

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music
press release

CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE

May 27th, 1979 6:30 and 8:00pm
\$5.00 / \$4.00 members / TDF Music + \$2.00

St. Thomas Church, 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue
Reservations a must: 925-3615

On Sunday, May 27th, The Kitchen Center will present composer Charlemagne Palestine in a special concert of carillon music to be held at St. Thomas Church, 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City. Palestine will play two sets on the church's 21-bell carillon, at 6:30 and 8:00pm. Seating in the belltower is available on a limited basis.

Charlemagne Palestine is perhaps best-known for his "Strumming Music for Bösendorfer." It is a little-known fact that the strumming technique was developed during the years that Palestine was carillonneur at St. Thomas, 1964-70. In 1966, he initiated the composition/performance of a carillon piece, EPIC IN DAILY SEGMENTS. For four years, he played a daily installment of 25 minutes or so, restating and developing a basic body of ideas. The piece ultimately grew to about 1500 segments. Thousands of passers-by walking along Fifth Avenue were exposed to Palestine's brand of experimental music as it chimed from the belltower. In a sense, the composition was music for the unsuspecting.

On May 27th, Palestine will play a distilled version of EPIC IN DAILY SEGMENTS. This version will last about 45 minutes, with one brief pause. Audience members will climb the 142 steps of a winding staircase to find seats in the steeple chamber where the composer will play. The St. Thomas carillon, one of the finest in the United States, is generally regarded as the one with the sweetest and purest bell tones. The original carillon of twelve bells, cast in 1875, survived the fire that destroyed the first church structure and became the core of the 21-bell carillon which was dedicated in 1930.

The sound qualities that attracted Palestine to the carillon are the same ones that later drew him to the Bösendorfer piano: purity of sustained tone and potential for rapid articulation. Carillons are usually played in slow stately rhythms; Palestine, however, allows the bells to sustain by extremely rapid articulation of the carillon keyboard—he plays the bells in the fast manner of a flamenco guitarist. The carillon is an instrument that demands great physical strength from its players; Palestine's style of playing demands even more than usual. In order to play his composition, he must tape his hands as a boxer does. Palestine foregoes amplification in his works and believes that playing for thousands of listeners should of necessity demand more physical exertion than playing chamber music for an audience of fifty. As he remarks, "You don't make a minor gesture and make a major sound."

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Charlemagne Palestine was born in Brooklyn in 1945. He attended the High School of Music and Art and continued his music studies at the Mannes School, Julliard, Columbia University and NYU. He has taught at the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, the California Institute of the Arts and NYU. The past fifteen years have seen an evolution in his compositional interests concurrent with a refinement of earlier styles: the strumming music was adapted in successive versions for carillon, Bösendorfer piano, harpsichord and string ensemble; compositions in the 1960s made pioneering use of vocal techniques producing overtones (as in Tibetan chanting); recently, in an effort to make Music step down from its pedestal, Palestine has been composing monologues which blend music, drama, text and terror. The composer has also channeled his artistic activities in videotapes, paintings, sculpture and books. He is currently working on a two-hour composition for Mahlerian orchestra which uses as its core the strumming technique.

For further information please call Joe Hannan at 925-3615.