

# For Philip Guston

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 – 2 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

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For Philip Guston (1984)

Morton Feldman (1926 - 1987)

Alexander Ishov, flutes

Liam Wooding, piano and celesta

Steven Schick, percussion

duration: approximately 4 hours 30 minutes

Audience members are expected to remain quiet throughout the performance. If you must exit and reenter the Hall, please be cognizant and respectful to the performers and fellow audience members.



**UC San Diego**  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
Department of Music

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Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise-generating devices before the performance, and to remain seated during the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the hall. UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall chimes composed by Caroline Louise Miller

*For Philip Guston* (1983) is the third work in a series of trios for flute, piano, and percussion which also includes *Why Patterns?* (1978), and *Crippled Symmetry* (1983).

Evolving over the course of ~240 minutes, *For Philip Guston* invites listeners (and performers) to explore its slowly-evolving rhythmic permutations which, over time, generate a trance-like state stretching the perception of form and memory. The score comes in and out of vertical alignment (both rhythmically and visually) and requires unpacking the layers of complex patterns. While perfection is unattainable, pursuing it offers its own satisfaction as one gets closer and closer to figuring out how the puzzle fits together.

Despite the complexity of the score, the overall effect for the listener can be described as “companionable .... like sitting on a beach with the sound of the waves. Easily done” (Howard Skempton). The challenge of the work is matched by its beauty; the piece has the potential to take us out of the pressures of our daily routines. As Robert Worby puts it, “society cuts time into vicious chunks then makes us fit into them; but sometimes five minutes can seem like forever while a whole day slips by in the twinkle of an eye.”

Feldman wrote many works for his friends and colleagues, fellow composers, visual artists, writers, and philosophers (including John Cage, Samuel Beckett, Aaron Copland, Franz Kline, Frank O’Hara, Mark Rothko, and Christian Wolff). *For Philip Guston* is not necessarily about Guston’s paintings, but is a testament to the friendship between Feldman and Guston. The program notes from The Paris Autumn Festival provide a glimpse into Feldman’s relationship with Guston:

“The friendship between American composer Morton Feldman (1926-1987) and painter Philip Guston came to a halt in 1970 when Guston chose to delve into figurative art, an aesthetic change that Feldman, an enthusiast of abstract art, would never be able to forgive. Upon the painter’s death two years later, Feldman understood the sheer freedom with which Guston was able to paint, saying, “he stopped questioning himself.” This became a leitmotiv throughout the remainder of his career, evidenced by his penchant for stretching time in his music. After completing his second *String quartet* (1983) which lasts five and a half hours, he composed the trio *For Philip Guston* (1984), of which the title shows the artistic debt Feldman owed the painter – a work that lasts for four hours. Feldman is known to have compared his patient musical style to the interwoven colours of a Persian rug – the Trio is a quintessential example of that very style.”

We truly hope you enjoy our performance of this mesmerizing work.

Program Notes by Alexander Ishov