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42<sup>nd</sup> season | 349<sup>th</sup> event

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# Ensemble SurPlus

**Saturday January 19, 2013**

The Music Gallery, 197 John St.

| the **Music Gallery**  
Toronto's Centre for Creative Music





Robert Aitken, artistic director

42<sup>nd</sup> season | 349<sup>th</sup> event  
**Saturday January 19, 2013**  
The Music Gallery, 197 John St.  
7:15 Introduction | 8:00 pm Concert

| the **MusicGallery**  
Toronto's Centre for Creative Music

*New Music Concerts & The Music Gallery present*

# Ensemble SurPlus

*Programme:*

**Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf** (b.1962) *Hommage à Daniel Libeskind*  
Vol. II (2010/2011) for flute (piccolo and bass flute), oboe  
(english horn), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, viola and cello

**Dániel Péter Biró** (b.1969) *Gam Zera* (also the seed) (World Premiere, 2009–2012)  
for contralto, alto flute, clarinet, percussion, piano,  
violin, cello, double bass and live electronics

– *Intermission* –

**Cornelius Schwehr** (b.1953) *'poco cantabile'* (2012)  
for flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, cello and contrabass

**Dieter Mack** (b.1954) *Yonsei* (2010)  
for flute (bass flute and piccolo), oboe (english horn), bass clarinet  
(clarinet in b flat), alto saxophone (soprano saxophone), horn,  
percussion, piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass

**Ensemble SurPlus:** Noa Frenkel contralto | Liz Hirst flute  
Nicola Miorada clarinet | Christian Kemper oboe  
Andreas Stark saxophone | Delphine Gauthier-Guiche horn  
Olaf Tzschope percussion | Sven Thomas Kiebler piano  
Stefan Häussler violin | Bodo Friedrich viola | Beverley Ellis cello  
Sven Kestel bass | Erich Wagner conductor

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and programming | Kirk McNally sound-direction



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**Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf** was born in Mannheim in 1962. He studied composition with Brian Ferneyhough, Klaus Huber and Emanuel Nunes, piano with James Avery and music theory with Peter Förtig, as well as musicology, philosophy, etc. with Jürgen Habermas and sociology with Ludwig von Friedeberg. In 1993 Mahnkopf received his Ph. D. with a dissertation on Arnold Schönberg. Alongside his compositional activity, he has published over 120 essays, written five books and edited a further ten. In these, he treats not only subjects from the area of contemporary music, but also composer-personalities such as Wagner and Cage as well as the musical philosophy of Adorno. In 1995 he was a major participant in the founding of the Gesellschaft für Musik und Ästhetik (Society of Music and Aesthetics). Mahnkopf's musical roots lie deeply in German-Austrian art music. His central point of reference is Beethoven, and for the twentieth century, Alban Berg. He has been strongly influenced by the avant-garde of high modernism and is also internationally oriented, thanks to his non-German teachers. After many years of activity as an instructor in music theory, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf became Professor of Composition at the Academy of Music and Theatre "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig in 2005.

**Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf** (\*1962) *Hommage à Daniel Libeskind*

Every now and then one experiences a moment of artistic awakening. In 2000, it was for me the Jewish Museum in Berlin by Daniel Libeskind, which was still under construction and therefore purely architectural and not yet functioning as a museum. Since childhood I had dreamed of such an architecture. Slanted walls, transverse beams, asymmetrical proportions, overcoming any alleged classical ideals. Resolutely non-utilitarian, these were pure *buildings*: imaginative, bold, daring, unprecedented, structurally rigid and non-ornamental yet without the Mannerist attributes typical of the anti-classical attitude. Zaha Hadid had employed a similar strategy to avoid the 90-degree angle. Alone, the Jewish Museum is a work not of mere avoidance of convention but the very definition of a new and a unique style. It is the combining of a plurality of resistive lines in three-dimensional space, which can be made visible as a line in order to indicate or to define spaces while the surface contradicts these forces. The Jewish Museum has such an internal complexity and substance in its architecture that it overcomes its intended use and can be appreciated as itself regardless of its actual use. Were it to



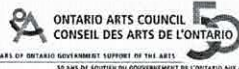
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remain empty we could go there just for the sake of the architecture and what it tells us. And of course I identified with it personally, because in 1988, when the Jewish Museum was first designed, I had composed my piano piece *Rhizom - Hommage à Glenn Gould*, which operates in a similar manner interpreting the scattered vectors of pick-up sticks.

Libeskind's building inspired not only my Libeskind-Cycle, but also the octophonic sound installation *void – mal d'archive*, in which I processed concrete sounds from within the museum. This work is the first of a subsequent Void-Cycle, which includes ten pieces which together form a work of music theatre. The orchestra piece *humanized void* also partly refers to this building.

The Ensemble recherche had commissioned me at the beginning of 2001 to write a sextet. I drew up a plan of 63 miniatures with every conceivable ensemble combination from solo to sextet; these miniatures are divided into three books that are played individually or in sequence (in the latter case, they fill about one hour). These miniatures can also be overlaid and overlapped. Thus the idea of chamber music is enhanced, because this work cannot be conducted as it is totally dependent on the dynamic interactions between the musicians.

Volume I was created in 2002 for the ensemble recherche on commission from the WDR [West German Radio] and consists of 17 miniatures. Its basic idea consists of sustained tones without any expression and without any parametric change ("dinamica statica"). These tones can be "upgraded" through expressive nuances or "devalued" by modifying the pitch content to devolve into noise. Another gambit is to win superior points through a clever series of miniatures, so that the work does not fall apart in a disjointed puzzle.

Volume II was composed in 2010/2011 for the Ensemble SurPlus (with support from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation). It consists of 25 miniatures. It is centered upon a lengthy cello solo which lasts more than 12 minutes which is flanked by a collection of miniatures. Occasionally these consist of only one stationary chord (reiterated eight times) so that in this centre, and thus in the middle of the cycle as

a whole, the music comes to a state of stasis. While in the first book each miniature is designed individually, in the second these miniature units are borrowed from the first book and transformed. The same procedure is used in the third book.

Volume III was written in 2010/2012 and was commissioned by the Ensemble Aventure (with support from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation) and contains 21 miniatures. It starts with a violin solo (as the first book began with a viola solo). At a certain point the miniatures closely follow each other without overlapping, forming a cohesive river of form. This, and the increasing size of the ensemble creates a growing form. From the 55th miniature onwards the viola is prominent in each section, running like a red thread through the end of this cycle which draws to a close with the sextet in its full formation.

As with any of my many "Hommage" works my aim is to find a connection point between the art of the dedicatee and that of my own music. Ostensibly, this is a deconstructive procedure; for Libeskind it involves the aesthetics of fragmentation, and for me it is the 63-part system, a poetic equivalent to the cool expressivity of Libeskind's ingenious construction which serves as the blueprint through which musical tones evolve in a slowly-moving harmonic development from one side to the other. Furthermore, the evolution of the expressive figures - more selectively than dramatically - are again always groundless in themselves ("dinamica statica") like frozen architecture.

— Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Translation: Daniel Foley)

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**Dániel Péter Biró** is Associate Professor of Composition and Music Theory at the University of Victoria. After studying in Hungary, Germany and Austria Dr. Biró completed his PhD in composition at Princeton University in 2004. His dissertation was a comparative study of early notational practices in examples of Jewish Torah trope, tenth century plainchant from St. Gallen and Hungarian laments. He researched Hungarian folk music at the Academy of Science in Budapest and Jewish and Islamic chant in Israel and the Netherlands. Awarded the Hungarian Government's Kodály Award for Hungarian composers, his compositions have been commissioned by Harvard University, the Stuttgart Opera, the Neue Vocalsolisten, the German Radio (Hessischer Rundfunk), the



City of Darmstadt, Vancouver New Music and have been performed around the world. In 2006 he was a featured composer and lecturer at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music and in 2008 at the International Messiaen Music Week. In 2010 he was awarded the Gigahertz Production Prize for Electronic Music by the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. In the fall of 2011 he was Visiting Professor at Utrecht University in Utrecht, Netherlands. From 2010–2012 he was a faculty member at the Matrix Academy for Electronic Music of the Experimental Studio in Freiburg, Germany, at the Tedarim Academy in Israel and the First International Symposium of New Music and Computer Music in Curitiba, Brazil. Dániel Péter Biró is co-editor of *Bela Bartók's String Quartets; Tradition and Legacy in Analytical Perspective* (Oxford University Press) and *Search – Journal for New Music and Culture* (Online Music Journal). He is co-founder of the Ensemble Tsilumos.

**Dániel Péter Biró** (b.1969) *Gam Zera* (also the seed) (2009–2012)

*Gam Zera* (Also the Seed) was written in 2009–2012. The composition is based on the Hebrew Bible text from the chapter of *Mishpatim* (Laws) in the book of Exodus as well as a section from the Book of Jeremiah. In Jewish tradition, the *Haftarah* text is to be read in the synagogue in the same week that the book of *Mishpatim* (Laws) is read. The English translation of the text is the following:

***Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, with Aaron, Nadab, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow low from afar. Moses alone shall come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."***

***Moses went and repeated to the people of the LORD and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, "All the things that the LORD has commanded we will do!" Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD.***

***Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He designated some young men among the Israelites, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as offerings of well-being to the LORD. Moses took one part of the blood and put it in basins, and the other part of the blood he dashed against the alter. Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!"***

***Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD makes with you concerning all these commands."***

***Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended; and they saw the God of Israel.***

***So will I never reject the offspring of Jacob and My servant David; I will never fail to take from his offspring rulers for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed I will restore their fortunes and take them back in Love.***

*English translation from Etz Haim: Torah and Commentary, David L. Lieber, Jules Harlow, eds. (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001).*

In combining these texts within the composition, relationships between ancient mythical ritual and textual hermeneutics are examined. As in much of my recent work, I have continued to incorporate Hebrew number symbolism (gematria) to form musical structure. Gematria not only serves to structure musical parameters such as pitch, rhythm, meter, tempo, etc. but also to organize phonetics, musical meaning, electronic spatialization and processing. Simultaneously, sonorous and formal connections are created between the sections of Torah and Haftarah text, one existing as phonetic ritual and the other as an extended chorale.

I am grateful to the members of the Ensemble Surplus, Noa Frenkel, Reinhold Braig, Kirk McNally, Detlef Heusinger, and the staff of the Experimental Studio and for their assistance in the creation of this composition. *Gam Zera* was commissioned with generous funding from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation.

– Dániel Péter Biró

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**Cornelius Schwehr** (b.1953, Freiburg/Breisgau) is a German composer with a significant body of chamber works as well as music for theatre, film and radio plays, an opera, and solo and orchestral pieces. From 1975 to 1981 he studied music theory with Peter Förtig, composition with Klaus Huber and guitar with Denise Lavenchy at the University of Music, Freiburg, and from 1981 to 1983 he took composition classes with Helmut Lachenmann at the Hochschule for Music and Performing Arts. From 1981 to 1995 he lectured at Freiburg, Karlsruhe and at the Winterthur Conservatory. Since 1995 he has been professor of composition, music theory and film music at Freiburg.



Besides a various number of chamber music works, several solo music works and orchestral works, and one opera Schwehr has written numerous music works for theatre, film, and radio plays. The current work (concerning all genres) deals (once again) with following question posed by Schwehr: "What can we learn from tradition and what of its aspects — for good reason — we can still live for and practice? This is not a trivial question, it rather touches the nerve of composing, as I take it and, in fact, can't be answered finally but should be asked insistently again and again."

**Cornelius Schwehr** (b.1953)

*'poco cantabile'* (2012)

The piece starts out with an anguished and distraught traditional harmonic cadence (a disturbance expressed rhythmically by meter and rhythm constantly and abruptly reverting into one another) and arrives at its end in an harmonic structure whose symmetrical aspects negate all traditional harmonic procedures. The transition between them, the middle part, is a kind of idyll in which a nervous wreck of a melody exhibits a completely dysfunctional relationship with its own accompaniment. This harmonic structure crosses over, opposes, and envelops the set character of the piece, initially rather cautiously, gradually becoming more musical and almost dance-like. The increasingly abstract harmony and on a more concrete level the rhythmic expectations do not cancel each other out; at best they illuminate each other reciprocally, in the twilight. And so as the beginning evokes a bygone harmonic reality and foreshadows its own ending (in the shadow of a German *Zweifachen* folk dance), *poco cantabile* can no longer reconstruct this ancient music.

— Cornelius Schwehr (Translation: Daniel Foley)

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**Dieter Mack** was born in Speyer in 1954 and studied composition, piano and music theory in Freiburg. After various teaching positions he was appointed professor of music theory at Freiburg University in 1986. Beginning in 2003 he taught composition at the Music High School in Lübeck. Numerous study trips abroad led him most often to Indonesia (over 9 years), where he studied Balinese gamelan music. In 1982 he founded his own gamelan ensemble. In 1988 he became a guest professor of music education and composition in Indonesia and from 1992-95 continued there as a long-term DAAD Lecturer at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in Bandung. From 1996-2007, funded by the Ford Foundation, he

worked as a consultant in an ethnomusicological and music education research project at the UPI Bandung. He is currently a visiting professor at the Art Academy ISI Surakarta, chairman of the music selection committee of the DAAD [German Academic Exchange Service] and member of the Music Advisory Board of the Goethe Institut.

**Dieter Mack** (b.1954)

*Yonsei* (2010)

*Yonsei* emerged after a lengthy period of composing various solo and orchestral works. I then happily returned to the realm of chamber music, which in varying degrees (number of players, choice of instruments) has marked the last 20 years of my work significantly. Aspects of the collective ensemble and the musical "individuals" within it and the dynamics of the relationships between these two extremes run through this series of chamber music works as a *leitmotif*. In *Yonsei* they are important, but rather on a secondary level. The title refers to the name of the South Korean university in Seoul where the piece was composed during my time as guest professor in the autumn of 2010.

Formally, *Yonsei* is based on a short rhythmic cell, which was developed and extended into various rhythmic layers and structuralizing levels, mostly using augmentation techniques. A double augmentation then became the starting point for a further group of new rhythmic layers, with micro-rhythmic elements that have a speech-like character, though no specific text is intended. For me, this abstract rhetorical aura couched in an imaginary language is an important element of expression in this composition.

— Dieter Mack

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### Ensemble SurPlus

Founded in 1992 in Freiburg, the Ensemble SurPlus has set itself the task of performing new compositions and of supporting non-mainstream composers, regardless of style, intellectual and technical difficulty. This spirit of radical openness toward the "new" was instigated by the founder, conductor, pianist, and artistic director of the ensemble, James Avery, who passed away in March 2009. This spirit is being continued by the musicians of the ensemble and was fundamental for the realization of many projects, which had previously been considered practically



impossible, such as avant-garde and experimental compositions of the "New Complexity" (Mark Andre, Aaron Cassidy, Frank Cox, Chaya Czernowin, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Mathias Spahlinger and many others).

SurPlus has a reputation for its extreme formats – concerts with 22 World Premières, and unusual instrumentation, such as a piece for seven pianos etc.

Immediately after its debut the ensemble was invited to take part in the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik. The first performance of a chamber opera at the Archipel Festival in Geneva soon followed and was received enthusiastically by the press. Since then, the ensemble has been performing all over Europe, Asia and North America. It has appeared at many of the important international centres for contemporary music, such as *musica viva*, Münchener Biennale, Wien Modern, März-Musik (Berlin), Flandern Festival, Eclat (Stuttgart), Beijing Modern Music Festival, Villa Medici (Rome), Sound Ways (St. Petersburg), Lucero Festival (Paris), Two Days and Two Nights of New Music (Odessa) and Tage für Neue Musik (Zürich).

As Ensemble in Residence, SurPlus regularly participates in exchange projects with the up-and-coming generation of composers. These include June in Buffalo (New York, U.S.A.), Stanford University (California, U.S.A.), Harvard University (Mass., USA) and the Summer Academy at Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart). SurPlus is continuing this fruitful international dialogue.

SurPlus performs both in traditional concert settings, as well as in interactive projects involving experimental installations, improvisation and instrumental theatre. The instrumentation can vary from duo to large scale ensemble, at times also utilizing live electronics in cooperation with the Experimentalstudio of the SWR. Numerous CD productions and live recordings document the ensemble's enormous versatility. The ensemble regularly commissions compositions and is supported, among others, by the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung.

### **Experimentalstudio Freiburg des SWR**

The Experimental Studio of the SWR in Freiburg is the link between compositional idea and technical implementation. Annually several composers and musicians are invited to enjoy a creative discourse with Studio technicians, sound designers,

editors and directors and are able to augment their creative work with the equipment of the experimental studio. Apart from the creation of new works, the Studio is very active as a production team. Now, with 40 years of presence in the international music business, it has established itself as one of the the leading resources for ambitious works with live electronics and has performed continuously at major opera houses as well as in almost all the major festivals (Berlin Festival, Vienna Festival, the Festival d'Automne à Paris, Biennale Venice, etc.). At the 1993 Salzburg Festival the work of the experimental studio was experienced for the first time in a performance of Nono's *Prometeo*.

Outstanding productions in the history of the experimental studio includes works by such major composers as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Cristóbal Halffter, Vinko Globokar and Luigi Nono; the latter virtually created his entire late works in close association with the studio and its employees. Nono's "tragedy of listening" *Prometeo* has been realized by the Experimental Studio more than fifty times since its first performance in 1984. Of the younger generation in particular Mark Andre, Chaya Czernowin, José María Sánchez-Verdú, Brice Pauset and Georg Friedrich Haas may be mentioned as those composers whose pioneering works have been produced in co-production with the experimental studio. Outstanding musicians who have collaborated with the studio include Maurizio Pollini, Claudio Abbado, Gidon Kremer, Jörg Widmann, Irvine Arditti and Roberto Fabbriciani.

For its exemplary work the Experimental Studio has been awarded many international prizes including the prestigious Annual Prize of the German Record Critics for their productions of the works of Luigi Nono. Detlef Heusinger was appointed artistic director of the experimental studio in 2006, succeeding Hans Peter Haller and André Richard.



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## 2013 Upcoming Events

### **February 3** Sunday at Betty Oliphant Theatre: **Past, Present and Future - Canadian Music Then and Now**

features a centennial tribute to John Weinzweig, works by senior composers R. Murray Schafer and Brian Cherney and commissioned works from rising stars Brian Harman (Canada Council) and Adam Scime (OAC).

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### **April 6** Saturday at Gallery 345: **Six Hundred Year Anniversaries**

To celebrate the centenaries of some of New Music Concerts most distinguished guest composers in a gala evening of music, words and pictures, a number of noted musicians and musical friends will play and reminisce about John Cage, Barbara Pentland, John Weinzweig, Witold Lutosławski and Henry Brant. The evening will feature an auction of André Leduc photographs from our archives, fine food, and wine of course, plus a tribute to American rhythmic pioneer Conlon Nancarrow. Proceeds will benefit New Music Concerts.

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### **April 27** Saturday at Gallery 345: **Le Jardin Musical - A Tribute to Gilles Tremblay**

is a program devised and performed by pianist **Louise Bessette** in honour of Tremblay's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The evening includes works by Tremblay, Serge Arcuri, Olivier Messiaen and François Dompierre.

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