

**NEW
MUSIC
CONCERTS**

KEIKO ABE

(Japan), MARIMBA

COLIN MCPHEE

ROBERT AITKEN

AKIRA NISHIMURA

ISAO MATSUSHITA

AKIRA MIYOSHI

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

PREMIERE DANCE THEATRE, Harbourfront

COLIN MCPHEE

Seduk Maru (1930's)

Lague Delem (1935)

Wargasari (1930's)

from Balinese Ceremonial Music

ii) Gambangan (1934)

iii) Tamboeh Teloe (1938)

MARC WIDNER & CASEY SOKOL piano

ROBERT AITKEN

*■ Shadows III: Nira (1973-88)

ROBERT AITKEN flute

CYNTHIA STELJES oboe

FUJIKO IMAJISHI violin

STEVEN DANN viola

ROBERTO OCCHIPINTI double bass

ELIZABETH KEENAN harpsichord

CASEY SOKOL piano

INTERMISSION

AKIRA NISHIMURA

** Matra (1985)

KEIKO ABE marimba

ROBIN ENGELMAN, RUSSELL

HARTENBERGER, ROBERT BECKER, JOHN

WYRE, PAUL ORMANDY, & MARK

DUGGAN percussion

HENRY KUCHARZYK digital sampler

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ISAO MATSUSHITA

** Airscope (1984)

KEIKO ABE

marimba

AKIRA MIYOSHI

** Rin-sai (1987)

KEIKO ABE

marimba

ROBIN ENGELMAN, RUSSELL

HARTENBERGER, ROBERT BECKER, JOHN

WYRE, PAUL ORMANDY, & MARK

DUGGAN

percussion

LORNE GROSSMAN, production manager

RON LYNCH, technical director

Marc Widner and Casey Sokol perform on Steinway grand
pianos from Remenyi House of Music

Tonight's performance will be broadcast on CBC
Stereo's Two New Hours at 9:05pm. on Sunday,
May 15, 1988.

* World Premiere

** Canadian Premiere

■ Commissioned by New Music Concerts with the
assistance of the Canada Council

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COLIN MCPHEE

COLIN MCPHEE was a pioneer among Western composers in turning to Asia for inspiration. His Tabuh-Tabuhan for orchestra (1936) has become legendary as an early attempt to fuse the sounds of the Balinese gamelan with those of the Western orchestra, and his Music in Bali (1966) still stands as the primary ethnomusicological study of the island's music. MCPHEE was inspired to travel to Bali after hearing gamelan recordings in New York during the late 1920's. As he later confessed: "The clear, metallic sounds of the music were like the stirring of a thousand bells, delicate, confused, with a sensuous charm, a mystery that was quite overpowering. At the time I knew little about the music of the East. I still believed that an artist must keep his mind on his own immediate world. But the effect of the music was deeper than I suspected, for the day came when I determined to make a trip to the East to see them [the gamelans] for myself."

Born in Montreal in 1900 and raised in Toronto, MCPHEE's talent was recognized early by family and teachers. While a child he studied piano and composition with Ernest Farmer at the Hambourg Conservatory and as early as 1915 was hailed in a local newspaper as "an unusually gifted young Toronto boy... He has a fine feeling for rhythm and an instinct for harmony, with a melodic inspiration surprising for a lad still in knicker-bockers." (MCPHEE treasured this unidentified clipping and still owned it at the time of his death in 1964.) Another youthful triumph came in 1916 when his piano work, Water Nymph was published in The Canadian Journal of Music. MCPHEE then went on to study in Baltimore at the Peabody Conservatory and in Paris with Isidore Philipp (piano) and Paul Le Flem (composition). In between the Baltimore and Paris years, he returned home to work with the renowned Liszt pupil Arthur Friedheim. On 15 January 1924, his Second Piano Concerto was premiered by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

In 1926 MCPHEE settled in New York and immediately became an important part of the new music scene. There he was closely involved with Aaron Copland, Carlos Chavez, Henry

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Cowell, Virgil Thomson and others who were challenging musical tradition, and there he heard the recordings that would change the course of his life.

MCPHEE and his new wife, the anthropologist Jane Belo, sailed for Bali in 1931 and remained there, off and on, for most of the decade. They built a native-style house in the remote mountain village of Sayan and became part of an important community of Western anthropologists, which also included Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. Immediately MCPHEE began to meet local musicians and, as he recalled in A House in Bali (1946), he spent his days driving across the island, pursuing "the sound of music, [which] seemed forever in the air." During the next few years MCPHEE transcribed hundreds of gamelan compositions and sponsored orchestras to revive dying musical styles. Two of them, the Gamelan semar pegulingan of Peliatan and the Gamelan angklung of Sayan still play together today. The latter was started for small boys in MCPHEE's village.

The piano transcriptions performed this evening are from a group of some three-dozen such pieces prepared by MCPHEE while in Bali. They were a vital part of his working method and represent an oasis between composition and literal transcription. MCPHEE brought a Steinway grand into his Sayan home, and used it as a tool in transcription: "In the afternoon Lebah [MCPHEE's principle informant] would sit down near the piano, to play phrase by phrase some g'nder melody while I wrote. Or he would pick up a drum to show me the rhythm in a certain part of the music. Seriously, leisurely, we worked together till sundown." The subtleties of gamelan tuning are submerged in these transferrals to the piano, yet MCPHEE effectively captured the "aerial and aeolian" spirit of the music, with its brilliant percussive resonances, delicate linear layering, and supple rhythmic swing. In 1941 he recorded a number of transcriptions with Benjamin Britten at the second piano.

MCPHEE used transcriptions as the basis for Tabuh-Tabuhan, as well as for several of his later works, including Symphony No. 2 (1957), the Nocturne for chamber orchestra

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(1958), and the Concerto for Winds (1960). Although he never returned to Bali, the island's music and culture permeated the rest of his days, as he later wistfully acknowledged: "Everyone carries within him his own private paradise. For me it was Bali, for I had lived there a long time and had been very happy."
-Carol Oja

CAROL OJA

CAROL OJA received her Ph.D. from the Graduate School of the City University of New York. She is Assistant Professor of Music at Brooklyn College of the same university, and is currently on leave and at Harvard University under a Mellon Faculty Fellowship. In 1984 she accompanied the film crew from Michael Blackwood Productions to Bali, where COLIN MCPHEE's musical legacy was explored on camera. The following year, CAROL OJA completed her dissertation, COLIN MCPHEE: A Composer in Two Worlds.

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Joseph Macerollo

Composers:

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David Keane

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ROBERT AITKEN

ROBERT AITKEN, flutist and composer, is internationally recognized as one of Canada's foremost musicians. He has distinguished himself as a sensitive interpreter of music from all periods, and is especially acclaimed for his virtuosity in the performance of contemporary music. For his dedication to music by Canadian composers, he has been awarded the Canada Music Citation, the Canadian Music Council Award, and the Harold Moon Award.

Born in Kentville, Nova Scotia in 1939, AITKEN began his flute studies at the age of nine. His main teachers were Nicholas Fiore and Marcel Moyse. At age nineteen, he was appointed flute soloist with the Vancouver Symphony, where he also studied composition with Barbara Pentland at the University of British Columbia. In 1959 he returned to Toronto to play with the CBC Symphony and to graduate with a Masters degree in composition from the University of Toronto. For five years, he was principal flute of the Toronto Symphony, and became subsequently professor of flute at the University of Toronto.

Since 1970, AITKEN has devoted much of his energy to a career as a soloist, touring Europe, North America and the Far East. He performs frequently with other outstanding musicians, such as Heinz Holliger, Leo Brouwer, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Janos Starker, Ruggiero Ricci and others.

While his commitment to performance and education of young musicians leaves little time for composing, AITKEN nonetheless has produced a number of compositions of considerable challenge to players. His catalogue includes orchestral works Shadows I: Nekuia (1971), Spectra (1969), Spiral (1975) and such pieces for small ensembles as Kebyar (1971) and Shadows II: Lalita (1972).

In addition to being Artistic Director of New Music Concerts, ROBERT AITKEN is also director of the Advanced Studies in Music Program at the Banff School of Fine Arts, and Music At Shawnigan, a chamber music festival on Vancouver Island.

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NIRA: SHADOWS III

In 1970 I took four months to travel through the Orient and experience first-hand the wonders of these countries. When I returned, there were so many musical ideas running through my mind that I decided to write them down. This writing of "ethnic" inspired music went very much against my artistic principles at the time. I felt that a Canadian should write "Canadian" music, whatever that means, and not something imitative of another culture.

However, I set out to rid my mind of these shadows and planned to compose four works inspired by different places I had visited. Nira, which simply means "shadows" in Tamil, is the last and is based on the extremely colourful and active music of south-west India. This Kathakali music is to western ears a very noisy metallic music which in fact bears a close relationship to the music of Bali. Sometimes it seems closer to the sound of the banging of pots and pans than anything we consider music. The musical material I used is based on an early morning south Indian raga group and thala and I began the work as a Canada Council commission for L'ensemble instrumental du Québec in 1973. Unfortunately the disbandment of the group before the scheduled day of performance led to the incompletion of the work. It has remained in this unfinished condition until this year when I felt it was finally the moment to complete it. Going back in time and reworking a piece is an interesting experience as it shows how quickly music and our own concepts of art and creative musical principles change. However I have enjoyed the challenge and am curious to see how it weathered the passing of time as a concept but in an incomplete state.

- Robert Aitken

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KEIKO ABE

KEIKO ABE is a marimba virtuoso who has travelled all over the world popularizing her instrument. She has devoted her career to demonstrating its dramatic potential as an instrument for the 21st century and elevated it to the status of a solo instrument. To prove the marimba's versatility she has given performances with a repertoire that includes classical music, jazz, popular music, modern music, improvisation and folksongs. She has lectured on the merits of the marimba at universities in countless countries and promoted music for the marimba by commissioning pieces herself.

KEIKO ABE teaches at Toho Conservatory in Tokyo and is guest professor at Utrecht Conservatory in Holland. She is the leader of the Tokyo Quintet.

Having learned to play the marimba almost as soon as she could lift a mallet, she began her formal music education at Tokyo Gakugei University in 1960, obtaining a diploma in percussion, piano and composition.

KEIKO ABE plays on a Yamaha 6000 5-octave rosewood marimba, courtesy of Yamaha Music Canada. In an effort to achieve a certain sustaining capacity and increase the range and depth of musical expression, she worked with Yamaha to design a bass extension for her instrument.

As a performer her technique is flawless and she shows great musicality, but more than this it is her astounding concentration which makes her so special. It enables her to memorize long difficult pieces in a single night and to immerse herself instantly in her music however bad the stage conditions may be. Everyone who hears her play is inspired by the tremendous energy she radiates in performance. This extraordinary quality is best explained by her students, who say they "go to lessons to get energy".

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AKIRA MIYOSHI

One of Japan's outstanding composers, AKIRA MIYOSHI was born in Tokyo in 1933. He began his musical studies at the age of 4, in both piano and composition under Kozaburo Hirai, then later with Tomojiro Ikencuchi and Raymond Gallois-Montbrun.

While a student of French Literature at Tokyo University, he won first prize in a noted music competition sponsored by the NHK and Mainichi Newspaper Company, and the following year, 1953, was awarded both the Art Festival Prize and the Otaka Prize for his work "Symphonie Concertante for Piano and Orchestra". From 1955 to 1957 he was a scholarship student at the Paris Conservatoire.

While actively engaged in composition, he has also dedicated much of his career to teaching, first as an assistant professor at the Toho Gakuen College and as a lecturer at the Tokyo University of Arts. Today he is President of the Toho School - University of Music.

RIN-SAI

Rin-sai is the motif of an improvisation for solo marimba and six percussion. At her request, MIYOSHI wrote the work for KEIKO ABE and the Kroumata percussion ensemble.

First he wrote some basic fragments and ABE and Kroumata improvised on them. After listening to this recorded trial performance he rewrote them, completing Rin-sai in this way. (Using this motif, KEIKO ABE gave the premiere performance of the improvisation as Rin-sai for solo marimba at Yuraki-cho Asahi Hall in July 1987.)

The score of Rin-sai constructed in the manner above, is quite fixed and inflexible. However the composer hopes the players will be highly imaginative; that is why he left the possibility of music for improvisation by the performers in the coda.

Rin-sai is the archaic word meaning sun in Chinese.

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AKIRA NISHIMURA

One of the most active young composers in Japan, NISHIMURA was born in 1953 in Osaka. In 1977 he graduated from the Tokyo University of Fine Arts, where he also completed his post graduate studies three years later. He has been the recipient of numerous awards including first prize at the 43rd Queen Elizabeth Music Competition in Brussels (1977), the Luigi Dallapiccola Prize (1977) and a special prize for creative stage art sponsored by the Japan Culture Agency (1978).

NISHIMURA's compositions are widely performed not only in Japan but abroad, and he has received many commissions from the NHK, the National Theatre of Japan, Japan Foundation for Orchestral Works, various music festivals and many Japanese musicians.

At present AKIRA NISHIMURA teaches at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts, Tokyo College of Music and the Tokyo Conservatoire SHOBI.

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MATRA

For solo marimba, timpani and 5 percussionists, Matra was commissioned by KEIKO ABE and German timpanist Prof. Klaus Tresselt. The title word Matra is a syllabic unit of traditional Indian music. The composer writes, "in this piece I used five different Talas which progress simultaneously. Tala is a word which means the cycle of rhythm in Indian music. The solo marimba improvises in sections of this work."

Matra, composed in 1985, is the last composition of Nishimura's South-Asian Trilogy for percussion ensemble. The previous works are Ketiak for 6 percussion (1979) and Tala for 6 percussion (1982).

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ISAO MATSUSHITA

Born in Tokyo in 1951, ISAO MATSUSHITA graduated from Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music where he studied composition under Prof. Hiroaki Minami and Toshiro Mayuzumi. At age 25 MATSUSHITA received honorable mention in the Mainichi Music Competition with his orchestral composition Diffusion.

In 1979, MATSUSHITA went to West Berlin as a scholarship student of the West Germany governmental commission for academic exchange (Deutscher akademischer Austausch-Dienst, DAAD) where he studied composition under prof. Isang Yun. He remained in Berlin until 1986 and has been active in work involving composing, conducting and planning, etc.

In 1982, his Alabaster for three orchestras was given its premiere performance at the World Music Days of the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM) festival in Graz, Austria. Subsequently MATSUSHITA participated in several music festivals, such as the Darmstadt Institute on Contemporary Music '82, Horizont-festival Berlin '85, Europamusicdays Copenhagen '85, and Inventionfestival Berlin '86. Since 1983, MATSUSHITA has led the Ensemble KOCHI Klang-Malerei Berlin.

In 1985 MATSUSHITA won first place in the Moenchengladbach International Composition Competition in West Germany with Toki-No-Ito I (Threads of Time) for string quartet. After his return to Japan in 1986, he captured the seventh annual Irino Prize with Toki-No-Ito II for piano and orchestra.

AIRSCOPE II

Breath turns into a wind as well as a current. "Air" which has become a current turns into sounds which float into space. With that flow, space expands its "Scope" into something infinite.

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This piece was composed at the request of KEIKO ABE and given its maiden performance at the Percussion Festival held at the Pompidou Center in Paris in November, 1984. As its title indicates, this piece means "air, wind, the expansion of a tune" or "a scope". Here, an awareness of the performer's respiration and several improvisatorial elements have been taken into account as well. I brought impromptu into the work because I thought it could be accomplished only by having a feeling of trust existing between the performer and myself (the composer), and with the two of us on the same wave length. In this respect, KEIKO ABE has sufficient understanding of my world, and indeed always gives a performance in harmony with my intentions.

- Isao Matsushita

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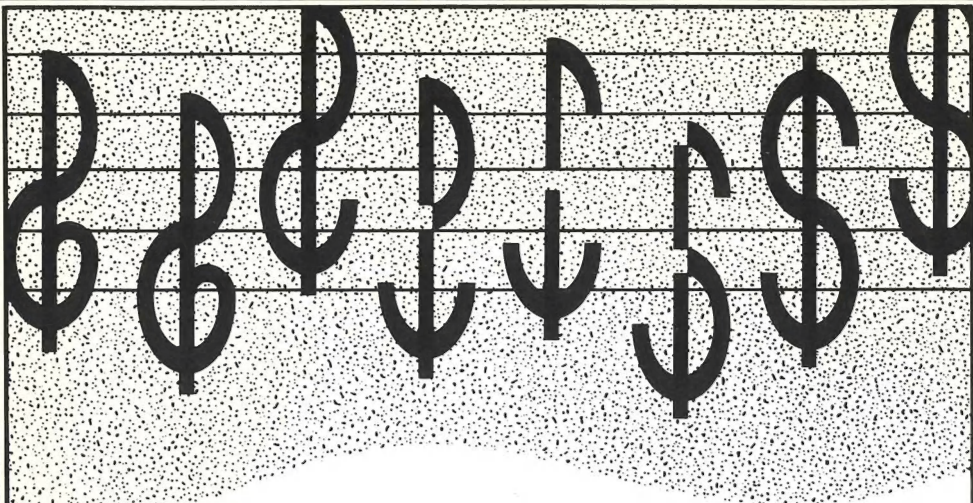
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