

New Music Concerts presents

Rien à voir II

Guest Composers:


Ann Southam | Robert Normandeau | Gilles Gobeil | John Oliver

Saturday January 13, 2007 | Isabel Bader Theatre

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New Music Concerts
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36th season | 303rd event
Saturday January 13, 2007
Isabel Bader Theatre
93 Charles St. West, Toronto
Intro 7:15 | Concert 8:00

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Rien à voir II

Guest Composers:

Ann Southam | Robert Normandeau | Gilles Gobeil | John Oliver

Programme:

György Ligeti (Hungary/Germany, 1923-2006)

Artikulation (1958)

Ann Southam (Canada, 1937)

♣ *Fluke Sound* (1989)

Gilles Gobeil (Canada, 1954)

♣ *Ombres, espaces, silences...* (2005)

— *Intermission* —

György Ligeti

Glissandi (1957)

John Oliver (Canada, 1959)

♣ *Nylong Symphony* (excerpt) (2005)

John Oliver, solo guitar, synthesizers and computer processing

Robert Normandeau (Canada, 1955)

♣ *Palimpseste*

(2006 revision of *ZedKejeM*, 2005)

♣ *Canadian work*

Please join us for a reception in the lobby following the concert
courtesy of New Music Concerts and the Bureau du Québec à Toronto

New Music Concerts

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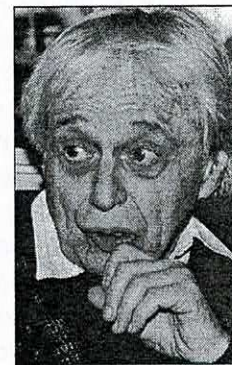
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György Ligeti was an adventurer in form and expression and a great visionary of contemporary music. His richly varied output takes a special position in its musical quality and uncompromising individuality. Ligeti moved far away from aesthetic trends and methods all his life. He was characterized by fresh and unorthodox ideas, any form of dogmatism was foreign to his nature, his entire oeuvre is marked by radical turning points. Admired and hugely influential in the profession, the sensual accessibility of his music has won the hearts of audiences everywhere.

Born in Dicsöszentmárton, Transylvania, on 28 May 1923, the son of Hungarian-Jewish parents, he studied at the Klausenburg conservatory with Ferenc Farkas from 1941 to 1943, later (1945–49) at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest with Ferenc Farkas, Sándor Veress, Pál Járdányi and Lajos Bárdos. Very soon he developed the micropolyphony which became one of the most significant features of his music. In his early pieces, such as the a-cappella choral work *Éjszaka Reggel* and his first successful work in the West, *Apparitions*, this style is already extremely distinctive. In December 1956, after the Hungarian Revolution, he fled to the west, for artistic and political reasons. Working as a free-lancer at the West German Radio electronic studios in Cologne (1957–58) he made an intensive study of the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel and Pierre Boulez, which found its musical expression in *Artikulation* (1958). This work, with *Atmosphères*, the orchestral work he created in 1961, brought Ligeti instant fame. In this piece, he worked almost completely without traditional melodic, harmonic and rhythmic parameters and concentrated on sounds with constantly changing textures. “Micropolyphony”, he once described, “means such a dense tissue that the individual parts become inaudible and only the resulting intermingling harmonies are effective as a form.”

After his intensive work in Cologne in the 1950s and the development of micropolyphony in the 1960s, Ligeti's personal style became simpler and more transparent in the 1970s. And as if wanting to withdraw from the predominating musical tendencies, he began to use tonal sounds again. He said: “I no longer listen to rules on what is to be regarded as modern and what as old-fashioned.” His only full-length stage work *Le Grand Macabre* was inspired by the theatre of the absurd and is teeming with operetta-like wit and black humour. The composer wanted to communicate more directly with audiences: “Stage action and music should be dangerous and bizarre, absolutely exaggerated, absolutely crazy.”



In the 1980s and 1990s, Ligeti expanded his musical horizons again, incorporating structural principles of African drumming music into his works: the fanatic of the intricate developed new complex polyrhythmic techniques. They form the basis of the three collections of his *Études pour piano* which are considered to be the most important piano music of the late 20th century. György Ligeti travelled a long road: from Romanian folk music and the tonal language of his fellow countryman Béla Bartók to his own cosmos of sounds. The mentor of a whole generation of composers, he wanted to “fuse the fear of death with laughter”. Ligeti was honoured with all the world’s major musical awards, including the Grawemayer Award, the Praemium Imperiale, the Ernst-von-Siemens Music Award, the Sibelius Prize, and the Kyoto-Prize. He died on 12 June 2006 in Vienna.

Shortly after Ligeti left Hungary after the crushing of the 1956 uprising he came to Cologne and lived as a guest of Karlheinz Stockhausen. By Ligeti’s own account, he was first introduced to the techniques of electronic music by Gottfried Michael Koenig in early 1957, who engaged him to work in the Studio for Electronic Music of the West German Radio Network. The first result was *Glissandi* (1957), a dense configuration of complex or pure sounds in continuous movements. This early piece already suggests the path Ligeti would chose later in his orchestra compositions *Apparitions* and, above all, *Atmospheres*. The second electronic piece, *Artikulation* (1958), is entirely based on “aleatoric” principles. Different types of material were put on tape and the cut-off pieces were put in several boxes. The selections of the different sound-patterns was left to chance operations. Their placement within the composition followed a rigid serial plan. He remained at the studio until 1959 and *Artikulation* was one of two pieces composed during these years (and the only one of the two to be published), having its premiere in Cologne on 25 March 1958. The performance medium of *Artikulation* is a four-track tape and it explores the linguistic similarities of different kinds of sounds. The piece combines a multitude of electronic sounds in a highly disjunct style, which layered into a multi-level polyphony, become a synthetic conversation. The disassembled beginning uses a variety of inflections including high and low voices and some agitated interjections, their interactions creating the dialogue. The quiet gurgling heard in the opening of the piece can be traced throughout the entire work, at times being answered by rare, deep, and distant replies. The brief snippets of melody are provided by this same gurgling sound and, although fleeting, add yet another level of discourse. As the piece progresses, the phrase lengths shorten until mere fragments are all that remain along with more intense juxtapositions of the recurring material. The counterpoint that was discernible earlier in the piece dissolves as the conversation-like interactions alternate faster and faster. Subsequently, the use of musical space becomes more obvious and more effective. The acceleration of the

musical line aids in what is actually the dying out of the imaginary conversation. Whereas some later works by Ligeti tend to be more static and calm, *Artikulation* is restless and animated. The “voices” never cease to communicate and the consistent overlapping textures create a “kaleidoscopic polyphony.”

— Sarah M. Hamilton

Ann Southam was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1937 but has lived most of her life in Toronto. She currently works as a freelance composer. After completing musical studies at the University of Toronto and the Royal Conservatory of Music in the early 1960s, where she studied piano with Pierre Souvairan, composition with Samuel Dolin and electroacoustic music with Gustav Ciamaga, Ann Southam began a teaching and composing career which has included a long and productive association with modern dance. As well as creating music for some of Canada’s major modern dance companies and choreographers including The Toronto Dance Theatre, Danny Grossman, Dancemakers, Patricia Beatty, Christopher House and Rachel Browne, she has been an instructor in electroacoustic music at the Royal Conservatory of Music and participated in many “composer-in-the-classroom” programs in elementary and high schools. While a great deal of her work has been electroacoustic music on tape, she is currently interested in composing music for acoustic instruments. She has composed concert music for a variety of acoustic instruments and instrumental ensembles, working with such artists and ensembles as Eve Egoyan and Christina Petrowska Quilico, percussionist Beverley Johnston and with Arraymusic and New Music Concerts – all of Toronto. Ann Southam’s work has been commissioned through the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the CBC, and has been widely performed in Canada, Europe and the U.S. She is an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre, a member of the Canadian League of Composers and was a founding member of the Association of Canadian Women Composers in 1980. She has received the Canadian League of Composers / Canadian Music Centre’s Friend of Canadian Music Award, and has served on the Board of the Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects.

Fluke Sound (1989) was the result of a happy coincidence, hence the title. It consists of the combination of two partially completed pieces of music that I had been working on at separate times, one specifically for dance which had never been used, and the other just for fun. I decided to try playing these two pieces at the same time to see what would happen and I liked the result. There is something in the sound which reminds me of waves, the ocean and whale song. In making this piece I used 3 Revox open reel track tape recorders and 2 Synthi AKS voltage control synthesizers. — Ann Southam

Gilles Gobeil received his musical training at the Université de Montréal, obtaining his Master of Music degree in Composition. His international awards include the Métamorphoses Biennial Acousmatic Composition Competition (Belgium, 2002, 2000); CIMESP (International Electroacoustic Music Contest of São Paulo, Brazil, 2001, 1999, 97); Ciber@rt (Valencia, Spain, 1999); Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 2005, 1999, 89, 88); Stockholm Electronic Arts Award (Sweden, 1997, 94); Ars Electronica, Linz (Austria, 2005, 1995); Luigi Russolo International Competition, Varese (Italy, 1989, 88, 87); Newcomp Computer Music Competition (USA, 1987); and Brock University Tape Music Competition, St Catharines (Canada, 1985). Other honors include an Opus Prize from the Conseil québécois de la musique, "Record of the year in contemporary music" for 2005; the 1993 Grand Prize from SOCAN (the Canadian performing rights society); the 1985 Robert Fleming Prize from the Canadian Music Council; and a Composition Award from PROCAN (a former Canadian performing rights society) in 1984. His works have been performed in concerts throughout Canada and abroad and appear on four solos discs on the empreintes DIGITALes label. Gilles Gobeil is a member of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC), Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) and co-founder of the concert organization Réseaux.

Ombres, espaces, silences...

I wished to revisit the musics of the early polyphonies (Ars Antiqua, Ars Nova, up to the XIVth century). My idea was to make this world of intervals and concords cohabit with that much vaster one of noises. That world of noises would somehow become a case to present or rather evoke poetically fragments of the first moments of the western music.

The world of noises would rest on a fascinating phenomenon of the Christian history: the hermits or "Desert Fathers" of the first centuries of the Christian era. These men had deliberately chosen to isolate themselves, to break with the society of their time as they believed that only outside could they find the answer to the problem of human destiny. They intended to create on the fringes of the profane world an ideal and holy society. This retreat would lead them to live in inhuman material conditions; sojourns in caves, in desert holes, within the cavities of trees or on top of columns and there practise a rigorous ascetic life (immobility, silence, lengthy fasting, austerity, sleepless nights, etc.) in order to abolish all personality to rebuild it on new foundations.

Through several scenes, I would like to evoke the astonishing life of these men, their religious fervour (the very fervour which gave birth to the first polyphonic musics) through the evocation of physical places of course, of the arid and menacing desert but also and above all their fabulous spiritual imagination.

Ombres, espaces, silences... was awarded an honorary mention at the international competition Prix Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria, 2005) and was a Selected Work at the 32nd Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 2005).

— Gilles Gobeil

John Oliver came to international attention during 1988/89 when he won six prizes for five compositions ranging from chamber to orchestral to electroacoustic music. Among these the "City of Varese Prize" at the 1988 Luigi Russolo Competition (Italy), and the Canada Council's Grand Prize at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 8th National Competition for Young Composers for his live electroacoustic work *El Reposo del Fuego*. The Canadian Opera Company commissioned Oliver's first opera, *Guacamayo's Old Song and Dance* which they produced in Toronto and at the Banff Centre in 1991, the first full-length opera of their Composer-in-Residence program. Oliver's second opera, *Alternate Visions*, will be presented in Montreal in 2007 by Chants Libres.

Oliver writes orchestral, and electroacoustic music, and has produced a significant body of chamber music in recent years as Composer-in-Residence for Music in the Morning and the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival. Oliver's music has been heard at major international festivals, including the International Society for Contemporary Music World Music Days, as well as in concert and on radio worldwide, in performances by The Borromeo String Quartet, Camerata Transsylvanica, Canadian Opera Company, CBC Radio Orchestra, New Music Concerts, Nouvelle Ensemble Moderne, L'Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Pierrot Ensemble, St. Lawrence String Quartet, Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, Vancouver New Music, Vancouver Opera, and others. His music is published on CD by CBC Records, empreintes DIGITALes, SNE, McGill University Records, ZaDiscs, and earsay. As an advocate for electroacoustic music, Oliver has written and performed music for live electronics (with synthesizers, microphones, etc.), instrument(s) and tape, and tape alone. He was a founding member, in 1993, of G.E.M.S. (Group of the Electronic Music Studio), and was active with the ensemble, as composer, performer, and conductor, until 1987. From 1991 to 1993, Oliver played MIDI guitar with the Vancouver group MORE (with Sergio Barroso, Lori Freedman, and Peter Hannan) and since that time has been

developing personal repertoire for his own performance project involving guitars, MIDI guitar, computer, and electronics. In the fall of 1997 he performed a set of this new music as part of the Body Electric Festival (Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria) and released a CD *Icicle Blue Avalanche* in 1998 on the earsay label, a CD company he formed in 1997 with composer/pianist Andrew Czink and designer Tanya Petreman for the promotion of new music.

Nylong Symphony [excerpt] (2005) for fretless MIDI classical guitar (Godin), Dimension Beam and synthesizers (Yamaha VL70M, Roland GR33)

A spectral/cultural voyage through centuries of (mostly plucked string) sound, this extended work exists in several parts and is performed on one or more guitars and a synthesizer whose sounds are fed into two computers for processing and extending. Throughout my musical life I have played the classical guitar. And so its sound, and Spanish guitar music in particular, are imbedded in my musical psyche. Combine this with my fascination with middle-eastern and Indian music and you have the material for *Nylong Symphony*.

— John Oliver

Robert Normandeau was born on March 11, 1955 in Québec City. He obtained his MMus (1988) and DMus (1992) degrees in Composition from Université de Montréal. He is a founding member of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community and a founding member of the concert society Réseaux (1991). His honours include awards from the Bourges, Fribourg, Luigi-Russolo, Musica Nova, Noroit-Léonce Petitot, Phonurgia-Nova, Stockholm and Ars Electronica (Golden Nica in 1996) international competitions. His work figures on many compact discs including six solo discs: *Lieux inouïs*, *Tangram*, *Figures*, *Clair de terre* and the DVD *Puzzles*, published by empreintes DIGITALEs; and *Sonars* published by Rephlex (England). He was awarded two Opus Prizes from the Conseil québécois de la musique in 1999: "Composer of the Year" and "Record of the year in contemporary music" (*Figures* on empreintes DIGITALEs label). He was awarded the Masque 2001 for *Malina* and the Masque 2005 for *La cloche de verre*, the best music composed for a theater play, given by the Académie québécoise du théâtre. He is Professor in Electroacoustics Composition at Université de Montréal since 1999. Having produced several instrumental and mixed works, his current endeavors are focused on acousmatic music. More specifically, his compositions employ aesthetic criteria whereby he creates a Cinema for the Ear, in which "meaning" as well as "sound" become elements which elaborate his works. Along with concert music he now writes incidental music, especially for the theater.

Palimpseste (2005)

To Anick

This work is the fourth and the last one of a cycle called *Onomatopoeias* begun in 1991 with *Éclats de voix* followed by *Spleen* (1993) and *Le renard et la rose* (1995). The pieces of the cycle are dedicated to childhood, adolescence and adulthood while the fourth one is an homage to old age. As with the first three pieces, this one is divided into five sections, each of them evoking a feeling associated with a musical parameter: Fury and rhythm; Bitterness and timbre; Anger and dynamics; Tiredness and space; Wisdom and texture. The title refers to a palimpsest, which is a manuscript on which a first text (even many texts) was erased in order to write a new one over it (the parchments were rare and precious). Here, the first text was the timeline structure of the previous works. It is still there but in the background. It has been overwritten with another layer made out of a series of new category of sounds, more noisy, absent in the previous works of the cycle.

Palimpseste is made exclusively with vocal sounds and more specifically with onomatopoeias that are extremely rich because they represent those instances when the sounds of human language correspond directly to the designated object or to the expression of a sentiment. The recording of the voices took place in Germany (voiced by Christian Gressier, Eberhard Geyer and Gabriela Lang) and in Montréal (by Andrée Lachapelle and Christiane Pasquier). The work was commissioned by the ZKM in Karlsruhe (Germany) where it was premiered during the trans-canada festival on February 13, 2005 under its first name: *ZedKejeM*. It was revised in the summer of 2005. The work was composed with the financial help of the CALQ and the CAC. Thanks to Sabine Breitsameter and Ludger Brümmer. The work was a finalist at the 2005 Musica Nova competition (Praha, Czech Republic).

— Robert Normandeau

New Music Concerts sadly notes the passing of **Cynthia Steljes**, one of our finest musicians and a long time friend.

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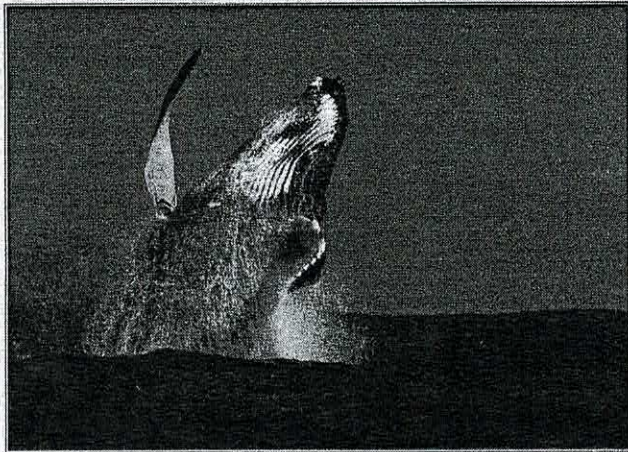


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