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The Idiot Variations

An Evening with Rinde Eckert

Thursday and Friday, January 19 and 20, 1995-8:00 p.m.

Written and performed by Rinde Eckert Assisted by Robert Woodruff Music consultancy by Lee Townsend

The Idiot Variations will be performed without intermission.

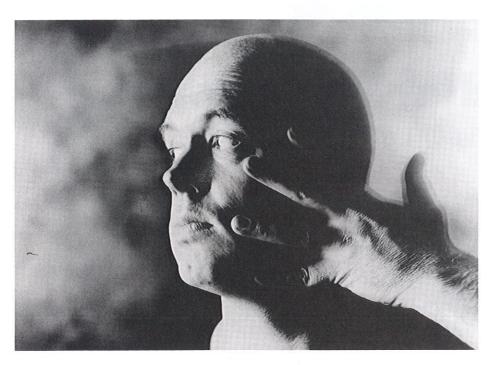
The Idiot Variations is a co-commission by Hancher Auditorium/The University of Iowa, P.S. 122 in New York, On the Boards in Seattle, the UCLA Center for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles, and the National Performance Network (NPN), a project of New York's Dance Theatre Workshop. The NPN and this presentation have been made possible with major national funding from The Ford Foundation (S.U.R.F.F. activities); Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund; and the Dance, Music and Presenting and Commissioning Programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Idiot Variations was commissioned by P.S. 122 with funds from the Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation.

Special thanks to Ellen McLaughlin and the Paul Dresher Ensemble.

Rinde Eckert is exclusively represented by Susan Endrizzi California Artists Management 1182 Market Street, Suite 418 San Francisco CA 94102-4921 tel. 415/861-2787 fax. 415/864-1599

This program is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Rinde Eckert



RINDE ECKERT (Writer/Performer) is internationally renowned as a singer, composer, movement artist, writer, and director. Blessed with a remarkably flexible and inventive singing voice, his solo pieces and collaborations with other composers, dancers, and musicians have been performed throughout North America and abroad. Long celebrated for his performances in multimedia theater with the Paul Dresher Ensemble and the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, his more recent work as a solo artist has attracted increasing attention.

The Idiot Variations, tonight's full-evening solo piece, premieres at Hancher Auditorium followed by performances with cocommissioners P.S. 122 in New York, On the Boards in Seattle, and the UCLA Center for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles. The New York Shakespeare Festival commissioned Rinde to create an evening-length solo work based on a work or works from Shakespeare, also set to debut in 1995. Previous solo staged works include Dry Land Divine and Quit This House, both written in 1988, and the radio musical Shoot the Moving Things (1987) which was featured on National Public Radio's "New American Radio Series."

In 1992, Eckert's theatrical evening *The Gardening of Thomas D.* premiered at Hancher

Auditorium. Co-commissioners for the work

included Hancher Auditorium, Northrop Auditorium/University of Minnesota, On the Boards in Seattle, and Dance Theatre Workshop in New York. *The Gardening of Thomas D.* received its New York premiere at The Kitchen in December 1993, and in 1994 had seven performances at the American Theatre Festival in France and Belgium, and multiple performances at both UCLA and in Portland, Oregon.

As writer/performer in the Paul Dresher Ensemble, Rinde wrote the text and collaborated in the creation of Slow Fire (1985/86), Power Failure (1989), and Pioneer (1990), the group's American Trilogy of contemporary music theater works. Rinde both wrote and directed Awed Behavior, which debuted and toured in the U.S. in 1993. Eckert and Dresher collaborated with the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company on Shelf Life (1987), which received an Isadora Duncan Award for its score, and are co-collaborators on The Gates (Far Away Near), which debuted in summer 1993. Shorebirds Atlantic (1987), Rinde's collaborative duet for the stage with Ms. Jenkins, was adapted for the PBS "Alive From Off Center" video series in 1989. Woman Window Square (1990) was created with the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company and videographer John Sanborn. Other Sanborn collaborations include a video from 1990, also featured on "Alive From Off Center," and the 1992 project I'm Sitting on Top of the World. Other collaborations include Secret House with the Oberlin Dance Company, Dresher, and Jay Cloidt, and Not For Real (1987), written and directed for Leonard Pitt. In 1989, Rinde was a featured guest on Clark Suprynowicz's In Sleep A King recording on the Sound Aspects label. Rinde was the featured performer in Bruce Nauman's video installation Anthro/Socio, part of the 1992 "Dislocations" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

A classically trained singer who has expanded his vocabulary to reflect a wide range of contemporary music styles and vocal effects, Eckert's technical mastery combines with a captivating performing presence and highly sophisticated rhythmic sensibility. During 1993-94, Rinde returned to these roots and created the role of Victor in Frank Lewin's opera *Burning Bright*, which premiered in New Haven, and sang the role of Segismundo in the premiere performances of Gina Leishman's opera *Burning*

Dreams at San Diego Repertory Theatre. In the early 1990s, Rinde and record producer Lee Townsend assembled the band The Compleat Strangers to perform Eckert's original and multifaceted music. Their debut album Finding My Way Home, released on the DIW label, features original compositions combined with contemporary reworkings of traditional folk songs. The band's second album, Do the Day Over, will be released on the City of Tribes label in 1995.

ROBERT WOODRUFF (Director) has been honored by the Los Angeles Drama Critics, San Diego Theatre Critics, Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle, and New York's SoHo News. He is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Associate Artist's Grant and has served on the board of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization of non-profit theaters. He is the co-founder of the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco and creator of the Bay Area Playwright's Festival. He has been an associate artist of the Mark Taper Forum and an artist-inresidence at The New York Shakespeare Festival and the New York Theatre Workshop, where he is currently working on a grant made possible by the Pew Charitable Trust.

As an associate artist of the Mark Taper Forum, Woodruff directed Sam Shepard's A Lie of the Mind, In the Belly of the Beast, A Madrigal Opera (music by Philip Glass, text by Len Jenkin), and Struck Dumb by Jean Claude van Itallie and Joseph Chaikin. His work with Shepard also includes the premieres of Curse of the Starving Class, Buried Child (Pulitzer Prize, 1979), and True West, as well as the European tour of the Shepard/Chaikin collaboration of Tongues and Savage/Love. For the La Jolla Playhouse he directed A Man's A Man, Figaro Gets a Divorce, The Tempest, and La Petomane with the Flying Karamazov Brothers. Woodruff directed John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi and George Walker's Nothing Sacred for American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Other productions include David Mamet's translation of Pierre Laville's Red River and The Three Moscowteers with the Karamazovs at the Goodman Theatre; A Comedy of Errors, also with the Karamazovs at Lincoln Center (later broadcast over PBS); The Skin of Our Teeth at Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater; Julius Caesar at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre; Bertolt Brecht's Baal

at the Trinity Repertory Theatre in Providence; Michael Christofer's *Ice* at the Manhattan Theatre Club; and *Shout Across The River* by Stephen Poliakoff at New York's Phoenix Theatre. His work has been seen at the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*), Sydney Arts Festival, Spoleto Festival USA (*Pioneer*, a collaboration with the Paul Dresher Ensemble), and Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles.

Robert Woodruff collaborated with and directed Rinde Eckert during the creation of the Paul Dresher Ensemble theater piece *Pioneer*, and was dramatic and directing consultant during the creation of *The Gardening of Thomas D.*

LEE TOWNSEND (Music Consultant) is an independent music producer and owner of Songline and Tone Field Productions, specializing in recordings of contemporary composers, jazz musicians, and singer-

songwriters. He has been director of U.S. operations for ECM Records, director of production at Palo Alto Records, staff producer and programmer for KCRW-FM National Public Radio affiliate, a music journalist, and commentator. Since 1983, Townsend has produced recordings for artists including Bill Frisell, Paul Dresher, Denny Zeitlin, Joe Henderson, and Chick Corea; produced motion picture soundtracks, concerts, and videos; was music consultant for Werner Herzog's film *Scream of Stone*; and recently completed a project to rerecord the music from the films of Buster Keaton.

Townsend has worked with Rinde Eckert for more than five years, and helped him develop the concept and bring together the musicians for the band The Compleat Strangers. Townsend produced both albums for the band, *Finding My Way Home* and *Do the Day Over*, and guided Eckert in developing the first album into a full-evening concert performance.

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Sassy, Soulful Sounds from

The Uptown String Quartet

There is something quintessentially European about the string quartet-four stringed instruments in intimate conversation with each other. The music for the string quartet stretches back to late eighteenthcentury drawing rooms where professionals and amateurs alike played music by Haydn and Mozart. The repertoire includes the balanced purity of Schubert, the passion of Beethoven, the singing melodies of Tchaikovsky, the clashing rhythms of Bartok, and the anguish of Schostakovich. But as the twentieth century draws to a close, a new generation of musicians has begun to search outside that tradition for music that reflects a wider range of musical traditions.



For the Kronos Quartet inspiration comes from music well outside of Western classical traditions from Africa and South America, as well as from Native American music, jazz, and rock music. Recently the Paul Dresher Ensemble presented a concert here of chamber music by American composers heavily influenced by the music of Asia. One can also mention the Turtle Island String Quartet and the New York String Trio.

The Uptown String Quartet can be considered part of that search to broaden the string quartet repertoire, to make it speak for wider musical and social traditions. When you listen to one of their CDs, you're immediately struck by how familiar their sound is—the

warmth of two violins, a viola, and a cello in intimate dialogue. But suddenly the violins sound sassy and the cello takes on a soulful mood and all four seem to be digging deep into their strings. The music comes from African American roots—from gospel, rock, blues, rags, and jazz.

It's difficult to parcel out the sources of the unique Uptown sound; they're so integrated that you wonder why it hasn't been around for generations already. It can be argued whether one can any longer talk about American society as a melting pot, but listening to the Uptown one can still believe in a musical melting pot in which the string quartet meets the vitality of the African

American heritage.

Underlying the Uptown's sound is a deep understanding of the repertoire for the string quartet that comes from years of training in classical music. All four of these women bring impeccable credentials. First violinist Diane Monroe studied at the Curtis Institute, has taught at Oberlin and Swarthmore, and made her recital debut in New York on the Young Artists Debut Series. Lesa Terry, the second violinist, holds a BA from California State University at Northridge, was a member of the Atlanta Symphony, and taught at Spelman College. Violist Maxine Roach received her degree from Oberlin and pursued graduate study with the noted violist William Primrose. Eileen Folson, the cellist, performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra at 17, holds degrees from the University of Michigan, and was a member of the New York Philharmonic for two years.

But this list only tells a very small part of their story. These four women were brought up in rich musical environments, where classical music, jazz, spirituals and gospel, rock 'n' roll, and blues were a natural part of family musical life. Diane Monroe recalls that she inhabited two musical worlds all through high school in her native Philadelphia. She played jazz piano in the high school jazz band, quitar in a rhythm-andblues band and even joined a conga band. Then there was the violin, which was really serious. That dichotomy continued throughout her college career at Curtis. A teacher once heard her playing the guitar in concert and pulled her aside later, saying "You've got to play the violin like you play the

guitar; then there won't be any problem." She says it took years of discovery and changes to figure out what the woman had been talking about and apply it to her own playing.

Lesa Terry is the niece of famed jazz trumpeter Clark Terry, but was brought up by a mother who had fantasies of a family piano trio-she played recordings of Rubinstein, Heifetz, and Piatigorsky while she was pregnant. Her mother kept jazz from her daughters fearing the drugs and alcoholism associated with it, but she introduced Lesa and her sisters to spirituals and gospel music through recordings of Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson. It was not until college that she was exposed to jazz and she loved it. But she was unconvinced that she could be a part of it and play it on a violin.

Eileen Folson was five or six when she began to play the piano; then she took over her brother's trumpet when he guit. She harbored dreams of being a jazz bassoonist, but let those dreams slide when she got to college and threw herself into the cello.

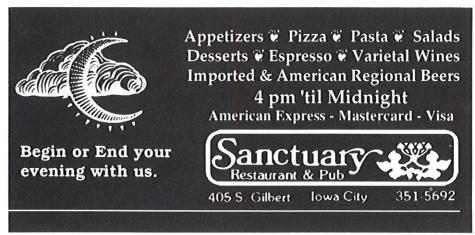
But it is Maxine Roach, the daughter of percussionist Max Roach, who seems the emblematic figure of this foursome. Trained as a classical violist, she went on to study with William Primrose who was her "first exposure to a classical giant who liked all kinds of music-Oscar Pettiford as well as Oscar Shumsky." Maxine had grown up around the jazz greats-Dizzy Gillespie, 'Cannonball' Adderly, and Bud Powell. When she graduated from high school, her dad took her to see Miles Davis, who looked her in the eye and said, "Now, you never play the same thing twice." She never forgot that dictum, though it was exceedingly difficult to follow under the rigid strictures of an Oberlin education.

It was Max Roach who was convinced that there was a role for a string quartet to play in jazz. But he needed some prompting from his own mother. According to recent legend, she said to him, "You know, you're playing and recording with all these people; how come you don't do something with your daughter?" Roach decided to add Maxine and her three colleagues to his famed jazz quartet, forming the Max Roach Double Quartet, and he introduced them, serving as producer, of their first CD Max Roach Presents The Uptown String Quartet. He continues to be a mentor to the ensemble.

With roots firmly in their classical training, the move outside the classical realm has

opened a new world of sound to this foursome. As you listen to their playing at Hancher on February 28, the bowing and the picking will sound familiar, but like true jazz musicians they also aggressively expand their attack-rapping instruments with bow or hand for percussive effects, scraping gritty nasal tones, and stretching the rhythms as if they were elastic.

As Miles Davis had suggested to Maxine Roach many years before, at the root of jazz is improvisation, the ability singly or as an ensemble to compose "on the spot"—to take off from what is written into a realm of spontaneity and creativity. Whether they are playing old time spirituals, stately rags, rippling blues, or snaky bebop, there is plenty of room to be deeply expressive in very personal ways.



New Plays for the New Year!



OWAS

The Butcher's Daughter

by Wendy Kesselman Directed by Mark Hunter February 3-12 E.C. Mabie Theatre

Ibsen and the Actress

written and directed by Maria Irene Fornes February 24-March 12 Theatre A



Loco Motives

by Nicholas Meyer Directed by Patrick Robertson UNIVERSITY heatres April 6-16 E.C. Mabie Theatre



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It's rare nowadays in classical music—though it is not given a second thought in jazz-for musicians to arrange and compose their own music. But the members of the Uptown have very little choice; there is no jazz written for a string quartet, and if they want to play it, they must arrange it. And arrangements have recently led to more composing. "We're moving toward getting off the printed page," says Diane Monroe. They hope, too, to encourage more composers to write for them. "The world is teeming with composers who want to do something that breaks down barriers, and this quartet stands for that," says Roach.

Maxine Roach bridles at attempts to label what the quartet does. She objects to the term "crossover" and also doesn't want the Uptown to be considered strictly a jazz ensemble. She stresses that categories are not what's important. "You listen to John Coltrane with McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison and that's a great chamber music ensemble. You listen to the Guarneri Quartet and that's a great chamber music ensemble. I'm not talking about the sound; I'm talking about the way they listen to each other."

The Uptown String Quartet's performance on February 28 culminates a week of residency activities, funded in part by The University of Iowa Community Credit Union, Chamber Music America's Presenter-Community Residency Program, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

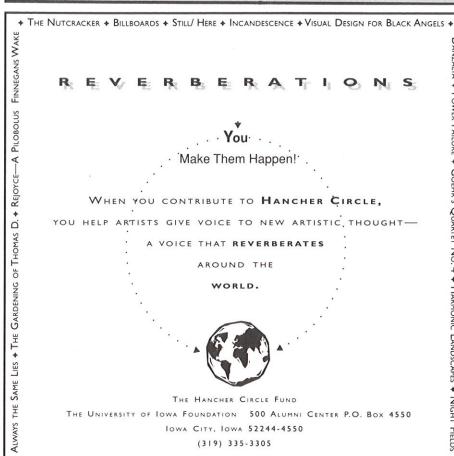
On Wednesday February 22 they will participate in an informal exploration of the string tradition in jazz, hosted by Winston Barclay and sponsored by Hancher, KCCK, and Riverside Theatre. The evening, which will include live and recorded music, videotapes and slides, will also include a reception for the musicians. The event is free, but tickets are required. They are available, beginning February 6, by calling Riverside Theatre Box Office at 338-7672. Or stop by the theater at 213 North Gilbert Street, adjacent to Gilpin Paint Store. The box office is open 2:30-6:30, Monday through Friday; 12:00-2:00, Saturday; and an hour before every performance.

For tickets to the Uptown String Quartet concert at Hancher on February 28, stop by the Hancher Box Office or call 335-1160 or toll-free in Iowa 1-800-HANCHER.

Upcoming Events

For a list of upcoming events in the Iowa Center for the Arts, please turn to the final page of this playbill.





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Calendar Calendar

For ticketed events, tickets are available from the Hancher Box Office or University Box Office, IMU. Check with the box office for current information on ticket availability.

MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBITIONS

January 21-March 5
Faculty Exhibition 1995

MUSIC, THEATER, AND DANCE

Sunday, January 22 Anne Harrell, soprano 8 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

Tuesday, January 24 *Les Misérables*8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Wednesday, January 25 Les Misérables 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Thursday, January 26 Les Misérables 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Un Voix 8 p.m., Theatre B, Theatre Building

Friday, January 27Delbert Disselhorst, organ 8 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

Un Voix 8 p.m., Theatre B, Theatre Building

Les Misérables 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Saturday, January 28 *Un Voix* 8 p.m., Theatre B, Theatre Building

Les Misérables 2 & 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Sunday, January 29 *Les Misérables*2 & 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

lowa Vocal Arts Ensemble 3 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall **Wednesday, February 1**Alban Gerhardt, cello
8 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

Friday, February 3
Bach Trio with James Galway
8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

The Butcher's Daughter 8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Saturday, February 4 Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

The Butcher's Daughter 8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Sunday, February 5 *The Butcher's Daughter*3 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Monday, February 6 Honor Choir 7 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

Wednesday, February 8 *The Butcher's Daughter*8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Thursday, February 9 *Natural Knees*8 p.m., Theatre B, Theatre Building

The Butcher's Daughter 8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Friday, February 10 Susan Marshall & Company 8 p.m., Hancher Auditorium

The Butcher's Daughter 8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Natural Knees 8 p.m., Theatre B, Theatre Building

Saturday, February 11 Composer's Workshop 8 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

The Butcher's Daughter 8 p.m., Mabie Theatre, Theatre Building

Hancher Auditorium Information

Box Office: Open from 11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Sunday. On nights of performances, the Box Office remains open until 8:30 p.m. If a performance falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Box Office hours are 1:00 to 8:30 p.m. Telephone: 319/335-1160, or toll-free in lowa 1-800-HANCHER.

Seating Policy: To avoid disrupting the performance, latecomers will be directed to the observation rooms and will be seated during an appropriate break in the performance, at the discretion of the management. If you must leave during a performance and later wish to re-enter the auditorium, an usher will escort you to an observation booth until an intermission or the conclusion of the performance.

Greenroom: The greenroom, located on the river side of the lobby, is the site of discussions preceding many events and is also a convenient place to meet artists following a performance. Ask an usher, or check the lobby sign for availability of performers.

Coughing and Electronic Watches:

The auditorium's acoustics amplify the sounds of coughing and other noises. Please turn off your electronic watch alarm. The use of a handkerchief helps to muffle a cough or sneeze, and cough drops are available from the ushers. If coughing persists, you may wish to return to the lobby, where an usher can direct you to one of the soundproof observation rooms.

Smoking: Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the auditorium, lobby, or Cafe. If you wish to smoke during intermissions, you may leave the building, but please take your ticket stub to re-enter the building.

Cameras and Tape Recorders: In compliance with copyright laws and contractual arrangements with artists, photographs and recordings may not be made during a performance. Please check your cameras and tape recorders with the house manager or an usher.

Restrooms and Drinking Fountains: Located on either side of the lobby and mezzanine.

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