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Peter Eötvös' Picks

Saturday March 10, 2012
Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W.



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Robert Aitken, artistic director

41st season | 343rd event
Saturday March 10, 2012
Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W.
7:15 Introduction | 8:00 pm Concert

New Music Concerts presents

Peter Eötvös' Picks

Programme:

Zoltán Jeney (Hungary 1943) **Heraclitian Fragments** (1997/2004)

Robert Aitken flute Keith Atkinson oboe Peter Stoll clarinet
Kathleen McLean bassoon Christopher Gongos horn
André Dubelsten trumpet Scott Good trombone Timothy Ying,
Carol Lynn Fujino violins Douglas Perry viola Liza McLellan cello
Troy Milleker contrabass Rick Sacks percussion Peter Eötvös conductor

Peter Eötvös (Hungary 1944)

Psy (1996)

Robert Aitken flute Liza McLellan cello Richard Moore cimbalom

Eötvös

Octet (2008)

Robert Aitken flute Peter Stoll clarinet Kathleen McLean,
Peter Lutek bassoons James Gardiner, Michael Fedyshyn trumpets
Ian Cowie, Scott Good trombones Peter Eötvös conductor

— *Intermission* —

Eötvös

Windsequenzen (1975/87)

Robert Aitken solo flute Keith Atkinson oboe/english horn
Peter Stoll, Gary Kidd clarinets Michele Verheul bass clarinet
Scott Irvine tuba Joseph Macerollo accordion Troy Milleker contrabass
Rick Sacks percussion Peter Eötvös conductor

Igor Stravinsky (Russia/USA 1882–1971)

Octet (1923/52)

[musicians: same as Eötvös Octet]

Please join us in the lobby following the concert for
a reception generously sponsored by **Jeffrey and Tomiko Smyth**.

New Music Concerts thanks **Sandor Ajzenstat**
for his tireless efforts as this evening's stage manager.

Peter Eötvös Octet for for wind instruments (2008)

Commissioned by the Reina Sofia School of Music in Madrid and written in memory of Karlheinz Stockhausen.

The number "eight" is connected in several ways with Stockhausen, whose eightieth birthday would have been in 2008. In his electronic music (e.g. **Octophonie**) Stockhausen used mainly eight-channel technique.

The **Octet** is a musical realisation of the radio play "Embers" by Samuel Beckett.

The special composition of the wind ensemble (flute, clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets, two trombones) enables players of the similarly instrumented **Octet** by Stravinsky to widen their repertoire. — Peter Eötvös

Peter Eötvös Windsequenzen (1975/87)

1. Windstille I • 2. Drei Sequenzen des Bergwindes • 3. Sieben Sequenzen des Wirbelwindes • 4. Sequenz des Morgenwindes • 5. Vier Sequenzen des Seewindes - Nordwind • 6. Vier Sequenzen des Seewindes - Südwind • 7. Ost-Westwind • 8. Windstille II

The Windsequenzen (Wind Sequences) date from the "exploratory" period of the 70s, when my interest was centred on transferring the laws of nature into sound. I started to work on it in 1975, and was working on it continuously until 2002. I consider its present form "final."
— Peter Eötvös

The **Windsequenzen** is based on a natural law, and so too this work is "nature itself," and not merely an illustration of nature. Although the whole composition and the picturesque titles of certain movements suggest some kind of programme, these are later additions, and played no role in the gestation of the piece. If, however, we are to seek the inspiration for this poetic work in the external world, we have to refer to the composer's time spent in Japan. Peter Eötvös spent six months in Japan in 1970, at the Osaka World Expo, as a member of Karlheinz Stockhausen's ensemble. **Windsequenzen** was composed partly on the inspiration of the Japanese natural world (the rain, wind, bamboo reeds and stones), but, according to the composer,

far more important is the influence of Zen Buddhism. The basic idea and philosophical background of the work is none other than one of the opposite pairs of Zen: calm in motion, motion in calm.

To form the Zen paradox into a composition Peter Eötvös made use of the most basic acoustical phenomena: the harmonic series and what is known as the phenomenon of "difference tones." This piece too, then, is based on intervals, but this time on the relationship between the most natural intervals, the harmonics. As we know, the harmonics are formed by the integer multiples of the frequency of the fundamental. If two notes of a different frequency sound together, the sum and difference tone can also be heard (that is, the frequencies are added and subtracted, and the two resulting frequencies are heard together with the two original pitches).

Peter Eötvös has chosen two fundamentals for each movement of the composition, and has ascribed 3 harmonic series to them in such a way that the distance between the harmonics (the difference tone) should remain constant, and always result in the fundamental itself. For example, if the composer links the 5:4 difference model to the fundamental, he works with the 1st, 6th and 10th harmonics, then the 2nd, 7th and 11th harmonics, the 3rd, 8th and 12th harmonics, and so on. The resulting sound is apparent motion, since the scale used in the movement runs on the harmonic series, but the difference is constant, so the system itself is unmoving, stationary. The vertical difference between the two harmonics always expresses the fundamental. The rhythm and metre are controlled by two opposing forces: one produces gradual change (like the "triangle" waveform familiar from electroacoustics), and the other sudden changes (like the electro-acoustic "square wave" sound).

This introduction merely illustrates how consistent is the composition of **Windsequenzen** and is a detailed description of the starting point for the composer. But what remains a mystery — for it almost certainly depends on the individual's capability — is how this rigorous intellectual construction acquires poetic content, and becomes a music which is at times meditative, and at other times of sensual beauty. In the "cast" of the work the series of chords

formed from harmonics is played mostly by the flute/alto flute, English horn doubling oboe and the clarinet; in the final movement the accordion takes on this role. The fundamentals — that is, the difference tones born of the harmonics — are played by the tuba, the double bass or the bass clarinet. The bass drum and the “wind” parts (oral imitation of the whistling of the wind) articulate the temporal flow of certain movements. The motion — superficially — is continuous; the system, however, remains constant, unchanged. The crystallisation of the paradox into music is perfect. **Windsequenzen** is nothing less than Zen become music.

— Zoltán Farkas

Born in Szolnok, Hungary in 1943, **Zoltán Jeney** is considered one of the leading personalities of the experimental art movement that evolved in Hungary in the 1970s and 80s. From 1961–1968 he undertook composition studies with Ferenc Farkas at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest and postgraduate studies with Goffredo Petrassi at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. In 1970, in collaboration with Péter Eötvös, Zoltán Kocsis, László Sáry, Albert Simon and László Vidovszky, he co-founded the New Music Studio Budapest. Since 1986 he has served as a professor and, since 1995, the director of the composition department at the Liszt Academy of Music. In his early compositions he made frequent use of non-musical basic materials such as text quotations, chess match moves, solitaire game moves, telex text rhythms and other systems. Between 1975 and 1984 he sang in the choir of Schola Hungarica, conducted by László Dobszay and Janka Szendrei. Becoming acquainted with Gregorian chant significantly influenced his thinking about music and composing. From the 1980s onwards he began once again to employ counterpoint methods reminiscent of the Baroque and pre-Baroque periods, and in addition there appeared in his music an archaic style of tone production that in its declamation and melodic profile drew on both Gregorian traditions and those of Hungarian folk music. Although in a technical sense all his works pass on and sum up the basic principles developed in the previous decades, today in his art the emotional freedom and sensitive directness that in his youthful works were hidden behind severe constructions now come across openly.

Zoltán Jeney

Heraclitian Fragments (1997/2004)

Written for the Klangforum Wien, this piece is the last of a series of works inspired by the poems of the great Hungarian contemporary poet, Dezső Tandori. The compositional ideas and methods found in the poems induced me to elaborate similar, corresponding musical methods. It's obvious that these correspondences are more conceptual than concrete, i.e. the same ideas or methods are concretised differently in music than in poems.

The first piece of the series, **Heraclitus in H** for any number of instruments and players (1980), is based on the poem inscribed upon Heraclitus's commemorative column. The poem itself gives a task to the reader: “Try to say at the first reading how many lines are [in the poem].” The poem is written vertically and each line contains only one letter so the task is impossible. Similarly the task given in the piece is also impossible to solve. A seemingly simple, but in fact a quite intricate melody and an instruction are given: “Play the melody or listen to it as being played by someone else. Then try to replay it by heart.”

The last piece of the series — **Heraclitian Fragments** — has no more a poetical reference but develops further the idea of the pure poetical formulation of Heraclitus's philosophical statement: nothing is reproducible. Broken parts of the original melody hidden in scales, chords, heterophonic and polyphonic developments and quotations from the other pieces of the series are the material of the piece. And this material — despite the apparent continuity of the formal development — also breaks into fragments.

— Zoltán Jeney

Igor Stravinsky was born June 17, 1882 in Oranienbaum, Russia and died April 6, 1971 in New York City. Son of an operatic bass, he decided to be a composer at age 20 and studied privately with Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1902–08). His **Fireworks** (1908) was heard by the impresario Sergey Diaghilev, who commissioned Stravinsky to write the **Firebird** ballet (1910); its dazzling success made him Russia's leading young composer. The great ballet score **Petrushka** (1911) followed. His next ballet, **The Rite of Spring** (1913), with its shifting and audacious rhythms and its unresolved dissonances, was a landmark in music history; its Paris premiere caused an actual riot in the theatre, and Stravinsky's international

notoriety was assured. In the early 1920s he adopted a radically different style of restrained Neoclassicism — employing often ironic references to older music — in works such as his **Octet** (1923). His major Neoclassical works include **Oedipus rex** (1927) and the **Symphony of Psalms** (1930) and culminate in the opera **The Rake's Progress** (1951). From 1954 he employed the compositional technique of serialism. His later works include **Agon** (1957) — the last of his many ballets choreographed by George Balanchine — and **Requiem Canticles** (1966).

Igor Stravinsky Octet for wind instruments (1923/52)

The Octet began with a dream, in which I saw myself in a small room surrounded by a small group of instrumentalists playing some attractive music ... I awoke from this little concert in a state of great delight and anticipation and the next morning began to compose. — Igor Stravinsky

The result was a divertissement that equally exercises the listener's mind and the eight virtuoso performers. The first movement marks Stravinsky's rediscovery of sonata form. The second is the first of many Stravinsky variation sets to come. The quick finale yields a stately coda: cool, jazzy, syncopated. Aaron Copland attended the premiere in Paris and later wrote: "I can attest to the general feeling of mystification that followed the initial hearing. Here was Stravinsky ... now suddenly, without any seeming explanation, making an about-face and presenting a piece to the public that bore no conceivable resemblance to the individual style with which he had hitherto been identified. ... No one could possibly have foreseen ... that the Octet was destined to influence composers all over the world."

— Joseph Horowitz, courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes



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