo, and Shanghai.

From the book Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls

Excerpted from an interview by anonymous

Q. How did the Guerrilla Girls start?
Kathe Kollwitz: In 1985, The Museum of Modern Art in New York opened an exhibition titled An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture. It was supposed to be an up-to-the-minute summary of the most significant contemporary art in the world. Out of 169 artists, only 13 were women. All the artists were white, either from Europe or the US. That was bad enough, but the curator, Kynaston McShine, said any artist who wasn’t in the show should rethink “his” career. And that really annoyed a lot of artists because obviously the guy was completely prejudiced. Women demonstrated in front of the museum with the usual placards and picket line. Some of us who attended were irritated that we didn’t make any impression on passersby.

Meta Fuller: We began to ask ourselves some questions. Why did women and artists of color do better in the 1970s than in the 1980s? Was there a backlash in the art world? Who was responsible? What could be done about it?

Q. What did you do?
Frida Kahlo: We decided to find out how bad it was. After about five minutes of research we found that it was worse than we thought: the most influential galleries and museums exhibited almost no women artists...
We needed a disguise. No one remembers, for sure, it gave us our ‘mask-ulinity.’

Lee Krasner: We joined a long tradition of (mostly male) masked avengers like Robin Hood, Batman, the Lone Ranger, and Wonder Woman.

Q. Why are you anonymous?

GG1: The art world is a very small place. Of course, we were afraid that if we blew the whistle on some of its most powerful people, we could kiss off our art careers. But mainly, we wanted the focus to be on the issues, not on our personalities or our own work.

Lee Krasner: We joined a long tradition of (mostly male) masked avengers like Robin Hood, Batman, the Lone Ranger, and Wonder Woman.

Q. Why the gorilla masks?

KK: We were Guerrillas before we were Gorillas. From the beginning, the press wanted publicity photos. We needed a disguise. No one remembers, for sure, it gave us our ‘mask-ulinity.’

Q. Do you allow men to join?

FK: We’d love to be inclusive, but it’s not easy to find men willing to work without getting paid or getting credit for it.

Q. What have you done besides posters?

Eva Hesse: The posters are our most public communication but we’ve done other things, too, like billboards, bus ads, magazine spreads, protest actions, letter-writing campaigns. We’re particularly proud of having put up broad sheets in bathrooms of major museums.

Rosalba Carriera: We send secret letters to egregious offenders, often honoring them with bogus awards.

We gave John Russell of the New York Times an award for The Most Patronizing Art Review of 1986, when he reviewed Dorothy Dehner’s show and called her “Mrs. David Smith,” referring to her famous sculptor husband (they had been divorced for years).

Q. Have you ever been accused of discrimination yourselves?

Alma Thomas: Yes. Menopausal women felt we were making fun of them by titling our newsletter Hot Flashes from the Guerrilla Girls. I guess they didn’t know the Girl who named it was having them herself.

KK: One male journalist is still threatening to sue us for charging white males a higher subscription rate to Hot Flashes than women or artists of color. We thought it was fair, because white men earn more. We told him to go sue hairdressers who charge women more for a haircut.

Q. Who finances you?

Georgia O’Keefe: In the beginning, we paid for the posters out of our own pocketbooks. And we received unsolicited contributions like one from a secretary at a New York City museum who wrote, “I work for a curator you named on one of your posters. You’re right, he’s an asshole. Here’s $25.” Now, we get a lot of contributions from women artists when their careers take off. We even got a government grant for our newsletter Hot Flashes, to “monitor sexism and racism in the art world.” There is no one funding source, no matron of the arts who writes us big checks, no PAC for the Guerrilla Girls. We do accept retributions from institutions we have attacked when they buy our posters and pay our lecture fees. For more information visit, guerrillagirls.com.
A tall cool drink of Marga Gomez
Excerpt from an interview by Shilanda Woolridge, January 9, 2009.

Shilanda Woolridge: 2008 had a lot of political issues that affected queer folks. What are your thoughts on Prop 8 and Rick Warren, the evangelical Christian pastor President-elect Obama chose to give the invocation at his inauguration?

Marga Gomez: Rick Warren is a very heated topic and a confusing situation. I talked about him [in her fifth New Year’s Eve show at the Rhino Theatre, with queer Muslim comic Ali Mafl] and how gay people felt that Obama threw them under the bus. I said I don’t think that analogy works in San Francisco when you have to wait 40 minutes for the Muni. Someone throwing you under the bus is not a serious problem. If someone throws you under the bus you have about a half hour to save yourself.

Proposition 8 is very hard for me to wrap my mind around. I feel that the religious right misrepresents God. I think they are going to really pay for it in the after life.

Shilanda Woolridge: You call yourself butch and often wear makeup. Are you futch (femme + butch)?

Marga Gomez: It’s about being a Latino/a. A Spanish sur-named person in America who can’t speak Spanish. It doesn’t seem to be an issue for any other ethnicity. No one expects an Italian-American to just break out into Italian and start playing bocce ball.

Latinos are kind of “fetishized.” Everyone looks at me as the person that’s gonna teach them salsa and the person they can practice their high school Spanish on. It’s a very deep source of shame that I can’t speak Spanish. It was almost harder than coming out as a gay person.

Latinos are so hungry to be represented on stage and in entertainment. I get these people who rush up to me and start speaking in Spanish, then I say a few clumsy words and you just see this sadness.

Shilanda Woolridge: Are you tackling all this stuff. It’s presented as somewhat of a comedy act with storytelling in it. I tell the stories and they are all funny, and yet there is a little bit of anger in it, just a little bit of edge.

This whole show is focused on my teenage years. I had to spend my high school years in a suburban neighborhood where I was the only brown person. So I tried to be as white as I could be, and it carried into being an English major in college and taking French instead of Spanish in high school.

My Mother was also part of this. She was a very fair-skinned Puerto Rican. People didn’t believe she was Puerto Rican until she opened her mouth and she had this thick Puerto Rican accent. She always wanted to be French. So I took French to make her like me. Yet I was dark so she was always disap-pointed. When I had a little blond friend she would be delighted with my friend. She’d say, “Why can’t you have your hair like that?” Because she’s white!

The first really big presentation of the show in New York had a tremendous response. There were so many people who came forward who said, “I don’t know Spanish either and I’m so ashamed.” It’s nice, because you know when Latinos are in the media it’s like we’re über Latino. That’s the reality for many of us. I deal with the stereotypes.

The group of Latinos that can’t speak Spanish are oppressed by the majority of Latinos that can speak Spanish. I am calling out to my nation, I am your leader. We speak the same language. English.

Don Byron and the music of Mickey Katz

Born in 1909 in Cleveland, Ohio, Mickey Katz began playing the clarinet in a public school music program at the age of 11. Katz was a natural showman who began winning amateur nights within two months of starting lessons and began playing with local bands in his teens. When he started introducing comic routines into his act, Katz attracted the attention of bandleader Lindley Armstrong “Spike” Jones who specialized in performing satirical arrangements of popular songs, ballads and classical works. Jones hired Katz into his City Slickers in 1946. Katz worked with Jones for a year and a half, playing and conducting shows. When he tired of the travel, he approached RCA to record parodies that combined popular songs with Yiddish lyrics and instrumentation. For his band, Katz gathered Nat Farber, who provided arrangements, Mannie Klein on...
trumpet, Si Zentner on trombone, and Sam Weiss on drums. In one month, his first release of the single “Haim Afn Range (Home on the Range)” on RCA sold more than 30,000 copies. In 1951, Katz organized his first tour which he called the Borscht Capades. It toured for four months and included Katz’s own teenage son, Joel Grey.

Jordan R. Young of MSN Music said, “Not long before he passed away in 1985, I asked Katz if he was familiar with the Klezmorim, the California-based group then at the forefront of a nationwide revival. That’s what we did—klezmer!” exclaimed Katz. ‘But we didn’t call it that in my day.” Though he was perhaps the greatest exponent in his day of ‘Jewish jazz,’ as Katz called it, he was too modest to suggest such thing.”

Katz used humor to expand the musical boundaries of klezmer, thrusting it into the lap of post-World War II mainstream America at a time when Yiddish was essentially restricted to a small community of Jewish kids pursuing some revival thing,” Byron remarked in an interview with Wire magazine. “This I found kind of ironic, unfortunate . . . because I think black people have been used to everyone just stepping up and claiming to be experts on black music. I never claimed that. I just wanted to participate, and if there’s anything I got out of my New York upbringing, it’s that I’m entitled to participate in anything I really want to.”

Don Byron

is a clarinetist, saxophonist, composer, arranger, and social critic whose projects aim to redefine various genres of music, including classical, salsa, hip-hop, funk, klezmer, rhythm and blues, swing, bop, and improvisation. He studied with George Russell in the Third Stream Department of the New England Conservatory of Music, and after returning to New York, began playing with prominent jazz avant-gardists such as David Murray, Craig Harris, and Hamiet Bluiett.

In 1992, Byron was named “Jazz Artist of the Year” by Downbeat, and was invited to major music festivals in Vienna, San Francisco, Hong Kong, London, Monterey, New Zealand, and Australia. He has produced two distinguished concert series for the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and New York’s Symphony Space, where he established his Adventurers Orchestra that played the wide-ranging music of Henry Mancini, Sly Stone, the pioneering hip-hop label Sugar Hill Records, Igor Stravinsky, Raymond Scott, Herb Alpert, and Earth, Wind and Fire.

Other Byron projects include arrangements of Stephen Sondheim’s Broadway musicals; There Goes the Neighborhood, a piece commissioned and performed by the Kronos Quartet; and original scores for the silent film Scar of Shame and a 1961 television episode by comedy pioneer Ernie Kovacs. He has written and performed music for the dance companies of Donald Byrd, Bebe Miller, Mark Dendy, and Ellen Sinopoli. He is featured in Robert Altman’s film Lulu on the Bridge. He has composed the soundtracks for several documentary films including director Joel Katz’s acclaimed Strange Fruit, about the history of the anti-lynching song made famous by Billie Holiday, and for Red-Tailed Angels, a film about the Tuskegee Airmen.

Byron has led residencies at the University of California, San Diego, the University of Nevada, Reno, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Columbia University. He was a visiting associate professor at the State University of New York at Albany and a Martin Luther King visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2007–08. He is the recipient of a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2008 United States Artist Gund Fund, and a finalist for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Music for his composition 7 Etudes for Solo Piano. He is the 2009 recipient of the prestigious Samuel Barber Rome Prize, whereby Byron is in residence at the American Academy in Rome, Italy to work on a chamber opera based on the novel and film Gentleman’s Agreement.

Kenny Davis

is a native of Chicago and graduated from Northeastern Illinois University. Before moving to New York in 1986, he performed with Von Freedman, Ari Brown, and Fred Anderson, and studied classical bass with Warren Benfield of the Chicago Symphony. In New York, he took lessons with Ron Carter and began performing with Out of the Blue (OTB) and such artists as Freddie Hubbard, Cassandra Wilson, Abbey Lincoln, Diane Reeves, and Art Farmer. His arrangements include a song for Cassandra Wilson’s Grammy Award-winning album Blue Light Till Dawn. Davis is featured on Don Byron’s Tuskegee Experiments (1992) and Music for Six Musicians (1994), and toured and recorded with the clarinetist’s quintet (No-Vibe Zone, 1996). He has also toured with Herbie Hancock, and was a member of the Tonight Show Band led by Kevin Eubanks, from 1999 to 2002, before returning to New York to resume touring, recording, studying, and teaching. In 2006, he received his masters degree in music from Rutgers University. He teaches at the University of Connecticut.
Jack “Yankl” Falk is known for his collaborations with Eastern European artists that explore what it means to be Jewish in new, and largely non-Jewish, contexts. For the past 14 years, he has toured internationally and recorded with Hungary’s Jewish roots ensemble, Di Naye Kapelye. He is founder and longtime host of the Sunday morning “Yiddish Hour,” now in its 31st year on KBOO-FM, Portland, and he also hosts a program on music of the Carpathian region. During the Jewish High Holidays, Falk serves as cantor at Congregation Kneseth Israel in Elgin, Illinois. He has served on the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Summer Institute in Technical Communication and Klezmer-Paris summer institute. He is pursuing graduate studies at the University of Washington Information School.

Jacob Garchik is a composer who plays trombone as well as accordion, bass trombone, tuba, computer, and piano. Since 1996, he has contributed dozens of arrangements and transcriptions for the Kronos Quartet of music from all over the world, notably for their acclaimed 2009 release Floodplain, as well as their CD Romance received acclaim from the New York Times. Originally from San Francisco, he has lived in New York since 1994.

Daniel Kelly is an award-winning composer and pianist. He has performed with Joe Lovano, Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman, Bobby Sanabria, Harvie S, Laurny Hill, John Zorn, Oliver Lake, Candido, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, and many others. In addition to several CDs he has recorded as sideman, Kelly has recorded four CDs as a leader, including Duets with Ghosts, featuring his unique approach to electronic sound manipulation and sampler. His CD Portal is an improvised solo piano suite that arose from his ongoing series of impromptu improvised solo piano concerts, some of which were for audiences of 1,000 people. His piano trio CD, Emerge made many Best of 2009 lists. His quartet is a recipient of the Chamber Music America/American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers Adventurous Programming Award. Kelly’s composition commissions include an evening-length piece titled Wounded Splendor, a multi-media work that is part of the University of Maryland’s Performance as Politic/Artist as Activist 2009 season and the feature film score The Legend of Johnson Roebling. He has been a Lincoln Center Institute Repertory artist since 2002. For more information, visit daniellelkmusic.com.

Michael Kozakis is an active percussionist in the Chicago area, performing regularly with Chicago Chamber Musicians, MusicNOW, Ars Viva, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Lyric Opera Orchestra, and recently completing two one-year positions as a full-time percussionist with the Chicago Symphony (February 2005-June 2007.) His solo appearances include marimba concerto performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Rockford Symphony Orchestra. He is on the faculty at DePaul University in Chicago and Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, while also teaching privately. Kozakis has a bachelor of arts degree from the Eastman School of Music, double majoring in percussion performance and music education, and a master of arts degree in performance from DePaul University.

Charlie Lewis is based in Boston and teaches and performs classical and jazz solo trumpet. He has toured internationally with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Baltimore Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and Commonwealth Brass Quintet. He performed on the Grammy Award-winning album Scott Joplin, the Red Back Book with Gunther Schuller (Angel Records). He is a founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning Empire Brass Quintet. He has recorded Philip Glass’ score for the 1982 film Koyaanisqatsi—Life Out of Balance by Godfrey Reggio, as well as Season of the Light with Carol Comune, Paradox with the Commonwealth Brass Quintet, Big Bang Sessions with Bill Bang, Don Byron’s Bug Music, Christine Fawson’s Happy Talk, and Syncopation’s A New Dance. Lewis is on the faculty at Berklee College of Music. He received the Brass Department Achievement Award in the spring of 2001 and 2006.

JD Parran performs saxophone and clarinet in several groups led by Don Byron. His recent additional projects include performing with the poet Michael Castro for their 2008 duo recording Kokopila; and with Douglas R. Ewart and Inventions, featuring Shaku Joseph Jamaran and the poet Amiri Baraka, at this year’s Vision Festival XIV in New York. Parran was the featured soloist for two world premieres by Anthony Davis in 2007: Concerto for Clarinet at the Miller Theatre of Columbia University, and Waconda’s Dream at Opera Omaha. His project J D Parran & Spirit Stage TOO with the poet Shirley Le Flore was featured at Washington University’s 2006 confer- ence Music and Musicians in the Black Artists Group of St. Louis. Other notable appearances include with Henry Threadgill’s Peroxide at the 2003 Miller Theater Anniversary series, Cecil Taylor and Sound Vision Orchestra at the 2002 Skopje Jazz Festival in Macedonia, and Andrew Hill on Hill’s 2002 record- ing A Beautiful Day.

Todd Reynolds is a composer and violinst who performs in chamber groups and as an improviser throughout New York. In recent years, he has performed and composed for Bang on a Can, a leading consortium of musicians formed more than twenty years ago, and the string group ETHEL, the Steve Reich Ensemble, and The Silk Road Project. Today his work is focused on acoustic and electronic music. He performs with his own ensembles; as well as playing, conducting, producing, and recording for others. He has performed and collaborated with groups such as The Books, whose MCA Stage debut was earlier this fall, and as- sembled a string quartet for Meredith Monk for her touring work Songs of Ascension. He is a resident artist in BAM’s Next Wave festival this year.

Ben Wittman is a percussionist-composer reared in the Bennington, Vermont area in the 1960s and 1970s. He started playing drums while in high school, studying with Milford Graves and Freddie Waits, and in 1980 graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music with a bachelor of music degree in jazz performance. While in Boston, he performed with Bob Moses, Mike Metheny, Bruce Bartlett, George Russel, Don Byron, and the Conservatory Klezmer Ensemble. Wittman moved to New York in 1993, where he resumed playing with Byron as well as a wide range of artists such as Paul Simon, Paula Cole, Laurie Anderson, Jonatha Brooke, and contemporary Celtic artists Eileen Ivers, Solas, and Cathie Ryan. He has toured internationally in Europe, Asia, and South America, with an eclectic roster including Byron, Mamak Hadim, Paula Cole, Laurie Anderson, Erasure, Solas, Keiko Lee, Jiro Yoshida, and Yungkin Lhamo.
Young Jean Lee

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