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New Music Concerts *presents*

*a portrait of*  
**Jörg Widmann**

**Friday April 18, 2014**  
Betty Oliphant Theatre  
404 Jarvis Street, Toronto



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**Friday April 18, 2014**  
Betty Oliphant Theatre  
404 Jarvis Street, Toronto

New Music Concerts presents

*a portrait of*

# Jörg Widmann

*Programme:*

**Liebeslied** ✻ (2010)

Robert Aitken flute Cary Ebli oboe Max Christie clarinet Rick Sacks percussion Gregory Oh piano  
Stephen Sitarski violin Doug Perry viola David Hetherington cello Jörg Widmann conductor

**Fantasie** (2005) Jörg Widmann solo clarinet

**Freie Stücke** ✻ (2002)

Robert and Dianne Aitken flutes Cary Ebli oboe Max Christie, Anthony Thompson clarinets  
Fraser Jackson bassoon David Quackenbush horn James Gardiner trumpet Ian Cowie trombone  
Rick Sacks, David Schotzko percussion Stephen Sitarski, Corey Gemell violins Doug Perry viola  
David Hetherington cello Roberto Occhipinti bass Jörg Widmann conductor

— *Intermission* —

**Fünf Bruchstücke** (1997) Jörg Widmann clarinet Gregory Oh piano

**Air** ✻ (2005) Chris Gongos solo horn

**Dubairische Tänze** ✻ (2009)

Robert Aitken flute Cary Ebli oboe Max Christie, Anthony Thompson clarinets Fraser Jackson bassoon  
David Quackenbush horn James Gardiner, Michael White trumpets Ian Cowie trombone Mark Tetreault tuba  
Rick Sacks, David Schotzko percussion Stephen Sitarski, Corey Gemell violins Doug Perry viola  
David Hetherington, Rachel Mercer cellos Roberto Occhipinti bass Jörg Widmann conductor

✻ *Canadian premiere*

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Robert Aitken, c.m., Artistic Director

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# Jörg Widmann

Jörg Widmann was born in Munich on 19 June 1973. He studied the clarinet at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich with Gerd Starke and later with Charles Neidich at the Juilliard School in New York (1994-1995). He additionally began to take composition lessons with Kay Westermann at the age of eleven and subsequently continued his studies with Wilfried Hiller and Hans Werner Henze (1994-1996) and later Heiner Goebbels and Wolfgang Rihm in Karlsruhe (1997-1999). Widmann's great passion as a clarinetist is chamber music and he regularly performs with partners such as Tabea Zimmermann, Heinz Holliger, András Schiff, Kim Kashkashian, and Hélène Grimaud. He has also achieved great success as a soloist in orchestral concerts in Germany and abroad. Several works have been dedicated to Widmann by fellow composers: in 1999, he performed the premiere of *Music for Clarinet and Orchestra* by Wolfgang Rihm in the musica viva concert series; in 2006, he performed *Cantus* by Aribert Reimann with the WDR symphony orchestra, and in 2009, at the Lucerne Festival, the world premiere of *Rechant* by Heinz Holliger. In 2001, Jörg Widmann was appointed as the successor to Dieter Klöcker as professor of clarinet at the Freiburg Staatliche Hochschule für Musik where he also took up the post of professor of composition in 2009. He was composer-in-residence of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival, the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Vienna Konzerthaus.

Jörg Widmann has received numerous prizes for his compositions: the Belmont Prize for Contemporary Music from the Forberg-Schneider Foundation (1998), the Schneider-Schott Music Prize, the Paul Hindemith Prize (both in 2002), the Encouragement Award from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, the Achievement Award from the Munich Opera Festival (both in 2003) as well as the Arnold Schönberg Prize (2004). In 2006, Widmann received the Composition Prize from the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg as well as the Claudio Abbado Composition Prize from the Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2009, he received the Elise L. Stoecker Prize of the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, New York and in 2013, he was awarded the Music Award of the



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Heidelberger Frühling and the GEMA German Music Authors Award. He is a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin and a full member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, the Free Academy of the Arts in Hamburg and the German Academy of Dramatic Arts. He was composer-in-residence of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival, the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Vienna Konzerthaus.

Jörg Widmann has composed a trilogy for large orchestra based on the principle of transferring vocal forms to orchestral writing. The trilogy consists of *Lied* (premiered in 2003 and recorded by Bamberg Symphony Orchestra and Jonathan Nott), *Chor* (premiered in 2004 by DSO Berlin and Kent Nagano) and *Messe* premiered by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Christian Thielemann in June 2005. In 2007 Pierre Boulez and the Vienna Philharmonic premiered Widmann's orchestral work *Armonica*; Christian Tetzlaff and the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie premiered his Violin Concerto. 2008 saw the premieres of *Antiphon* with Paavo Järvi conducting Frankfurt Radio and of the piano cycle *Eleven Humoresques*, commissioned by Carnegie Hall New York for Yefim Bronfman, followed by the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio and Mariss Jansons premiering *Con brio*. In March and April 2008 Widmann lived and worked in Dubai. This project was supported by the Siemens Arts Program and the Goethe Institute led to the world premiere of Widmann's *Dubairische Tänze* in Berlin in May 2009. The Cleveland Orchestra under their Music Director Franz Welser-Möst premiered Widmann's flute concerto, *Flûte en suite*, in May 2011, followed by the European premiere by the Berliner Philharmoniker and Sir Simon Rattle with soloist Emmanuel Pahud. String Quartets such as the Artemis, the Vogler, the Pacifica and the Minguet Quartets regularly perform his works.

Three music-theatre projects prove Widmann to be an outstanding composer for the stage: the opera *Das Gesicht im Spiegel* was chosen by the German magazine *Opernwelt* as the most significant first performance of the season 2003/04. *Am Anfang* (2009) is the result of a unique kind of collaboration between a visual artist and a composer; Widmann created the work together with Anselm Kiefer and conducted the world premiere on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Opéra Bastille in Paris. The most recent

stage work *Babylon* (2011/12) is a commission by the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich. Jörg Widmann and philosopher Peter Sloterdijk in his first venture as librettist present a new interpretation of the Babylon myth in this musical-dramatic *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

### Liebeslied (2010)

The ensemble piece *...umdüstert...* was composed around the same time as my cello concerto *Dunkle Saiten*. It is based on a comment on the subject of beauty made by Baudelaire towards the end of his life, "on one of the most interesting objects which human society has to offer," the face of a woman, which is at its most fascinating and attractive "when darkened by melancholy." Ten years later, I am now working in a similar manner on a new pair of compositions: on the subject of love. A poet's phrase, in this case the fragment of a poem by Schiller, provided the basis for my orchestral work *Teufel Amor*. The chamber music counterpart for this work is this purely instrumental love song free of any verbal associations. The composition deals in compressed form with the same subject matter as in *Teufel Amor*: the character of love as both paradise and a pit of snakes in the manner of a Janus face.

— Jörg Widmann

### Fantasie (2005)

*Fantasie* for solo clarinet is my first real piece for my own instrument, the clarinet. With its eccentric virtuosity and its cheerful, ironic fundamental character, it reflects the experience with Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet* of 1919 and the tonal innovations which did not appear in music before Carl Maria von Weber's clarinet concertos and takes them further in a new way. It is a little imaginary scene uniting the dialogues of different people in close proximity in the spirit of the *commedia dell'arte*. — Jörg Widmann

## **Freie Stücke** (2002)

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Following on several works for larger-scale forces focused on the mastering of a large-scale structure and musical flow, these pieces take their inspiration from the desire for concentration and reduction. The ten movements all display a high degree of disparity in all possible aspects. Each piece concentrates on a particular tonal phenomenon (pulse, shaky foundations, noise, monophony, structures with harmonics etc.), but all sections still remain interlocked. The ending (or its reflection) of each piece forms the initial point of the subsequent movement, thereby transforming disparate elements into a single narrative. Despite the brevity or reduction on the horizontal plane, the vertical plane of these pieces has become quite substantial by my standards: this is my first real ensemble work (for 9 wind players, 5 string players and 2 percussionists). – *Jörg Widmann*

## **Fünf Bruchstücke** (Five Fragments) (1997)

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After composing several pieces that dealt with the ebb and flow of coping with large-scale forms, in 1997 the idea of fragments began to fascinate me: reduction, implosion, concentration. My cherished instruments of clarinet and piano had become strangely unfamiliar to me; composing this work cast a new light on them. – *Jörg Widmann*

## **Air** (2005)

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The horn piece *Air* requires a highly virtuosic technique, as indeed it should since it was composed in 2005 as the compulsory piece for the 54th International Music Competition of the ARD. At the same time, however, it is completely oriented towards a simple vocal air – “air” in its literal meaning and in its handed-down meaning of “melody”. The sound material consists of various natural harmonic rows some of which are intersecting. This microtonal cosmos and the constant change of open and stopped playing create an exciting piece of nature on closeness and distance. – *Jörg Widmann*

## **Dubairische Tänze** (2009)

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- I. Zweifacher II. Valse mécanique III. Wiegenlied  
IV. Jeux d’eaux (improvisation for two percussionists)  
V. Valse bavaroise VI. Schlaflied VII. Landler  
VIII. Vier Strophen IX. Marsch

Dubai was the envisaged destination of Jörg Widmann when he was sent to the desert as part of the Siemens Arts Program. The intention was to gather inspiration for a new composition in the cosmopolitan city on the Persian Gulf, but his *Dubairischen Tänze* sound far closer to his native Bavaria than the Middle East: Bavarian *Ländler*, *Zwiefache* and a substantial collection of other wittily alienated dances form a highly unorthodox, contemporary yet entertaining piece. Widmann writes about his composition:

My one month stay in Dubai raised the question in me: where I actually come from – even with regard to music. Just like it is natural to want to go to foreign parts of the world when at home, it is perhaps necessary to travel abroad in order to discover the familiar. My answer to that – be it consequence, substratum or counterquestion – is *Dubairische Tänze*. – *Jörg Widmann*

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**Christopher Gongos** is one of Canada’s most respected horn players. Originally from Edmonton, Alberta, Christopher received his formal education at the University of Alberta where he earned his Bachelor of Music degree in Performance, as a student of Kay McCallister. He then pursued graduate studies at McGill University where he studied with John Zirbel. He was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada and a Fellow at the Tanglewood Institute. Additionally, he studied with Philip Farkas, Michael Holtzel and John MacDonald. Following his studies in Montreal, Christopher began his professional orchestral career as Principal Horn of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. In Kitchener he gained valuable experience in chamber music performance as a member of the Canadian Chamber Ensemble. Christopher also served as Associate Principal Horn of the Winnipeg Symphony and as Second Horn of the Hamilton Philharmonic. In 1998 Christopher joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, where holds the position

of Associate Principal Horn. He continues to enrich his career with chamber music, new music and studio work.

**Gregory Oh** gained his notoriety as a “new music revolutionary,” but he is equally at home in the opera, theatre and indie rock. Holding graduate degrees from the University of Toronto and University of Michigan, Gregory is an acclaimed classical pianist whose repertoire spans five centuries. His recent work has seen him appear in places from the National Arts Centre to legendary techno club Berghain in Berlin, and the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville to the Wordless Music Series at the Lincoln Centre. Gregory is the artistic director of the Open Ears Festival and acclaimed new music group Toca Loca, and has served as contemporary music curator at Toronto’s Music Gallery. He has worked at San Diego Opera, the Canadian Opera Company and the Banff Opera Program. He teaches at the University of Toronto, is on faculty at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, and is a resident artist at Soulpepper Theatre.

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