

# 100 Icons

for any number of performers  
duration and tempo variable

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conceived 2006/detailed and revised 2008

## *Instructions to the performer(s)*

- At any tempo, recite the names of 100 20th century musicians.
- The names may be free-associated and spoken in any order, but must not be memorized.
- Do not recite the names from a sheet of paper. Avoid risk-averting *aide-memoires* (projected text, cue cards, mnemonic memorization, audio piped into an in-ear monitor, etc.). The names should be familiar to you and embody music you know and love.
- Amplification is optional; speak (and/or sing) so your audience can hear you. Do a dry recitation only if it suits you; if the names (and/or concomitant associations) are beautiful to you, make them beautiful.
- Do not preface the performance with any comments or introductory notes. Just go. Optionally you may conclude your performance by stating “100 Icons. Thank you.”
- To count exactly to 100, you may enlist an assistant to give a discreet signal, or finger some pebbles (or beads) stashed in your pocket or devise any other furtive method to keep count cardinally. This is optional.

## *notes*

Apart from indicating areas of interest, bias, expertise, adoration, and ignorance, **100 Icons** offers a way for musicians to perform a musical autobiography, at once outlining, seeking, and improvising a musical genealogy or at least conveying the fecundity of 20th century music. A composition for musicians and others who love and know music, I hope the allusions and associations as well as the contrast of known and unknown names in **100 Icons** will percolate in the ears of listeners and performers.

Postscript 2008: I did not know of Robert Ashley’s tape piece *In Sara, Mencken, Christ and Beethoven There Were Men and Women* when I composed **100 Icons**, though in this work, the words are the music. **100 Icons** is a close cousin carrying a debt to contemporary poets who employ inventories in their work, notably Kenneth Goldsmith and Robert Fitterman as well as John Barton Wolgamot, and of course, the inclusion of evocative catalogues from the assorted lists (genealogies, laws, inventories, Temple dimensions, etc.) that permeate the Bible to various chapters harbored in *Moby Dick* (“Cetology,” “the Grand Armada,” “Measurement of the Whale’s Skeleton”).

I believe **100 Icons** to be most effective performed solo, however the score reads “for any number of performers” in case a group manages to realize the piece without devolving into competitive, name-dropping recitation, comical antiphonies, or other theatrical actions that defer attention from the names. Limiting names to 20th century musicians (composers, performers, improvisors, etc.) is a rhetorical tactic aimed at excavating the recent past; a performer who cannot name **100 Icons** (or at least makes the attempt) is not likely to (be mature enough to) perform the piece anyway.

Documented performances by a single performer, especially over the course of several decades, of **100 Icons** might prove useful to scholars as well. Accidental repetitions, mispronunciations, and flat-out failure by falling short of naming **100 Icons** is not encouraged yet should be accepted—and in retrospect, welcomed by the performer.

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