



Robert Aitken

„Two of the most wide-open
unencumbered ears in Canadian music.”
(William Littler)

As a flutist, composer, conductor and highly sought after teacher, Robert Aitken is one of the most diversified and respected musicians of our time.

This diversity has been characteristic of him since his early years. At the age of 19, he became principal flute of the Vancouver Symphony and at the same time studied composition and Palestrina counterpoint with Barbara Pentland. He left the orchestra the following year to continue his work in composition with John Weinzweig and electronic music with Myron Schaeffer at the University of Toronto. Within two years, Aitken received his Bachelor of Music Degree and then continued with post graduate studies. During this period, he was very active in the musical life of Toronto and as a member of the CBC Symphony, performed under such noted conductors as Karl Böhm, Hermann Scherchen, Heitor Villa-Lobos and Igor Stravinsky.

In 1964, a Canada Council Grant enabled Robert Aitken to study in Europe with Jean-Pierre Rampal, Severino Gazzeloni, Herbert Barwahser and André Jaunet and to spend time with the man he considers his principal teacher and mentor, Marcel Moyse. Throughout this period, he continued to compose and partake in as many musical experiences as possible.

When at the age of 25, he returned to Canada as co-principal flute of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, resident conductor Seiji Ozawa selected his *Concerto for 12 Soloists and Orchestra* (1962) for performance on the main subscription series. This exposure established him as a significant composer in the eyes of the concert public and its success led to a continuing stream of commissions from such organizations as the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, the National Youth Orchestra, L'ensemble instrumental du Québec, the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and L'Orchestre de Chambre de Neuchâtel.

In 1970, Aitken left the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to devote himself fulltime to composing and a solo career.

From 1970 to 1972 he was founder/director of the Music Today festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake and in 1971, with composer Norma Beecroft, he co-founded New Music Concerts, Toronto which he continues to direct today. From 1986 to 1989 he was artistic director of the Advanced Studies in Music Program at the Banff Centre and then, to have a closer, first-hand view of the musical life in Europe, accepted the position of Professor of Flute at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg im Breisgau. In each of these positions he has continued to prove his dedication to contemporary music by bringing together composers from all corners of the world to showcase their latest and most innovative musical creations. A long list of awards gives testament to his devotion.



As the music critic Kenneth Winters once wrote, „one can hardly imagine that a musician as involved in performance and other practical activities as Aitken would find time and mental energy to write music of any consequence, not to speak of scores full of inventiveness and originality. But it is exactly here where he proves his uniqueness. His music has a distinctive quality of its own, and a spirit of newness and adventure”. To describe his music, one might say that the many years playing in orchestras have given him a strong sense of colour and a very acute ear for orchestration. This interest in timbre often leads to the use of extra musical effects and extended techniques. A four-month trip through the Orient gave him first-hand exposure to many non-western musical cultures. This influence often shows itself in unexpected ways. His *Shadows* series is in fact a result of that journey, although the inspiration is generally not obvious and reveals itself subtly. He also enjoys working with spatial and stereophonic ideas and makes sensitive use of range as a formal element.

Robert Aitken says that with his music he would like to take the listeners to places they have never been before. And when a piece is over, they should really feel that they have returned from a fascinating musical journey.

NEW MUSIC CONCERTS PRESENTS

**MUSIC SPEAKS
ROBERT AITKEN, FLUTE
SUNDAY OCTOBER 29, 2000
NEILSON PARK CREATIVE CENTRE**

Mr. Aitken will discuss and perform a selection of works from the following:

Robert Aitken (b.1939, Canada): Plainsong (1977)

Elliott Carter (b.1908, U.S.A.): Scrivo in Vento (1991)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918, France): Syrinx (1913)

Heinz Holliger (b.1939, Switzerland): "t(air)e" (1980-83)

Diego Luzuriaga (b.1955, Ecuador): Paris-Yangana-Paris (1984)

Axel D. Ruoff (b.1957, Germany): Phantom (1991)

Thorkell Sigurbjornsson (b.1938, Iceland): Kalas (1977)

Harry Somers (1925-1999, Canada): Etching - The Vollard Suite (1964) from The Picasso Suite

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996, Japan): Voice (1971);
Itinerant (In memory of Isamu Noguchi) (1989);
Air (1995)

Edgard Varèse (1885-1965, France/U.S.A.): Density 21.5 (1936)

Isang Yun (1917-1995, Korea): Sori (1988)