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44th season | 363rd event
Thursday December 11, 2014
The Music Gallery, 197 John Street, Toronto

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Stroppa + Sluchin



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Stroppa + Sluchin

Marco Stroppa guest composer | **Benny Sluchin** solo trombone
Wallace Halladay saxophone | **NMC Ensemble** | **Robert Aitken** direction

Programme:

Elliott Carter (USA 1908-2012) *Epigrams* (2012)
Stephen Sitarski violin David Hetherington cello Gregory Oh piano
Canadian premiere

Paul Steenhuisen (Canada 1965) *Anthropo* (2014)
Benny Sluchin trombone Paul Steenhuisen electronics
World premiere, funded by The Canada Council

— *Intermission* —

Marco Stroppa (Italy/Germany 1959) *... of Silence* (2007-13)
Wallace Halladay alto saxophone Marco Stroppa electronics
Canadian premiere

Marco Stroppa *From Needle's Eye* (1996-2001; rev. 2007)
Benny Sluchin solo trombone Les Allt flute Clare Scholtz oboe Max Christie clarinet
Bill Cannaway bassoon Joan Watson horn Stuart Laughton trumpet David Pell trombone
Scott Irvine tuba Rick Sacks percussion Doug Perry viola Adam Scime contrabass Robert Aitken direction
Canadian premiere

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Composer, researcher and professor, **Marco Stroppa** (Verona, 1959) undertook a range of musical studies (piano, choral music and choir conducting, composition and electronic music) under Laura Palmieri, Guido Bega, Renato Dionisi, Azio Corghi and Alvis Vidolin at the Conservatories of Verona, Milan and Venice. He also studied computer music, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence at the Media Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on a Fulbright Scholarship in 1984-86. Between 1980 and 1984 he worked at the computer music centre of the University of Padua (Italy), where he produced his first mixed piece, *Traiettorie*, for piano and computer. In 1982 Pierre Boulez invited him to work as a composer and researcher at IRCAM, the largest institution of the world devoted to computer music. His constant contact with this institution has been fundamental to his musical education and work as a composer. A highly appreciated and active pedagogue, he has lectured widely and has published essays in a number of international reviews. In 1987 Mr. Stroppa founded the composition and computer music workshop at the International Bartók Festival in Szombathely, Hungary. During thirteen years at its head, he met the greatest musicians in the country and broadened his horizons by reading a great deal of poetry. He also taught composition at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris and Lyon and since 1999 he has been professor of composition at the University of Music and Performing Arts (Musikhochschule) in Stuttgart, as successor to Helmut Lachenmann.

Mr. Stroppa composes for both acoustical instruments and new media. His repertoire includes works for concerts, one music drama, two radio operas and various special projects. His keen interest in sound and space has often led him to rethinking the placement of the instruments on stage so as to achieve a spatial dramaturgy that will be revealed and highlighted by the unfolding of the music. He often groups several works around large cycles exploring specific compositional projects, such as a series of concertos for instrument and a spatialized orchestra or ensemble inspired by poems of W.B. Yeats, a book of *Miniature Estrofe* for piano and three string quartets. He has approached chamber and choral music for only ten years. His widely acclaimed first opera, *Re Orso* (King Bear) was premiered at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 2012. He is currently writing a horn octet and two concertos, one for three accordions and orchestra and one for cello.



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► **Marco Stroppa: ...of Silence (2007-13)**
.....

for alto saxophone and acoustic totem, from *The enormous room*, a cycle for solo instrument and chamber electronics. Commission: Concert Hall Shizuoka / Shizuoka City Cultural Promotion Foundation.

1. Winsome
2. Sensible and quick
3. Scattering
4. Smarting

Lady of Silence

from the winsome cage of
thy body
rose
through the sensible
night
a
quick bird

(tenderly upon
the dark's prodigious face
thy
voice
scattering perfume-gifted
wings
suddenly escorts
with feet
sun-sheer

the smarting beauty of dawn)

— e. e. cummings

...of Silence is the fourth piece of a cycle of works based on poems of e.e. cummings for solo instrument and chamber electronics, a term invented by myself which has several meanings: aesthetically, I am searching for a delicate and intimate relation between a soloist and other invisible sounds around him or her; technologically, all the electronic sounds are diffused only from the stage; spatially, the performer occupies for each movement a different position on the stage. In *...of Silence* a single sound source, made of five loudspeakers, is standing on the stage, a system that I

call an "acoustic totem". The unfolding of the piece follows the poem, which depicts the passage of the night (the lady of silence) toward the "smarting beauty of dawn."

This is the first work that used a revolutionary system, called Antescofo and developed at IRCAM by a team directed by Arshia Cont, which gives the computer a more musical behaviour and allows it to follow the score and the tempo of a human performer, exactly as in a chamber music situation.— *Marco Stroppa*

► **Marco Stroppa: From Needle's Eye (1996-9/2007)**
.....

for solo trombone, double quintet and percussion. Commission: Ensemble InterContemporain.

1. Polished
2. Silently boundless
3. Crackling (like a whirl of unrestrainable dances)

A Needle's Eye

All the stream that's roaring by
Came out of a needle's eye;
Things unborn, things that are gone,
From needle's eye still goad it on.

— W.B. Yeats (from: *A Full Moon in March*, 1935)

This is the second work belonging to a cycle of concertos inspired by poems by W. B. Yeats. It is also the first outcome of a long-lasting cooperation with Benny Sluchin, that started in 1982 at IRCAM, when he was working on the analysis of mutes for brasses. The ensemble is "spatialised": in the centre, in front, the soloist; on the left and right hand side of the stage two quintets "battenti" – as the double choirs in Venice in the XVI century; in the centre, but behind, a percussionist, a kind of fleeting shadow of the soloist. Each quintet, comprising one string instrument, two woodwinds and two brasses, has a specific sound colour: soft and velvety on the left, harsh and biting on the right. During the whole piece the placement of each sound in this space was used as a way to generate, for instance, an opposition of volumes or spatial "canons."

The piece has three movements connected to each other. The first is based on oscillating chords between the two quintets. Each chord is finely “polished” in all its details of orchestration and further enriched by bowed percussion instruments. The oscillation, which may suggest a supple breathing, is punctuated at first by short, almost “shy” notes played by the solo trombone, and then by increasingly longer and more expressive phrases. This process yields a series of “beginnings of phrases,” that never manage to be entirely developed and start each time again and again, as if the soloist were in quest of an impossible contact with the ensemble.

The second movement is announced by the stroke of a Tam Tam at the end of the first movement, that is metamorphosed into a glissando Tam (a water gong). Inspired by the sonority of the “dung,” the huge Tibetan trumpet played on the roofs of the monasteries, the movement explores an unusual feature of “virtuosity,” a dimension, each concerto has to deal with in a way or another! Rather than pushing the instrumental technique to its extremes of speed or power (a very western interpretation of virtuosity), I tried to achieve complete mastery of a very slow, but perfectly smooth movement: a glissando in the lowest register of the trombone (the so-called pedal tones). The majesty of the “dung,” as well as the impressive beauty of the boundless landscape surrounding them, is thus recalled by sounds quietly growing in the most unfathomable of the trombone’s registers, and by a glissando gong, a percussive double bass (playing with a timpani mallet) and, at the end, by the enigmatic presence of a bell.

The third movement emerges from the atmosphere of the second one and starts with an increasingly frenzied cadenza for trombone and wah-wah mute, where the soloist has to dissociate the movement of the right hand (the slide of the trombone), from the one of the left hand, opening and closing the waa-waa mute according to different rhythmic patterns. The other instruments progressively join the trombone, build a highly polyrhythmic and hectic fabric

around it, and finally fade out into a soft and immobile atmosphere that ends the piece. I would like to thank Benny Sluchin, whose bravura, inquisitive mind and patience have greatly inspired me. — *Marco Stroppa*

Twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the first composer to receive the United States National Medal of Arts, one of the few composers ever awarded Germany’s Ernst Von Siemens Music Prize, and in 1988 made “Commandeur dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” by the Government of France, as well as receiving the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honor in 2012, **Elliott Carter** is internationally recognized as one of America’s leading voices of the classical music tradition. He was a recipient of the Prince Pierre Foundation Music Award and was one of the few living composers to be inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame during his lifetime. Carter was recognized by the Pulitzer Prize Committee for the first time in 1960 for his groundbreaking String Quartet No. 2. Igor Stravinsky hailed Carter’s Double Concerto for harpsichord, piano, and two chamber orchestras (1961) and Piano Concerto (1967), as “masterpieces.” Carter’s prolific career spanned over 75 years, with more than 150 pieces, ranging from chamber music to orchestra to opera, often marked with a sense of wit and humor. His astonishing late-career creative burst resulted in a number of brief solo and chamber works, as well as major essays such as *Asko Concerto* (2000) for Holland’s ASKO Ensemble. Some chamber works include *What Are Years* (2009), *Nine by Five* (2009), and *Two Thoughts About the Piano* (2005-06), widely toured by Pierre-Laurent Aimard. Carter showed his mastery in larger forms as well, with major contributions such as the opera *What Next?* (1997-98), *Boston Concerto* (2002), *Three Illusions for Orchestra* (2004), called by the Boston Globe “surprising, inevitable, and vividly orchestrated,” *Flute Concerto* (2008), a piano concerto, *Interventions* (2007), which premiered on Carter’s 100th birthday concert at Carnegie Hall with James Levine, Daniel Barenboim, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (December 11, 2008), and the song cycle *A Sunbeam’s Architecture* (2011).

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► **Elliott Carter: *Epigrams* (2012)**
.....

Epigrams is Elliott Carter's final work, composed during the spring and summer of 2012 at the age of 103. It was written for the Aldeburgh Music Festival and was premiered there in 2013 during a Tribute to Elliott Carter presented by Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Oliver Knussen. This is the work's first Canadian performance.

Born in Vancouver, **Paul Steenhuisen** is an independent composer working with acoustic and digital media. His concert music consists of orchestral, chamber, solo, and vocal music, often including live electronics and soundfiles. Additionally, he is the composer for the HYPOSURFACE installation project based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was most recently exhibited for six months at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. Raised by parents from The Netherlands and Curaçao, the confluence of his heritage and upbringing in North American culture has informed both his education and musical output. Initially, Steenhuisen worked with Keith Hamel (DMA, UBC), simultaneously with Louis Andriessen (Royal Conservatory, The Hague) and Michael Finnissy (Hove, England), and later with Tristan Murail at IRCAM (Centre Pompidou, Paris). During those years, he was laureate of more than a dozen national and international awards, including the Governor General of Canada Gold Medal as the outstanding student in all faculties (UBC), seven awards from PROCAN/SOCAN, and four in the CBC Young Composers Competition. He was a finalist in the Gaudeamus Music Week, and his piece WONDER was a "recommended" work at the International Rostrum of Composers (UNESCO, Paris). Subsequently, Steenhuisen was composer in residence with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Alberta. In 2011, he was awarded the Victor Martin Lynch-Staunton Award (Canada Council for the Arts) as the outstanding mid-career artist in music. He is also the author of 'Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composers', and host of the SOUNDLAB New Music Podcast (iTunes). His music has been called "Superb... the high point of the concert" (Neuzeit Graz, Austria), as well as "filth" (La Presse, Montréal), with a "freshness that bodes well for the future" (Paris Transatlantic).

► **Paul Steenhuisen: *Anthropo* (2014)**
.....

From the root *ánthrōpos* (human being), the trombone becomes the unstable centre of ambiguous hybrids – combined, cross-synthesized, anthropomorphized, and cannibalized (anthropophagized). Analyses of the trombone (anthropometrics) are resynthesized into dynamic physical models of the instrument (via Modalys/IRCAM), then further compounded by pushing the outputs back through virtual models of metals – like taking the sound of the trombone and resonating it through the metal of another trombone, multiplied by X and divided by fragile impurities. *Anthropo* was written for Benny Sluchin with the support of a multi-faceted project grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. — *Paul Steenhuisen*

Ma femme à la taille de loutre entre les dents du tigre Ma femme à la bouche de cocarde et de bouquet d'étoiles de dernière grandeur Aux dents d'empreintes de souris blanche sur la terre blanche	My wife is the size of otter between the teeth of the tiger My wife has the mouth of a roundel and rosette bouquet of stars latter grandeur Teeth imprints of white mice White on the white earth
---	--

L'union libre, André Breton

Des loups viennent mordre le poignet (de l'homme) sans détente, et la main qui s'épuise. Les rats s'approchent, sautant sans bruit, sans bruit. Impuissance, puissance des autres.	Wolves are biting the wrist of man (Rights) without relaxation, and the hand that runs out. Rats are approaching, jumping without noise Without noise. Impotence, power of others.
Le singe se renverse et devient balai. La loutre se renverse et devient éponge. L'âne se renverse et devient un buffle et Devient un REQUIN QUI S'ÉLANCE VERS VOUS LA GUEULE RENVERSÉE POUR HAPPER.	The monkey is reversed and becomes broom. The otter is reversed and becomes sponge. The donkey is reversed and becomes a buffalo and becomes a SHARK that rushes TO YOU AND REVERSES ITS MOUTH to snap.

Animaux fantastiques, Henri Michaux

► **Benny Sluchin, trombone**
.....

Benny Sluchin studied music at the conservatory of his native city, Tel Aviv, and in the Academy of Music in Jerusalem. Simultaneously, he studied mathematics and philosophy at the university of Tel Aviv and received his "Master of Science."

For two years, Sluchin played in the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. For the following 4 years he was co-soloist in the Symphony Orchestra of Jerusalem (Radio Orchestra). A scholarship from the German government brought him to Cologne where he studied with Vinko Globokar, receiving his Artist's diploma with distinction.

Since 1976, he has been a member of the Ensemble InterContemporain (dir. Pierre Boulez), playing the most representative music of the present century and participating as soloist in premières of solo works by Iannis Xenakis, Vinko Globokar, Gérard Grisey, Pascal Dusapin, Frédéric Martin, Elliott Carter, Luca Francesconi, Marco Stroppa, James Wood, Paul Méfano, György Kurtag, Jonathan Harvey...

Apart from this, he participates in various research projects in brass acoustics and musicology at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique). He completed a PhD thesis in Mathematics and is the author of many articles and pedagogical books. The SACEM prize for pedagogical realization was given in 1996 to his Introduction to contemporary trombone techniques, *Contemporary Trombone Excerpts* and *Jeu et chant simultanés sur les cuivres* (Éditions Musicales Européennes). Writing with Raymond Lapie he also published *Le trombone à travers les âges* (Buchet-Chastel, 2001).

Trombone professor at the Conservatoire de Lavallois, and teacher at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris (CNSMDP), he offers workshops, instrumental master classes and conferences. Benny Sluchin took part in many recordings and completed *Le Trombone Contemporain*, (Musidisc 243673), *French Bel canto Trombone* (Musidisc 243662), *Xenakis - Keren* (Erato 2292-45770-2), *Berio - Sequenzas* (DGG 457 038-2), and *Luca Francesconi - Animus* (Kairos 0012712KAI).

► **Wallace Halladay, saxophone**
.....

Canadian saxophonist Wallace Halladay captures the qualities of the modern virtuoso, being at home in numerous styles, from the traditional to jazz and beyond. A specialist in the performance of contemporary music, Wallace has commissioned and premiered numerous works for saxophone. Wallace also inaugurated the Intersections Series with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in an entire concert of music for saxophone and orchestra entitled "The Story of the Saxophone." In March 2009, Wallace made his debut as soloist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra: the *Globe and Mail* called him "phenomenal" and "so riveting...that not much can compete against it."

Wallace recorded the two saxophone *Sequenzas* of Luciano Berio and the Colgrass concerto for NAXOS Records. He has been presented by and performed with new music groups across the Canada and the USA and is the Artistic Director of Toronto New Music Projects, which has presented the music of Scelsi, Donatoni and Gubaidulina, and most recently bringing Philippe Leroux, and Vinko Globokar to Toronto. He can also be heard with the Toronto Symphony, Canadian Opera Company, and National Ballet Orchestras.

Wallace holds a Bachelor's degree in Performance and Composition from the University of Toronto, a Master's from New England Conservatory in Boston, and a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music. Wallace also studied at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam with internationally acclaimed virtuoso Arno Bornkamp with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. He has previously taught at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Eastman School of Music, and is presently Assistant Professor of Saxophone at the University of Toronto, where he also directs the Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Wallace was the 2009 winner of the Virginia Parker Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts. Awarded for outstanding musicianship, Wallace is the first woodwind player to receive the prize in its 25 year history, and he joins such luminary Canadian laureates as Jon Kimura Parker, Isabel Bayrakdarian, James Ehnes, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Wallace is a Conn-Selmer Artist and plays Selmer (Paris) saxophones.

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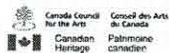
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