

New Music Concerts and The Goethe Institut present

The Music of Helmut Lachenmann

Monday November 3, 2003 • Glenn Gould Studio

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New Music Concerts
Robert Aitken, director

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New Music Concerts presents

The Music of Helmut Lachenmann

Monday November 3, 2003 • 8⁰⁰ pm

Illuminating Introduction at 7¹⁵

Co-presented with **The Goethe Institut
Glenn Gould Studio • 250 Front St. W.**

Featuring **Helmut Lachenmann**, composer, narrator and pianist;
Yukiko Sugawara, piano; **David Hetherington**, cello;
New Music Concerts Ensemble; **Robert Aitken**, Director

Programme:

HELMUT LACHENMANN (Germany 1935)

*...zwei Gefühle... , Musik mit Leonardo** (1991/92)

Helmut Lachenmann, narrator

NMC Ensemble conducted by **Robert Aitken**

Flute: **Doug Stewart** | Bass Flute: **Dianne Aitken** | English horn: **Mark Rogers**
Bass clarinet: **Lori Freedman** | Contrabass clarinet: **Max Christie** | Contrabassoon:
Christian Sharpe | Trumpet I: **Mike White** | Trumpet II: **Ray Tizzard**
Trombone: **Jerry Johnson** | Tuba: **Scott Irvine** | Percussion I: **Trevor Tureski**
Percussion II: **Rick Sacks** | Piano: **David Swan** | Guitar: **Aaron Brock**
Harp: **Erica Goodman** | Violin I: **Fujiko Imajishi** | Violin II: **Aisslinn Nosky**
Viola I: **Bev Spotton** | Viola II: **Jeewon Kim** | Cello I: **Paul Widner**
Cello II: **Maurizio Baccante** | Contrabass: **Peter Pavlovsky**

*Serynade** (1998/99)

Yukiko Sugawara, piano

— *Intermission* —

Pression (1969/70)

David Hetherington, violoncello

Ein Kinderspiel (1980)

Helmut Lachenmann, piano

...zwei Gefühle... , Musik mit Leonardo (reprise)

(* *Canadian premiere*)



Tonight's concert is being recorded for
broadcast by **Two New Hours** with host **Larry Lake** on
CBC Radio Two 94.1FM on **16 November 2003** at **10 pm**

New Music Concerts

Robert Aitken, c.m., artistic director

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HELMUT LACHENMANN

A Voyage to the Edge of Music

Austin Clarkson

President, New Music Concerts

Nearly one hundred years ago, Ferruccio Busoni, the legendary pianist, composer, author, mentor, editor, and musical prophet, proclaimed, "Music was born free and to win freedom is its destiny." He worshiped Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven as patron saints of the music of liberation, but he railed against academicians who fetishized the masters and turned their music into a religion of form. He deplored the rule-bound music of his contemporaries and looked to modern literature and painting as less hampered by tradition. Busoni gave his many students permission to follow their bliss and be their own law-makers in whatever they did. Composers Edgard Varèse, Otto Luening, Kurt Weill, and Stefan Wolpe, pianists Egon Petri, Mark Hambourg, and Edward Steuermann, Natalie Curtis (who documented the music of the native peoples of North America) and the Canadian dancer Maud Allan were among the many explorers who acknowledged Busoni as their greatest mentor. Each practiced the aesthetic of liberation in their own way, for Busoni insisted that if music were to win its freedom, the artist must discover his or her own path, just as each work of art must evolve its own form. Busoni was absorbed by too many creative projects to found a school, which is why his name has been all but forgotten.

Busoni's revolutionary spirit lives on in composers like **Helmut Lachenmann**, who since the late 1960s has carried the aesthetic of liberation into uncharted waters. Consciously or not, Lachenmann has taken several of Busoni's precepts as his own. Busoni claimed that music most nearly approaches the essential nature of the art in the transitions between sound and silence, and Lachenmann has explored the vast reaches of the barely audible with endless ingenuity. With regular musical instruments he produces sounds of breathing, whispering, whistling, sighing, humming, souging, rustling, blurring, smacking, scratching, scraping, creaking, squeaking, sometimes loudly, but often almost inaudibly. Busoni insisted that the system of twelve equal-tempered pitches in the octave is woefully inadequate and called for infinite gradations of sound. He proposed a new notation for micro-intervals and welcomed the invention of the Dynamophone of Thaddeus Cahill, the first electronic organ that could produce such intervals. Lachenmann does not use electronic sources, but instead reduces the sounds of conventional instruments to their most primitive constituents. He burrows in behind the brilliant, resonant,



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FERRUCCIO BUSONI (1866–1924)

exuberant tones of familiar instruments and finds what is hidden away in their attics and basements. He then recycles these found remnants into new compounds, rather like splicing genes to create new life-forms. The challenge is to make music from such materials, for the systems of tonality or serialism do not apply. Lachenmann, as did Busoni, Varèse, Wolpe, and others before him, rejects all systems and trusts in his intuitive form-sense to guide the creative process. At each and every moment the emerging identity of the piece directs the composer's ear as to what needs to be next. No matter how strange his pieces may sound, they have an unerring authenticity and integrity and stand strong and resilient, the offspring of a lively musical instinct and a formidable intelligence.

Some listeners may object to concert music that uses genetically modified sounds. In fact, they have been hearing recombinant sounds in countless movie soundtracks — human cries in creaking doors, and so forth. The threat is not to the sanctity of music so much as to ingrained habits of lazy listening. As Busoni said, half the comprehension of a musical work must come from the effort of the listener. Lachenmann in turn seeks to broaden the experience of listening rather than satisfy its expectations, for we only can discover ourselves by penetrating into the unknown. He quotes the playwright Georg Büchner, “Man is an abyss; he leaves you reeling when you look down.” Lachenmann believes that only by traversing the abyss can we change. Listening, for Lachenmann, is “the capacity to discover in oneself new antennae, new sensors, new sensibilities; to discover one's own alterability and use it to resist the unfreedom which it uncovers. Listening means discovering oneself anew; it means changing oneself.”

Lachenmann is speaking not only of the audience and the musicians who must learn new ways of playing their instruments, but of himself. For like the alchemists who sought to transmute the base matter of the soul into noble gold, Lachenmann discovers himself anew in each piece. Which brings me to the piece that will be featured this evening: “...*Two Feelings...*,” *Music with Leonardo*. Unusually for Lachenmann, whose music is usually for instruments alone, the piece sets a text and became part of his opera on the Hans Christian Andersen story of *The Little Matchgirl*. Two speakers recite excerpts from the writings of Leonardo da Vinci. The subtitle “Music with Leonardo” indicates that Lachenmann is speaking through the persona of Leonardo. For Lachenmann, Leonardo was “a paragon of a sentient

observer of the powerful forces of nature and of his own creativity,” which reveals his own approach to his role as a composer. (Busoni, as it happens, also identified with Leonardo and saw him as a Faustian figure. He considered writing an opera on “The Italian Faust,” but instead composed his *Doktor Faust*.)

In the first of the two excerpts (see below) Leonardo observes the Sicilian coastline from the turbulent Straits of Messina (Scylla and Charybdis) to the volcanic island of Stromboli. It is a scene of untrammelled violence. Nothing can resist or contain the raging forces of the sea and the earth. In the second passage Leonardo is no longer withdrawn in reverie, but is actively investigating the marvelous diversity of the forms of Nature he sees before him. He peers into a cave and is overcome by two feelings — the fear of darkness and the desire to explore the unknown. As the second excerpt begins, another text is heard as four of the instrumentalists speak a few words by Nietzsche: “O Man, give heed, what does deep midnight say.” (Mahler also set these words from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in the utter stillness and mystery of the fourth movement of his Third Symphony.)

Just as Leonardo, at the edge of the abyss, is caught between the fear of Nature's terrifying power and the insatiable desire to plumb her mysteries, so Lachenmann holds his ears to the fire so that he may discover new sound-forms. The musicians will be performing with an equivalent sense of voyaging to the edge of music. It is up to the audience to match this commitment by listening intently without expectations and preconceptions. For then we may discover in the shock and awe of the moment a new birth, some new knowledge of oneself, Nature, and the possibilities of music.

DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE

Leonardo da Vinci, from the Arundel Codex

The raging sea, whipped by the north wind, does not make such a roar with its tumultuous waters between Charybdis and Scylla. Neither do Stromboli nor Mongibello, when the sulfurous flames that they enclose force and burst the tall mountain, spewing stones and earth into the air along with the spurting flame that they vomit; neither Mongibello, when its blazing caves release the elements restrained with such difficulty, spitting and vomiting them furiously round about, repulsing everything which might be an obstacle to their impetuous surge. . . .

Drawn from my vain reverie and desirous of seeing the myriad varied forms created by fecund Nature, I wandered a moment amongst the shadowy rocks and eventually reached the entrance of a large cave before which I remained a moment, stunned and totally unaware of this marvel. I bent my back, my left hand on my knee and, with my right hand, shaded my squinting eyes, repeatedly leaning from one side to the other, attempting to distinguish something within. But that was made impossible by the darkness which reigned. Soon, two things rose up in me: fear and desire — the fear of the dark and threatening grotto, and the desire to see if there was nothing mysterious there.

[Translated by J. T. Tuttle]

VERLANGEN NACH ERKENNTNIS

So donnernd brüllt nicht das stürmische Meer, wenn der scharfe Nordwind es mit seinen brausenden Wogen zwischen Scylla und Charybdis hin und her wirft, noch der Stromboli oder Aetna, wenn die Schwefelfeuer im gewaltsamen Durchbruch den großen Berg öffnen, um Steine und Erde samt den austretenden und herausgespieenen Flammen durch die Luft zu schleudern, noch auch die glühenden Höhlen von Mongibello, wenn sie beim Herausstoßen des schlecht verwahrten Elements rasend jedes Hindernis verjagen, das sich ihrem ungestümen Wüten entgegenstellt ...

Doch ich irre umher, getrieben von meiner brennenden Begierde, das große Durcheinander der verschiedenen und seltsamen Formen wahrzunehmen, die die sinnreiche Natur hervorgebracht hat. Ich wand mich eine Weile zwischen den schattigen Klippen hindurch, bis ich zum Eingang einer großen Höhle gelangte, vor der ich betroffen im Gefühl der Unwissenheit eine Zeit lang verweilte. Ich hockte mit gekrümmtem Rücken. Die müde Hand aufs Knie gestützt beschattete ich mit der Rechten die gesenkten und geschlossenen Wimpern. Und nun, da ich mich oftmals hin und her beugte, um in die Höhle hineinzublicken und dort etwas zu unterscheiden, verbot mir das die große Dunkelheit, die darin herrschte. Als ich aber geraume Zeit verbarrt hatte, erwachten plötzlich in mir zwei Gefühle: Furcht und Verlangen. Furcht vor der drohenden Dunkelheit der Höhle, Verlangen aber mit eigenen Augen zu sehen, was darin an Wunderbarem sein möchte.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

[Deutsche Übertragung von Kurt Gerstenberg]

A large portion of ...*zwei Gefühle*... was written in Luigi Nono's empty house in Sardinia (he died in 1990), and there is no doubt that his memory influenced my conception of the piece at the time.

My work began from the experience of "structural hearing", which is to say the perception and observation of what resonates in an immediate manner, but also the relationships which structure it. These are tied to interior images and feelings which do not in any way distract from this process of observation, but remain indissolubly linked to it and even give it a particular intensity. This is the strange situation which we encounter when we decipher a message concerning us. The immediate job of perception, the (eventually laborious) recognition and assembly of signs on the one hand and, on the other, the power of the message as an intrinsic structure, are strongly intertwined, to the extent of determining one another and forming a complex and unitary experience.

The two narrators of Leonardo da Vinci's text in ...*zwei Gefühle*... (...*Two Feelings*...) are the two quasi-complementary conscious parts of an imaginary "Wanderer" and of a reader who marvels in silence. These two function in an unconscious manner akin to the two hands of a blind man working together, which might pass over the text as over a precious inscription, seizing upon its particles, one after the other, and assembling them in his memory as well as can be expected. This assemblage is both concentrated and sober, "damaged" and "struck" (in both senses of the term), since semantically it is an anxious search conducted in ignorance, in which the groping blind man recognizes himself. When I integrated this music into my opera, the two parts were merged into a version for one speaker.

Whatever resonates is understood as twofold: a material deduced and transformed from the phonetic components and, at the same time, as sparse fragments of a traditional reservoir of affective gestures, arranged in a new way through the sonic relationship of acoustic fields, articulated variously from within, like different volcanoes which come to life or cool off. A Mediterranean sound landscape at an inhospitable altitude — a "pastorale" written while pondering over what links me to the composer of *Hay que caminar*.

— HELMUT LACHENMANN, translated by J. T. Tuttle
[program notes for the Huddersfield Festival 2000]

Serynade (1998/99) for solo piano

Serynade was written for Lachenmann's wife, the pianist Yukiko Sugawara; the title is configured to refer to her name. It is Lachenmann's longest piano work to date and is notable for its relatively sparing employment of extended keyboard techniques. In its extensive use of resonances and harmonics produced by silently depressed keys and highly intricate use of the pedals, it resembles in part the earlier piano works *Echo Andante* (1962), *Wiegenmusik* (1963), *Ein Kinderspiel* (1980) and the monumental piano concerto *Ausklang* (1984-85). Sometimes the harmonics form into a parallel layer of information whose importance is as great as that of conventionally 'sounding' notes.

Lachenmann utilizes a relatively familiar array of gestures, including block chords, clusters and virtuoso runs up and down the keyboard, as well as many repeated notes. These elements have a clear history, both in Lachenmann's own music and that of others; what is more important is their contextualization. Our perception of any sonic effect is highly conditioned by those others that surround it; Lachenmann subverts expectations in this respect to produce a music that is continually startling and intriguing. On the larger scale, sometimes material is extended beyond the length that might make it containable so as to open the music out onto different planes, to move beyond that which has been predicated by what has gone earlier. In the final section, Lachenmann makes use of powerful bass notes together with much quieter ones in the treble, like a contemporary re-working of Messiaen's concept of 'extended resonance'. Structurally the piece would seem to organize itself into three or possibly four movements; a homage (by inversion) to a classical sonata?

— IAN PACE

Yukiko Sugawara was born in Sapporo, Japan, where she received her first piano instruction with Michiko Endo, followed by studies with Aiko Iguchi at the Toho college of music in Tokyo, with Erich in Berlin and Alois Kontarsky in Cologne. Ms. Sugawara won several international competitions, including the Kranichsteiner music prize, and has performed at the Donaueschinger music days, the Holland Festival, Festival d'Automme à Paris, the Huddersfield music festival and recitals in Chicago, New York, and Tokyo. Ms. Sugawara is also a member of the *Trio Accanto* and the *ensemble recherche*. CDs of her chamber music and solo works are available on the Wergo, Col Legno and Cairo labels.

Ein Kinderspiel (1980)

seven short pieces for piano

1. Hänschen Klein • *Little Johnny*
2. Wolken Im Eisigen Mondlicht • *Clouds in Icy Moonlight*
3. Akiko
4. Falscher Chinese (Ein Wenig Besoffen) • *Fake Chinese (slightly drunk)*
5. Filter-Schaukel • *Filter Swing*
6. Glockenturm • *Bell Tower*
7. Schattentanz • *Shadow Dance*

Although written for my son David and — in part — for my at that time seven-year-old daughter Akiko to perform, these pieces are not pedagogical music and not necessarily for children. Childhood and the musical experiences associated with it are a deep component of the internal world of each adult. These pieces are in all other respects developed from the experiences which I had developed in my last larger works (*Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* and *Salut für Caudwell*): indeed experiences of structural thinking, projects on already familiar formulas and samples existing in the society as for instance child songs, dance forms and the simplest utilitarian models. It was also important to me to transform the change of hearing and the aesthetic behavior offered in my pieces from an abstract model to a series of "challenges" in which the listener (as well as the composer) feels at home and secure. The result is easy to play and easy to understand: a children's game, but aesthetically without compromises...

— HELMUT LACHENMANN, 1982

Pression (1969/70) for solo violoncello

This piece arose in relation to ideas about an 'instrumental musique concrète', a music for which the acoustic qualities are organized in such a way that the actual situation of the making of sound, the mechanical conditions and oppositions in the experience of music are involved. Thus, instrumental alienation logically arises from the necessity to range the energetic conditions in which sound is made and to link them in different groups.

This constitutes an offer to the listener (and not a rejection, the way this piece in particular is always one-sidedly interpreted): the offer to listen in the sense of listening differently. To experience a musical coherence in the light of a thus consciously designed concept of material should mean: to experience oneself.

— HELMUT LACHENMANN

A member of the Toronto Symphony since 1970, **David Hetherington** is currently the orchestra's Acting Principal Cellist. As a chamber musician, he has toured Canada, the United States and Europe and is a founding member of the Amici Chamber Ensemble, which presents an annual concert series at Glenn Gould Studio and has made six recordings for Summit Records and Naxos. His own string quartet, *Accordes*, performs regularly for New Music Concerts and was recently nominated for a Juno Award for its recording of Harry Somers' String Quartets on CENTREDISCS, for which Hetherington also made the premiere recording of Talivaldis Kenins' prize-winning cello sonata. Earlier this season Mr. Hetherington appeared at the Elora Festival and with the Niagara Symphony. David would like to thank Chris Paul Harman for the use of his cello in this performance.



*Helmut Lachenmann with
Robert Aitken, February 1982*

Helmut Lachenmann was born in Stuttgart in 1935 and studied there at the Musikhochschule between 1955 and 1958. His interest in the current avant garde was reinforced by his first visit to the Darmstadt Ferienkurse in 1957, where he met Luigi Nono, with whom he studied in Venice between 1958 and 1960. Stockhausen was added to the pedagogical mix three years later, when Lachenmann attended the Cologne New Music Course. In 1966 Lachenmann embarked on his own academic career, lecturing first on music theory at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule and subsequently teaching at the Ludwigsburg Pädagogische Hochschule and the Musikhochschule in Hanover, before returning to live in Stuttgart in 1981.

When Lachenmann's music began to be performed in the early 1960s, first at the Venice Biennale and at Darmstadt, his works appeared to fit comfortably into the aesthetic of the post-Webern serialists, in particular revealing the influence of Nono's pointilliste techniques. From the late 1960s onward, however, Lachenmann began to look for a new approach to the problems of musical language and syntax. In a series of works, beginning with *temA* (1968), *Pression* for solo cello (1969), and *Air* for percussionist and orchestra (1969), he started to exploit a new, alienated sound world that treated instrumental technique in a radically unconventional way.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with scores such as the string quartet *Gran Torso* (1972), *Salut für Caldwell* for two guitars (1977), and *Mouvement (vor der Estarrung)* for chamber orchestra (1984), Lachenmann continued to question many of the basic assumptions about the function of music and the expectations made of it, backing up his musical achievement with the vigorous polemics of his writing and lectures. Always, though, the pressure of tradition remained a background presence in his explorations, sometimes even emerging as audible points of reference in his scores. In his most recent pieces, Lachenmann has begun to pick up recognizable elements of a post-serial language which reveal the tradition from which his music evolved.

Since 1983, Lachenmann has been a featured composer at numerous festivals and concert series in Germany and abroad, including the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, Ars Musica in Brussels, Musik der Zeit in Cologne, Festival d'Automne in Paris, Wien Modern in Vienna, and Tage für neue Musik in Stuttgart and Zurich. He is a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and of the Akademien der Künste in Hamburg, Leipzig, Mannheim, Munich, and Brussels.

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