

NEW MUSIC CONCERTS | 2007-2008 PROGRAMME NOTES

October 21, 2007

William Bolcom for Two Pianos

co-presented with

The Music Gallery

Guest Artists: Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann

William Bolcom (USA, 1938):

Recuerdos (1991)

Frescoes (1971)

for 2 pianos, harmonium and harpsichord

Sonata for Two Pianos (1993)

The Serpent's Kiss (1969)

Through Eden's Gates (1969)

Illuminating Introduction 7:15 | Concert 8:00

Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann have been performing together as a duo since 1989. They studied with Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Hannover and with Jean-Eudes Vaillancourt at the Université de Montréal.

The duo received first prize at the International Chamber Music Competition in Caltanissetta , Italy , and were laureates of The4th Murray Dranoff International Two Piano Competition.

In 1993 they became members of the young artists' roster of Yehudi Menuhin-Live Music Now. Their recitals and concerts with orchestra have taken them to many parts of the world, including the United States , Italy , Germany , Holland , Greece and Canada . The duo has appeared at the celebrated Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Banff Arts Festival, the Royal Bank Calgary International Organ Festival and Competition, the International Two Piano Symposium and Schubertiade, Miami , the Tage für neueMusik, Darmstadt , the Braunschweiger Kammermusik Podium and at the EXPO 2000, Hannover.

They have made recordings for the CBC, for several stations of the ARD in Germany and for National Public Radio in the USA . In 1997 they recorded their first CD with 20th century works for two pianos. The duo's most recent recordings appear on the Arktos label featuring works by Rachmaninov, Bernstein, Debussy, Liszt and Gershwin. As founding members of the International Piano Quartet they had the opportunity to record Stravinsky's Les Noces under the direction of Robert Craft at the Abbey Road Studios in London . The CD first appeared on Koch International Classics and has been recently re-released on Naxos.

Currently on faculty at The Mount Royal College Conservatory in Calgary , Elizabeth and Marcel have also been involved in various musical activities at The Banff Centre for the Arts and were recently appointed as Artistic Directors of The Murray Dranoff International Two Piano Competition and Foundation in Miami . They are members of the Calgary based group Land's End Chamber Ensemble and have appeared as soloists with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and the Red Deer and Lethbridge Symphonic Orchestras. Their extensive repertoire ranges from the baroque to the contemporary and includes numerous own arrangements and compositions.

William Bolcom was born in Seattle, Washington in 1938. He studied composition with Milhaud at

Mills College in Oakland, California from 1958 to 1961, continuing with him and Messiaen in Paris. While teaching at Queens College in New York City in the late 1960s, he developed an interest in ragtime piano performance that helped spur a renewed interest in the music, leading to the composition of rags such as *Graceful Ghost*. Since 1973 he has taught at the University of Michigan. Bolcom is best known for his many recitals and recordings of historical American popular song with his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris. His early compositions are serial, reflecting Boulez, Stockhausen and Berio. With his discovery of ragtime, he found his mature style that melds popular and classical idioms in a distinctively American eclecticism.

Perusing a collection of late nineteenth-century Latin American dances inspired *Recuerdos* (Reminiscences). Bolcom saw the continuity between American ragtime and the larger world tradition of light piano music, writing his own tribute and evocations of that era. *Chôro*, the genre of Brazilian street folk-song, is in the style of Ernesto Nazareth, its creator. *Paseo* reflects the melding of Latin and North American musics in Civil War-era New Orleans in the music of America's first classical virtuoso pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk. *Valse Venezolano* is a Venezuelan waltz in the style of Ramón Delgado Palacios. It makes use of many of the stylistic elements of Palacios, including unexpected leaps, modulations and phrase lengths as well as excursions into 5/8 metre. *Recuerdos* was written for and first given at the Murray Dranoff Two- Piano Competition in 1991.

Frescoes is one of Bolcom's most powerful works in its scope and colours. In the detailed preface, Bolcom, inspired by the brief sketching, rapid painting and grand vision of fresco technique, wrote *Frescoes* in similar style. The pianists also double on harpsichord and harmonium. The score itself, typical of many works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, is visual "eye music" incorporating aleatoric improvisation, unsynchronized playing, tone clusters and plucking of the strings. The work is in two movements, *War in Heaven* and *The Caves of Orcus*. It was first performed in 1971 at a New Music Concerts recital in Toronto by Bruce Mather and Pierriette LePage.

The *Sonata for Two Pianos in One Movement* displays the focus resulting from the condensation of a three-movement form into a single movement. The first movement *Gaia*, the earth mother creatrix and sustainer of life on Earth, explores a nearly orchestral range of colours through a sonata-form structure of themes in which a lyrical third theme, in Bolcom's words, "set(s) up a conflict that proves to be irresoluble except by continuing into the other two movements". *Night Diversion* uses two pedal tones from *Gaia* which leads to a third (B flat); this note brackets two quotations, the first from Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* and the second the first ten notes from Debussy's *Brouillards*. *Ancient Dances* grew from an early Bolcom fragment. The conflicts of the previous two movements return to be resolved in a clear D major with the lyrical third theme of the first movement in apotheosis to end the work. Bolcom combines ancient Greek rhythms with a dancing blues, creating unforeseen connections. The *Sonata* was commissioned for the Paratore brothers' piano duo who gave the première in 1994.

Interlude dates from the early 1960s and the composer's "total chromatic period", which took place in Paris and at Stanford and includes the first dozen piano études and works such as *Décalage* for cello and piano.

Bolcom's suite *The Garden of Eden*, originally for solo piano, uses the ragtime idiom to tell the biblical story of the Fall from Genesis. It consists of four movements, each a self-contained "rag". Bolcom arranged the third and fourth rags, *The Serpent's Kiss* and *Through Eden's Gates*, for two pianos in 1994 for their première recording by Richard and John Contigula. *The Serpent's Kiss* uses various ragtime effects such as heel stomping and knocking on the wood of the piano in addition to aptly appropriate tongue clicking. *Through Eden's Gates*, in Bolcom's words, "conjures the image of Adam

and Eve calmly cakewalking their way out of Paradise”.

David Ciucevich
notes from Naxos recording

January 12 & 13, 2008 – Chou Wen-chung and the Varèse Story
Betty Oliphant Theatre
New Music Concerts Ensemble; Robert Aitken, flute and direction
Accordes String quartet; Teri Dunn, soprano

Concert One: Saturday January 12, 2008

7:15 Chou Wen-chung's talks about his life with Varèse

8:00 Concert

Edgard Varèse (France/USA 1883-1965) – Octandre (1923) (fl+pc/ob/clar/bsn/hn/trp/tbn/bass)
Chou Wen-chung (China/USA, 1923) – String Quartet No.2 "Streams" (2003)
Varèse – Density 21.5 (1936, rev.1946) solo flute
Chou – Twilight Colors (2007) (fl-alt fl/ob-eng hn/cl-bs cl/vn/vl/vc)
Varèse – Offrandes (1921) (Sop/2 fl+pc/ob/clar/bsn/hn/trp/tbn/7 perc/hp/2 vln/va/vc/bass)

9:30 Frank Scheffer's new Varèse film "The One All Alone"

Concert Two: Sunday January 13, 2008

Illuminating Introduction 7:15 | Concert 8:00

[Introduction and Interview with Chou Wen-chung]

Varèse – Intégrals (2 pc/ob/2 cl/hn/2 tpt/3 tbn/4 perc)

[Chou Wen-chung's introduction to Déserts]

Varèse – Déserts (1950-54; 1961) (2 fl+pc/clar/bass clar/2 hn/3tpt/3tbn/2 tba/5 perc/pf)

Chou – Echoes from the Gorge (1989) (4 perc)

Varèse – Hyperprism (1922-23) (fl+pc/cl/3 hn/2 tpt/2 tbn/10 perc)

Varèse – Ionisation (1929-31) (13 perc.)

Chou Wen-chung and the Varèse Story

Chou Wen-chung's earliest work, Landscapes for orchestra (finished in 1949 and premiered by Leopold Stokowski with the San Francisco Symphony in 1953), is often cited as the first composition that is independent of either Western or Eastern musical grammar. Subsequently, his research for integration of musical concepts and practices led to his ever-evolving theory on his *pien* (variable) modes, influenced by concepts found in yin-yang and I Jing theories, Dao philosophy, brush calligraphy, and *qin* (Chinese zither) music, as well as early and modern European theories. It began with two works for wind orchestra, *Metaphors* (1959) and *Riding the Wind* (1964), but evolved steadily through such works as *Pien* (1966) for chamber ensemble, *Echoes from the Gorge* (1989) for percussion quartet, the *Cello Concerto* (1992), and most recently, the two string quartets, *Clouds* (1996) and *Streams* (2003).

Chou was introduced to Edgard Varèse by Colin McPhee in 1949, and became Varèse's student and assistant during the years when Varèse was composing his last works, including *Déserts* (1949-1954), the manuscript of which is, in fact, in Chou's handwriting. His decades-long task of editing and correcting Varèse's scores began under Varèse's supervision, but was mostly undertaken after his death, including both versions of *Amériques*. Chou has also completed two of Varèse's unfinished

scores.

Chou did his graduate work at Columbia University under Otto Luening, 1952–1954, and served as his assistant and Vladimir Ussachevsky's at the predecessor of the historic Electronic Music Center. Among Chou's other teachers were Nicholas Slonimsky, Bohuslav Martinu, and the musicologist Paul Henry Lang at Columbia.

Chou taught composition to an increasingly international student body at Columbia University from 1964 to 1991. He succeeded Luening in 1969 and developed the composition program into an internationally renowned institution. He was responsible for the design and coordination of the curriculum for doctoral candidates in music composition. He designed the one-year course "Twentieth-century Styles and Techniques" as a basic required course for doctoral and master candidates in musical composition (1965) and the graduate course "Chinese Music" (1969). Chou also designed the course content on East and Southeast Asian music for the course "Asian Humanities in Music" as well as coordinating the overall design of the course, including the music of South and West Asia (1982). Concurrently, he was also in charge of academic affairs at Columbia's School of the Arts. He supervised curricular planning and the revision for the Master of Fine Arts programs in film, theater, visual arts and writing (1975 to 1987). In the 1980s, he discovered many young Chinese talents and brought them to the United States to study at Columbia.

As the first Fritz Reiner Professor of Musical Composition, Chou established the Fritz Reiner Center for Contemporary Music at Columbia in 1984 to foster new music and encourage young composers. He revitalized Columbia's Electronic Music Center by converting it to the present Computer Music Center. He has worked continuously on behalf of many cultural institutions, most notably as President of Composers Recordings, Inc. from 1970 to 1975.

To undertake crucially needed cultural projects throughout East and Southeast Asia, where he has been visiting since 1966, Chou established the Center for United States-China Arts Exchange in 1978 at Columbia University, which has since conducted many sustained projects in diverse cultural fields, involving thousands of professionals at a time. Some examples of the Center's projects are the Pacific Music Festival and the Pacific Composers Conference in Sapporo, Japan, in collaboration with Leonard Bernstein and the London Symphony Orchestra, 1990; the decade-long arts education program in China, begun in 1980, funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; and the ongoing comprehensive program on conservation and development of indigenous cultures of Yunnan, China, begun in 1990, funded by the Ford Foundation. Chou and the Center also collaborated with Isaac Stern on his first visit to China and the filming of *From Mao to Mozart* in 1979; and with Arthur Miller on the historic Asian premiere of *Death of a Salesman*, in Beijing, 1983. In 1994, at the invitation of the Nationalities Institute of Yunnan, he designed the fundamental concept for a four-track (indigenous minority, majority Chinese, pan-Asian, and modern Western) curriculum for a new arts department (music, dance and visual arts) in consultation with José Maceda.

Chou Wen-chung was born in Yantai, China in 1923 to a family steeped in the wenren tradition. He came to the United States in 1946. Chou is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and honorary member of the International Society for Contemporary Music and of the Asian Composers League. He was honored in 2001 by the French government with the order of Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. Chou's latest work, the Second String Quartet "Streams", premiered in New York City in April 2004. Most recently, he was awarded the 2005 Robert Stevenson Prize for research on the relationship between ethnomusicology and composition.

Chou lives in New York City with his wife Yi-an. He has two grown sons, Luyen and Sumin, and two

grandchildren.

My greatest lesson came in 1950. I had just discovered some early Webern scores: Six Bagatelles for string quartet, Op. 9, and Five Pieces for orchestra, Op. 10. They overwhelmed me because I thought they showed an amazing affinity to some very refined types of Chinese zither (ch'in or qin) music, so I spent a lot of time experimenting with integrating the material. Varèse, never very patient, could usually smell something foul in music pretty quickly. This time he was patient and allowed my experiment to continue. Perhaps he thought I was genuinely groping toward something. Finally one day, with both of us at the piano, he turned to me ferociously and said, "Wen-chung, you want to be a composer? Then you have to have courage. Sometimes you have to burn your music! Sometimes you have to piss on it!" And he stood up, pointing to my score, saying, "Piss now!" and walked out.

— Chou Wen-chung

Edgard Varèse (b. Paris, 22 Dec 1883; d. New York, 6 Nov 1965) studied with d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum (1903-5) and Widor at the Paris Conservatoire (1905-7), then moved to Berlin, where he met Strauss and Busoni. In 1913 he returned to Paris, but in 1915 he emigrated to New York; nearly all his compositions disappeared at this stage, with the exception of a single published song and an orchestral score, *Bourgogne* (1908), which he took with him but destroyed towards the end of his life. His creative output therefore effectively begins with *Amériques* for large orchestra (1921), which, for all its echoes of Debussy and of Stravinsky's early ballets, sets out to discover new worlds of sound: fiercely dissonant chords, rhythmically complex polyphonies for percussion and/or wind, forms in continuous evolution with no large-scale recurrence.

In 1921 he and Carlos Salzedo founded the International Composers Guild, who gave the first performances of several of his works for small ensemble, these prominently featuring wind and percussion, and presenting the innovations of *Amériques* in pure, compact form: *Hyperprism* (1923), *Octandre* (1923) and *Intégrales* (1925). *Arcana* (1927), which returns to the large orchestra and extended form with perfected technique, brought this most productive period to an end.

There followed a long stay in Paris (1928–33), during which he wrote *Ionisation* for percussion orchestra (1931), the first European work to dispense almost entirely with pitched sounds, which enter only in the coda. He also took an interest in the electronic instruments being developed (he had been calling for electronic means since his arrival in the USA), and wrote for two theremins or *ondes martenot* in *Ecuatorial* for bass, brass, keyboards and percussion (1934). The flute solo *Density 21. 5* (1936) was then his last completed work for nearly two decades.

During this time he taught sporadically and also made plans for *Espace*, which was to have involved simultaneous radio broadcasts from around the globe; an *Etude pour Espace* for chorus, pianos and percussion was performed in 1947. Then, with electronic music at last a real possibility owing to the development of the tape recorder, he produced *Déserts* for wind, percussion and tape (1954) and a *Poème électronique* (1957-8), devised to be diffused in the Philips pavilion at the Brussels Exposition of 1958. His last years were devoted to projects on themes of night and death, including the unfinished *Nocturnal* for voices and chamber orchestra (1961).

— The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music © Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

Edgard Varèse

Octandre

So often inspired by the physical sciences, Varèse here pays tribute to the biological, the adjective

octandre (octandrous) referring to flowers that have eight distinct stamens. Similarly eightfold, and perhaps similarly male in Varèse's imagination, the requisite ensemble comprises one each of the orchestral woodwind and brass instruments plus double bass. Among Varèse's ensemble pieces, the absence of percussion is unique, and perhaps contributes a sense of loss, most particularly near the start where the music goes through gestures recalling the recent *Hyperprism* but deprived of that work's febrile percussive activity. On the other hand, the concentration on pitched instruments provides for a richness of thematic and motivic relationships not approached again until *Déserts*. Another unusual feature is the division into movements, though these do not follow any conventional pattern, nor are they greatly differentiated in speed or character. Indeed, they allude to one another freely, and could be regarded as stages in the development of a single idea, that of having a soloist introduce an interplay of instrumental choirs.

The first movement starts with an oboe theme composed simply of a four-note descending chromatic scale with the second note slipped down an octave — yet this elementary idea gains, through rhythm and dynamic change, an unmistakably Varèsian profile. It climbs up to a sequence of blistering dissonances, broken off for an antiphony of wind quintet and brass trio, both supported by the double bass. At the end it returns, up a tritone.

In another typical gesture, the piccolo opens the second movement insisting on one note. Again there is a dialogue of ensembles, this time with the E-flat clarinet stepping forward. The final climax comes on a searing discord, out of which the double bass begins the finale. Here the main soloist is the bassoon, followed soon, as the marking changes from *Grave* to *Animé et jubilatoire*, by the oboe once more. A moment of canonic imitation is unexpected, as is a return to the tempo and material of the second movement. But then the brass recover the steadier speed of lively jubilation and roll round the same notes to press the work home.

The score was composed in 1923 and first performed at an International Composers Guild concert in New York on January 13, 1924. The conductor was E. Robert Schmitz, a fellow immigrant from Paris and an enthusiastic colleague in presenting new music. Varèse dedicated the piece to him.

— Paul Griffiths

Chou Wen-chung Second String Quartet "Streams"

My second string quartet is meant to be a humble tribute to the universality of the genius of Bach. When I was commissioned by the Brentano String Quartet for a short work in response to the *Art of Fugue*, I immediately decided to follow the commissioned fugue with ensuing movements on the same subject, as a quartet. It is intentionally concise in view of the monumental dimensions of the *Art of Fugue*. It bears the subtitle of "Streams," suggesting the ebb and flow of distinct ideas sprung from a single source or the confluence of currents from different sources into a single intermingling entity.

The first movement is a strict fugue. Where it is different from a conventional fugue is that its theme undergoes radical transformations throughout the fugue according to the elasticity central to the Chinese theories of yin/yang and I-ching. If the western transformation of a fugal theme can be characterized as viewing oneself in a mirror—exact reverse image—then the transformation in this quartet is more like seeing one's own face undulating in a running brook or a rippling pond. Another difference is in the emphasis on the gradual "process" of change as against a single "instance" of change. This characteristic is found throughout the quartet.

The second movement is an elegy, set as a canon in two pairs, based on the yin/yang forms of the fugal theme. The Chinese subtitle, *Zhaohun*, refers to a millennia old poetic form, meaning literally

“calling for the spirit of the deceased.” It is in turn mournful, tender, explosive and delirious but always constrained, and often in juxtaposition of each other. This wide range of emotion is expressed by the strings with mutes, in imitation of each other. This movement reminds me of the extraordinary a cappella polyphonic singing of villagers from an isolated locality in southwest China that I heard some years ago, which employed flexible but complicated imitation that is remarkably in spirit with that of this elegy. The Elegy is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Wen-tsing, who died unexpectedly shortly before I began to sketch out this movement.

The next is an extremely brief scherzo-like movement in the character of a “perpetual motion,” although technically again a double canon. The interest here is the process of a relentless drive towards an ever increasing tension by means of a constant expansion of the number of notes within each phrase, and of repeated bowing attacks within each beat. This steadily tightening mood is however counteracted by the ebb and flow in the tempo and the fluctuation in the dynamics. All of these means of expression in sound are in accordance with the same esthetic principles in Chinese calligraphy, where a single brushstroke in action can suggest an increasing mobility and tension while at the same time exhibiting fluctuations in texture and density. In short, this movement appears to be all about how a single calligraphic stroke completes its course of action. For a long time after the movement was composed, I was puzzled as to why I chose to depict such a theme. It only dawned on me recently that over the many months when I was composing this quartet, I was suffering a severe recurrent pain in my body that would intensify mercilessly to an unbearable climax when it would suddenly subside, very much in the manner of the arpeggio that abruptly concludes the movement.

The last movement is a recapitulation of the three principal expositions of the fugue. It opens with a canonic imitation in double-stops, making it practically a canon in eight parts. The superposition of double-stops on the strings made me feel sublimated while composing the movement. It is followed by a cadenza-like section leading to another eight part section which is now homophonic with a strong sense of searching for the meaning of life—to be one with nature. A brief coda brings the music back to where it started in the beginning, reminiscent of the introduction to the fugue—and perhaps of Bach’s own unfulfilled search.

— Chou Wen-chung

Edgard Varèse

Density 21.5

21.5 is the density in standard measure (grams per cubic centimetre) of platinum; Varèse wrote the piece for a new flute made for Georges Barrère, one of his New York French acquaintances — though Barrère’s instrument, produced by the still prominent firm of Wm. S. Haynes of Boston, was in fact of an alloy with one-tenth iridium, which would imply a density of 21.6. Barrère had been in the U.S. longer than Varèse, since coming in 1905 to be principal flutist of the New York Symphony, and he was nearing sixty when he asked his friend to write the first piece specifically for platinum(-iridium) flute, to be introduced at Carnegie Hall on February 16, 1936.

The choice of metal was not entirely a gimmick, for the new instrument was said to produce a wider range of upper partials. Varèse wrote the piece quite quickly, in January 1936, taking as his model Debussy’s flute solo *Syrinx*. The crucial opening four-note pattern of that work is crucial here, too, though quite differently interpreted, and *Density 21.5* unfolds almost as an alternative to *Syrinx*, a lament instead of a pastoral. Beyond that, the material is very much Varèse’s own, tracing a sketch of ideas from other compositions and not excluding some remnant of his vital percussion at those moments where the player is asked to tap the keys audibly.

Varèse revised the work, doubling it in length, before publishing it ten years later.

— Paul Griffiths

Chou Wen-chung

Twilight Colors

Twilight Colors is a double trio for woodwinds and strings, specifically for flute, oboe and clarinet in one trio; and violin, viola and cello in the other. The woodwind trio is by itself a double trio with some movements written for alto flute, English horn and bass clarinet played by the same performers as a separate entity. Therefore the movements of the work consist of a string trio with combinations of one of the two woodwind trios, which offers changing color combinations from movement to movement.

This piece is inspired by the exceptional colors of the changing sky over the Hudson River Valley which attracted American painters who initiated a school of true landscape painting not dominated by the human figure. The texture of the twilight sky, with its rich monochromatic hues, tranquility devoid of sharp contrasts and streaks of parallel yet non-parallel lights, undergoes a subtle and continual change. This process of transformation in nature is reflected in the multi-linear texture, timbre, harmony and rhythm of the music, and became apparent only after the composition was well underway.

In conceiving the piece, I was influenced by the Chinese brush painters of the early 17th century who adopted fundamental brush stroke technique from Chinese calligraphy to develop a landscape painting technique based on subtle brushstrokes and their sophisticated organization. “The result was an extremely terse and abstract expression of the subject portrayed, and conceivably anticipated much of the abstract and the expressionist development in Western painting of the 20th century, which presumably evolved out of a different esthetic orientation.”

Twilight Colors is a series of vignettes in four movements and a coda, each with a descriptive phrase: “in the darkness, a thread of light,” “through the clouds, colors of dawn,” “trees and rocks in the mist,” and “over the horizon, mountain peaks rising.” There is also a coda, “their silhouettes neither parallel nor contrary”.

Twilight Colors was commissioned by the Koussevitsky Foundation and dedicated to the fond memory of Olga Koussevitky.

— Chou Wen-chung

Edgard Varèse

Offrandes

Offrandes (1921) for soprano and chamber orchestra sets two surrealist poems by Latin American writers, *Chanson de là-haut* (Song from on high) by the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro and *La croix du sud* (The southern cross) by the Mexican poet José Juan Tablada. The première of the work in New York on 23rd April 1922 was the first performance of any music by Varèse since the première in 1910 of his symphonic poem *Bourgogne* in Berlin (a work which he subsequently destroyed). In its orchestration *Offrandes* clearly shows the influence of Debussy, although its focus on solo wind instruments was to become a trait of the small ensemble works written during the next few years.

Edgard Varèse

Intégrales

This is in many ways the quintessential Varèse composition: the smoothest in form, most confident in utterance, and most characteristic instrumentation. *Hyperprism*, two years before, had been laid out for a similar ensemble of wind and percussion, but here the dimensions are much broader and the

wind scoring is more various, with the brass at similar strength (six players) and the woodwinds increased to a shrill quintet of two piccolos, oboe, E-flat clarinet, and standard B-flat clarinet. The percussion activity, meanwhile, is somewhat lessened, and meshes more with the powerful succession of fanfares, chorales, and laments coming from the winds.

There are three distinct sections, of which the first is occupied mainly with the figure of an upward arrival on a reiterated note, a figure introduced by the E-flat clarinet and soon imitated by trumpet and oboe. While each of these wind soloists is anchored to a fixed note, the percussionists correspondingly fret at a regular pulse, and the result of both obsessions is an increase of tension that is released in acute discords. Following the most colossal of these, the omnipresent motif drops down to the horn, where its action is different but no less cataclysmic.

The second section opens with the piccolos stranded in a high minor ninth, but its main components are much more vigorous. There is a grueling, heavy-footed dance from the brass sextet and a warning signal from a trumpet. Another huge discord brings all this to an end, after which the tempo suddenly slackens and the percussion are left alone to introduce a song from the oboe. Reminiscences of earlier material are then brought in as the piece aims toward its final burst of the seams of existing instrumental possibility: a chord stretching over six octaves, from the trombone's depths to the piercing upper reaches of the piccolo. This is just one of the signs that Varèse was struggling with a medium no longer adequate to his purposes; much later he cherished a plan to recompose the piece for electronic sounds on tape. But perhaps this is music that has to strain and bridle.

Begun on a return visit to Paris in the summer of 1924, the score was finished the following January in New York, where Leopold Stokowski conducted the first performance just a few weeks afterward, on March 1, once more at an International Composers Guild concert. Varèse dedicated the score to Juliana Force, who had lived up to her name in making the International Composers Guild possible.

— Paul Griffiths

Edgard Varèse

Déserts

Varèse composed only for himself, but who can blame him for being obsessed with the insults hurled at him and feeling the need to prove himself at every turn? The first performance of *Déserts* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris in 1954 was a tragic blow to him. Nevertheless, despite the magnitude of that scandal, it was only one in a long series of disappointments that had dogged his life. And it is a lesson in understanding Varèse. He belonged to no one, no country, culture, school, or trend. His legacy belongs to the world. Any assessment of his music and influence based on national and stylistic considerations does him a disservice.

— Chou Wen-chung

Varèse's first work with electronic sound was *Déserts* (1949–54), whose title the composer intended to connote "not only physical deserts of sand, sea, mountains and snow, outer space, deserted city streets, but also this distant inner space...where man is alone in a world of mystery and essential solitude." The atmosphere is strikingly different from that of *Amériques*, which was all about the discovery and conquest of new worlds, and indeed the music is strikingly different from what had been in Varèse's mind 30 years before: thrust and havoc give way to a generally slow, subdued, interior landscape. The "essential solitude," implicitly melancholy, is surely the composer's own. He had spent two long periods in New Mexico in 1936–37, and had completed nothing that satisfied him since *Density 21.5* just before. He may have had in his mind, too, the technologically enabled disasters of the Second World War.

Déserts is a continuous orchestral movement broken by three [optional] “interpolations” composed from factory noises and the sounds of percussion instruments. Varèse collected these with his own Ampex tape recorder, in 1953, and though they provide windows onto a new musical world, the outlook is of a piece with the work’s beautifully maneuvered bleakness. The ensemble is similar to that of *Intégrales*, with flutes and clarinets in pairs, ten brass, piano and percussion group. Its use, however, is quite different. Though ejaculatory motifs still occur, they lack propulsive energy and remain subsidiary to sustained chords or single tones, whose orchestration is highly sophisticated. Pitched percussion — principally the piano, but also vibraphone, glockenspiel, xylophone, and tubular bells — are used almost always to double the wind in a subtle assembling and dismantling of sonorities, while the role of the unpitched percussion, paramount in *Hyperprism* and *Ionisation*, is considerably curtailed.

The work was completed in Paris, where the composer finalized the tape at the French Radio’s *musique concrète* studio (though he was to work on it again in New York in 1960–61). The first performance was conducted by Hermann Scherchen in Paris on December 2, 1954, when this was the first music broadcast by French radio in stereo.

— Paul Griffiths

Chou Wen-chung Echoes from the Gorge

Echoes from the Gorge (1989), subtitled *A Quartet for Percussion*, is the magnum opus of Chou: it represents a summation of all the concepts, East and West, acquired throughout his career. This work deploys vast timbral resources, yet is unprecedented in the thoroughness with which it codifies certain Western percussion practices according to 1) timbres, 2) sticks with regards to articulation and, 3) contact location on the instruments. Such extensive codification results in a vast network of intrinsic structures comparable to Chinese ideograms.

The concept of calligraphy, in which, according to Chou, “the desired contour and texture of a character are achieved by the flow of ink through a coordination of pressure, direction, speed and viscosity,” is also at work. The predetermined form in this piece emerges as the spontaneous manifestation of a continual directional change, as in the movement of a brush under the calligrapher’s control. And *The Fallen Petals*, the orchestral work employing this same principle, prompts historian H.H. Stuckenschmidt to call Chou a “musical calligrapher.”

The yinyang concept of interaction controls the way the instruments relate to one another. The four parts, each with its own distinct rhythm derived from a single source, along with such elements as timbre and register, interact continually to create a totality in motion.

Rather than assuming a Western form, this work employs an elaborate design derived from “the pre-eminent musical form in East Asia, wherein all sections of a composition are elaborations or reductions of one and the same nuclear idea,” Chou explains. *Echoes From the Gorge* contains an introduction followed by twelve sections, each being subtitled with an evocative imagery as in *ch’in* music, including “echoes from the gorge,” “clear moon,” “falling rocks and flying spray.”

As with Varèse’s *Ionisation*, *Echoes from the Gorge* explores the structural value of musical elements other than that of pitch. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that Chou regards *Ionisation* as the most representative work of Varèse wherein all the composer’s concepts are revealed. Without any conscious intention by Chou, his piece is a fitting tribute to Varèse.

On Sunday evening, 4 March 1923, in New York City's Klaw Theatre, pandemonium suddenly broke out after the closing piece of contemporary music concert. Giggles, guffaws, and catcalls were mixed with thunderous applause, and the house "divided into two frantic camps, one of which hissed the music, the other hissed the hissers." Carlos Salzedo, "jumped to his feet and after calling to the audience to be quiet, cried, 'This is serious!'" While most of the audience demanded an encore, a few headed for the door, and at least two men channeled their volatility into a fistfight in the rear of the hall. After the work was repeated, Carl Ruggles "called out from the stage, 'People who don't like this should stay away.'"

— R. Allen Lott, "New Music for New Ears": The International Composer's Guild
Journal of the American Musicological Society, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer, 1983), pp. 266-286

Varese's music blows the world completely to smithereens. Everybody talks about Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' as the beginning of Modernism, but I don't see it. To me, 'Rite' is a terribly Modernistic piece, but it owes a great deal to Rimsky-Korsakov. But in the Varèse [Hyperprism], composed only five years after Debussy's death, you have a big caterwauling baby, with a big rattle, making great noises and ultimately leading to Frank Zappa. It's another kettle of fish entirely.

— Paul Zukofsky

When new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it... the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived. When these sound-masses collide the phenomena of penetration or repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles... In the moving masses you will be conscious of their transmutations when they pass over different layers, when they penetrate certain opacities, or are dilated in certain rarefactions.

— Edgard Varèse

Edgard Varèse

Ionisation

Ionisation is not only the first serious composition for an all-percussion ensemble, it is a study of the structure, grammar, and expression of musical communication beyond the conventional realm of pitch. It is not without pitches, but without definite pitches, having associate and relative pitches that are not part of the Western European tradition. But it is much more than a work illustrating a novel theoretical concept. It is an exciting, vital masterpiece that has gripped audiences. Yet few musicians recognize the historic role of this piece. Varèse was a generation ahead of his time when he wrote it. Beyond pitches and other parameters, it is a composition fundamentally conceived for primarily non-Western instruments, organized with rhythms derived from the performance techniques of each such instrument. We have yet to find a more intercultural composition.

— Chou Wen-chung

Varèse wrote this work in 1929–31, when he was back in Paris, intending it for a flamenco dancer; the choreographic contribution then passed briefly to Martha Graham, before being abandoned. The piece was not quite the first in the western tradition for percussion alone: there are percussion-only movements in Alexander Tcherepnin's First Symphony (1927) and Shostakovich's opera The Nose (1927–28), and the Cuban composer Amadeo Roldán finished his two Ritmicas for percussion ensemble in 1930. Moreover, all of these were predated by Milhaud's incidental music for The Choéphoroi (1915–16), scored for speaking chorus with percussion. Ionisation, however, has gone

down as the classic, perhaps partly because it is so classical in form and demeanor, unlike the composer's eruptive earlier pieces. Among the themes are a small side-drum solo and an energetic charge in quintuplets from five players together. Such materials, defined only in rhythm, color, and dynamic shape, are masterfully worked into a process of constant evolution, until the surprise of the ending.

The work was first performed on March 6, 1933, in New York, with Nicolas Slonimsky conducting. Varèse was still in Paris, from where he dashed off some fascinating notes on the piece to Salzedo: "In terms of character: a merciless pace — that never changes (in terms of unit of measure) — very high voltage — The work is very stressful — tragic... Ionisation represents today — and the mystery of the skies of America —."

— Paul Griffiths

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Accordes evolved out of a string quintet that was formed in 1975 to perform a composition by John Beckwith, commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Women's Committee. Frequently heard on CBC radio, they have performed on the Roy Thomson Hall Chamber Music Series and constitute the core string players of the New Music Concerts Ensemble. Always searching for new repertoire, Accordes has commissioned works, as well as regularly premiering new compositions on the New Music Concerts series. This concentration on contemporary music has allowed them to give the Canadian, and sometimes world premieres, of works by such composers as Elliott Carter, Ben Johnson, Peter Paul Koprowski, Brian Cherney, Peter Michael Hamel, Ann Southam and Hope Lee. They have recorded extensively for the Canadian Music Centre label, Centrediscs, including discs devoted to the music of Harry Freedman (Spirit Song), Harry Somers (Somers String Quartets) and Alexina Louie (Dénouement). Their recoding of NMC co-founder Norma Beecroft's Amplified String Quartet with Tape was nominated for a Juno award in 2004.

Originally from Ottawa, soprano Teri Dunn holds a Master of Music from the University of Toronto, where she studied with Mary Morrison. She was a prizewinner in the 1999 Eckhardt-Grammatté Competition. Ms. Dunn brings a wide expressive palette to her oratorio appearances, ranging from Bach's Matthäuspassion to Carl Orff's Carmina Burana. As a chamber music performer, she has scored triumphs in the performance of several Bach cantatas, and numerous contemporary works, including George Crumb's Ancient Voices of Children and Federico's Little Songs for Children, the latter of which she recorded with New Music Concerts for the Naxos CD George Crumb — Vox Balaenae. On the operatic stage, Ms. Dunn has appeared as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte and Galatea in Handel's Acis and Galatea.

Ms. Dunn has performed with some of Canada's finest ensembles, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, The Bach Consort, Opera in Concert, Exultate Chamber Singers, New Music Concerts, the Guelph Spring Festival, and the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival. In addition to her singing endeavors, Ms. Dunn is an active conductor and teacher. A winner of the Leslie Bell Prize in Choral Conducting, she is on the Faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music and is a member of the Artistic Staff of the Toronto Children's Chorus.

Frank Scheffer (born 1956 in Venlo) is a Dutch cinematographer and producer of documentary film, mostly known for his work Conducting Mahler (1996) on the 1995 Mahler Festival in Amsterdam with Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Chailly, Riccardo Muti and Sir Simon Rattle. Scheffer was schooled at the

Academy for Industrial Design (Eindhoven), the “Vrije Academie” Art College in Den Haag, where he studied with the famous experimental filmmaker Frans Zwartjes and is a graduate from the Dutch Film Academy (Amsterdam).

Early films include *Zoetrope People* (1982), a documentary on Francis Ford Coppola and his studio with Wim Wenders, Tom Waits, Vittorio Storaro and others, as well as documentaries on the Dalai Lama and various socio/cultural subjects. In 1985 he directed the music video *A Day* for the band XYMOX on the 4AD Records label, leading him towards musical subjects. 1987 saw his short experimental films *Wagner’s Ring*, a distillation of *The Ring* in 3'50" conceived with John Cage; and *Stopperas 1/2* which was created to be shown with Cage's *Europerras 1 & 2*. Collaborations with Cage continued with the conceptual film *Chessfilmnoise* (1988), a documentary on Cage and on Elliott Carter, *Time Is Music* (1988), and *From Zero* (1995) in collaboration with Andrew Culver.

Scheffer’s films on music constitute an overview of the great composers of the 20th century, from *Conducting Mahler* (1996) to *Five Orchestral Pieces* (1994) on Arnold Schönberg’s work conducted by Michael Gielen and *The Final Chorale* (1990) on Igor Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Wind Instruments* conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw. Further documentaries include films on Louis Andriessen, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Scheffer is also working on several in depth films on specific composers: *The Present Day Composer Refuses to Die* on Frank Zappa, in cooperation with the Zappa Family Trust (2000, featuring The Mothers of Invention, Pierre Boulez and Ensemble Modern), and the 90-minute Zappa feature *Phaze II, The Big Note* (2002), to be followed by a third film which will complete his Zappa trilogy.

Scheffer has been following and filming Elliott Carter for 25 years; this culminated in *A Labyrinth of Time* (2005), a portrait on the composer as well as a view of the history of modernism in the 20th century, presented by New Music Concerts in 2006. The making of *The One-All-Along* was generously supported by the Spiralis Music Trust. This world premiere screening was made possible thanks to the cooperation of director Frank Scheffer.

February 8, 2008
Timo & Magnus – Finland Today
co-presented with The Music Gallery

Guest Artists: Magnus Lindberg, piano;
Timo Korhonen, guitar
New Music Concerts Ensemble;
Robert Aitken, flute and direction
Illuminating Introduction 7:15 | Concert 8:00

Kimmo Hakola (Finland, 1958)
12 Etudes for Guitar* (2005) solo guitar
Magnus Lindberg
Mano a Mano** (2004) solo guitar
Magnus Lindberg (Finland, 1958)
Linea d'ombre (1981) flute, saxophone, guitar, percussion
Magnus Lindberg
Konzertstück** (2006) cello and piano
Magnus Lindberg
Kiri** (1996) clarinet, cello, percussion, guitar

* World premiere | ** Canadian premiere

Magnus Lindberg was born in Helsinki in 1958. Following piano studies he entered the Sibelius Academy where his composition teachers included Einojuhani Rautavaara and Paavo Heininen. The latter encouraged his pupils to look beyond the prevailing Finnish conservative and nationalist aesthetics, and to explore the works of the European avant-garde. This led around 1980 to the founding of the informal grouping known as the Ears Open Society including Lindberg and his contemporaries Hämeenieniemi, Kaipainen, Saariaho and Salonen, which aimed to encourage a greater awareness of mainstream modernism. Lindberg made a decisive move in 1981, travelling to Paris for studies with Globokar and Grisey. During this time he also attended Donatoni's classes in Siena, and made contact with Ferneyhough, Lachenmann and Höller. His compositional breakthrough came with two large-scale works, *Action-Situation-Signification* (1982) and *Kraft* (1983-85), which were inextricably linked with his founding with Salonen of the experimental Toimii Ensemble. This group, in which Lindberg plays piano and percussion, has provided the composer with a laboratory for his sonic development. His works at this time combined experimentalism, complexity and primitivism, working with extremes of musical material. During the late 1980s his music transformed itself towards a new modernist classicism, in which many of the communicative ingredients of a vibrant musical language (harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, melody) were re-interpreted afresh for the post-serial era. Key scores in this stylistic evolution were the orchestral/ensemble triptych *Kinetics* (1988), *Marea* (1989-90) and *Joy* (1989-90), reaching fulfilment in *Aura* (1993-94) and *Arena* (1994-95). Recent works, including the concert-opener *Feria* (1997), large-scale orchestral statements such as *Fresco* (1997) and *Cantigas* (1999), and concertos for cello (1999) and clarinet (2002), have established Lindberg as one of the most invigorating of composers working in the orchestral field. In the 2001/2002 season his music was celebrated internationally in the *Related Rocks* festival in London, Paris and Brussels, with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, and a linked disc of his orchestral music was released by Sony. His *Concerto for Orchestra* was premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 2003 and the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen premiered his *Sculpture* in October 2005. Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic premiered *Seht die Sonne* in July 2007. Lindberg's music has been recorded on the Deutsche Grammophon, Sony, Ondine and Finlandia la-

bels. In 2003 Lindberg was awarded the prestigious Wihuri Sibelius Prize.

Kimmo Hakola (born 27 July 1958) studied at the Sibelius Academy under Einojuhani Rautavaara and Eero Hämeenniemi. He won the Unesco Composers' Rostrum twice: in 1987 with his String Quartet and in 1991 with his Capriole for cello and clarinet. Hakola's music has been performed at several major music events and festivals, and portrait concerts of his works have been held in Los Angeles (Monday Evening Concerts) and New York (Miller Theatre, Broadway). Hakola creates intense musical dramas that recognize no stylistic or expressive limits and his works usually attract exceptional interest. His music is a combination of exciting dramatic power and exceptional musical quality and musicianship is manifest in all his achievements resulting in communicativeness and richness of sound that speak of the composer's delight at discovering his very own idiom.

Hakola has composed two operas. The Mastersingers of Mars is a delightful cartoon opera including elements unusual for an opera, and his second opera The Mustard Seed is a serious study of a Finnish religious dissident. The Piano Concerto premiered at the Helsinki Festival in 1996 is an unprecedented work in new Finnish music in its expressive range, variety of styles and scope. The Clarinet Concerto has been a roaring success and it has performed several times since the premiere in 2001. The Chamber Concerto commissioned by Present Music was premiered in Milwaukee, USA in March 2002. Hakola has also composed an Oboe Concerto (2005-06) and a Flute Concerto (L'or de Azur, 2007). His other orchestral works include a Sinfonietta (1999), Verdoyances crepuscules (2003) and Maro, commissioned by the Swedish Radio and Berwald Hall for a performance at the Baltic Sea Festival in August 2006.

One of Hakola's largest works is Le Sacrifice, an oratorio tied in closely with the film of Andrei Tarkovsky. It was commissioned by IRCAM for a performance in Paris in November 2002, and a new, revised version was heard in Helsinki in 2005. Le Sacrifice was one of the three winners of the first Teosto Prize awarded by the Finnish Composers' Copyright Society in 2003. Kimmo Hakola's new large scale-oratorio Song of Songs was premiered on 20 October 2006 at the International Choral Espoo festival. Hakola has also written works for mixed choir. Hakola's oeuvre includes also chamber works, the weightiest of them being his three string quartets and the Clarinet Quintet from 1998. His latest chamber and instrumental works are Consolation (2004) for cello and piano, Arara lunaire (2004) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, and Altar for organ (2006).

Kimmo Hakola is the composer-in-residence of the Joensuu City Orchestra. Apart from composing he has also turned towards conducting and acting as a performing artist. He has been the Artistic Director of the Musica nova festival in 1999-2006 and the artistic director of the Helsinki Chamber Choir since 2005. His works have been recorded by Ondine and Innova Records.

Timo Korhonen (b. November 6, 1964 in Rautalampi, Finland) has performed in more than 30 countries, at venues in Berlin, London, Vienna, Paris, Tokyo, Chicago, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Havana, Los Angeles, Hong Kong and at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival among others. He has appeared with orchestras under Esa-Pekka Salonen, Sakari Oramo, Osmo Vänskä, Leif Segerstam, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Susanna Mälkki, Tuomas Hannikainen, Joseph Swensen and John Storgårds. Timo Korhonen made his début at the age of 14 and began his international career at the age of 17 when he became the youngest ever winner of the guitar category in the ARD competition in Munich. He has studied with Oscar Ghiglia, Seppo Siirala and Pekka Vesanen. Korhonen's repertoire includes the entire core repertoire written for his instrument. He has premiered more than 40 new works, and composers such as Magnus Lindberg, Leo Brouwer and Toshio Hosokawa have written works for him. Timo Korhonen is the founder and artistic director of the international GUITARISTIVAL competition and festival, and from 1998 to 2000 he was the artistic director of the Suomenlinna Culinary Concerts in Helsinki. He is a teacher at the Turku Music Academy, and from January 2005 he has been a visiting professor at the national Luigi Cherubini Conservatory in Florence. He was

teacher at the Sibelius Academy in 1989-1999. His students have won more than 40 prizes in international competitions.

Korhonen records regularly for the Ondine label. His recordings have been acclaimed by critics and have received several awards. For example, the disk containing Concerto of Helsinki, written for Timo Korhonen by Leo Brouwer, with the Tampere Philharmonic conducted by Tuomas Ollila (Hannikainen), won the Cannes Classical Award 2003 (ODE 979-2). Timo Korhonen plays a guitar built by "Weissgerber" (Richard Jakob) in 1928.

Magnus Lindberg Mano a mano (2004)

Mano a mano is the first work for solo guitar by Magnus Lindberg, commissioned jointly by The Berlin Festival and Turku Music Festival in 2004. The composition is dedicated to Timo Korhonen. The guitar, however is not unknown to Lindberg; he has composed chamber music works with guitar: Linea d'ombra for flute, alto saxophone (or clarinet), guitar and percussion (1981), Decorrente for clarinet, guitar, vibraphone, piano and percussion (1992), Duo Concertante for clarinet, cello and chamber ensemble with guitar (1992) and Kiri for clarinet, cello, guitar, percussion and electronics (1993). Mano a mano is a symphonic work. Its three movements are cast in a classical concerto form; the movements are performed without pauses between them. The first movement has a double exposition, the material of which is then modified in development section. The second movement is a grand Beethovenian Adagio flavored with some rapid sections. Between the second and third movements there is an improvised Cadenza. The first section of the third movement is a perpetuum mobile containing some typically Lindbergian come una machina, toccata, and scherzo writing, ending with a strong trembling climax. The second, slower section evokes associations with the Poeme de l'Extase by Scriabin and leads to a Coda. The harmonic structure of Mano a mano is based on the idea of the Chaconne: the contrast between a chain of six chords based on the pentatonic tuning of the open strings of guitar and the D-flat-major scale between the open strings, is the basis of all harmonic material of the composition.

— Timo Korhonen

Kimmo Hakola Selections from Leonardo Etudes (2007)

When I'm composing a new work, I often think of the soloist. In my mind I can imagine the soloist in the concert hall and the way he or she would play my music. Timo Korhonen's guitar has inspired me ever since I got to know him at the Sibelius Academy in the 1980s. His unusually soulful interpretations, capturing the very essence of the music, and his dazzling virtuosity have made an indelible impression on me. Timo Korhonen has, over the years, asked me on a number of occasions to write some music for the guitar, but as an instrument it always seemed very remote to me. Korhonen was very persistent; he gave me a thorough demonstration of the guitar's potential and in time I grew interested in its expressive language. In 2005 I wrote some sketches for a guitar concerto and my first attempt at an etude that Korhonen premiered in Japan. The time was not, however, yet ripe. I wanted to establish a deeper relationship with the instrument. I made a detailed study of the way Heitor Villa-Lobos wrote for the guitar, and I became very attached to the etudes in particular. I have learnt a lot from them about the idiom and soul of the guitar. The Leonardo Etudes are dedicated to Timo Korhonen and are a tribute to Heitor Villa-Lobos. I admire the way Villa-Lobos writes for the guitar. The name of the suite alludes to Leonardo da Vinci, whose sketches and paintings inspired the etudes. My travels with the guitar are only just beginning; I am now writing a concerto for Timo Korhonen to be premiered in April.

— Kimmo Hakola

Magnus Lindberg Linea d'ombra (1981)

Linea d'ombra ('Boundary of Shadow') is dated Rome, August 23, 1981, the same year as ...de Tartuffe, je crois. This work was written for the Cluster ensemble, a typically eccentric Finnish ensemble.

ble of flute, saxophone, guitar and percussion. [...] Lindberg has said that he aimed at using the instruments as a single macro-instrument rather than as four individual ones. Four such diverse instruments striving towards harmony produces naturally rich and untypical colours and sounds. The instruments also have solo passages. Actually, there is a fifth instrument, the human voice, since the players are required to utter sounds and, ultimately, words. The voices blend into the multi-faceted world of the work and extend the sound games of the instruments. *Linea d'ombra* is constructed of the dramaturgy of abrupt turns, rapidly emerging and quickly extinguished bursts. The type of ensemble alone provides a lucid and colourful sound, and in the climaxing section towards the end the sound world seems even excessively rich. The disjointed human sounds coalesce into words which, in turn, are extracts from a line of poetry in Italian: "Sorrìdi, sospira, sospendi la morte, giura che un melo si freddo dà fiori sta sera." ("Laugh, sigh, keep Death away, for the cold apple tree will bloom tonight.")

— Kimmo Korhonen

Magnus Lindberg *Konzertstück* (2006)

Konzertstück was written in July 2006 and is a co-commission of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla Summerfest and Bergen Festival. Anssi Karttunen and Magnus Lindberg, who have collaborated together for over 25 years as the *Dos Coyotes* duo, gave the world premiere in Santa Fe on the 31st of July 2006, soon followed by performances at La Jolla, Brussels and Strasbourg. Magnus Lindberg wrote this piece in a very short time immediately after finishing his *Violin Concerto*. The piece can be divided into three movements which follow each other without break. It is a piece of great architectural dimensions lasting about 14 minutes, making it the most substantial of Lindberg's cello-piano pieces.

— Anssi Karttunen

Magnus Lindberg *Kiri* (1996)

Kiri is one of the many impromptu pieces that Lindberg has written for the concerts of his *Toimii* ensemble. Quite often these pieces are adaptations of his older works, or sketches for the works he is conceiving for the future. The latter is true of *Kiri*, which embodies the skeleton of the first movement of the 40 minute orchestral piece *Aura*, the most important of Lindberg's orchestral works from the early 1990s. *Kiri* was first performed at a *Toimii* concert in Rotterdam, and later reproduced at the *Lerchenborg* festival in Denmark.

— Risto Nieminen

Friday March 7, 2008
Michel Gonneville and his Protégés
Glenn Gould Studio
Illuminating Introduction 7:15 | Concert 8:00
Guest Composers: Michel Gonneville
André Ristic
Nicolas Gilbert
Charles Antoine Frechette
Maxime McKinley
Benoît Côté
Frans Ben Callado

Max Christie, clarinet
Jean Laurendeau, ondes Martenot
Accordes string quartet
New Music Concerts Ensemble
Robert Aitken, solo flute and direction

Michel Gonneville (Canada, 1950) - * Perdre la trace, suivre le fil (2000) for string quartet
Michel Gonneville - *Le cheminement de la baleine (1998) for clarinet, ondes Martenot and ensemble
Works by Ristic; Gilbert; Côté; Frechette and McKinley
utilizing instruments employed in Gonneville's Le cheminement...

* Canadian work | ** World premiere | *** Canadian premiere

Michel Gonneville, born in Montréal in 1950, began piano studies at a very early age. Later, when he was 18, and after some significant musical shocks -- Ravel, then Messiaen, Boulez, Tremblay, Xenakis and Stockhausen -- he made the definitive choice to study music. He received his bachelor of music from the École Vincent-d'Indy where he studied piano from 1968 to 1972, and one year later, he opted for composition, enrolling in the composition and analysis class of Gilles Tremblay at the Montréal Conservatory (he won Premiers prix in both subjects in 1974 and 1975). The Stockhausen seminars that he attended in 1974 convinced him to work with that composer. With the assistance of grants from The Canada Council and the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, he took three semesters of composition classes with Stockhausen in Cologne; he also worked in the electronic music studio of the Musikhochschule in the same city under the direction of Hans Ulrich Humpert. He then became the student and personal assistant of Henri Pousseur in Liège. During those three years in Europe, he also studied with Johannes Fritsch, Rolf Gelhaar and Frederick Rzewski. Returning to Québec in 1978, he continued to compose, teach and develop new musical projects. He also obtained his PhD in composition from l'Université de Montréal where he worked under the tutelage of Serge Garant, John Rea and Marcelle Deschênes.

With the help of commissions from The Canada Council and creative arts grants from the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec, he composed works for Louis-Philippe Pelletier, Michael Laucke, Robert Leroux, Groupe 7, the Ensemble d'Ondes de Montréal, the SMCQ, the Vallières-McCutcheon duo, and the CBC. His works have been performed in Montréal, Québec City, Toronto, Winnipeg, Metz, Cologne, Bonn, Liège and Paris. Among others, he created several works in collaboration with visual artists (Mario Côté, René Derouin) and choreographers (Jean-Pierre Perreault, Catherine Tardif).

Michel Gotteville received the prestigious Prix Serge-Garant 1994 (awarded by la Fondation Émile-Nelligan) in recognition the overall quality of his work. His piece Chute/Parachute has been broadcast in more than 27 countries. Highlights of Gotteville's output include: Intendami chi pó for the Hilliard Ensemble (London, U.K.) which premiered as part of the Festival MNM in 2005; Microphone Songs (2002) for the Crash ensemble of Dublin; Suivre la trace, perdre le fil, commissioned by the Molinari Quartet (and nominated by the Prix Opus in 2000 in the best artistic creation of the year category); Le messenger, which was written in 1996-99 for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra who premiered it under the baton of Charles Dutoit; and Le cheminement de la baleine (1998), written for clarinetist Jean Laurendeau, Geneviève Grenier (ondes Martenot) and Véronique Lacroix conducting l'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal.

For Gotteville, aesthetic research is a function of research on the "means" that exist to transmit Beauty, of research about language and about technique. His efforts in this direction are related to new initiatives seen in the most recent works and theories of Stockhausen and Pousseur, ideas that have been adopted by many young composers in Canada and elsewhere. In this area, the most successful aspects of new music echo very old and fundamental ideas, like melody, consonance, driving rhythms, repetition...

A passionate and inquisitive mind, Michel Gotteville likes discovering new musical horizons and new perspectives. Through his work, he continuously strives to contribute to this renewing process, exploring and unearthing new musical possibilities, both for his listeners' benefit and his own. In his early career, he was greatly influenced by the technique of Stockhausen and Pousseur. The eloquent examples of the post-modern movement, which arose in the 1970s, also spread through his craft: Gotteville has developed his own style where melody, themes, harmony and dissonance, rhythmical articulations, perceived metrics and timbres that combine in unusual ways shed a new light on the extra-musical themes that inspired him. In doing so, he incessantly tries to reconcile his passion for research with his thirst for immediacy and communication.

Michel Gotteville teaches composition at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Montréal since 1997.

Michel Gotteville (Canada, 1950) *Perdre la trace, suivre le fil (2000)

Commissioned by the Molinari String Quartet, Suivre la trace, perdre le fil is based on the same material as another piece I wrote for the same ensemble, performed along works by 18 other composers for 333 musicians on the occasion of the Symphonie du Millénaire. In both cases, the Gregorian hymn Veni Creator served as a starting point. Of course, it has been transformed, but the four melodic phrases (comprised of eight notes each) follow the same outline. But then, as this involves a quartet, it became necessary to reorganize everything in a mathematical way, thus creating a kind of geometry to respect the natural symmetry: 4 parts from 4 sections (or phrases) each represent 4 different 'musics' in a particular tempo. All these 'musics' are being defined according to the number of independent layers: 1 layer consists of the 4 instruments playing in a homorhythmic manner; 2 layers is a dialogue/antiphon played by 2 groups of 2 instruments; 3 layers is a counterpoint created by the instruments grouped in 2+1+1; and 4 layers is simply made of a counterpoint in 4 parts. The tempi are clearly divided in 'temporal octaves' and are always presented in the same order: the note value may be a sixteenth note (fairly quick tempo), 32nd notes (very quick), an eight note (moderate tempo) a quarter note (slow). As the total note value is the same for all phrases, the complete duration of each of them varies (from 16, 8, 32 or 64 seconds respectively). Then, ornamentation (ranging from no ornamentation at all for the 8 notes of a phrase to heavy ornamentation where the 8 original notes

become only pivotal points for the ornamental notes themselves) provide different levels of density. The permutation of the different types of 'musics' and their varied levels of density combine with the symmetrical repetitions of the above-mentioned tempi. This creates the impression of recognizable pattern from one part to the other – but it is different enough that one can 'lose the train of thought' (perdre le fil). The outcome is emphasised by the free playing, or different note attacks (such as pizzicato, arco, tremolo, etc.) or by adding certain transitions between phrases. The effect can also be highlighted by the sudden appearance of a fifth player: the metronome... And of course, there are the 4x4 transpositions of the phrases; the mode, which is the result of a series of harmonics and different other techniques I have been using since 1989 (to this day, I keep discovering new facets of these techniques); the method of harmonization, integrating relatively simple sounds, which is made more complex by a set of mixtures; the brief return of the 4 original phrases as quotes, etc.

Finally, the short Amen from the hymn is also used in the coda, 4 times in the 4 tempi, according to the 4 different types of 'musics'...

As opposed to many of my recent works, this piece does not fit the "program music" category per se. Therefore, it is more 'abstract', more 'pure'. Suivre la trace, perdre le fil is somewhat fragmented but its symmetry brings a certain logic to the piece and provides continuity. It is also a 'work of joy': to me, it epitomizes the pleasure of creation itself, reinforced by the delight of experiencing the physical gesture of the string quartet while I was writing it. After all, the string quartet is a 'monstre sacré'; from the 18th-century intimate salons to our modern concert halls, the string quartet, with its powerful, invasive intimacy, is worthy of a great future. This is my first contribution towards this goal.

— Michel Gonneville

Michel Gonneville *Le cheminement de la baleine (1998)

After a public performance of one of my works, Adonwe (a concerto for piano), Jean Laurendeau sent me this poem:

Lentement
Sous les vagues
Chemine
La baleine
Vers son bond
De lumière

Slowly
Under the waves
Travels
The whale
Leaping
To the light

As I read this short text (the arrival point of a meditation on the apparent contradiction of peace and violence) the form for the new work which Laurendeau wanted me to write for him immediately took shape in my mind. The composer somewhat puts himself in a dangerous position when he reveals the 'program' (or mental image) of one of his productions. Despite this fact, here are some mental images from this work. Purists beware: do not read the next paragraph.

In the beginning, the low-register instruments in the ensemble represent the whale's body; the ondes Martenot correspond to its voice, and the clarinet (sometimes colla parte with the high-pitched instruments) stands for the whale's lover. Treading waters, the whale first travels under the middle F# which symbolizes the horizon, the border between air and water. Touching the water in four breaths, the whale dives in the deeps of the sea and disappears momentarily. Moving on a parallel line as a creature evolving above the horizon, the clarinet — at first feverish and rhythmically unpredictable — reacts to the whale's calls and its brief appearances. In an attempt to get closer, it too dives to catch up to the whale but remains unable to reach the same depths. As in Laurendeau's meditative text, *L'amour arrive lentement sur cette terre / D'abord le fourreau / Ensuite l'âme / Plus tard la communion* (Love slowly arrives on Earth / First the sheath / Then the soul / Later, the communion), the clarinet needs to perhaps experience the restlessness and chaos that define desire, and lose sight of the beloved object before achieving inner peace. Maybe this silent state, in which one waits patiently or listens actively, will allow the clarinet to swim back to the surface and climb on the whale's back, moulding itself to its chant and soar together. Sharing the momentum to jump over the horizon in slow motion, in a dreamlike manner they touch the sky and vanish. When they fall back, fused together as one, the waves create a gigantic spurt from which emerge the voices of the clarinet and the whale with increasing clarity. When the horizon becomes calm again, they sing together and the real dialogue begins.

Much like the text that led to the writing of *Adonwe*, this poem about the whale might also evoke the depth of the creative process, or the search for identity. However, as opposed to the piano concerto, this evocation does not consist of a series of sketches. Rather, it is a continuous curve, a prolonged wave that bends into the dominating melodic cells.

Le cheminement de la baleine was born of many unions and celebrates several events: Jean Laurendeau's recent return to the clarinet, bringing to the forefront the two instruments to which he dedicated his musical life, and his new status as a sexagenarian. It also marks the invention of the ondes Martenot — the 60th anniversary — and the 100th anniversary of Maurice Martenot's birth, the inventor of the instrument (incidentally, this work was premiered on October 14, which is also the anniversary of Martenot's death). The association of ondes Martenot and whale singing is inevitable (the humpback whale's song, with its neumes, breaths, tessitura, etc.), served as my inspiration though I did not attempt to reproduce it here. The piece is also a tribute to Gilles Tremblay, the composer and professor of composition who recently retired from the Conservatoire de Montréal. For him, nature was always a major source of inspiration, as it was for his own mentor, Olivier Messiaen. Tremblay's future retirement haven will probably be his house in Saint-Joseph-de-la-rive, dubbed *Le pays des baleines*. Finally, *Le cheminement de la baleine* stands as a tribute to Véronique Lacroix, founder/conductor of *l'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal* who together imbued the premiere performance of my other concerto with exceptional musicality. Indirectly, this work is also a tribute to the Conservatoire, as Véronique, Jean, Gilles and I exercised our craft in this venerable institution.

Le cheminement de la baleine was made possible through the financial support of the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec.

— Michel Gonneville

Benoît Côté received his composition prize from the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal in 2005. He is now working on a doctorate with Michel Longtin at l'Université de Montréal. A versatile composer, he is very much involved in music for theater, working on musically engaging theatrical works in Montreal and elsewhere. On the new music scene, Benoît has been commissioned pieces by the Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, Code d'Accès, Flûtes Alizé and also the Société de Musique

Contemporaine du Québec for which he composed the music for the audacious theatrical-mute-opera *La Fugue*. In 2006, he won a first prize from Socan for his piece *dis-moi quelque chose*. He will also be nominated for the Composition of the Year in the 2007 edition of the Prix Opus for his piece *Les Chiens*. Also a talented songwriter and musician, he has been invited to the Festival en Chanson de Petite-Vallée in 2007 and to the National Arts Centre in 2008 as artist-in-residence.

Benoît Côté (Canada, 1981)

Pan-toutt* (2007)

In Quebecois idiom “pan-toutt” is an expressive and somewhat drastic way of saying “nothing at all”. One would say: “Y’en avait pas pan-toutt!” which would mean “There wasn’t none at all!”. Now, this expression is paradoxical. Indeed, how can “pan” (“everything” in ancient Greek) and “tout” (“everything” in standard French) joined together take the meaning of “nothing”? God knows why and how this came about... Stranger still is how our language is full of these odd sayings, strange words and expressions that have evolved without taking notice of their origins.

Michel Gonneville knows this. When I told him the title of this piece, he automatically understood and analyzed its confused meaning, taking lots of pleasure in the nonsensical and expressive potential of the word. That’s Michel. A clear mind, able to see through clouds and to reveal sense and direction in complicated and entwined structures.

This piece is thus a reverence on a light note. It will sound at a moment a bit like Michel’s music and the instant after drastically different from Michel. But beneath the contrasts, what remains and endures of my master’s lessons is the sound of something building up gradually and surely, solid and optimistic.

Merci Michel!

— Benoit Côté

Maxime McKinley was born in the Eastern Townships (Quebec) in 1979, and lives in Montreal. He studied composition with Michel Gonneville at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Montréal, where he graduated with the Prix avec Grande Distinction in 2004. He has been studying composition with Isabelle Panneton at the Université de Montréal since 2004, where he is preparing a Doctorate. In 2007, he studied in Paris with Martin Matalon. He also had master classes with composers such as Hugues Dufourt, Peter Eötvös, and Bruno Mantovani. In recent years his works have been performed by, among others, by the Camerata de las Américas, the Esprit Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Orchestre de la francophonie canadienne, the Ensemble contemporain de Montréal and the Trio Hochelaga. His music has been performed in Quebec, elsewhere in Canada, as well as in France and Mexico, and has been broadcasted on CBC Radio Two and Espace Musique de Radio-Canada. Maxime McKinley has received five prizes in the Socan national competition for young composers, a commission prize from the Orchestre de l’Université de Montréal (2005), and the TSYO Canadian composer’s competition prize (2006). In addition, he was selected to participate in the Young Composers Program of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa (2005) and the Génération 2006 Canadian tour of the Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal. He received various grants, including several from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. As a writer, he has collaborated with various journals, such as *Circuit* and *Le Quartanier*.

Maxime McKinley (Canada, 1979)

Wirkunst-Nijinski** (2007)

“Music can be made out of anything, you know...”

(Michel Gonneville to me, during a composition lesson, in 2003)

When, in 1919, Vaslav Nijinski (choreographer of the Rite of Spring) writes his Notebooks, he is also devoting himself to drawing and dance. The main figure of his drawings is the circle, which reminds of the labyrinth-like syntax of the Notebooks, with their continuously repeated words and sentences. In parallel, Nijinski works on a choreographic notation system and trains intensively, sometimes 16 hours a day. Throughout these activities, Nijinski says that he is “obeying the orders of God”. It is this incredible expense of energy, maniac and schizophrenic, just preceding the silence of internment, that interested me while composing *Wirkunst-Nijinski*, the seventh of a series of works which have all been inspired by non-musical works of art. “Wirkunst” is a portmanteau word that I invented by assembling the German words “wir” (we), “wirkung” (effect, impression) and “kunst” (art).

— Maxime McKinley

Nicolas Gilbert studied composition and analysis at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal with composers Michel Gonneville and Serge Provost. He has also received training in Mandarin Chinese at Nankai University (Tianjin, China) and in Russian at St-Petersburg State University (Russia). He is currently artist in residence at Radio-Canada. His catalogue comprises about 30 chamber, vocal and orchestral works that have been heard in concert series and festivals in more than 15 countries around the world by ensembles and soloists such as the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, the Polish Radio Orchestra, Kaida (Amsterdam), ICE (Chicago), cellist Benjamin Carat (Lyon), pianist Stanislaw Widulin (Berlin), clarinetist Thomas Piercy (New-York) and many Canadian contemporary music ensembles (Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, Continuum, Trio Fibonacci, Quasar, Bradyworks, etc.).

He is recipient of numerous grants and awards including the 2006 “Discovery of the Year” Opus Prize and the CBC Rising Star Award awarded by the Quebec Music Council, three SOCAN Awards for Young Composers, the Third and Special Prizes in the 2006 Serocki International Competition (Poland) and a dozen grants from the Canada and Quebec arts councils. Nicolas Gilbert was resident composer at the Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur in Montreal from 2003 to 2005 and president of the Codes d'accès concert society from 2002 to 2004. He is presently preparing a doctor's degree in composition at McGill University under the supervision of composer John Rea. During the 2005-2006 season, he was in residence at GRAME (Lyon), working on a new piece for cello and electronics (commission: GRAME-CALQ). Upcoming projects include a new cello concerto for American cellist Matt Haimovitz and the Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, a Radio-Canada commission for the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, and a new string quartet for the Molinari Quartet.

Nicolas Gilbert * Réflexions circulaires sur l'origine et la destination**

This work constitutes a sort of prelude to Michel Gonneville's string quartet *Suivre la trace, perdre le fil*. It involves a series of cycles which leads us through various musical materials until we eventually reach the point of transition, the “joint “ that will allow us to flow into Gonneville's quartet. It is this joint, both origin and destination, that we track all along the work. *Réflexions circulaires sur l'origine et la destination* is dedicated to Michel Gonneville.

— Nicolas Gilbert

Charles-Antoine Fréchette (b. 1981, Montréal). Canadian composer of solo, chamber, choral, chamber orchestra, and orchestral works that have been performed in Canada. Mr. Fréchette studied choral singing with Gilbert Patenaude and piano at the Maîtrise des Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal from 1991-99 and piano with Claude Labelle at the École de musique Vincent-d'Indy in Montréal from 1999-2001. He studied composition with Michel Gonneville at the Conservatoire de Musique de Mon-

tréal until 2007. He is currently following conducting classes with Raffi Armenian at the Conservatoire and will pursue a Doctorate at McGill Shulich School of music in the fall of 2008. Among his honors are the First Prize in the Piano category in the CBC Young Composers Competition (2003, for *Trajectoire*), two prizes in the Solo-Duo category of the 2004 SOCAN competition for young composers (First Prize for *Soledad Sonora*; Third Prize for *Transfiguration*) and two first prizes at this competition in 2006 for a trombone quartet and a solo piece for trombone. In 2005, he traveled to Mexico to give two lectures (as part of an exchange program with the Conservatoire) — one about his own music, and one about young Québec composers. In the summer 2006, he went to Acanthes in France where his work *Thème et Variations* was performed by l'Orchestre National de Lorraine conducted by Sylvio Gualda and broadcast by Radio-France. More recently, his composition *Aspirations* was a co-commission of CBC/Radio-Canada and l'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal, and was performed across Canada on the "Generation 2006" tour (hosted in Toronto by New Music Concerts). His works have also been performed by the Orchestre Symphonique de Laval conducted by Alain Trudel (2007) and by the Orchestre du Conservatoire de musique de Montreal (2008) for which he wrote *Parcours*. Charles-Antoine Fréchette is one of the founders and co-artistic director of the Ensemble Chorum, for which he conducts, arranges and composes music.

Charles-Antoine Fréchette (Canada, 1981)

Pureté violée** (2007)

The poignant account of a friend who was a victim of abuse provided the inspiration for *Pureté violée*. Here, however, the word 'rape' has a broader meaning; it is the rape of nature, of silence, of singing. Emerging from a windswept, peaceful silence, the discourse becomes more and more fragmented and fills with tension. This is achieved through the use of a rather unusual percussion instrument called *claviers-bouteilles* or "bottle-keyboard". This piece stands as the expiation of something irreversible. *Pureté violée* was written for the musicians of l'Ensemble Chorum and for the event "Gonneville and his protégés", presented by New Music Concerts in Toronto.
— Charles-Antoine Fréchette

Frans Ben Callado might be perceived as one of the greatest nuisances of contemporary music in Québec, and he is at open war with most artistic impostors, institutions and administrators of art. His heritage is Castilian, Valencian, British, Caribbean and FLQ. He studied in England under John Woolrich, in Spain under Rosa Maria Kucharsky and Pedro Mariné. He is the only student to have been expelled from the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal, where he studied under Michel Gonneville. He then studied under Michel Longtin, who taught him how to love becoming the new punching-bag of Quebecker music. He has studied composition, pianoforte, harpsichord, arts & crafts, literature, and the history of homosexuality. He is a ballet accompanist, and one of the most prolific improvisers in Montréal. He has been composing operas, symphonies, lieder, tone poems and numerous chamber pieces since the age of six. He formed the bands *Concorde Crash*, *Nguyen Ultra* and *Révoltango*, the Committee of Artistic Terrorism in the year 2000, the *Soirée Lacrymogène* nights at Café Ludik in 2001-02. In 2005 he created a series of works in relationship with the massive student strike. In 2007 he published his first book of poetry, *Visages après l'averse* (Ed. Poètes de Brousse) and in 2008 he presented his first movie, *Les Fascistes on les a tous pendus à Nuremberg*, to his own script, image and music.

Frans Ben Callado (Canada, 1978)

Black Boxes, Op. 30* (2008)

1. Trauermusik für Eldar K. (593) 2. Falha na frenagem (3054) 3. Jisei no ku (123)

"We used to live in tribes, and when a tribe suffered a disaster, an exploding mountain, a shaking of the earth, a great flood, we would sit around fires and retell the event; stories of death, destruction, escape and rescue..."

This is really a partita; a sequence of abstract dance movements. Of course, instead of a succession of movements, one will not be surprised I took the option of mixing them all together into one giant soup of delicious musical ingredients. The various “dances” are triggered by extraneous sounds in what looks like a nightmarish musical labyrinth from which the flutist tries to escape...

Although I use the word “trigger” for the first time in a title, triggering events are omnipresent in my recent works, often in the form of prerecorded samples that are to be played on a keyboard. I see them as the skeleton of the piece, revealing the frame of the composition: they appear at irregular intervals of time that create a supra-rhythm... The “meat” around that skeleton is actually all the music performed by the flutist, with references to many many musical genres; I wanted it to be an homage to Michel Gotteville and a remembrance of my study years, where I recall numerous trips to the library where we would listen to pieces that for me seemed to fall right from the sky, at a time where my musical connoisseurship was limited to the well-known “serious” music repertoire. I have a general feeling of plurality when I think of M. Gotteville: it is not evident if you don't know him, but he is truly a man with an extraordinarily wide musical knowledge and a talent to transmit it to others. I think Trigger-Partita reflects, if not the whole spectrum of what I think of when referring to Gotteville and the years I spend in his class, at least a general feeling of the possibility of everything!

The work can be performed as a duet (electronics or percussions or other triggering device) or with a group of rotating performers with percussion instruments or other triggering device.

— André Ristic

New Music Concerts presents

Premieres and the Jules Léger Prize

NMC Ensemble | David Swan piano | Dieter Hennings guitar | Kathleen McLean bassoon

Programme:

Alice Ping Yee Ho (Hong Kong/Canada 1960) *Angst II*** (2006) 11'
clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, tuba, tenor and alto saxophones, percussion,
2 violins, viola, cello, bass | David Swan solo piano

Rodney Sharman (Canada 1958) *Incantation** (2007) 10'
Kathleen McLean solo bassoon | Accordes string quartet | Erica Goodman harp

Juan Trigos (Mexico/Canada 1965) Ricercare de Cámara VI*** (1998-99) 15'
flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, 3 percussion, piano
2 violins, viola, cello, bass | Dieter Hennings solo guitar | Juan Trigos, conductor

— Intermission —

Chris Paul Harman (Canada 1970) *Postludio a rovescio*** (2006-07) 8'
flute, oboe, clarinet, mandolin, guitar, percussion, piano, harp, violin, viola, cello, bass

So Jeong Ahn (Korea/Canada 1956) *SUB** (2008) 15'
flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trombone, saxophone,
2 percussion, accordion, piano, violin, viola, cello, bass

* Canadian Work | ** World Premiere | *** Canadian Premiere

New Music Concerts Ensemble — Robert Aitken direction

Dianne Aitken flutet | Keith Atkinson oboe | Max Christie clarinet | Robert W. Stevenson
bass clarinet | Kathleen McLean bassoon | Michele Gagnon horn | Robert Venables trumpet
Ian Cowie trombone | Scott Irvine tuba | Rob Carli, Wallace Halladay, saxophones
Dieter Hennings guitar | Andrew Collins mandolin | Rick Sacks, Trevor Tureski, Mark Duggan, perc.
Joe Macerollo accordion | David Swan piano | Erica Goodman harp | Fujiko Imajishi, Corey Gemmel,
Carol Lynn Fujino, violins | Doug Perry viola | David Hetherington cello | Peter Pavlovsky bass

The concert will include the presentation of the 2008 Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music to Chris Paul Harman for Postludio a rovescio. Please join us in the lobby for a post-concert reception generously provided by The Canada Council for the Arts. Special Thanks to Roger D. Moore for his invaluable support of this evening's event.

Alice Ho is a freelance Chinese Canadian composer/pianist dedicated to new music. She holds a bachelor of Music with high distinction from Indiana University and a Master's of Music from University of Toronto. She has been the recipient of numerous awards such as the Winnipeg Symphony New Music Festival Composers Competition, Martin Hunter Artists Award, International League of Women Composers Competition, and was a finalist at the 2006 Luxembourg International Composition Prize. In 2006, an independent film "Garage" for which she wrote the score won the top award at the Calgary International Film Festival. Her performance highlights include music featured at the ISCM World Music Days in Hong Kong and Luxembourg, Toronto Harbourfront Centre's 2007 New World Stage International Performance, and an upcoming premiere on April 21/08 by China National

Chinese Orchestra at the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing. Her works have been performed by many major orchestras and ensembles including China National Symphony, Florida Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, CBC Vancouver Orchestra, Esprit Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony, Amsterdam's Nieuw Ensemble, Penderecki String Quartet, Luxembourg Sinfonietta, Le Novel Ensemble Moderne, and the Toronto New Music Concerts. Other upcoming performances include a concerto for Chinese Classical Dancer and chamber orchestra for the Newfoundland Sinfonia, and new works for the Victoria Symphony and Toronto's new music group Toca Loca.

Alice Ping Yee Ho (Canada 1960)

Angst II (2006)

Angst II describes an intense state of perpetual anxiety. The dramatic intent of this work explores an imaginative scenario when a troubled individual is inexplicably trapped in an unknown enclosed environment. Feeling confined, one becomes delusional and creates fear of all forms. The sense of isolation and desperation in this drama is portrayed by the bleakness of the music, often a long pause after an intense passage to create an empty space filled with rich ringing overtones. Struggling between dream and reality, the music stylishly augments this dissolution by intense tremolo figures, sudden dynamic changes, and dramatic variation in piano registers. The solo piano writing is conceived in an unusual manner in that it leads and breathes freely, and carries one main gesture throughout. The accompanying ensemble is created as "action" or "reaction" to the soloist; symbolically, they play "chance" to one's uncertain destiny.

— Alice Ping Yee Ho

Rodney Sharman (born Biggar, Saskatchewan, May 24, 1958) lives in Vancouver, Canada. His music has been performed by ensembles and soloists in more than forty countries and by orchestras in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. He was Composer-in-Residence and Composer/Music Advisor with the Vancouver Symphony from 1997 to 2001 and Composer-in-Residence of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada in 2004. His chamber opera, *Elsewhereless*, with libretto and direction by Atom Egoyan, was performed in concert in Amsterdam, and staged thirty-five times since its 1998 premiere in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. Performances in 2007 and 2008 include premieres of new works for bassoonist Kathleen McLean, cellist Frances-Marie Uitti, the St. Lawrence String Quartet, the Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam, Concertgebouw Saturday Matinee), the Kingston Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Ballet, choreography by James Kudelka.

further information @ <http://www.rodneymarman.com>

Rodney Sharman (Canada 1958)

Incantation (2007)

Incantation (2007) was commissioned by bassoonist Kathleen McLean, to whom it is dedicated. The piece consists of chants and refrains for solo bassoon, harp and string quartet. Almost every note in the quartet and harp part is doubled at the interval of the twelfth, an overtone of the harmonic series. The bassoonist is sometimes asked to create a tone rich in harmonics, imitating the sound of Buddhist overtone chant (Tibetan chant), creating a rich, enveloping sound, enhanced by the quartet and harp parts.

— Rodney Sharman

Composer and conductor Juan Trigos has specialized in music from the 20th century and particularly in contemporary music. He has premiered and promoted an extensive catalogue of new works, both in live performance and recording and through his work with numerous choirs, ensembles and symphony orchestras in Canada, the USA, Europe, and Mexico. Recently he premiered the chamber opera *El Conejo y el Coyote* (The Rabbit and the Coyote), by Mexican composer Víctor Rasgado, an Italian and Mexican co-production which received six performances at the Festival Humanitas 2007 in Oaxaca City in Mexico.

He is also a very active composer, an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre and a mem-

ber of the Mexican Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte. His music is characterized by a primal “pulsation”, articulated by obsessive rhythmic gears, a “concertante” relationship between the solo and the different instrumental combinations, and a structural role for percussion instruments (including piano). Similarly, the musical discourse is driven by a manipulation of musical codes (“reading codes”) that serve to transform both original materials or those taken from other sources. His recent work has centered on the creation of a new genre, called “Hemofiction Opera”. “Hemofiction”, is a literary aesthetic invented by his father, the Mexican playwright and novelist Juan Trigos Sr.

Juan Trigos (Mexico/Canada 1965)

Ricerca de Cámara VI (1998-99)

Juan Trigos is a former student of Italian composer Franco Donatoni whose music defies the stereotype often associated with that school of composition. Trigos is a solid craftsman who assimilated and interiorized the technical ideas of the Italian master, and was able to take them as a point of departure for the development of a very personal and identifiable musical language. In his Ricercari series, Trigos transcends the modernist aesthetic of his teacher by introducing culturally charged elements that work as points of reference for the listener. In the case of Ricerca VI for guitar and chamber orchestra, these elements are drawn out of the flamenco tradition (palmas, rasgueados, microtonal inflections and percussion) but avoid the typical Spanish guitar cliché by presenting them on an abstract and structural level rather than as coloristic or local quotations. The piece is dedicated to the Mexican guitarist Pablo Gómez.

— Alejandro Madrid

Chris Paul Harman was born in 1970 in Toronto where he studied classical guitar, cello, and electronic music with Barton Wigg, Alan Stellings, and Wes Wraggett respectively. As a composer, he is primarily self-taught. Mr. Harman’s works have been performed by many ensembles and orchestras in Canada and abroad including the Asko Ensemble, the CBC Radio Orchestra, the Esprit Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the New Music Concerts Ensemble, the Noordhollands Philharmonisch, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, the St. Lawrence String Quartet, the Tokyo Symphony, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Harman has been commissioned by guitarists William Beauvais and Sylvie Proulx, violinist Jacques Israelievitch, oboist Lawrence Cherney, the Carnegie Hall Corporation, Continuum, the Esprit Orchestra, the Guelph Spring Festival, Music Canada 2000, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam,) the Trio Fibonacci, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, among others. In June 2005, Mr. Harman was appointed Assistant Professor of Composition at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University in Montreal. Current projects include a new work for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra with Kent Nagano, for premiere in the 2008-2009 season.

Chris Paul Harman (Canada 1970)

Postludio a rovescio (2006-07)

Postludio a rovescio was commissioned in 2006 by the Nieuw Ensemble, and is dedicated to Unsuik Chin. This new work is based on a piece I wrote in 2005 for solo violin called Preludio a rovescio, whose source material is drawn from the Passacaglia for solo violin by Heinrich von Biber. The expression a rovescio means “inside out” in Italian, and refers to the many ways in which I “inverted” structural and gestural elements in Biber’s original work. The Preludio in the title refers to the potential for this work to be played — without interruption — in advance of the Passacaglia. Postludio a rovescio is thus an elaboration of my earlier work, retaining the same playful and frenetic character. In spite of the expanded instrumentation, the tessitura of the work remains limited for the most part, to that of the original solo violin music. Lower pitches are used sparingly, either to add momentary “warmth” to the overall texture, or to punctuate important junctures in the work’s structure.

My conception of the orchestration in this work assumes that the most “fragile” elements in the instrumentation, (guitar and mandolin,) should be determinants in the way the other instruments would be treated. Heavier textures are avoided in favour of a more linear approach; a kind of rapid-fire Klang-

farbenmelodie where small amounts of material are frequently passed from instrument to instrument. At other times, small subgroupings of instruments provide more homogeneous textures, but these composite textures themselves are never allowed to establish themselves for very long. Paradoxically, the “climax” of the work might be said to occur towards the end in the form of an ungainly 8-bar solo for the piano.

— CPH, January 2007, Montreal

Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music

Established in 1978 by the Right Honourable Jules Léger, then Governor General of Canada, the Jules Léger Prize is a \$7,500 national award designed to encourage Canadian composers to write for chamber music groups and to foster the performance of Canadian chamber music by these groups. Three organisations are involved in the prize: the Canadian Music Centre, which administers the prize; the Canada Council for the Arts, which funds and promotes the prize and selects the jury; and CBC Radio Music and Espace Musique de Radio-Canada, which broadcast the winning work on the national stereo networks.

So Jeong Ahn was born in Seoul, Korea and studied composition with Prof. Sukhi Kang at Seoul National University, with Prof. Witold Szalonek at Hochschule der Künste Berlin, and Musicology with Prof. Carl Dahlhaus at the Technical University in Berlin, Germany. Since participating as a guest composer in the courses for electronic music by Prof. Thomas Kessler (1999) and for algorithmic composition by Prof. Hanspeter Kyburz (2000) at the Basel Electronic Studio in Switzerland, she has been engaged in live-electronic music. Her compositions have been performed at various music festivals and concerts in Asia, Europe and North America. She was a prize winner at the Martirano Composition Competition 2007 at the University of Illinois and the Tsang Houei Hsu Composition Award 2006 in Taiwan. Her recent composition Ssa-reng, ui... has been scheduled for the ISCM concert to be held in October, 2008 in Vilnius, Lithuania. She has been living in Toronto since 2001.

further information @ www.ahn-sojeong.com

So Jeong Ahn (Korea/Canada 1956)

SUB (2008)

Since moving to Canada I've noticed that the Toronto SUB-way is not only a wonderful source of a variety of amazingly attractive sounds, but also a place of communication, where people from all over the world meet in a kind of daily ritual performance like a concert. They bring along all their movements and sounds of their cultural background and throw it into this huge sound-pool for a short trip through space and time. Not only the squealing sound on a slight curve during its dynamic rush to the next station, announcements on some loudspeaker or unspecified voices and laughter in a station, the station itself turns into a huge wind machine when two trains simultaneously divide the air. To get in at the last moment, people play accelerandos with their feet and, not noticing their own contribution to the wonderfully complex rhythms, just happily smile on hearing the door-closing chime. My musical idea for this piece is based on such realistic impression of a typical Torontonion “soundscape” whose variety of unexpected sounds greeted me.

— So Jeong Ahn

Soloists

Dieter Hennings, a native of Mexico, is one of the few concert artists devoted to new music on guitar and early music for lute, baroque guitar, and theorbo. Mr. Hennings has been a soloist with the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra, the University of Arizona Philharmonia, and the Orquesta Juvenil de Sonora, Mexico. Mr. Hennings has won several prestigious competitions including the 2005 Eastman Guitar Concerto Competition, the 2002 Villa de Petrer, Alicante International Competition, the Ralph Stevens Competition, the 2001 Portland Guitar Competition, and the Claire Schaeffer Competi-

tion. Mr. Hennings is an active proponent of new music, particularly that of Latin America, having recently worked with composers Mario Davidovsky, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, Juan Trigos and Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon. This year Hennings has premiered works by composers Jake Bancks, Wes Matthews and Hebert Vazquez. He recently performed Synchronisms No. 10 for guitar and tape by Mario Davidovsky in a concert dedicated to the composer's work. Last season Mr. Hennings toured through northern Mexico as part of the Festival de Alamos "Dr. Alfonso Luis Tirado".

Kathleen McLean received her musical training at the Curtis Institute of music and has been associate principal bassoon of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 1992. She is a much sought after chamber and orchestral musician recognized internationally and has participated in many chamber music festivals including the Evian International Festival, Vancouver Chamber Music Festival, Scotia Festival and the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival. She performs frequently with New Music Concerts, Amici Ensemble and is a founding member of the Caliban quartet, Toronto Wind Quintet and the Canadian Winds. She was principal bassoon with the Canadian Opera Company and has played principal bassoon with the NAC orchestra. She has been soloist with the Calgary Philharmonic and the Toronto Symphony. Kathleen has had the honour of participating in the World Orchestra for Peace, an ensemble of the finest players drawn from top international orchestras under the baton of Valery Gergiev. She recently toured with them performing in London, Berlin, Moscow and Beijing. She has been instructing bassoon since 1986 and has been on faculty at the University of Victoria, University of Toronto and teaches master classes abroad. Kathleen McLean and Erica Goodman's CD Nightsongs featuring three new Canadian works for bassoon and harp (including Sharman's Incantation with Accordes) will be released in May.

Saskatoon native David Swan gained national exposure at the age of sixteen as winner of the first Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition for the Performance of Canadian Music. After completing doctoral studies at the University of Indiana, he settled in Toronto, where he has freelanced continuously since 1986. His varied activities include ensemble and solo performances, accompaniment, recording and teaching, and he retains a special interest in 20th century repertoire. He served for many years as organist of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and appears regularly with New Music Concerts.

May 29 – June 15, 2008
A Portrait of Robin Minard
(soundaXis festival event)
Gallery 345
Guest Artist: Robin Minard

Robin Minard (Canada, 1953)
*An Installation and Retrospective
of 10 Years of Sound Objects

Wednesday June 4, 2008
Sound and Poetry in Motion
(soundaXis festival event)
Isabel Bader Theatre
Introduction 7:15 | Concert 8:00

Guest Artists:

Robin Minard and Jaap Blonk

Robin Minard (Canada, 1953)
*The Book of Spaces (2004)
for multi-channel audio diffusion
Jaap Blonk (Holland, 1953)

Sound Poetry

(selections from his repertoire)
Robin Minard and Jaap Blonk
*New Work (2007)
for Sound Poet and Electronics**

* Canadian work | ** Canadian premiere

Robin Minard was born in Montreal in 1953. He studied music composition and electroacoustic music in Canada (at McGill University and the Conservatoire de Musique) and Paris (at the Université de Paris VIII). Since the early 1980's his work has focused in the area of electroacoustic composition and sound installation art. His works have been presented in countless festivals, museums and public venues. From 1992 to 1996 he was lecturer on the subject of sound installation art at the electroacoustic studio of the Berlin Technical University. Since 1997 he has been professor for electroacoustic composition and sound design in Weimar, Germany at the Franz Liszt Academy and the Bauhaus University where he is also director of the Studios for Electroacoustic Music (SeaM Weimar).

Sounds on Paper presents Robin Minard's recent sound objects made with books and paper as well as the sound installation Silent Music, a work that has been presented in museums and public spaces worldwide since 1994. Minard's audio books (2005) — originally created for the Bibliothèque Robert Desnos in Paris — present small loudspeaker elements superimposed over hand-written

texts. The organic-like arrangement of the elements recalls Silent Music. The audio books led in 2006 to the creation of *à lire en silence*, a first set of artist-editions consisting of small notebooks with texts and loudspeaker elements, audio CD and presentation box. *à voir en silence*, another edition project, brings together the same elements but on hand-made paper into which loudspeaker elements are directly integrated. The exhibition also includes *Nature Morte*, a new collaborative work between Robin Minard and video artist Susan Meinhardt. This work investigates the use of sound and image in a “non-narrative” context. The audio material of the work is taken from one of Minard’s earliest nonnarrative works entitled “Music for Quiet Spaces” (1984). The video images were recorded in 2007 and edited in accordance with the music in early 2008. [R.M.]

Susan Meinhardt was born in Zeulenroda, Germany in 1971. Since 2000 she has worked as a television journalist and documentary filmmaker for the German MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk) creating both short documentary reports and documentary features. In 2006 she began working closely with Robin Minard, documenting his sound projects and collaborating on interdisciplinary art works involving sound and video.

Sound + Poetry in Motion | Wednesday June 4, 2008 | Isabel Bader Theatre The Book of Spaces

The Book of Spaces is a collection of multi-track pieces in which the spatial representation of sounds plays a major role. The main parts of the work were composed in August/September 1998 (making up the work “4 Räume”) and in July 2001 (making up the work “Sutra”). In the spring of 2004 unifying elements – including an introduction, several bridge sections and some additions to the original pieces – were composed. This formed The Book of Spaces.

The work is divided into eleven sections, each of which proposes a different type of “sound space”:

- i) Introduction
- ii) Sutra I (with recordings made in l’Église de la Trinité, Paris)
- iii) Bridge I
- iv) Circles
- v) Bridge II
- vi) Hommage to Schaeffer I
- vii) Bridge III
- viii) Sutra II (with recordings made in the Great Paris Mosque)
- ix) Bridge IV
- x) Hommage to Schaeffer II
- xi) Conclusion

The Book of Spaces was realized at the Electronic Studio of the Berlin Technical University. Spatial movements were composed with Sigma I (APB-Tools, Berlin). Parts of the work composed in 1998 were commissioned by the Berlin Inventionen Festival and Sender Freies Berlin for concerts celebrating 50 years of “musique concrète” – hence the homages to Pierre Schaeffer. Other parts of the work were commissioned by the Friedenskirche Jena, Germany with the support of the German “Kulturfonds Foundation”.

Diary for S.

Diary for S. uses sounds collected from my surroundings as material for the composition. This includes various outdoor recordings, excerpts from some of the music I listen to — especially ethnic music — and the sounds of my writing with pen, pencil and paper. These recordings of writing are the main theme of the composition and appear in many variations throughout the piece. In the work, an imaginary protagonist writes down thoughts about his everyday experiences. These thoughts, and the environments contemplated, slowly melt into the sounds of the composition. The theme of writing in

the work is closely related to the gallery exhibition “Sounds on paper,” presented in conjunction with the concert for which *Diary for S.* was commissioned.

The outdoor recordings used in *Diary for S.* provide either spatial coloring or concrete soundscapes within which events take place. The musical excerpts employed are for the most part transformed beyond recognition with spectral delays and strong resonance filtering. This provides the glassy harmonic timbres that characterize the work. Here, ethnic music was especially interesting to process due to its rich spectral content. All of the sound processing used in the piece was written in MAX/MSP.

Diary for S. was realized at the composer’s current home in Weimar, Germany. The work was commissioned by Réseaux des arts médiatiques (Montréal) with support of the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA). Full Circle (Blonk)

Full Circle (Blonk) is a work for vocal performer, four-channel audio and liveelectronics with texts by Jaap Blonk. A first version of Full Circle was composed for the German sound poet Gerhard Rühm in 2007 and was premièred within the e.poesie festival in Berlin. Following the completion of this piece, a second version was composed in 2008 for Toronto New Music Concerts and their guest, the renowned Dutch sound poet Jaap Blonk. This version incorporates new liveelectronic elements and consists of a much freer temporal structure than the original composition.

All sound elements in the piece are derived from vocal sounds. Sound elements particular to the Blonk version are taken from a selection of Jaap Blonk’s sound poems and vocalizings including “Geen Krimp”, “Kulo Quasi”, “Just a Thought” and “Rhotic”. Although the general course of the composition remains largely predetermined, the recomposing of the music into openly structured moments serves to extend the communication between the vocal performer and the live-electronics as well as to allow elements of improvisation to enter into the piece. Sound processing and the temporal structuring of the composition are written in Max/MSP.

Jaap Blonk (born 1953 in Woerden, Holland) is a self-taught composer, performer and poet. For almost two decades the voice was his main means for the discovery and development of new sounds. From around the year 2000 on Blonk started work with electronics, at first using samples of his own voice, then extending the field to include pure sound synthesis as well. He took a year off of performing in 2006. As a result, his renewed interest in mathematics made him start a research of the possibilities of algorithmic composition for the creation of music, visual animation and poetry. As a vocalist, Jaap Blonk is unique for his powerful stage presence and almost childlike freedom in improvisation, combined with a keen grasp of structure. He has performed in many European countries, as well as in the U.S. and Canada, Indonesia, Japan, South Africa and Latin America. With the use of live electronics the scope and range of his concerts has acquired a considerable extension. Besides working as a soloist, he has collaborated with many musicians and ensembles in the field of contemporary and improvised music, like Maja Ratkje, Mats Gustafsson, Nicolas Collins, Joan La Barbara, The Ex, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble and the Ebony Band. He premiered several compositions by the German composer Carola Bauckholt, including a piece for voice and orchestra. A solo voice piece was commissioned by the Donaueschinger Musiktage 2002. On several occasions he collaborated with visual computer artist Golan Levin. Blonk’s work for radio and television includes several commissioned radio plays. He also makes largescale drawings of his scores, which are being exhibited. He was the founder and leader of the long-standing bands Splinks (modern jazz, 1983-1999) and BRAAXTAAL (avant-rock, 1987-2005). He also has his own record label, Kontrans, featuring a total of 15 releases so far. Other Blonk recordings appeared on Staalplaat, Basta and VICTO.

Excerpts from an Interview with Jaap Blonk by Bryan Sentes (Montreal, 2000) (complete interview available at www.jaapblonk.com)

BS: How did you come to sound poetry?

JB: In the late seventies, I had been in university for about five years doing mathematics and physics and I quit not too long before finishing. So I was doing several odd jobs, cleaning offices and things like that, thinking about what I would like to do. I was playing saxophone at that time and already had begun writing some little pieces which were like simple jazz tunes, which were the first kind of compositions I did. I was working at that time with a group of people who recited poetry, not their own poetry but from rather well-known Dutch poets, and I came into that group to make music on the saxophone and to write pieces in between the poems or to set some poems to music. There was one member of the group who was a singer, and there was a piano player, and that was nice for me, because at that time it gave me a chance to write something and have it performed immediately, not put it on a shelf and look at it. So, it was a good way to start music for me. I also took some courses. In the seventies you had lots of “expression” workshops and courses you could do, like “body expression.” There was also poetry reciting, and in that I remember, I think it was 1979, I saw a sound poem for the first time. This was one of Hugo Ball’s six sound poems, actually “Sea Horses and Flying Fish.” There was a little presentation after the workshop, and I chose that poem to perform.

Not long after that I heard a performance of Kurt Schwitters’ “Ur Sonata” and I found that very interesting. I went to the Institute of German Literature and made a serious copy of the whole piece and started to practise it. But it took more than two and a half years—I was just playing around and not planning of making a big performance of this piece, but I noticed that I almost knew it by heart, so at a friend’s birthday party I stood up and performed this piece. People liked it. Then I was asked to perform in cafes and other places. At first it was actually separate from what I was doing with the saxophone. I had founded a little jazz group playing our own compositions. When I look back to that, I note I can see that I was more and more inclined in my improvisations on the saxophone to use sounds that were actually like a voice. But then all of a sudden there was a breakthrough. It was after I had attended a workshop of actors from Poland, a voice workshop, very physically oriented, strong body work. When I got back and was sitting in my living room (I just had an attic room in Amsterdam), I put on a free jazz record by, I think, Archie Shepp, and all of a sudden I improvised along with it with the voice, and I noticed I was still doing that when the record had long ended, and it kind of felt really good, but of course I had no idea of what other people would think. I was not aware of other people doing this kind of stuff, but I soon found some improvising musicians in the Amsterdam scene who enjoyed improvising with me on instruments, so I could develop it. And out of these improvisations, the first little sound poems came.

Then I started to make longer pieces, and after a few years I trained myself to work with the international phonetic alphabet for a little bit more opportunities for structure and writing larger pieces and add more variety in the sound poems, not using just the pronunciation of one language but mixing several languages and also more possibilities, finding notations for many sounds I was making in my improvisations, although many sounds are not expressible in the phonetic alphabet. Improvisation is not usually associated with sound poetry, and at this time in the international sound poetry community, there are only very few people who improvise.

BS: In 1916 Hugo Ball’s “poems without words” were met with derision and boos and catcalls at the Cabaret Voltaire, while, today, you give some six performances a month, which are politely and appreciatively received. What happens to sound poetry when it loses this shock of the (apparently) radically new? Is it “Dada” anymore, or is it just “another kind of poetry” beside the sonnet or the lyric, popular and otherwise?

JB: It was important for me starting out with these people like Ball, Schwitters, Khlebnikov, and so on, who were in anthologies and were printed and respected now, they gave me a kind of legitimation to be on a stage and perform these pieces, and even when people raised protest or even threw things at

me, which sometimes happened at the beginning, going on and finishing, which I would not have done so easily, if it would have been my own work. The reception is so dependent on the context you are invited into. Especially in the earlier years, I had many performances where people got angry. For instance, in clubs where I was the opening act for a rock band, the biggest example being opening for The Stranglers in a big concert hall in Holland for 2,000 people in 1986. Six guards before the stage were struggling to keep people from hitting me, and people throwing beer at me all the time. I have no doubt that the same thing could still happen now.