

Reminiscences of Milhaud

To commemorate the centenary of the birth of Darius Milhaud, New Music Concerts is pleased to present a concert featuring his ballet suite *L'homme et son désir*, the *Aspen Serenade* and the *Octuor à cordes*, which consists of his 14th and 15th string quartets played simultaneously. To celebrate the great tradition of musical lineages, the concert also features a Canadian link with works by Bruce Mather and James Harley—Mather was a student of Milhaud and Harley, a student of Mather.

Reminiscences of Milhaud

"In 1956-57, I had the good fortune to study with the Russian pianist Alexander Uninsky who taught for several years in Toronto. He kindly obtained a scholarship for me to study with him at the Aspen Music School in Colorado in the summer of 1957. Uninsky introduced me to Milhaud who accepted me in his composition class in Aspen.

"At that time, I was writing a type of post-romantic music full of clichés. As I played my pieces, he would wince whenever he heard a cliché. Needless to say, this made quite an impression on me at the tender age of eighteen. He made me understand immediately the difference between composing and arranging. His great strength as a teacher was the ability to discern in any style the inventive ideas as opposed to the conventional formulae. His classes constituted a course in aesthetics.

"He was a man of great physical courage in that he continued to compose, teach and conduct in spite of almost constant pain from rheumatism. His generosity, sense of humour and positive attitude towards life inspired all who met him. I continued to visit with him until his death in 1974."—Bruce Mather

Milhaud was one of the few 20th century composers to create an absolutely personal language, his own universe. No

**happy
birthday,
darius!
works by
darius
milhaud,
bruce mather,
james harley
sunday
march 8,
1992
at 8 p.m.
betty oliphant
theatre
404 jarvis
street
961-9594**

one before him created structures of such contrapuntal density, like a luxuriant jungle. His polytonality was in fact a means to achieve clarity with so many simultaneous melodic ideas. Each idea was identified by a different key. He was also the great pioneer in writing for large percussion ensembles, even before Varèse.—b.m.

Octuor à cordes, opus 291

Modéré—Animé—Vif

In 1948, Milhaud was given a small green notebook with a splendid binding of the Romantic era. Each page had eight musical staves. He conceived the idea of writing in this notebook two different string quartets, his 14th and 15th quartets, which in superposition would constitute a string octet. Here is an excellent example of the complex textures characteristic of Milhaud's finest works. The first performance was

given in 1949 at Mills College in Oakland, California by the Budapest and Paganini quartets.—b.m.

Aspen sérénade, opus 361

Animé—Souple et printanier—Paisible—Énergique—Nerveux et coloré

(Astir—Springlike—Peaceful—Energetic—Nimble and colorful)

new music

C O N C E R T S

For approximately fifteen years, Milhaud taught every summer at the Aspen School of Music in Aspen, Colorado. He found the mountain climate beneficial for his health. For the Aspen Festival of 1957, he was commissioned to write a work for nine instruments: four woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon); four strings (violin, viola, cello, doublebass); and trumpet. The first letters of the indications for the five movements spell out "Aspen" in French and English.—b.m.

L'homme et son désir, opus 48

As Milhaud's health did not permit him to serve in the First World War, he could accept in 1916 the invitation of the great writer Paul Claudel, a career diplomat, to be his secretary in Rio de Janeiro. Claudel conceived a ballet inspired by the immensity of the primeval Brazilian forest. In Claudel's words, "the theme is that of a man obsessed by a passion, an idea, a desire, who in vain tries to escape from it as from a prison with invisible bars, until a woman, representing both Death and Love, comes to fetch him and lead him off stage." Claudel divided the stage into four levels of four different colours—violet, green, blue and black—to represent the luxuriant growth of the jungle. Milhaud conceived an innovative spatial disposition of five ensembles: 1. a wordless vocal quartet; 2. a string quartet; 3. two flutes, two clarinets; 4. trumpet, oboe, harp, doublebass; 5. a large percussion ensemble of nineteen different instruments, including a tambourine, sleigh bells, whip, whistle, wind machine, siren, and a plank struck by a hammer. The first performance was given in Paris in 1921 by the Ballets Suédois, with an ensemble under the direction of Inghelbrecht.—b.m.

Bruce Mather

Born in Toronto in 1939, Bruce Mather studied there with Oskar Morawetz (composition) and Alberto Guerrero and Alexander Uninsky (piano). He continued his studies in Paris (1959-62) with Simone Plé Caussade (counterpoint and fugue), Darius Milhaud (composition) and Olivier Messiaen (analysis). He completed his studies at Stanford University (California) where he studied with Leland Smith (composition) and obtained his master of arts degree, and at University of Toronto, obtaining his doctorate in 1967. Since 1966, he has taught composition, analysis, harmony and since 1981, has directed the contemporary music ensemble at McGill University (Montréal). As a pianist he has been active as a performer of contemporary music both as a soloist and with his wife, Pierrette LePage, in the two-piano repertoire.

He has written many works on commission from Orchestre de Chambre Rouen, Ensemble 2e 2m (France), Rencontres Musicales Internationales de Metz, Radio-France, Montréal Symphony Orchestra, New Music Concerts (Toronto), Trio Basso (Cologne), SMCQ (Montréal), Esprit Contemporain, Nexus, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Stratford Festival, Standford University, University of Toronto, University of Manitoba, Ten Centuries Concerts, Days Months & Years to Come (Vancouver) and from many soloists.

In 1978-79, Bruce Mather was guest lecturer for the analysis class at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. In 1979, he was awarded the Jules Léger Prize for chamber music.

In recognition of his numerous works inspired by wine, Bruce Mather was initiated into the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin at the Château Clos de Vougeot in 1987.

Vega Sicilia (1989)

"When Alvaro Pierrri invited me to write a guitar concerto, I accepted on condition that the "orchestra" be small enough that the guitarist could play without amplification. I chose an "orchestra" consisting of only four instruments: viola, cello, harp, marimba. In my work as director of the contemporary music ensemble at McGill University, I often looked for repertoire for guitar and ensemble. I find that there is very little good repertoire.

"Already ten of my works take their names from wines. Of course a work for guitar must have the name of a Spanish wine. I chose Vega Sicilia, one of the best and most expensive Spanish red wines."—b.m.

James Harley

James Harley is a Canadian composer presently completing his doctorate at McGill University in Montréal. Originally from British Columbia, he has studied music in the U.S. (Western Washington University), London (Royal Academy of Music, with Paul Patterson), Paris (CEMAMu, Université de Paris with Iannis Xenakis) and Warsaw (Chopin Academy of Music, with Wlodimierz Kotonski). His works have been awarded prizes in Canada, Great Britain, France, Poland and Japan, and his music has been performed and broadcast in many countries. This spring, Harley's *Memoires of a Landscape*, for 13 strings, is being [was ??] performed in Warsaw at the World Music Days of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

Neue Bilder (Der Hölle Rache)