

In co-operation with GOETHE-INSTITUT TORONTO
with the support of LUFTHANSA GERMAN AIRLINES

New Music Concerts presents

The Music of Mauricio Kagel

Sunday, February 1, 2004 • Glenn Gould Studio

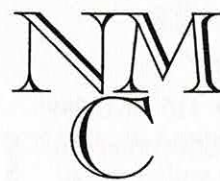
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157-203 Carlton • Toronto Ont. M5A 2K3 • 416-961-9594

New Music Concerts
Robert Aitken, director

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33rd season | 274th event

Sunday February 1, 2004 • 8:00 pm
Illuminating Introduction at 7:15

Glenn Gould Studio • CBC Broadcast Centre

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New Music Concerts presents

The Music of Mauricio Kagel

Programme:

Mauricio Kagel (Argentina/Germany 1931)

Burleske for saxophone and mixed choir (1999–2000) §
Elmer Iseler Singers • Wallace Halladay, baritone saxophone
Lydia Adams, conductor

Schwarzes Madrigal for ensemble and choir (1998–99) §
Anita McAlister, trumpet • J. Scott Irvine, tuba
Trevor Tureski and Ryan Scott, percussion
Elmer Iseler Singers • Lydia Adams, conductor

— *Intermission* —

Selections from *The Points of the Compass*
(*Die Stücke der Windrose*) (1988–1994)

1. *Norden* (1993–94) §

2. *Westen* (1993–94) §

Max Christie, clarinet • Fujiko Imajishi, principal violin
Carol Lynn Fujino, violin • Steven Dann, viola
David Hetherington, cello • Peter Pavlovsky, contrabass
David Swan, piano and harmonium
Stephen Clarke, piano and harmonium • Rick Sacks, percussion
Mauricio Kagel, conductor

§ *Canadian Premiere*

New Music Concerts

Robert Aitken, c.m., Artistic Director

157 Carlton Street, Ste. 203 • Toronto M5A 2K3 • 416-961-9594
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MAURICIO KAGEL

Austin Clarkson

Trying to capture the essence of the creative life of Mauricio Kagel is like wrestling with Proteus. But it doesn't matter if at the end one's not blessed with ultimate truth. Traveling through Kagel's fantastical domain is its own reward. The celebrated Canadian composer Istvan Anhalt drew a thumbnail sketch of Kagel in his path-breaking book on "alternative" musics for the voice composed after World War II. He said:

Kagel has developed into the most imaginatively, consistently, and absurdly satirical and productive composer in Europe. Who are the tenants in his house of many echoes, distorting yet truth-telling mirrors, and spotlights? The list includes an organist who, playing or silent, coughs, laughs, whistles, shouts, and claps (*Improvisation ajoutée*, 1961-2); a lady harpsichordist who absent-mindedly plays Chopin- and Bach-like fragments over and over, while vocalizing a word-salad in a *Sprechgesang* (*Rezitatvarié*, 1973); an anonymous singer-speaker who is on the point of losing his voice (and perhaps his sanity), and who also acts as a ventriloquist, a mime, and an impersonator (*Phonophonie*, 1963-4); singer-speakers in a choral piece who also blow into organ pipes and utter or sing a text in a semblance of pidgin Latin in a spiritless and mindless mock-liturgical routine (*Hallelujah für Stimmen*, 1967-8); and the vocalists in his absurd opera, *Staatstheater* (1967-70), representatives of classical operatic roles: the Queen of the Night, Aida, Carmen, Erda, Ottavio, and others, singing in caricatures of the respective idioms, using pseudo-texts of nonsense words, coined with considerable combinational inventiveness.

Alternative Voices: Essays on Contemporary Vocal and Choral Composition, 1984

Austin Clarkson is president of New Music Concerts. He edited *On the Music of Stefan Wolpe: Essays and Recollections* (Pendragon Press, 2003) and recently received an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award.

Twenty years on, Kagel's seismic productivity continues unabated. Taking all of culture as his theatre of operations, his scalpel is as keen as ever. He continues to take enormous risks, the kind Morton Feldman meant when he said: "There is that doctor who opens you up, does exactly the right thing, closes you up – you die. He failed to take the chance that might have saved you. Art is a crucial, dangerous operation we perform on ourselves. Unless we take a chance, we die in art." Like Feldman, Kagel works with images rather than concepts. He avoids what Theodor Adorno calls "identity-thinking" (this is 'modern,' that is 'postmodern') and addresses issues with a dialectic of images. The breathtaking profusion of Kagel's music-theatrical events shock and delight, surprise and alarm, puzzle and confuse. They insist that we postpone *understanding* until after *undergoing* them. If we listen by the seat of our pants, we'll stay close to ground zero of aesthetic experience.

Burleske, for baritone saxophone and mixed choir, is a richly evocative scape of vocalizations and instrumental sounds. Saxophonist and singers combine to form a unique instrument powered by breath and body-percussion of every imaginable sort. From the mosaic of images emerges a virtual drama in which the protagonists are shapes, textures, and timbres, some in sympathy and some divergent. The piece closes with a theatrical image. After sounds of kissing, humming, and in-breaths, the singers and saxophone whisper "Abracadabra," and then...!

Schwarzes Madrigal (Black Madrigal) was commissioned by the city of Berlin for the year 2000. Kagel draws the vocal material from the names of African towns and villages, and a few German words – "wo" (where), "in," "ja," "nein," "und," "nach" (to), "wohin" (whither). Kagel is not concerned to have the choir pronounce the names according to the respective African languages. In the preface of the score he writes, "My own attitude to the 'correctness' of the interpretation is something that I have tried to clarify in the very first bars. Here the word 'Timbuktu' occurs several times, and each time the stress

**M A G I C
W O R D S
should be
spread on
bread and
eaten like
they used
to be.**

—Mauricio Kagel

is differently placed." The conductor and singers of each choir in whatever country must decide on a particular pronunciation. Kagel's inventive play with African place names is in tune with practice in parts of Africa where musicians not only perform music but create words. These poet-musicians take their lead from the intonation of words, so their songs and dances are rhythmic unfoldings of words. The choir is joined by trumpet, tuba, and two percussionists with many instruments of African origin – marimba, log drum, tomtoms, bells, sanzas, gourds, maracas, guiros, coconut shells. Though the piece does not quote African music as such, it is the confrontation of a European with the globally-immanent fact of Africa.

It begins, "Where? In Timbuktu? Yes. In Timbuktu." The hushed voices evoke the magic and mystery of sounding names. The tone-drama unfolds in passages of joyful playfulness and hushed wonder, searing violence and deep mourning. Interludes for brass and percussion heighten the drama. As the piece ends, the question is unresolved: "To Timbuktu! Whither? Timbuktu? Yes. Timbuktu. Where?"



Kagel boxes the compass with these eight pieces for "salon orchestra" – *Die Stücke der Windrose (The Pieces of the Compass)*. Where do we get our ideas of the directions? From geography, culture, politics, travels? As a youth in Argentina, Kagel's South was the Antarctic and his North was the tropics. As a European the meanings are reversed. Each of the eight directions is rich with associations – an intriguing interplay of personal and collective meanings. The compass locates where one is here and now. **West and North**, the last two pieces of the set, complete his project of circumscribing the virtual centre.

A "salon orchestra" provides generic background music for relaxing afternoons in palm courts. But Kagel's dialectics transforms the background into the site of reverie from which emerges the foreground of vivid encounter. To the core instrumentation of clarinet, piano, harmonium, and string quintet Kagel adds percussion instruments that vary according to the point of the compass.

For **West** the percussion evokes the intermingling of Africa and America. It is a place of introspection and dreamy intimacy interspersed with jazzy scenes of frenetic hilarity. The piece closes with the percussionist chopping at a piece of tree trunk with an axe while the other musicians move their heads back and forth in unison. These pregnant actions abruptly splice the music with traces of . . . ecocide? genocide? or simply dada?

The percussion section of **North**, in addition to drums, calls for suspended metal sheets, pebbles in a shallow wooden box and in bowls, pieces of crumpled cellophane, an anvil, a piece of polystyrene, a tree branch with dried leaves, and an electric fan standing on the bass drum. Sounds of the barren tundra, arctic shores, remorseless weather. Absence of human agency, save perhaps for the wistful tinkle of a muted sleigh bell. The gathering and scattering actions diverge and intensify. The closing image of string tremolos (the wind), the shaking branch, the humming fan, culminates with the musicians looking upward to the Zenith, the Pole Star to which the compass ultimately points.

Kagel's detailed instructions for performing these actions insist that they not be taken lightly. The percussionist is instructed to break the pieces of polystyrene, "almost like a religious ritual." Kagel's genius is to graft the banal onto the primordial. Polystyrene becomes the instrument of a riveting ritual action.

Mauricio Kagel

Born in Buenos Aires in 1931 and living in Germany since 1957, **Mauricio Kagel** is among the most distinctive composers of contemporary music. From the very beginning his name has been associated above all with music theatre, the genre in which he has perhaps exerted the greatest impact. Besides his radical innovations in this area, however, he has also developed a highly personal aesthetic in his absolute music. Imagination, originality and humour are the hallmarks of this multimedia artist. With inexhaustible powers of invention, Kagel makes use of a very wide array of expressive devices which, although often highly provocative, are always placed in the service of musical discourse. Kagel's creative output has been enormous. It encompasses not only stage, orchestral and

chamber music in an extremely wide range of instrumental settings, but also film scores, radio plays and essays. Mauricio Kagel has presented, and continues to present compositions that seem to come from an inexhaustible spring of ideas, suggesting a phenomenal imaginative power. This multi-disciplinary perspective is probably the primary reason he has created such a wide variety of works, including films, plays, and puppet shows, and any number of multi-media compositions. It is also true that Kagel has brought into use new means of producing and structuring sounds. Indeed, his work suggests an enlarged understanding of the concept of 'music', an understanding which not only covers all sounds, but also phenomena of motion or visual effect. The dynamic nature of his compositions and the way he reflects the work of other artists in his own suggests a man with a deep interest in all the arts, and a commitment to a true exploration of his media. Although much of his work has a humourous exterior, it is as often as not underlined by a dialectically dark detachment.

Lydia Adams

Lydia Adams, one of Canada's most distinguished conductors, was appointed Artistic Director and Conductor of the Elmer Iseler Singers in 1998. Under her direction, the choir has received rave reviews for their Toronto concert series and for their extensive touring performances through the U.S. and Canada. She has had the distinct honour, along with the choir, of recording choral music of Canadians Harry Somers and Louis Applebaum in commemorative albums. Recently released is the choral music of Christos Hatzis. She is also embarking on other exciting recording projects including the music of John Burge, Srul Irving Glick and Harry Freedman. In recent seasons, Ms. Adams and the Elmer Iseler Singers have toured Northern Ontario, the United States, Western Canada and Atlantic Canada presenting more than 90 performances and workshops. Ms. Adams has been the recipient of numerous awards including the 2002 Charles Frederick Allison Award, the Mount Alison University Distinguished Alumni Award. In celebration of her exceptional contribution to music in Canada, Lydia Adams received an Honorary Doctor of Music from Mount Alison University in 2003 at an impressive ceremony in Sackville, New Brunswick. In addition to conducting the Elmer Iseler Singers, Ms. Adams conducts the Amadeus Choir of Toronto and is a widely sought guest conductor and clinician.

Elmer Iseler Singers

The **Elmer Iseler Singers**, under the baton of Lydia Adams, is a twenty-voice professional chamber choir based in Toronto. It has built an enviable international reputation since its debut performance in 1979. In 2004, it celebrates its 25th Anniversary and as the successor of the Festival Singers of Canada, it marks the 50th Anniversary of professional choral singing in Canada.

With repertoire that spans 500 years of choral music, the Elmer Iseler Singers are acclaimed for their flawless technique and wide interpretive range. The choir has appeared at several national and international festivals and is best known for its fostering and premiering the works of contemporary Canadian composers in live performances and it extends this work through frequent radio and television broadcasts and a variety of recording projects. The Singers are the professional Choir In Residence at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music.

Soprano

Kimberley Briggs
Michelle Ketrick
Stefanie True
Tanya Turner
Joanne Nasmith
Kathleen Tapp Mock

Alto

Karla Ferguson
Carolyn Kirby
Lori Reid
Alison Roy

Tenor

Carmine Lappano
Eric MacKeracher
Stephen Powell
Edward Wiens

Bass

Esteban Cambre
James Baldwin
Alexander Jozefacki
David King
Nelson Lohnes
Michael Thomas

Wallace Halladay

Hailed as "one of Canada's leading performers of contemporary music," saxophonist **Wallace Halladay** has premiered numerous works for his instrument. He holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto Faculty of Music in Performance and Composition and a Master's from New England Conservatory in Boston, studying under Kenneth Radnofsky. Wallace has performed with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and as a fellow of the Tanglewood Music Centre. He has performed in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia, with broadcasts on the CBC, WGBH (Boston) and Radio Nederland. As soloist, he has performed the concerti of Ibert, Husa, Scelsi, Colgrass and Donatoni. Wallace is currently recording the two saxophone *Sequenzas* of Luciano Berio for the NAXOS label.

Upcoming events:

Sunday February 8 at 2:00 pm (free admission)

*New Music Concerts and
University Settlement Music and Arts School present*

Music Speaks with **Joseph Macerollo**

Church of Saint George the Martyr • 197 John St.
(north side of Stephanie) **Information:** 416 961-9594

Renowned accordion virtuoso, former member of Quartetto Gelato and Past President of New Music Concerts, Joseph Macerollo discusses and demonstrates extended playing techniques and performs selections from the contemporary accordion repertoire, many of which were composed especially for him.

Sunday February 22, 2004 • 8:00 pm

New Music Concerts and The Music Gallery present

The Basel Electric Art Messengers

Sylvia Nopper • Matthias Wuersch • Wolfgang Heiniger • Thomas Kessler
music by Kelterborn, Heiniger, Aperghis,
Palacio-Quintan and Kessler

Church of Saint George the Martyr • 197 John St.

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