For Immediate Release

U of M School of Music Presents
Professor James Dillon’s “Book of Elements”
Performed by Pianist Noriko Kawai on May 15, 2013

Minneapolis, MN (5/8/2013)—U of M School of Music will present composer and U of M professor James Dillon’s *Book of Elements*, a five-volume piano solo, performed by pianist Noriko Kawai on Wednesday, May 15 at 7:30 p.m. at Ted Mann Concert Hall (2128 4th St. S., Minneapolis, MN 55455). This event is free and open to the public.

Kawai performed *The Book of Elements*, which has been described by *BBC Music Magazine* as “rich” and “utterly riveting,” at the UK Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the Royal College of Music in London, and the Alicante Summer Festival in Spain. In 2003, she recorded a CD of *Elements*.

“To play all volumes in one go is a quite a tour de force,” says Kawai, who premiered volume 2 in Germany. “It’s about 90 minutes without any intermission.”

But daunting as it is, Kawai savors the challenge; once she starts, she says, time ceases to exist and the music takes over. “What I like about Dillon’s piano music is, despite his vast knowledge of the keyboard literature, his language remains unique, outrageous, elegant, exasperating, funny, and helplessly beautiful,” she says.

When asked what he wanted people to leave with after attending the May 15 concert, Dillon, who started composing at about the age of seven or eight, replied: “The only thing one can hope for is that an audience has an open and curious mind, nothing else. And actually, what they’d leave with, I don't want to have any control over whatsoever. The concert contains all the things that one demands of a concert, which is essentially a kind of musical magic.”

*The Book of Elements* a five-part essay in continuity versus discontinuity and concentrated substance for solo piano that amounts, I think, to be the most significant contribution to the pianist's repertoire since György Ligeti's *Etudes.*”
—Tom Service, *The Guardian*


Biographies

Pianist **Noriko Kawai** studied with Phyllis Sellick and Yonty Solomon at the Royal College of Music in London and with Rodolfo Caporali at the Academia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. She has given numerous recitals and broadcasts throughout the world and is well known for the extraordinary range of her repertoire, from Renaissance composers to new music. Her innovative programs often juxtapose standard and contemporary works.

In recent seasons Kawai has appeared at festivals in Aldeburgh, Bath, Huddersfield, Macerata, Paris, Strasbourg,
Brussels, Berlin, Valencia, Oslo, Bludenz, Alicante, Rome, and Venice. She has given concerts with the Leopold String Trio, the Arditti Quartet, and the Quatuor Diotima, and duo recitals with violinist Irvine Arditti and cellist Rohan de Saram.

For the NMC label Kawai has recorded works by Gerald Barry, and more recently James Dillon’s *The Book of Elements Volumes I-V*. The latter received unanimous critical acclaim including ‘Editor’s Choice’ in *Gramophone*. Her earlier Skryabin recital CD from Live Notes, Japan, was also hailed as a major artistic achievement (“…rivalling the greats of the so-called Golden Age…one of the great Skryabin recitals on disc”).

Recent concerto engagements include the first performances of Dillon’s *Andromeda*, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ilan Volkov, in London (BBC Proms 06, Royal Albert Hall) and Glasgow, and Lachenmann’s Ausklang in ‘Transcendent – the Music of Helmut Lachenmann’ presented by the Royal College of Music and the London Sinfonietta. Kawai also gave the French première of *Andromeda*, with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège/Pascal Rophé, at the festival ‘Musica’ in Strasbourg. In Fall 2009 she appeared as a soloist in the Piano Concerto *Alternative World – Versions* by Saed Haddad, with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra/Zsolt Nagy at the Arena Festival in Riga, Latvia. Most recently she performed Scriabin’s *Prometheus* with Conductor Steve Schick and the La Jolla Symphony Orchestra, San Diego in October 2010.

She made the North American premiere performance of *Traumwerk Book 3 for Violin and Piano* by James Dillon with Irvine Arditti at Ted Mann Concert Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, the first complete performance of *Etudes Mysterieuses* by Haddad at the French Academy of the Villa Medici Rome. Her recording of the same work for the Wergo label received The German Record Critics’ Award (“Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik”) in November 2010.

In addition to her concert appearances, Kawai has been active teaching in recent years; she served as a professor of piano at the Royal College of Music, London during 2004-2008 and then was invited to teach piano and Chamber Music as a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota School of Music, 2007-2013.

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Although composer James Dillon has lectured extensively on his work throughout Europe, Asia, and the U.S.A. Dillon has largely remained outside of the academic world working as a freelance composer. During the late 80s early 90s he accepted temporary positions teaching composition at The University of Central England, Birmingham and Goldsmith’s College, University of London.

Since 1980 James Dillon’s work has been consistently performed and commissioned worldwide by most of the major festivals, radio stations, soloists, ensembles, and orchestras. In 1976 he won the first Huddersfield Contemporary Music Prize. He was also the first British recipient of the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis (1982) from Darmstadt, Germany. In 1989 the *Sunday Times* named him ‘Classical Musician of the Year,’ and he has uniquely received four Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards (1997, 2001, 2005, 2011), the UK’s most prestigious music awards. In 1995 he was a Japan Foundation ‘visiting artist’ to Japan. He has been a guest lecturer at universities throughout the world and was named ‘Distinguished International Visitor’ to New York University in 2001. In 2003 the University of Huddersfield awarded him an honorary doctorate for his contribution to music. In 2003 and 2004 he received the British Academy of Composers ‘Chamber Music Award’ for *Traumwerk II* and *The Soadie Waste* respectively.

In the early 1980s Dillon’s name became associated with the so-called New Complexity movement in London an association he has consistently questioned. However Dillon’s music is the product of a fertile creative imagination and a multi-faceted and independent musical personality, and his work defies simple categories. Perhaps one common factor amongst this group of composers was a shared intransigence to the commodification of art, but also a clear

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distaste for schools, which tended to confound the critics. Dillon’s large and growing catalogue of works is rooted in the European classical tradition but is touched by his formative exposure to Scottish pipe music in particular piobaireachd and displays a wide interest other musics from jazz and delta blues to the Hindustani classical tradition and oriental court musics. This does not however indicate an exotic indulgence, Dillon’s is a direct response both the structural and expressive.

During the 1970s and early 80s clearly touched by Varese and Xenakis, works such as . . . Once Upon a Time and East 11th St. NY 10003 show a fascination with timbre and space. Some of these influences prevail in later works too, in the colossal orchestral helle Nacht, a work of obsessive intensity and hair-raising fierceness, and its immediate predecessor iüberschreiten for 16 players commissioned by the London Sinfonietta. iüberschreiten, helle Nacht and Blitzschlag (for flute and Orchestra) form the three parts of his German Tryptich which grew from his reading of German philosophy and poetry. The organization of works into ‘cycles’ or ‘series’ is a distinctive feature of Dillon’s compositions. During much of the 80s and 90s he worked on his large scale cycle Nine Rivers a chain of nine compositions, over three and a half hours of music which in exploring relationships between ‘flow’ and ‘turbulence’ draws inspiration from such diverse influences as complexity theory, renaissance alchemy, Rimbaud’s Le Bateau Ivre and Celtic knot patterns. Nine Rivers will receive its third performance in four years as the featured work at this year’s Holland Festival in June 2013. His work has been extensively recorded on CD and his complete works are published by Peters Edition, London and range through solos, chamber music, orchestral, concertos, electroacoustic works, and opera. Dillon’s creativity reflects a restless curiosity and a singular vision.

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Parking is available in the 21st Ave. ramp, one block southwest of the concert hall. Photographs available upon request. Email requests for photographs to marsh396@umn.edu.

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