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41st season | 342nd event

New Music Concerts presents



Legends

Sunday January 29, 2012

Enwave Theatre, 231 Queens Quay West



Robert Aitken, artistic director

41st season | 342nd event
Sunday January 29, 2012
Enwave Theatre, 231 Queens Quay West
7:15 Introduction | 8:00 pm Concert

New Music Concerts presents

Legends

Programme:

Thomas Kessler (Switzerland 1937) **Salzburg Quintet** (2011)

Canadian Premiere

Keith Atkinson oboe **Max Christie** bass clarinet

Peter Lutek bassoon **Chris Gongos** horn **Gregory Oh** piano

Omar Daniel (Canada 1960) **Mehetapja** (2011)

World Premiere, NMC commission

Xin Wang, Carla Huhtanen sopranos **Erica Iris Huang** mezzo-soprano

Dianne Aitken flute **Keith Atkinson** oboe **Max Christie** bass clarinet

Fraser Jackson bassoon **Chris Gongos** horn **Rick Sacks** percussion

Erica Goodman harp **Timothy Ying, Carol Lynn Fujino**, violins

Douglas Perry viola **Liza McLelland** cello **Peter Pavlovsky** contrabass

Gregory Oh piano **Robert Aitken** direction

— *Intermission* —

Jeffrey Ryan (Canada 1962) **The Whitening of the Ox** (2011)

World Premiere, NMC / Turning Point Ensemble co-commission

Tyler Duncan baritone **Dianne Aitken** flute **Keith Atkinson** oboe

Max Christie clarinet **Fraser Jackson** bassoon **Chris Gongos** horn

James Gardiner trumpet **David Pell** trombone **Rick Sacks** percussion

Erica Goodman harp **Timothy Ying, Carol Lynn Fujino**, violins

Douglas Perry viola **Liza McLelland** cello **Peter Pavlovsky** contrabass

Robert Aitken direction



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New Music Concerts

Robert Aitken, c.m., Artistic Director

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Thomas Kessler was born in 1937 in Zürich. After studies in German and Romanic linguistics at the Universities of Zürich and Paris he studied composition with Heinz Friedrich Hartig, Ernst Pepping and Boris Blacher in Berlin where he founded his own electronic studio in 1965. In the following years he was director of the Berlin Electronic Beat Studio and musical director of the Centre Universitaire International de Formation et de Recherche Dramatiques in Nancy, France. From 1973 until 2000 he taught composition and theory at the Basel Music Academy and created the well-known electronic studio there. Together with Gerard Zinsstag he founded the festival Tage fuer Neue Musik in Zürich and the live-electronic music festival ECHTZEIT with Wolfgang Heiniger in Basel. As a composer of numerous instrumental chamber music, orchestral music and live-electronic music compositions, he is interested in the interactions between musicians and electronics. Thomas Kessler lives in Basel and Toronto.

Thomas Kessler: Salzburg Quintet

I suppose that every sound that we have experienced in our lives leaves some trace in an enormous biological data bank stored somewhere in our memory. We would soon become mad if all these sounds, symphonies, scales, wrong and correct melodies continuously could bubble out again, like in our media. We protect ourselves from the overwhelming flood of memory through the instinctive ability of forgetting. And yet we need memory to comprehend music as something more than a meaningless succession of sounds. It would be impossible to appreciate even a melody if we immediately forgot every tone as soon as it ends. And without the presence of memory it would be impossible to conceive of inventing something new, or to compose music.

In my **Salzburg Quintet** I have composed a conscious forgetting by recording phrases from Mozart's Piano Quintet K452 with each instrument separately and subjecting them to electronic transformations that render them unrecognisable. No one should know that these sounds were derived from Mozart. Nonetheless there remains a trace, a presentiment of something familiar differing from abstract and non-referential electronic material. I sought to evoke such memories from the depths of our memory by live-electronic means.

Each musician is assigned their own independent live-electronic computer setup in which these sounds are stored.

The individual MSP programs for each musician allow them to control and transform these sources. The amplitude (envelope) of the real instruments activate the stored samples which exactly follow the dynamic playing of the musicians. A reciprocal dialogue is formed between the instrumental and electronic sources, a path from the unknown to the known, from premonition to reminiscence. Through these real-time electronic interpolations a sense of familiarity with the original sources is evoked. They become more and more clear until emerging briefly in a literal quotation, only to disappear again in the depths of our memory.

I have followed the process I applied in my orchestral work **Utopia**, in which I equipped a symphonic ensemble with 71 laptop computers in order to transform the sound of the traditional instruments through an electronic component. The same principle of completely independent voices is applied to the five instruments of my **Salzburg Quintet**. The piece, commissioned for the Biennale Salzburg and premiered on March 26 2011 by the Österreichisches Ensemble für Neue Musik, is dedicated to Heike Hoffman, artistic director.
— *Thomas Kessler*

Omar Daniel has composed extensively in solo, chamber, electronic and orchestral idioms, and was the 1997 recipient of the Jules Léger Award for New Chamber Music for **Zwei Lieder nach Rilke**, a previous NMC commission. Other composition awards include the 2007 K.M. Hunter Arts Award, the SOCAN National Competition for Young Composers and the CBC National Radio Competition for Young Composers. His compositional endeavors extend to electroacoustic music as well. His innovative work **The Flaying of Marsyas** has been performed many times since its creation in 2001, and his **Annunciation** for electronics and string quartet has been performed over twenty times with the Penderecki String Quartet. Daniel has been invited to the Ars Musica festival in Belgium to realize this work with the Kryptos Quartet.

Daniel has an ongoing interest in the ancient folk music of Estonia. Several recent works refer directly to these 'Runo-songs', including his recent Esprit Orchestra commissioned Violin Concerto, written for his wife Erika Raum. Omar Daniel currently holds the position of Associate Professor at the Department of Music Research and Composition at the University of Western Ontario.

Omar Daniel: Mehetapja (Husband-Killer)

- I. **Emal ol hulka tüttareida...**(a mother had many daughters...)
- II. **Kui Meeli Mehele viidi...**(when Meeli was taken to be wed...)
- III. **Tuli homme, uusi päeva...**(The next day came, a new day...)
- IV. **Meeli läks joosetes kaevu juurde...**(Meeli ran to the well...)

Ancient, pre-Christian Estonian 'Runo-songs' (Regilaul) depict many activities and rituals of the rural peoples who composed them and passed them down: work, harvest, love, games, cooking, death, the natural world. A particularly famous Runo-song is 'The Song of Meeli', which forms the basis of my **Mehetapja**.

The archetype of 'Husband killer' in Nordic poetry and song is rather well represented throughout northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia. As is the case with all folk-song, the details may change from region to region or over time, but the essential storyline remains the same: a young woman is taken to be wed, kills her husband shortly after the wedding, flees into the forest, begs the natural world for shelter, and eventually disappears. Often there is a reason for the murder: the young woman has defended herself against a violent husband, for instance. However, in the Runo-song 'The Song of Meeli', the motive for the crime seems to be only that she misses her family. So, there appears to be no moral ground for her crime, even though the character of Meeli is, I believe, a sympathetic one. One of the most interesting structural characteristics of the 'Song of Meeli' version of the fable is the amount of time spent describing Meeli's time in the forest after the crime: she begs for shelter (forgiveness) from trees, rocks, hills, bogs, streams—the sacred icons of her world. Finally, she finds refuge somewhere, and we are not certain if she is dead or has become part of the natural world.

My **Mehetapja** uses principles of Estonian Runo song, as well as some actual material. Runo songs are often sung in groups, using call and response, homophonic or heterophonic textures. As well, they use rigorously metered, copious amounts of text set to short, endlessly repeated phrases. I didn't assign the singers to specific characters in a consistent way. Rather, the three female voices take on the personas of the characters in a collective way, sharing the story with each other in the spirit of ancient Runo-song.
— *Omar Daniel*

Praised for his “strong personal voice” (Globe and Mail), “masterful command of instrumental colour” (Georgia Straight), and “superb attention to rhythm” (Audio Ideas Guide), **Jeffrey Ryan** has emerged as one of Canada’s leading composers. His music has been performed and broadcast across Canada and internationally, including commissions for the Vancouver Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New Music Concerts and Turning Point Ensemble, Aventa Ensemble, Arditti Quartet, Tokyo Quartet and Tapestry New Opera. Recordings of Ryan’s music have garnered multiple JUNO and Western Canadian Music Award nominations, all for Classical Composition of the Year. Recently Naxos Records chose an all-Ryan programme with the Vancouver Symphony and the Gryphon Trio to launch its Canadian Classics series. Ryan’s growing discography includes recordings by musica intima, the Canadian Chamber Choir, clarinetist Cris Inguanti, pianist Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa, the Thunder Bay Symphony, the Hannaford Street Silver Band and the Penderecki String Quartet. Based in Vancouver, Ryan is Composer Advisor for Music Toronto, and was the Vancouver Symphony’s Composer Laureate for the 2008/09 season, after serving as the VSO’s Composer-in-Residence from 2002 to 2007. Jeffrey Ryan holds degrees from Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Toronto and The Cleveland Institute of Music.

Jeffrey Ryan: The Whitening of the Ox

1. Overhead Thunder Clouds
2. Ungovernable As My Heart
3. To The End of the World
4. A Seed Planted in Me
5. Fade To Winter
6. Nothing Has Changed
7. A Circle Bending
8. White Shadows Without Shape
9. The Gate of My Home
10. Echoes of Light Shining

The story of the oxherd taming his wild ox comes from Zen Buddhism, and provided the inspiration for several different series of images, including a set of ten drawings by 15th-century Japanese monk Tenshō Shūbun. In these images, the ox, representing the untamed mind and ego, is gradually brought under control by the oxherd. In the process, the ox turns progressively whiter until it becomes transparent and vanishes, and a perfect circle is achieved. Centuries later, these images inspired Canadian poet K.V. Skene to write a set of ten poems as a contemporary response to these images and this story. When I discovered these poems in an issue of *Descant*, I was drawn to the richness and the musicality of her poetry, that evoked her inspiration in language both timeless yet thoroughly of our own time.

The half-hour journey of this work takes us from chaos to order, complexity to simplicity, frenetic to focused, dark to light. The multi-layered first movement, **Overhead Thunder Clouds**, opens with scattered energy, a large-ranging vocal line depicting the oxherd’s inner duality, and an instrumental emphasis on lower register and darker colours. As the music proceeds from song to song, the oxherd meets, faces, and forges a relationship with the ox, frequently represented by the solo bassoon. By the fifth song, **Fade to Winter**, the oxherd is able to untie and embrace the ox, which both frightens and liberates him, and in the sixth song, he wonders whether he made the right choice in undertaking this journey, fearing that **Nothing Has Changed**. But as the ox disappears, the oxherd finds a new sense of calm, release and detachment, culminating in the warm colours, simplicity and cohesion of the final song, **Echoes of Light Shining**. **The Whitening of the Ox** was commissioned by New Music Concerts (Toronto) and Turning Point Ensemble (Vancouver), with the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Deux Mille Foundation. — Jeffrey Ryan

Vocal Soloists

British-Columbia-born and New York-based baritone **Tyler Duncan** enjoys international renown for bringing consummate musicianship, vocal beauty and interpretive insight to recital, concert, oratorio and operatic literature. Frequently accompanied by pianist Erika Switzer, he has given acclaimed recitals in New York, Boston, Paris and Montreal, as well as throughout Canada, Germany, Sweden, France and South Africa. He is a founding member on the faculty of the Vancouver International Song Institute. Recently released on the CPO label is his Boston Early Music Festival recording of the title role of John Blow’s **Venus and Adonis**. Forthcoming recordings are Bach’s **St. John Passion** with Portland Baroque under Monica Huggett and a DVD recording of Handel’s **Messiah** with the Montreal Symphony under Kent Nagano with CBC television. Awaiting release on the ATMA label are recordings of works by Purcell, and Carissimi’s oratorio **Jepthe** with Les Voix Baroque.

Mezzo-soprano **Erica Iris Huang** emerged on Toronto’s music scene with acclaim for her “gorgeous big voice, seamless from top to bottom, dramatic, and highly expressive.” (Howard Dyck).

Praised for her stage presence of warmth and character, Erica has captivated audiences with her sensitivity and vocal timbres in new music repertory. She was featured in Igor Correia's **Three Great Songs of Range** which won the 2008 Karen Kieser Prize, "gave the best singing of the evening as the sympathetic Aunt Adelaide" (Globe and Mail) in Charles Wilson's **Kamouraska** with Opera In Concert in 2009 and made her New Music Concerts debut in 2011 with the premiere of Paul Steenhuisen's **Supplice and Demand**, performed with an "intense beautiful opacity" (Globe And Mail). Erica has given numerous performances with the Aldeburgh Connection and will be featured in their concert series based on Schubert and the Esterházy in March 2012.

From early to modern repertoire, **Carla Huhtanen** has performed with Grand Teatro La Fenice, BBC Concert Orchestra, festival d'Aix, Opera Atelier and Garsington Opera. She has been praised for her "vivid, fine-toned, accurately placed coloratura" (Independent), and her "clarity of tone and smoothness of line...matched only by her exquisite acting" (Opera Now). Much in demand as an interpreter of contemporary music, she has performed the work of Saariaho, Salonen, Leroux, Scelsi, Cage and Crumb, and numerous premieres of Canadian and American works such as Moravec's **Blizzard Voices** with Opera Omaha and Ana Sokolovic's opera **Svadba** with Queen of Puddings. Upcoming engagements include Saariaho's **Leino Songs** with Soundstreams, Brian Harman's **Sewing the Earthworm** with Canadian Art Song Projects and Lully's **Armide** at the Royal Theatre of Versailles.

A native of Mainland China, Canadian Soprano **Xin Wang** completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Winnipeg before moving to Toronto, where she graduated from both the Opera division and the Artist Diploma Programme at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. Xin Wang has distinguished herself as a dynamic and captivating performer of contemporary music, having sung works by Canadian and international composers Alice Ping Yee Ho, Petar Klanac, Fu Hong Shi, José Evangelista, James Rolfe, Ana Sokolovic, Karin Renquist, Jürg Wyttenbach and many more. Ms. Wang has performed with many of Ontario's best known presenters of contemporary music, including the Queen of Puddings Music Theatre, Tapestry Opera New Works, New Music Concerts and Soundstreams Canada.



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