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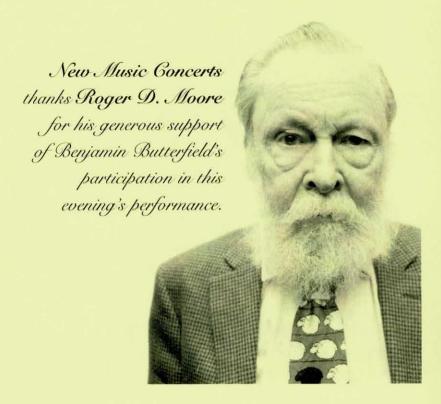
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Canadian New Music Network
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46th season | 389th event
Friday April 28, 2017
Trinity St. Paul's Centre | 427 Bloor Street West
New Music Concerts presents:







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#### PROGRAMME:

— Illuminating Introduction @ 7:15 —

Celebrating John Beckwith at 90 with John Beckwith and Robert Aitken

-- Concert @ 8:00 --

John Beckwith (Canada 1927)

Calling (2016, World Premiere)

James Gardiner flugelhorn Vanessa Fralick, Scott Good tenor trombones

Cathy Stone euphonium Megan Hodge bass trombone Adam Scime contrabass

John Weinzweig (Canada 1913-2006)

String Quartet N°3 (1962)

Accordes Quartet: Stephen Sitarski, Carol Lynn Fujino violins Douglas Perry viola David Hetherington cello

Igor Stravinsky (Russia/USA 1882-1971)

In Memoriam Dylan Thomas (1954)

Benjamin Butterfield tenor Vanessa Fralick, Scott Good, Cathy Stone tenor trombones

Megan Hodge bass trombone Accordes string quartet Robert Aitken direction

- Intermission -

John Beckwith

Avowals (1985)

Benjamin Butterfield tenor William Aide keyboards

John Beckwith

Quintet (2015, World Premiere)

Dianne Aitken flute Fraser Jackson bassoon James Gardiner trumpet Douglas Perry viola Adam Scime contrabass

Please join us in the Gymnasium following the concert for a wine and cheese reception courtesy of New Music Concerts' Board of Directors.

Paul Hodge recording engineer | Sandor Ajzenstat stage manager PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AND OTHER DEVICES!

#### PROGRAM NOTES By John Beckwith



John Beckwith with Robert Aitken. ©2007 by André Leduc

During the series' fortysome years of existence. I have been a devoted New Music Concerts fan. I have attended a large number, maybe most, of its public events, served a brief span on its board, and as a composer have been involved in a generous number of its performances and commissions. Several times, Robert Aitken and his associates have supported with their encouragement compositional proposals that others have rejected: a work for ten keyboard instruments, a chamber work featuring the Highland pipes, a wind nonet

with a scenario of entrances and exits, to cite a few examples. I'm delighted now to be asked to curate a concert featuring works by me alongside works by composers I regard as influences.

Unintentionally, the program as finally designed has several elegiac connections. The poet Dylan Thomas was en-route to meet with Stravinsky with a view to their collaboration on a stage work, when he suddenly died (December 1953). As a memorial, the composer made a setting of one of Thomas's best-known poems, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," itself a memorial to the poet's father. Weinzweig's Third Quartet was completed shortly after the death of his mother, and is dedicated to her memory. My second collaboration with bpNichol, Avowals, preceded his early death by only three years.

Membership of the Accordes Quartet has undergone changes but two of the original players remain active with the ensemble – Doug Perry and David Hetherington. The Quartet was founded in the early 1970s for a performance of a work of mine called *Musical Chairs*, and we have worked together in later years preparing a revival of my Quartet in 1996 and the premiere of *Fractions* in 2007. I'm happy they're able to participate in tonight's concert.

# Beckwith: Calling (2016)

A year ago, in preliminary discussions about this program, my suggestion of *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas* was accepted, but it implied the addition of four trombonists to the playing cast – for a scant three or four minutes of playing. How might we justify this? What other works requiring trombones might we add? When no immediate ideas emerged, I said, "Well, okay, I'll write something," and I did. Asking one of the trombonists to take up the euphonium, and enlisting the trumpeter from

the Quintet to play flugelhorn, I produced *Calling*. The title occurred to me when I thought of the historical association of the trombone with time-callers, signals, and especially religious or other-worldly moments (think of the graveyard scene in *Don Giovanni* or the trial scene in *The Magic Flute* or for that matter the "Tuba Mirum" of Mozart's Requiem). The "calling" motives in the piece aren't in fact confined to the bass trombone but are shared by other brasses in solos or duets in other registers, against a counterpoint of something like free conversation.

#### Weinzweig: String Quartet No. 3 (1962)



John Beckwith with John Weinzweig (CMC archive)

The third and largest of John Weinzweig's three string quartets was composed in 1962 and premiered in early 1963 by the Canadian String Quartet in the Concert Hall (now called Walter Hall) of the Edward Johnson Building, then in its inaugural season. The half-hour-long work is in five movements. The first, third, and fifth are all played with mutes and in a uniform Adagio tempo, the second and fourth unmuted in more rapid tempos. All five employ compound metres: 9/8, 6/8, 9/8, 15/8 (resolving into 5/4), and 9/8.

Robert Aitken, who like me was a composition student of Weinzweig's, recalls the composer's comment during

his work on the Quartet that he seemed to be writing it more or less automatically, just as it came to him. Weinzweig's program note refers to the piece as "surrealistic" and credits this quality to his interest in *Finnegans Wake* and other "free association" writings of James Joyce. The four instruments are individually characterized and there are few tutti passages or rhythmic unisons, notable exceptions being the aggressive beginning of movement 2 and the conclusion of movement 5. The lines are meticulously edited by the composer with a predominantly dissonant harmonic color and many telling string effects, such as the fast repeated notes played in a quiet col legno (with the wood of the bow) in movement 2 and again briefly in movement 5.

Movement 5 is headed "In Memoriam," recording that during the Quartet's composition the composer's mother died. Towards the conclusion there is a brief reference to the opening phrase of the chant associated with the *Kol Nidre* ("All vows," in Aramaic), a text repudiating vows and oaths of the year, which is traditionally intoned in synagogues at the start of the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) eve service. The Quartet ends with an extraordinary slow passage played by all four instruments in octaves, based on a retrograde inversion of the work's basic set, starting on C. A final C is sustained while the players repeat the set in its original form, a few hesitant notes each.

This eloquent composition is available in the 1975 recording by the Orford Quartet, part of a three-disc album of Weinzweig's works (Centrediscs CMCCD8002). There have been excellent live performances in Toronto in 2013 and in Montreal in 2016, but until one of the prominent Canadian quartets includes it in its regular touring program it will not have the position in the national chamber-music repertoire it deserves. Many Weinzweig enthusiasts regard it as his finest achievement.

### Stravinsky: In Memoriam Dylan Thomas (1953)

As a young composer, I studied closely the works by Igor Stravinsky of the early 1950s that represent his first adoption of serial procedures - the Cantata, the Three Shakespeare Songs, and In Memoriam Dylan Thomas. The adoption was gradual: Stravinsky didn't compose with the complete chromatic (twelve-tone) series of the Second Viennese School until the later 50s. The Thomas setting employs a five-note set, whose components lie within the span of a major third. The instrumental prelude and postlude for answering quartets of trombones and strings, and the tenor line itself, use only this pattern, in various transformations and transpositions, making this a "stricter" composition than the two that preceded it, the Cantata and the Songs. The narrow interval span has been compared to many themes from Stravinsky's earlier (non-serial) works, and pause-points in the piece maintain the tonal associations of those works. The outspoken theorist Hans Keller published an analysis of In Memoriam shortly after it was written, and mentioned a comment by the tenor Peter Pears to the effect that knowing the serial construction was of no interest to him in learning the tenor part. Keller wise-cracked that this might explain why Pears sang several wrong notes. The instrumentation of the setting is strikingly original, and may have been a response to the recitation of the poem as recorded on LP by Thomas: while Stravinsky's tenor line is totally different from Thomas's resonant bass-register speaking voice, the choice of a trombone ensemble was perhaps intended to invoke it.

Do not go gentle into that good night,/ Old age should burn and rave at close of day;/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,/ Because their words had forked no lightning they/ Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright/ Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,/ And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,/ Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight/ Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light. And you, my father, there on the sad height,/ Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray./ Do not go gentle into that good night./ Rage,

rage against the dving of the light.



William Aide at the multiple keyboards of Avowals (recording session 2006); photo by André Leduc.

#### Beckwith: Avowals (1985)

When Ruth Morawetz commissioned me to compose for her "Classical Cabaret" series, she agreed to my suggestion of inviting bpNichol to write a text. Nichol and I had previously enjoyed a lively collaboration on a choral work, *Mating Time*. *Avowals* is a "sung monodrama" featuring a cabaret singer whose onstage crooning of love lyrics contrasts with his offstage psychological angst, expressed in a succession of puns on the five vowels. Nichol and I shared a fondness for the Rodgers-and-Hart/Kern/Gershwin repertoire, and *Avowals* reaches a high point in a ballad fragment:

you/ do this to/ everyone you meet/ greet them in/ the same sweet way/ treat them like they're lovers, they/ don't know what to do you/ do this too/ every time we part/ casually/ you break my heart/ start and stop/ I'm torn apart/ don't know what to say --

which later expands into a formal thirty-two-bar version:

you say/ beauty's in the eye of/ the beholder and/ when I behold her/ I know what beauty means

you say/ the future's in the hands of/ the dreamers and/ when I dream her/ she hands my future to me

you say/ all things come to him who waits/ so I'm waiting yes I'm waiting/ but better too soon than far too late/ oh/ won't you please come over to me?

you say/ that love is the wisdom/ of a fool and/ yes I'm fool enough/ to be in love with you/ to be in love with.../ be in love.../ with...

As in several previous works, I conceived an instrumental part for multiple keyboard instruments (piano, harpsichord, celeste), negotiated by one player. Nichol even gave the keyboardist a spoken line or two.

Avowals received its first performance by Henry Ingram and Ruth Morawetz in 1985, and a few years later Ingram and I repeated it in a Faculty of Music concert. Benjamin Butterfield and William Aide recorded the work in 2007 (Centrediscs CMCCD 12907); this evening marks their first concert performance of it.

# Beckwith: Quintet (2015)

I had the idea on a back burner for several decades to compose a chamber work for mixed instrumentation, thinking (I guess) of such models as *Pierre Lunaire* and *Histoire du Soldat*. In 2014-15, I was deeply involved in a commission for a choral work, *Wendake/Huronia*, which was premiered in the summer of 2015. I composed the Quintet that Fall, finally heeding that bubbling back burner -- no commission, no immediate performance in view. The five instruments are treated freely, individually and more or less as soloists; there is only partial rhythmic coordination. A melody in high bass harmonics near the start is repeated in retrograde by the muted trumpet near the end. This melody, I realized after the work was completed, has similar intervals to a melody in *Wendake/Huronia* - a traditional Ojibwa "mourning song" which I quoted in that work after one of the indigenous drummers, Shirley Hay, sang it for me.

# **Performer Biographies**

Accordes evolved out of a string quintet that was formed in 1975 to perform a composition by John Beckwith, commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Women's Committee, Frequently heard on CBC radio, they have performed on the Roy Thomson Hall Chamber Music Series and constitute the core string players of the New Music Concerts series. This concentration on contemporary music has allowed Accordes to give Canadian, and sometimes world, premieres of works by such composers as Elliott Carter, Ben Johnston, Peter Paul Kropowski, Brian Cherney, Peter Michael Hamel, Michael Tippett, Henri Dutilleux, György Kurtág, Jörg Widmann, Ann Southam and Hope Lee. They have recorded extensively for the Canadian Music Centre label Centrediscs, including discs devoted to the music of Harry Freedman (Spirit Song), Harry Somers (Somers String Quartets, nominated for a JUNO award in 2001) and Alexina Louie (Dénouement). Their recording of NMC co-founder Norma Beecroft's Amplified String Quartet with Tape was nominated for a JUNO in 2004. Internationally, Accordes travelled to Cologne with Robert Aitken in 2004 to perform a program of Lithuanian music including works by Balakauskas. Kutavicius and The Oriental Elegy by Raminta Šerkšnytė, a NMC commission. More recently in 2013, under the auspices of Soundstreams, they travelled to Taiwan to perform Tan Dun's Ghost Opera and to Beijing for the Beijing Modern Music Festival.

William Aide has enjoyed 50 years of professional music-making. At the age of 19 he made his concerto debut with the Rachmaninoff 3rd, and in his early twenties he won first prize in the CBC Talent Festival and the Canada Council Award for Young Performing Artists. As a collaborative pianist he has worked with conductors Sir Andrew Davis. Arthur Fiedler and Walter Susskind: bass-baritone, James Milligan; sopranos Elizabeth Soederstroem and Lois Marshall: violist Rivka Golani and the St. Lawrence string quartet, among many others. He has toured the former Soviet Union with Phyllis Mailing and held artist residencies at Aix en Provence's Darius Milhaud Conservatory: the University of Glasgow; and Trinity/Laban College, London, Head of the Keyboard Division at the University of Toronto for 25 years, he was the inaugural R.E. Edwards Chair in Piano Performance, A proponent of Canadian music, he has premiered over 40 works, including 5 piano concertos, and has long been associated as juror with the Honens International Piano Competition. With Oberon Press he has published five books including Pieces in My Hands, poems and a CD of his live performances of the Liszt B minor Sonata and Schumann's Carnaval; and "Massenet's Elegy", poems with a live CD of Schumann's Kinderszenen and Chopin's Op. 10 Etudes. William Aide was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2013.

Praised by The New York Times as, "clarion-voiced and vibrant", Benjamin Butterfield is known for his performances throughout North America. Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Butterfield's 2016/17 season features a dynamic range of repertoire showcasing his versatility with both contemporary and classic works. In North America, he performs with major orchestras including the Calgary Philharmonic and the Utah, Kansas City, Newfoundland, and Victoria Symphonies. Recent performances include Carnegie Hall with Orchestra of St. Luke's, Lincoln Center with American Classical Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, L'Orchestre Lyrique de Montreal and Victoria Symphony. He makes frequent appearances with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem including their annual 2-week Bach Festival. Most recently as an interpreter of opera, he has performed with Pacific Opera, Montreal Symphony, Toronto Symphony, and Calgary Opera, and was stage director for Puccini's Gianni Schicchi at the Amalfi Coast Music Festival, A prolific recording artist, he has recorded for Analekta, Dorian, CBC Records, Koch International, and Timpani (France). Associate Professor, head of voice, and co-head of performance for the School of Music at the University of Victoria, Butterfield is the 2015 recipient of the UVic. Craigdarroch Award for Excellence in Artistic Expression.

# **Composer Biographies**

**John Beckwith**, born 9 March, 1927 in Victoria, British Columbia, studied piano and sang in church choirs there before coming to Toronto in 1945 on a Royal Conservatory scholarship to study piano with Alberto Guerrero. He studied composition 1950-51 in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and holds Mus.B. (1947) and Mus.M. (1961) degrees from the University of Toronto,

where his teachers included John Weinzweig. Appointed special lecturer part-time in the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto in 1952, he became a full-time lecturer in 1955 and remained with the faculty, becoming a full professor in 1970 and serving a term as dean 1970-77. He retired in 1990 in order to devote more time to composition. His over 150 compositions cover stage, orchestral, chamber, solo and choral genres. Beckwith holds honorary doctorates from five Canadian universities, was recipient of the Canadian Music Council's annual medal in 1972 and Composer of the Year citation in 1984, as well as the Toronto Arts award for music in 1995 and the Diplome d'honneur of the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1996. In 1987 he was named a member of the Order of Canada.

John Weinzweig (b. Toronto, 1913) studied composition at both the University of Toronto and the Eastman School of music in Rochester, New York. At Eastman, Weinzweig worked with Howard Hanson and was exposed to serialism. Upon his return to Canada, the young composer worked at the CBC and National Film Board. In 1951, Weinzweig, along with a consortium of Canadian composers, formed the Canadian League of Composers. During the following year, Weinzweig began teaching at the University of Toronto where his pedagogy shaped generations of Canadian composers. From the late 1970s until his death in 2006, Weinzweig returned to an exploration of concert music, chamber works, and vocal/dramatic genres. He completed his series of 12 *Divertimenti* for chamber groups and solo instruments in 1988. He is remembered as a great composer and pedagogue and a staunch advocate for Canadian music.

Igor Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum, a Baltic resort near St Petersburg, on 5 June (17 June, New Style) 1882. His most important composition teacher was Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, with whom he studied informally from the age of twenty, taking regular lessons from 1905 until 1908. The Firebird, a ballet commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev and premiered by his Ballets Russes in Paris in 1910, brought Stravinsky into sudden international prominence. The premiere of his landmark 1913 ballet. The Rite of Spring, was met with a mixture of astonishment and hostility. Stravinsky became established as one of the most progressive composers of his time. A rapid succession of works reinforced his aesthetic dominance. During the 1920s he favoured a retrenched neo-classical style, beginning with the ballet Pulcinella and culminating in the comic opera The Rake's Progress in 1952. In 1938, faced with an imminent war in Europe. Stravinsky and his second-wife-to-be Vera Sudeikin left France for the United States. They settled in California, which they were to make their home for the rest of their lives. One of the most unexpected stylistic shifts in modern music came in 1957, with the appearance of the ballet Agon. Stravinsky had been studying Anton Webern's music since 1953 under the guidance of his amanuensis Robert Craft and Agon was the first work in which he embraced serialism wholeheartedly. Stravinsky died on 6 April 1971, in New York; his body was flown to Venice for burial on the island of San Michele, near to the grave of Diaghilev.

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