

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth presents

Sounds Modern

Terry Riley, *In C*

Saturday, April 26, 2008, 2 pm

featuring musicians from Nova

the new music ensemble of the University of North Texas
Elizabeth McNutt, director

Elizabeth McNutt*, Laura Nieman, Adriana Potoczniak, flutes
EunSuk Oh, oboe
Deanna Brizgys, Rachel Yoder, clarinets
Susan Anderson, horn
Greg Dixon, Andrew May*, violins
Jenny Lin, viola
Andrew Broz, cello
Linda-Rose Heimbreiker, harp
Christopher Deane*, vibraphone
Bora Im, electronic keyboard
Steven Harlos*, piano

* UNT College of Music faculty

***In C*: music to celebrate the art of Martin Puryear**

The pairing of Terry Riley's *In C* (1964) with an exhibition of the art of Martin Puryear doesn't seem an obvious choice, on the surface; but they have much in common. These two American artists are contemporaries (born six years apart – Riley in 1935 and Puryear in 1941), and broke new ground in their respective fields. Both are labeled “minimalists,” though neither one is very fond of the term.

Riley and Puryear share a fascination with simple forms and the innate textures of their materials. They derive their materials from simple, everyday objects, transforming them into something magical yet whimsical. While both had formative experiences in America and Europe, both have drawn heavily on their experiences with art in non-Western cultures.

Michael Auping, chief curator at the Modern, writes that “Puryear’s work has a way of sneaking up on us perceptually, and it is partially through his surfaces that we are drawn in, invited to inspect his wooden objects more closely, as one would a more intimate construction, through the subtlety of inflection that he at times imparts to the surface.” Substituting “musical gestures” for “wooden objects” provides a reasonable description of much of Riley’s work – especially *In C*.

In this piece, any number of players perform a series of 53 musical fragments--repeating, looping, pausing, listening, and shifting registers at will to create a shifting, hypnotic musical tapestry. The players interact, listening to each other and finding inspiration for the way they will play in their own imaginations and the behaviors of the musicians around them. A constant pulse of high C's keeps the ensemble together.

The simple pulse (not easy to perform, but conceptually minimal) and the terse, often similar fragments (there is only one extended melody in the entire work) are the most reductive elements of music imaginable. Like a branch from a tree, these gestures grow almost inevitably from the physical act of playing an instrument. In much the same way that the viewers of Puryear’s work construct its hidden forms from a deceptively simple surface, the performers and audience construct a complex shape through time from Riley’s simple materials.