New Music Concerts

Elliot Carter Returns:

The Recent Smaller Works

Sun April 22/90

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a du Maurier Arts Ltd.†
presentation...

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ELLIOTT CARTER RETURNS:
THE RECENT SMALLER WORKS

Premiere Dance Theatre
8 pm Sunday April 22 1990

A Memo and A Memory
Linda C. Smith

Memo

A note, a message, a quick thought, something to remember. In his Six Memos for the Next Millenium, Italo Calvino addresses literature through six ideas: Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility, Multiplicity. The sixth, if written, was never found, and exists only in title: Consistency. I have used Calvino's memos as a reference point for thinking about the music of Elliott Carter.

Lightness *"...weightless gravity..."* * The immaculate textures of Elliott Carter's music are characterized by lightness. Even in the most extreme moments of counterpoint, contrast and multiple discourse, the music never contrives complexity for its own sake, but is rooted in an inner necessity, a kind of ordered chaotic-ness, like a garden carefully tended to grow wild. Mutable, in flight, the textures are created of intersections, layers, divergences with moments of accord. Rarely pulled into the weight of pulse, the music moves with the light substance of breath.

Quickness *"...the lightening flashes of the mental circuits that capture and link points distant from each other in space and time..."* * Carter's music is mercurial. He is agile with his material - a quick-change artist. The music shifts as in film, from foreground to background, past, present and future intercut. It is a continuity of discontinuities. It flickers. The music articulates the flow of time. Psychological

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or experiential time is often juxtaposed with clock or pulse time; we are carried on various and changing winds while clocking our pace by the regularity of the stars.

Exactitude *"...the highly exact and meticulous attention to the composition of each image, to the minute definition of details..."* * While not applying strict mathematical procedures which unfold according to some recipe, the music has a precision and an immense fascination with detail. The music conveys precisely itself, with its own inner sense of logic. It is as precise in notation as it is in subtlety of expression. Calvino, in his third memo, uses the images of the flame and the crystal as two symbols of exactitude. Carter's music could be thought of as a flame reflected in a crystal - many-faceted events which flow, which move, transform, reappear.

Visibility *"Where do they come from, these images that rain down into fantasy?"* * Clarity - of purpose, form and imagery. What is this imagery - characterization of instruments, discourse, counterpoint, contrast, complexity...whatever words are used, the imagery is conveyed with the utmost clarity. Nothing is obscured. The texture is translucent, figures crystallize before dissolving into background. Though sometimes dense, it is not impermeable. There is space, room for hearing, like a kind of netting through which you can still see. (Carter's father and grandfather were importers of lace).

Multiplicity *"Who are we, who is each one of us, if not a combinatoria of experiences, information, books we have read, things imagined..."* * Multiplicity - the co-existence of simultaneous presences - is an ongoing principle in Carter's music. Lines superimposed with lines, instruments with instruments, clock time with expressive time - all creating a labyrinth of the possible. The juxtaposition of elements highlights the essential qualities of each. Simultaneous trains of thought, the garden grown wild, lacework...

Consistency Or continuity - the persistence of essential qualities carried from work to work. Clarity, texture, fascination with rhythm and change, co-existence - all elaborate Carter's articulate expressionism: the flickering diamond, the crystallized flame.

* Italo Calvino - Six Memos for the Next Millenium

A Memory

"...every time one wrote a piece it seemed as if one had to reinvent a language in which to write it." *

When I was fifteen, my composition teacher, Allen Shawn, sent me to the Lincoln Centre Library where, in the gallery upstairs, there was an exhibition of Carter's scores. A recording of his Cello Sonata (1948) was playing. Listening, I was

startled and transfixed by the music. I remember thinking that it was completely alien to me. I couldn't 'understand' it. It was as though my mother suddenly started speaking to me in Japanese, expecting me to understand. Obviously this music, in a sense, expected me to understand it. I bought the recording. Over time I noticed that I was hearing moments of beauty, that I was beginning to recognize the music, to know it, and realized that it had started to permeate the wall of my listening experience. I was learning the language...

* Attributed to Carter by Charles Rosen in his book The Musical Languages of Elliott Carter.

Elliott Carter was born on December 11, 1908 in New York City. He took piano lessons as a child and listened to his mother's recordings of symphonies and Italian Opera. In 1923 he began his friendship with Charles Ives, who encouraged his interest in music. He attended concerts of the music of Stravinsky, Ives, Bartok, Cowell, Varese, Ruggles and many others in New York. He accompanied his father on his business trips to Europe where he learned French and came into contact with the music of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg. Through friends and travel Carter learned about middle-Eastern music, Arabic music and East Indian music. He came to hear recordings of Balinese music through Colin McPhee. In 1926 Carter attended Harvard University where, at that time, contemporary music was not well-embraced by the music department. He took a degree in English literature, furthering his interest in the works of Pound, Eliot, Stein, Joyce, Proust and others, and continued his music studies on the side, supplemented by attendance at Boston Symphony concerts. He eventually took a post-graduate degree in music at Harvard, studying with Walter Piston and Gustav Holst. He continued his studies with three years under Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Carter has won numerous awards for his music including two Pulitzer Prizes (for the Second and Third String Quartets), Guggenheim Fellowships, and the Prix de Rome. He has lectured widely, and has taught at the Peabody Conservatory, Columbia University, Queens College, Yale, Cornell and Juilliard, and is currently working on a violin concerto.

Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux for flute and clarinet was composed for the celebration of Pierre Boulez' 60th birthday on March 31, 1985 in Baden-Baden. The title, translated as 'rough breathing/smooth breathing', refers to the pronunciation of classical Greek words beginning with a vowel or a *p*. With esprit rude (rough breathing) the initial vowel (or *p*) is to be preceded by a sounded H, and is indicated by a reversed comma above the letter. With esprit doux (smooth breathing) the initial vowel is not to be preceded by H and is indicated by a comma above the vowel. In the Greek for 'sixtieth year' (transliterated as hexekoston etos) the initial epsilon of the first word has a rough breathing sign while the epsilon of the second has a smooth one. The score begins with the motto:

Bflat	C	A	E	
B(O)	U	L	E	(Z)
	t	a		

- using both the French and German names of the notes. Both instruments have some rough and some smooth breathing. - E.C.

Canon for 4 - Homage to William was written for the occasion of Sir William Glock's retirement from the Bath Festival which rose to such eminence under his leadership. Following the pattern of many older pieces written by composers to celebrate one of their musical colleagues by making a demonstration of compositional skill, this four-part canon is quite strictly carried out from beginning to end. The flute imitates the cello in inversion, the bass clarinet imitates it in retrograde, and the violin in retrograde inversion. In using this very restricting technique, I have tried to write music that would be interesting and communicative to a listener not preoccupied with its formal devices. The London Sinfonietta gave the first performance at a celebration for Sir William on June 3, 1984 during the annual Bath Festival in England. - E.C.

Enchanted Preludes is a birthday present for Ann Santen, commissioned by her husband, Harry, and composed in gratitude for their enthusiastic and deeply caring support of American music. It is a duet for flute and cello in which the two instruments combine their different characters and musical materials into statements of varying moods. The title comes from a poem of Wallace Stevens: *The Pure Good of Theory*, "All the Preludes to Felicity," stanza No. 7:

Felicity, ah! Time is the Hooded enemy,
The inimical music, the enchanted space
In which the enchanted preludes have their place.

The score was given its first performance by Patricia Spencer, flute, and Andre Emelianoff, cello, of the Da Capo Chamber Players in N.Y., on May 16, 1988. - E.C.

Riconoscenza per Goffredo Petrassi was composed for the 1984 Festival Pontino in celebration of Petrassi's eightieth birthday.

String Quartet No. 4 A preoccupation with giving each member of the performing group its own musical identity characterized my String Quartet No. 4: thus mirroring the democratic attitude in which each member of a society maintains his or her own identity while cooperating in a common effort - a concept that dominates all my recent work. In this quartet, more than in others of my scores, a spirit of cooperation prevails. Each player's part has its own musical materials and expressive character, and each participates in its own way in the four-part ensemble. While there are many changes of mood and speed and frequent pauses, the work is in one long, constantly changing movement. In the background, however, there is a suggestion of the traditional four-movement plan of the classical string quartet - Appassionato, Scherzando, Lento, Presto.

String Quartet No. 4 is dedicated to the Composers String Quartet, who commissioned the score as one of a consortium made up of two others - the Sequoia and Thouvenel QUartets - that was financed in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The score was composed during part of 1985-86 in New York City, Waccabuc, and at the American Academy in Rome. The Composers Quartet gave its premiere at Festival Miami on September 17, 1986. - E.C.

José Evangelista was born in Valencia, Spain in 1943 where he began his musical studies with Vicente Asencio. He also graduated in Physics and worked in computers. In 1970, he moved to Montréal where he studied composition with André Prevost and Bruce Mather. He is a founding member of "Les Evénements du Neuf" (new music society) and of "Traditions musicales du monde" (concert series of world music) and he is now teaching at the Faculty of Music of the University of Montréal. In 1974, he won the "Arpa de Oro" Prize in Spain, and in 1982 the Prize of the Spanish Ministry of Culture. In 1984, his piece "Clos de vie" was recommended by the Unesco International Rostrum for Composers and in 1986 he was a guest composer at the new music courses in Darmstadt. Since 1987, he has been a member of the Board of the "Société de musique contemporaine du Québec".

O Bali was commissioned by Radio Canada to commemorate the centenary of the first major contact of the West with Indonesian music at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. At this occasion, Debussy heard the gamelan and wrote his famous essays. To pay hommage to the extraordinary music of Bali, I have made this work following the principles of Balinese music, though freely interpreted. For example, my piece is based on two melodies played by the flutes that are at the same time ornamented and punctuated by the other instruments. This technique of orchestration, essential to the gamelan, is at the base of the heterophonic writing style I have used in my music since 1982. However, these melodies in themselves have nothing in common with those in Bali: they use all twelve tones of the tempered scale and not sets of five or seven notes, as is the case in Balinese music. My piece is dedicated to the memory of Colin McPhee (1900 - 1964), a Montreal composer and great pioneer in the study of Balinese music.

A Doll's House Story renders in music the events of a tragic revolution of a few minutes' duration. The revolution broke out overnight in the toy department of a store. There did not seem to be any rhyme or reason to it, and indeed, it erupted over a petty affair - it appears to be petty with hindsight anyway. The toys - plastic dolls, tin soldiers, bicycle regiments, intrepid civilians, undercover chimneysweeps, smart police officers, clowns, dwarfs and giants - engaged in a pitched battle of unprecedented cruelty.

The fragmentary reports that have come down to us allow the reconstruction of but a few aspects of those events, albeit rather important ones. I have discovered, for instance, that the very first minute of the revolution claimed nine lives (among them that of a Pierrot, a Columbine and a heroic Harlequin). Within the next five minutes, six more deaths occurred, all victims of some instincts running amok.

The appearance of a night watchman put a temporary stop to the events, but fighting continued with even more bitterness once the torchlight had been switched off. The streets were overrun by ambulances with their shrieking sirens, tanks firing shells and other military vehicles - and soon there was silence. The presence of mechanized troops did its work: the rebels and fighters withdrew into their homes. The dead silence was only occasionally disturbed by the fumblings of a doll, groping cautiously in the dark for its lost limbs or head.

In the morning, the shop assistants, tired and sleepy after a short night's rest, were incredulously taking in the mess, looking in vain for signs of burglary or theft.

Later, in the course of the morning, a tiny, wind-up guillotine swung into action, but nobody took any notice of that any more. - István Márta

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a du Maurier Arts Ltd. presentation

Programme

ELLIOTT CARTER (United States)
• *Enchanted Preludes* (1988)

Robert Aitken, flute
David Hetherington, violoncello

ELLIOTT CARTER (United States)
Riconoscenza (1984)

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

ELLIOTT CARTER (United States)
Canon for 4 (1984)

Robert Aitken, flute
Lori Freedman, bass clarinet
Fujiko Imajishi, violin
David Hetherington, violoncello

JOSÉ EVANGELISTA (Canada)
Ô Bali

Robert Aitken, flute
Dianne Aitken, flute
Fujiko Imajishi, violin
Marie Berard, violin
David Hetherington, violoncello
Roberto Occhipinti, double bass
Bernadene Blaha, piano
Bill Brennan, vibraphone

I N T E R M I S S I O N

MÁRTA ISTVÁN (Hungary)
•*Doll's House Story* (1985)

Robin Engelman, percussion
Russell Hartenberger, percussion
Bob Becker, percussion
Bill Brennan, percussion

ELLIOTT CARTER (United States)
Esprit Rude / Esprit Doux (1984)

Robert Aitken, flute
Stanley McCartney, clarinet

ELLIOTT CARTER (United States)
•*String Quartet no. 4* (1986)

Accordes Quartet:
Fujiko Imajishi, violin
Marie Berard, violin
Douglas Perry, viola
David Hetherington, violoncello

• *Canadian premiere*

Please join us for a reception in the lobby after the concert ...

New Music Concerts would like to thank the American Consulate through the United States Information Services office for its generous asssistance with tonight's reception in honour of Elliott Carter.

A Doll's House Story was written in 1985 for the Amadinda Ensemble of Budapest.

Márta István was born in Budapest in 1952. He trained as a composer under Josef Soproni, Rezso Sugar, Emil Petrovics and Witold Lutoslawski. Since 1976 he has been active as a composer for theatre, film and television. From 1981 - 1983 he taught at the Bela Bartok Secondary School of Music in Budapest, and has participated in, and organized, many festivals of contemporary music. He was a founding member of Group 180, a performance group devoted mainly to minimal and repetitive music. He has also been a member of the Mandel Quartet, performing both old and new music on the harpsichord, synthesizer and percussion.

TONIGHT'S SOLOISTS

Fujiko Imajishi is very much in demand as a violinist for numerous Toronto performances as well as being involved in the Esprit Orchestra and the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra. Her skill and enthusiasm for contemporary music make her a frequent artist with New Music Concerts.

Accordes evolved out of a string quintet formed originally to perform a work by John Beckwith, commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Women's Committee for the Symphony's Seminars Program. Accordes has been actively involved in performing contemporary music, having commissioned works by composers such as Thomas Baker and Milton Barnes. Concerts have included works by Ann Southam, Ben Johnson and Jean Papineau-Couture for New Music Concerts, and a recording of *Slano* by Papineau-Couture has been made for Centrediscs.

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