# THE UNKNOWN CRUMB

Sunday April 13, 2003 • Glenn Gould Studio

# New Music Concerts

157 Carlton St, Suite 203 . Toronto, Ont. m5a 2k3

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Robert Aitken, artistic director

2002 - 2003 season

# New Music Concerts presents

# THE UNKNOWN CRUMB

Sunday April 13, 2003 • Glenn Gould Studio
Illuminating Introduction @ 715 pm • Concert @ 800 pm

32nd season | 265th event

Ann Crumb, singer • Teri Dunn, soprano

Robert Aitken, solo flute and direction

#### Programme:

#### George Crumb Federico's Little Songs for Children \*\* (1986)

- 1. La Señorita del Abanico
- 2. La Tarde
- 3. Canción Cantada
- 4. Caracola
- 5. iEl Lagarto está Llorando!
- 6. Cancioncilla Sevillana
- 7. Canción Tonta

Teri Dunn, soprano, Robert Aitken, flutes, Erica Goodman, harp

#### George Crumb (USA, 1929)

Quest (1994)

Refrain I

- I. Dark Paths
- II. Fugitive Sounds Refrain 2
- III. Forgotten Dirges
- IV. Fugitive Sounds Refrain 3
- V. Nocturnal

William Beauvais, amplified guitar, Rob Carli, soprano sax, Erica Goodman, harp, Peter Pavlovsky, contrabass, Rick Sacks and Richard Moore, percussion Robert Aitken, conductor

**George Crumb** 

An Idyll for the Misbegotten (Images III) (1986)

Robert Aitken, amplified flute Trevor Tureski, Rick Sacks, Ryan Scott, percussion

George Crumb

... Unto the Hills \*\* (2001)

Appalachian Songs of Sadness, Yearning and Innocence

- I. Poor Wayfaring Stranger
- All the Pretty Little Horses (An Appalachian Lullaby) II.
- III. Ten Thousand Miles
- Appalachian Epiphany: Sunset and Nightfall IV. (Instrumental Interlude)
- Black, Black is the Color V.
- VI. The Riddle (An Appalachian Children's Song)
- Poor Wayfaring Stranger (Echo) VII.

Ann Crumb, singer, David Swan, amplified piano Trevor Tureski, Rick Sacks, Richard Moore, Ryan Scott, percussion Robert Aitken, conductor

\*\* Canadian premiere

Presented with the generous assistance of the **Aaron Copland Fund for Music** Performing Ensembles Program

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n eorge Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia on 124 October 1929. He studied at the Mason College of Music in Charleston and received the B.Mus. degree in 1950. Thereafter he studied for the Master's degree at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana under Eugene Weigel. He continued his studies under Boris Blacher at the Hochschule für Musik, Berlin from 1954-1955. He received the D.M.A. in 1959 from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor after studying with Ross Lee Finney.

Crumb first taught theory and analysis at Hollins College, Virginia before being appointed as instructor and assistant professor in piano and composition at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1958. From 1964-1965 he also acted as creative associate and composer-in-residence at the Buffalo Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, State University of New York, Buffalo. In 1965 a long association with the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia started with his appointment as assistant professor and then full professor. Since 1983 he is the Annenberg Professor of the Humanities. He retired in May 1997 from teaching. George Crumb married Elizabeth May Brown on May 21, 1949. They have one daughter and two sons.

rogramme

Though George Crumb began composing as a teenager, he regards most of his early music as juvenilia, and has discouraged performances of these early compositions. Exceptions are Three Early Songs (1947), for voice and piano; Sonata (1955) for solo violoncello; and Variazioni (1959) for orchestra - the composer's doctoral thesis. In the 1960s and 1970s, George Crumb produced a series of compositions that were highly successful, earning the composer numerous international performances, recordings, and awards. Many of these were vocal works based on the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca, including Ancient Voices of Children (1970); Madrigals, Books 1-4 (1965,69); Night of the Four Moons (1969); and Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death (1968). Other major works from this period include: Black Angels (1970), for electric string quartet; Vox Balaenae (1971), for electric flute, electric cello and amplified piano; Makrokosmos, Volumes 1 and 2 (1972, 73) for amplified piano; Music for a Summer Evening (1974) for two amplified pianos and percussion; and Crumb's largest score - Star Child (1977), for soprano, solo trombone, antiphonal children's voices, male speaking choir, bell ringers and large orchestra.

Crumb has received numerous awards, honors and commissions (Pulitzer Prize 1968; International Rostrum of Composers (UNESCO) Award 1971; Fromm, Guggenheim, Koussevitzky and Rockefeller Foundations) and is a member of the National Institute of Arts & Letters. In 2001 his work Star-Child received a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition. His recent works include: Quest (1994) for guitar and chamber ensemble; Mundus Canis (1998) for guitar and percussion; Eine Kleine Mitternachtmusik (2001) for amplified piano; ...Unto the Hills (2002) for folk singer, amplified piano and percussion quartet; and Otherwordly Resonances (2002) for two amplified pianos.

#### Quest

for guitar, soprano saxophone, harp, contrabass and 2 percussion (1994)

Refrain I

I. Dark Paths

II. Fugitive Sounds Refrain 2

III. Forgotten Dirges

IV. Fugitive Sounds Refrain 3

V. Nocturnal

**Quest** was composed at the request of the guitarist David Starobin and was commissioned by Albert Augustine, Ltd. The final revised version of the work was completed in February, 1994 and is dedicated to David and Speculum Musicae.

Over the years David had played virtually all the various parts I had composed for plucked instruments -- mandolin (in Ancient Voices of Children), electric quitar (in Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death), sitar (in Lux Aeterna), and banjo (in Night of the Four Moons). In requesting this new piece David specified only that I write for acoustic guitar and that the guitar part be treated soloistically.

I initially toyed with the idea of a piece for guitar alone, but feelings of insecurity in regard to guitar technique and idiom led me quickly to the conception of an ensemble work. Within the chosen sextet of players the guitar remains the principal protagonist, but other instruments (especially the soprano saxophone) can also take over the principal "voice". The inclusion of a wide variety of percussion instruments gave me an exceptionally colorful palette of timbral and sonoric possibilities. I would specifically cite rather unusual instruments such as the Appalachian hammered dulcimer, the African talking drum, and the Mexican rain stick.

The poetic basis for Quest was never very clearly articulated in my thinking. I recall pondering images such as the famous incipit of Dante's Inferno ("In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy mood, astray ...") and a line from Lorca ("The dark paths of the guitar"); also the concept of a "quest" as a long tortuous journey towards an ecstatic and transfigured feeling of "arrival" became associated with certain musical ideas during the sketching process. But although the movement titles are poetic and symbolic, there is no precise programmatic meaning implied. There is one use of musical quotation in the work: phrases from the famous hymn tune Amazing Grace are played by the soprano saxophone - initially, at the conclusion of Dark Paths (over a delicate web of percussion sonority), and finally, in Nocturnal (over a sequentially slowing ostinato of bare fifths in the harp and contrabass). On the very last page of the score a distant echo of the tune is intoned by the harmonica.

The composition of *Quest* turned out to be much more of an arduous "quest" than I could ever have imagined! An incomplete version was first performed in Amsterdam as early as 1989 (as a work in-progress). But only after several more years of constant revision did the work reach its present form.

- George Crumb

# Federico's Little Songs for Children for soprano, flutes and harp (1986)

Federico's Little Songs for Children, written for the Jubal Trio, was completed during the summer of 1986. In 1970, after the composition of Ancient Voices of Children (the eighth work of a Lorca cycle initiated in 1963 with Night Music I), I felt that I had exhausted the potential of Lorca's poetry as a catalytic agent for my own music. I therefore turned my attention towards traditional Latin texts (in Lux Aeterna and Star-Child); and then followed settings of Walt Whitman (in Apparition) and Edgar Allan Poe (in

The Sleeper). However, there remained a number of Lorca's poems which I eventually hoped to treat musically, should inspiration return. Among these, the Canciones para Niños (Songs for Children) especially intrigued me, perhaps because the light hearted and whimsical character of these little poems contrasted so sharply with the more somber poetry I had chosen for my earlier settings. And thus, after a hiatus of sixteen years, I found myself once again immersed in Lorca's magical imagery.

The seven little poems constituting the *Canciones para Niños* reflect many different aspects of a child's fantasy world. The mood can be reflective, playful, mock-serious, gently ironic, or simply joyous. At an early stage in the sketching process I decided to include all four instruments of the flute family so that I might associate an appropriate timbre with the innate character of each poem. Of course the varied treatment of voice and harp, together with purely compositional choices likewise help delineate the desired mood.

The opening song, Señorita of the Fan (Vivace, giocosamente; scored with piccolo), is set for the most part in a quintuple measure. The reference to "crickets" is illustrated by a chirping piccolo motif. Afternoon (Andantino quasi barcarola; with flute in C) is delicate and idvllic throughout. A Song Sung (Molto moderato, poco bizarramente; with alto flute) is set in a very capricious style. The alto flute personifies Lorca's "Griffon bird". The central song of the cycle, Snail (Lento, languidamente; with bass flute), projects a sense of timelessness and wonder. The soprano whispers the opening and concluding lines of the poem; for the central portion, the soprano sings in "Sprechstimme style", combined with a highly coloristic use of the harp. In The Lizard is Crying! (Lentamente e lamentoso; with alto flute), the singer alternates between a quasi-cadenza style of declamation and rhythmically articulated spoken passages. The alto flute participates in the general sobbing! A Little Song from Seville (Tempo di Habanera; scherzando, un poco buffo; with flute in C) parodies a well-known type of Spanish popular music (and contains references to Debussy's La Puerta del Vino). The concluding piece, Silly Song (Prestissimo [and alternately: molto più lento]; with piccolo), is ... just a silly song!

— George Crumb

#### 1. La señorita del abanico

La señorita del abanico, va por el puente del fresco rio.

Los caballeros con sus levitas, miran el puente sin barandillas.

La señorita del abanico y los volantes, busca marido.

Los caballeros están casados, con altas rubias de idioma blanco.

Los grillos cantan por el Oeste.

(La señorita, va por lo verde.)

Los grillos cantan bajo las flores.

(Los caballeros, van por el Norte.)

#### 2. La tarde

La tarde equivocada se visitío de frío.

Detrás de los cristales, turbios, todos los niños, ven convertirse en pájaros un árbol amarillo.

La tarde está tendida a lo largo del río. Y un rubor de manzana tiembla en los tejadillos.

#### 1. Señorita of the Fan

The señorita of the fan goes over the bridge, over the cool river.

The gentlemen in their waistcoats look at the little bridge without railings.

The señorita of the fan, with skirts a-flying, is seeking a busband.

The gentlemen are already married to tall blond ladies of the white language.

Crickets are singing in the west.

(The señorita walks through the greenery.)

Crickets are singing under the flowers.

(The gentlemen go towards the north.)

#### 2. Afternoon

The mistaken afternoon was dressed in cold.

Bebind the murky windowpanes all the children watch a yellow tree change into birds.

The afternoon stretches out along the river. And a blush of apple trembles in the roof tiles.

#### 3. Canción cantada

En el gris, el pájaro Griffón se vestía de gris. Y la niña Kikiriki perdía su blancor y forma allí.

Para entrar en el gris me pinté de gris. iY como relumbraba en el gris!

#### 4. Caracola

Me han traído una caracola.

Dentro le centa un mar de mapa. Mi corazón se llena de agua, con pececillos de sombra y plata.

Me han traído una caracola.

#### 5. iEl lagarto está llorando!

El lagarto está llorando. La lagarta está llorando.

El lagarto y la lagarta con delantalitos blancos.

Han perdido sin querer su anillo de desposados.

iAy, su anillito de plomo, ay, su anillito de plomado!

Un cielo grande y sin gente monta en su globo a los pájaros.

El sol, capitán redondo, lleva un chaleco de raso.

#### 3. A Song Sung

In cold gray
the Griffon bird
was clothed in gray.
And there from little Kikiriki
whiteness and shape
were taken away.

To enter cold gray I painted myself gray. And how I sparkled in the cold gray!

#### 4. Snail

They have brought me a snail.

Inside it sings a map-green ocean. My beart swells with water, with small fish, silvery, shadowy.

They have brought me a snail.

#### 5. The Lizard is Crying!

Mr. Lizard is crying. Mrs. Lizard is crying.

Mr. and Mrs. Lizard in little white aprons.

Have gone and lost their wedding ring.

Ab, their little leaden wedding ring, ab, their little ring of lead!

A large sky without people carries the birds in its balloon.

The sun, rotund captain, wears a satin waistcoat.

iMiradlos qué viejos son! iQué viejos son lagartos!

iAy, cómo lloran y lloran, iay!, iay!, cómo están llorando!

#### 6. Cancioncilla sevillana

Amanecía en el naranjel. Abejitas de oro buscaban la miel.

¿Dónde estará la miel?

Está en la flor azul, Isabel. En la flor, del romero aquel.

(Sillita de oro para el moro. Silla de oropel para su mujer.)

Amanecía en el naranjel.

#### 7. Canción tonta

Mamá. Yo quiero ser de plata.

Hijo, tendrás mucho frío.

Mamá. Yo quiero ser de agua.

Hijo, tendrás mucho frío.

Mamá. Bórdame en tu almohada.

> iEso sí! iAhora mismo!

Look how old they are! How old the lizards are!

Oh, how they cry and cry, Oh! Oh! How they go on crying!

#### 6. A Little Song from Seville

Dawn is awakening in the orange grove. The little golden bees are looking for boney.

Where will they find the honey?

It's in the blue flower, Isabel. In the flower of that rosemary yonder.

(A little chair of gold for the Moor. A chair of brass for his wife.)

Dawn is awakening in the orange grove.

#### 7. Silly Song

Mama, I wish I were silver.

Son, you'd be very cold.

Mama, I wish I were water.

Son, you'd be very cold.

Mama, Embroider me on your pillow.

> That I will! Right away!

## An Idyll for the Misbegotten (Images III)

for flute and drums (1985)

I feel that "misbegotten" well describes the fateful and melancholy predicament of the species *bomo sapiens* at the present moment in time. Mankind has become ever more "illegitimate" in the natural world of the plants and animals. The ancient sense of brotherhood with all life-forms (so poignantly expressed in the poetry of St. Francis of Assisi) has gradually and relentless eroded, and consequently we find ourselves monarchs of a dying world. We share the fervent hope that humankind will embrace anew nature's "moral imperative".

My little *Idyll* was inspired by these thoughts. Flute and drum are, to me (perhaps by association with ancient ethnic musics), those instruments which most powerfully evoke the voice of nature. I have suggested that ideally (even if impractically) the music should be "heard from afar, over a lake, on a moonlit evening in August".

There are two quotations in *An Idyll for the Misbegotten* — the haunting theme of Claude Debussy's *Syrinx* (for solo flute, 1912), and two lines from the eighth-century Chinese poet Ssu-K'ung Shu:

The moon goes down. There are shivering birds and withering grasses.

— George Crumb

An Idyll for the Misbegotten is dedicated to Robert Aitken. The world premiere was presented by New Music Concerts on November 16, 1986.

#### ... Unto the Hills

Appalachian Songs of Sadness, Yearning and Innocence for Singer, Percussion Quartet and Amplified Piano (2001)

- I. Poor Wayfaring Stranger
- II. All the Pretty Little Horses (An Appalachian Lullaby)
- III. Ten Thousand Miles
- IV. Appalachian Epiphany: Sunset and Nightfall (Instrumental Interlude)
- V. Black, Black is the Color
- VI. The Riddle (An Appalachian Children's Song)
- VII. Poor Wayfaring Stranger (Echo)

In an interview with Peter Dobrin for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* prior to the first performance of this work last October by Orchestra 2001, the composer explained that his treatment of the Appalachian folk songs that form the heart of this work are "not traditional arrangements. The vocal part is kept pretty intact. What could you do to those beautiful songs? But you can imagine that with percussion instruments as the predominant sound, it isn't going to sound too much like a conventional instrumental arrangement."

Responding to Dobrin's observation that the premiere of ... Unto the Hills would mark Crumb's "first sign of compositional life in several years", Crumb acknowledged that he "wasn't writing much in the '90s, I think maybe only a couple of pieces. I needed to take some time and see which of the projects I thought about I might pursue. I did retire [from teaching] about four years ago. I probably should have retired earlier to make that transition. Teaching takes a lot of energy out of you. But now I feel much more relaxed, and maybe I can get into some more sustained writing again."

Stylistically, Crumb describes his work as "an extension of things I've done. People will say, 'Oh, he took the percussion part from his other pieces and just put the folk tunes over it.' It's very much my style."

The work was composed expressly for Crumb's daughter, Ann, an acclaimed Broadway and jazz singer. "The worst thing that could happen to this piece would be an operatic voice with a wide vibrato. That would absolutely defeat the sense of the pieces's text. The vocal part should be a pure, quasi-untrained voice. Because the surreal effect would be the contrasts between the simple voice against the rather ambiguous background effects. At least, I'm depending on that juxtaposition to make a certain effect. I hope my confidence is not misplaced in that."

"I see [the movements of this work] as kind of a beautiful evocation of something in my childhood, maybe, something in all of our more idealistic thoughts, perhaps. They symbolize something in the country. Maybe they seem very old now."

# Soloists

# Robert Aitken

orn in Canada, Robert Aitken studied with Nicholas Fiore and Marcel Moyse and for shorter periods with Jean-Pierre Rampal, Severino Gazzelloni, André Jauvet and Hubert Barwahser. At the age of 19 he became principal flute of the Vancouver Symphony and at age 24, the Toronto Symphony. In 1970 he left the TSO to pursue a solo career that has taken him to virtually every corner of the globe. From 1985-89 he directed the Banff Centre's Advanced Studies in Music Programme and is at present professor for flute in Freiburg.

Germany. He is the recipient of many awards including the Order of Canada and Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) and prizes at the international flute contests in Paris 1971 and Royan 1972. He has more than 40 recordings to his credit and such notable composers as George Crumb, John Cage and Elliott Carter have dedicated works to him. As a composer, he holds Bachelor and Masters degrees from the University of Toronto and all of his works are published by Universal Edition, Salabert, Ricordi and Peer Music. Robert Aitken was founder and artistic director of Music Today, Music at Shawnigan and co-founder of New Music Concerts, Toronto, which he continues to direct today.

# Ann Crumb

nn Crumb recently completed a headlining role for the First National Company of Swing (Broadway National Theater Award Nomination Leading Actress) along with performances at Philadelphia's Wilma Theater as Ludmilla in Polly Pen's Bed and Sofa (Barrymore Award Best Actress) and as wild schizophrenic Sarah Downey in George Walker's play Love and Anger. Prior to that she appeared opposite John Davidson in The Will Rogers Follies, starred in the premiere of Neil Simons new version of The Goodbye Girl on London's West End, and headlined the U.S. National Tour of Music of the Night. Ann became the first American actress to originate a lead role in an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical when she starred as Rose Vibert in Aspects of Love in London and on Broadway. Ann's extensive list of legitimate credits includes everything from the classics to postmodernist theatre, Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams to the world premiere of lonesco's Journeys Among the Dead and the New York premieres of Sam Shepard's Suicide in B-Flat, and Witkavic's Madman and the Nun. Her new classical album on which she sings "Three Early Songs" composed by her father George Crumb has just won a Grammy Award (Bridge Records). She will soon record a collection of men's theater songs entitled "In the Boys' Room" and a new jazz album "Goodbye Mr. Iones."

## Teri Dunn

anadian soprano Teri Dunn is rapidly gaining the attention of Caudiences and critics alike. Originally from Ottawa, she has studied and performed in Canada, England, Europe and the United States, and holds a Master of Music from the University of Toronto. In the spring of 1999. Ms. Dunn was a prizewinner in the prestigious Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition. She was also a prizewinner in the 1997 Elora Festival Imperial Oil Young Performers Competition. In addition to several solo recitals, Ms. Dunn has performed with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir in Mendelssohn's St. Paul, with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere of Jeff Ryan's Ophélie, and with Aradia in several works including Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's Jonas, Vivaldi's Gloria, Caldara's Vaticini in Pace, and numerous Cantatas by J.S. Bach. She has performed with Toronto's New Music Concerts, Ottawa's Musica Divina, Arbor Oak, Ottawa Bach Choir, and is broadcast frequently on CBC Radio Two. Along with her singing endeavors, Ms. Dunn is an active conductor, coach and teacher. She is on the Faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music, is a member of the Artistic Staff of the Toronto Children's Chorus, and has worked extensively with the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus.

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