

Summergarden The Museum of Modern Art

NO: 43

FOR RELEASE before June 4, 1977



photo: D. Jarvar

MEET THE BAND: ROBERT "ONE-MAN" JOHNSON OPENS SUMMERGARDEN CONCERT SEASON

One-man band ROBERT JOHNSON opens The Museum of Modern Art's seventh SUMMERGARDEN season with performances at 8 PM, Friday and Saturday, June 3 and 4, 1977. Free admission is through the Sculpture Garden gate at 8 West 54th Street beginning at 6 PM. SUMMERGARDEN has been made possible by grants from MOBIL since its inception in 1971.

"One-Man" Johnson accompanies his "good-timey" ragtime and country-blues vocals by playing (more-or-less simultaneously) six or twelve string guitar or his 1936 National steel guitar played bottleneck style, hi-hat cymbal, harmonica, kazoo and a large acoustic foot-piano, a unique handcrafted instrument based on Jesse "Lone Cat" Fuller's original "fotdella".

The tunes are country-blues and ragtime classics from the 1920's through 1950's by such composers as Hank Williams, Jelly Roll Morton, Jesse Fuller (author of SAN FRANCISCO BAY BLUES), Leadbelly, Charlie Patton, Willie Dixon and many others.

(over)

"My work includes songs of my own composition and personal stylings of classic tunes from other authors," explains Johnson. "The spirit of the material is blues and ragtime with glints and glimmers of swing, charleston, delta and Chicago/Memphis blues, rock and roll, and early country tunes I learned from my Uncle Johnny in Rhinelander, Wisconsin."

Johnson's foot-piano is of his own design and making and has 13 strings, the careful construction of a fine guitar and foot pedals attached to piano hammers which hit the strings. It's an elaboration on Jesse Fuller's 5 string creation constructed from a packing crate and a handful of bolts and wing nuts. Fuller called his instrument a "fotdella", which is Alabaman for "foot-diller" according to Johnson who hosted Fuller in his Wisconsin coffee house in 1965. Years later Johnson realized that in order to more fully express his musical ideas he needed the effect of tuned percussion provided by the fotdella. It was then that he re-thought Fuller's invention into an instrument more sophisticated in principle and construction, and nearly three times larger than the original.

In addition to playing The Three Rivers Arts Festival in Pittsburgh this May and his performance in Summergarden last year, he frequently plays in Chicago at such clubs as The Earl Of Old Town, Orphan's, The Quiet Knight, and Somebody Else's Troubles; college and university clubs and concerts throughout the Midwest, South and East; and has opened concerts for Leon Redbone, Mose Allison, Corky Siegel and Wendy Waldman. He also conceived and performed the soundtrack for an educational TV documentary about The Rock Island Railroad Line. Johnson's album, SWEET MAMA, DON'T LET IT Fall, is available on Sweet Jane Records.

The Museum of Modern Art's Sculpture Garden is open free as SUMMERGARDEN from 6 PM to 10 PM every Friday, Saturday and Sunday through October 2, 1977. Entrance is through the Garden gate at 8 West 54th Street. Short informal performances of music are presented at 8 PM every Friday and Saturday.

SUMMERGARDEN IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM MOBIL

SCHEDULE

June 10 and 11 -- NO GAP GENERATION JAZZ BAND plays Dixieland and swing

17 and 18 -- MITCHELL KORN ENSEMBLE plays "fusion" jazz

24 and 25 -- DAVID EYGES, cello; MARK WHITECAGE, reeds play "new" jazz

July 1 and 2 -- JULIE HOLTZMAN, pianist, plays Gershwin and others

8 and 9 -- L'AREMA CHAMBER ENSEMBLE plays Joplin, Piston, Schifrin, Beatles

15 and 16 -- ANDREA PASSIGLI, pianist

22 and 23 -- VIVIAN TAYLOR, pianist

29 and 30 -- CHRISTINA PETROWSKA, pianist

August -- DOWNTOWN/UPTOWN: a little night "new" music

Septemeber -- to be announced

Press Information: Earl Hatleberg, Project Director, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director,
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PRESS PREVIEW OF ONE MAN BAND, ROBERT JOHNSON, WHO INAUGURATES 7TH SUMMERGARDEN

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 1977 -- 9 AM to 1 PM -- (RAIN OR SHINE)

The Museum of Modern Art Sculpture Garden
11 West 53rd Street, Manhattan

One man band ROBERT JOHNSON dresses in old-time suits and cap reflecting the days when his "good-timey" tunes from the 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's were penned.

He plays eight instruments, more-or-less simultaneously, including two of unusual appearance: a unique home-made acoustic foot-piano, and a 1936 National steel guitar played bottle-neck style using a 13/17" Sears and Roebuck spark plug wrench.

"One-Man" Johnson lives in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin and drives himself and his music around the country in "One-Man's Van", a beat-up 1954 Chevy panel truck.

Johnson will play at 8 PM, Friday and Saturday, June 3 and 4.

The Museum of Modern Art's world-famous Sculpture Garden will open free to the public for its seventh season as SUMMERGARDEN at 6PM, Friday, June 3 and on every weekend evening thereafter all summer.

The Garden-turned-public-park will serve as arena for 38 free informal concerts presented at 8 PM on Fridays and Saturdays for 19 weeks.

300,000 visitors in six seasons have discovered and been entertained by more than 150 promising young artists in all the performing arts and have made SUMMERGARDEN a New York institution.

This season's music will include ragtime, country-blues and jazz; recitals of classical, 20th Century and contemporary composers including Gershwin, Joplin and Lennon-McCartney to name a few; a Bernstein operetta; and a few surprises.

Sundays are reserved exclusively for enjoying the monumental sculpture by such masters as Picasso, Rodin and Henry Moore, set amid lushly landscaped terraces with reflecting pools and fountains.... and the moon.

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