

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

EDITOR: PLEASE NOTE

Special Event for Children at The Museum of Modern Art

December 28 - 31, 1970

GERTRUDE STEIN'S "FIRST READER"

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, December 28, 29, 30, 31

11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 St., New York City

Tickets: adults \$2.00, children under 16 \$1.00. *For children over 8.*

A musical revue for children, Gertrude Stein's "First Reader", presented by The Junior Council of The Museum of Modern Art; produced by John Bernard Myers; adapted and directed by Herbert Machis; composed by Ann Sternberg; decor by Kendall Shaw.

Gertrude Stein's "First Reader" is an informal production -- the cast includes a dog. Miss Stein's book, published just before her death in 1946, has been set to appealing contemporary music by Ann Sternberg. Some of the songs tell a story, others are lyric expressions, others are nonsense verse in the tradition of Edward Lear or Lewis Carroll.

"First Reader" was originally presented at Southampton College in the summer of 1969 and then at the Astor Place Theatre last winter, where it was enthusiastically received by Harold Clurman, The Nation; who called it "An enchanted evening" and Emory Lewis of Cue, who referred to it as "A bright balloon of a musical revue"...

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw and Linda Gordon, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, NYC 10019 Telephone: (212) 956-2648

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 135
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GERTRUDE STEIN'S "FIRST READER" HAS SPECIAL MUSEUM PERFORMANCES THE MUSICAL REVUE TO BE SHOWN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CURRENT EXHIBITION OF THE STEIN FAMILY

A musical revue based on Gertrude Stein's "First Reader" will be staged at the Museum of Modern Art, and is scheduled to have a limited engagement of two performances daily, for four consecutive days, starting December 28th, at eleven in the morning and three in the afternoon. The Junior Council of the Museum is presenting this special event which is open to the public, children and adults.

Produced by John Bernard Myers, with music by Ann Sternberg, "First Reader" features a quartet of singers under the direction of Herbert Machiz, in what has been described as a "bright balloon of a musical." Miss Stein was inspired to write "First Reader" at the suggestion of Carl Van Vechten. First published in 1946, just prior to her death, it was apparently intended to be read aloud, and as Virgil Thomson pointed out, "It isn't that Miss Stein's words lack music; they like music." As a matter of record, Miss Sternberg, the composer, has said, "the words seemed to set themselves to music."

Some of the songs in this revue tell a story; others are lyric outbursts, such as "Sunshine" and "Wildflowers." "Baby Benjamin" is a nonsense verse in the tradition of Edward Lear or Lewis Carroll.

Miss Stein intended to convey to her audience some basic lessons in manners, courage, fortitude, kindness and the difference between things: the true meanings of words and how to use them effectively.

The director, Herbert Machiz, and the composer, Miss Sternberg, collaborated in attempting to find the concept behind each song, including the mini-opera "In a Garden" and "The Blackberry Vine."

(more)

Miss Stein has been called "a premature hippie" and "a magnificent magician enamored of words" and "the queen of cubism," who has captured sense and nonsense.

The stage setting of the Stein revue will consist of a series of standing screens in bright colors that depict the life of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. The sets were designed by Kendall Shaw. The cast of "four" features Joy Garrett, Frank Giordano, Sandra Thornton and Geoff Leon. There is also a dog named Hughie. The production was conceived and directed by Herbert Machiz, with lighting by Jim Wallace.

The musical revue was first performed at the Artists' Theater Festival in Southampton, Long Island. It also played to 70 performances in New York, Off-Broadway at the Astor Place Theater. At the Museum it will be shown in the spacious Founders Room which is not usually open to the public. The audience will be seated on three sides.

 * Tickets are available, at \$2.00 for adults, \$1.00 for children under 16, from *
 * Sharon Werner, The Junior Council, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, *
 * New York, New York 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-6112. Tickets to "First Reader" *
 * include general admission to the Museum, and can be purchased by mail or in *
 * person prior to or the day of the performance. *

Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Special Projects Coordinator, and Mark Segal, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296.