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Robert
Aitken
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New Music Concerts

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GRAME

An appearance by the exciting French contemporary music ensemble from Lyon on the occasion of their North American tour. This concert features new live and electro-acoustic works by French and Canadian composers.

Sunday, February 4, 1996
Discussion 7:15 pm, Concert 8:00 pm
Premiere Dance Theatre

GRAME

Programme

Robert Pascal (*France*)
Chant d'aubes (1991)
cello and live electronics

Pierre Alain Jaffrennou (*France*)
In A Low Voice (excerpt) (1991)
soprano, cello, clarinet, piano,
keyboard and taped children's choir

James Giroudon
Jean François Estager (*France*)
Pierre d' Ombre (1991-94)
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keyboards and tape

Yves Daoust (*Canada*)
New Work (1996)
soprano, cello, clarinet, piano,
keyboards and tape

tickets ☎ 416 973 4000

new music concerts presents: an homage to Morton Feldman

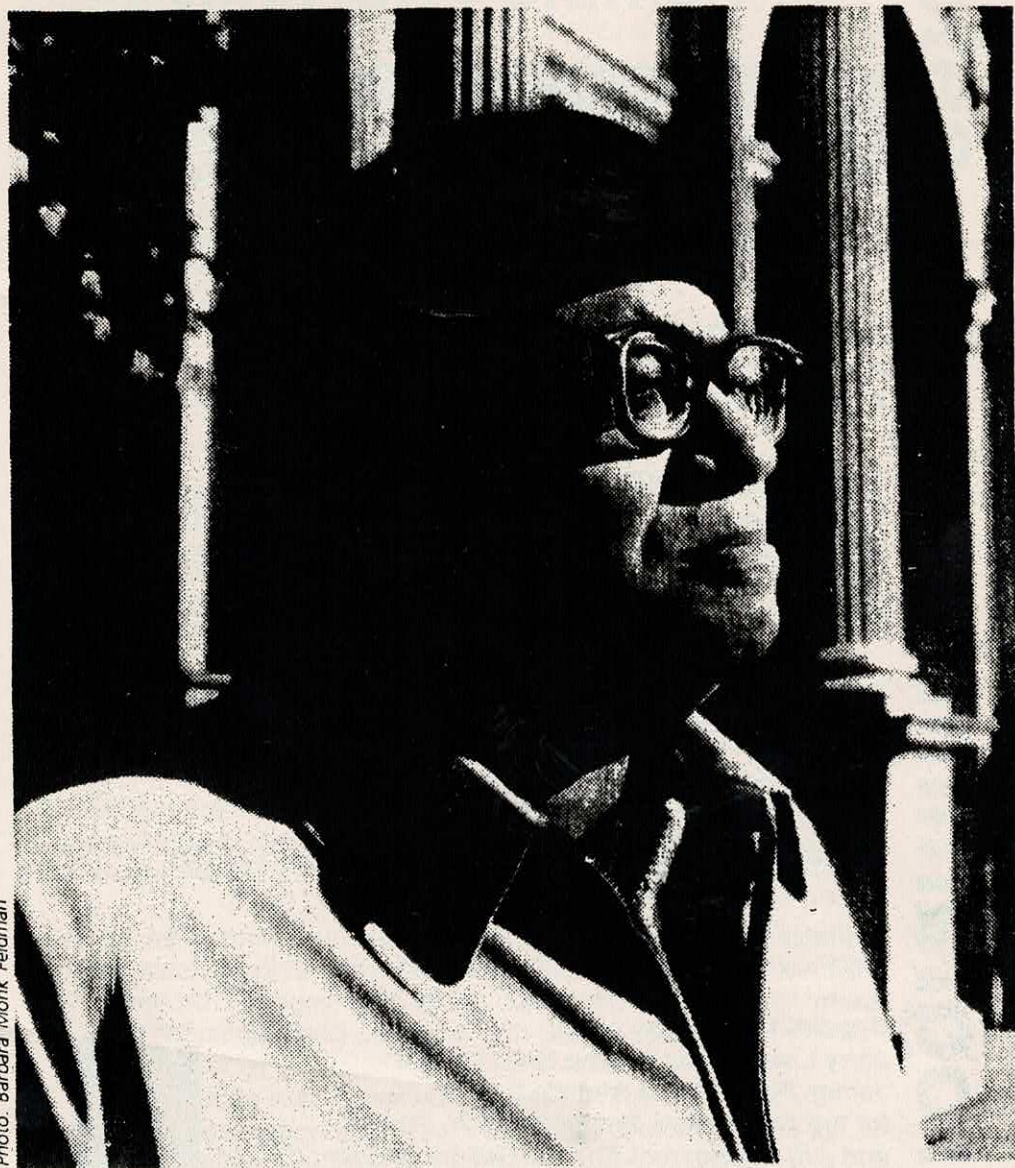


Photo: Barbara Monk Feldman

7:00 pm friday january 12 1996
weston recital hall / ford centre for the performing arts

Friday, January 12, 1996
George Weston Recital Hall
North York Centre for the Performing Arts

an homage to

Morton Feldman

Programme

Documentary Film (1985) dur. 28'

Morton Feldman in Conversation with videographer / art historian Barbara Rose at the Atlantic Centre for the Arts

Jackson Pollock. (1951) dur. 8'

Produced and directed by Paul Falkenberg and Hans Namuth.
New York: Museum at Large, c1951.
Credits: narrator, Jackson Pollock. Music by Morton Feldman played by Daniel Stern.

Intermission

Morton Feldman

Crippled Symmetry (1983) dur. appr. 1hr 30'

Robert Aitken, flute
Barbara Pritchard, piano
Robin Engelman, percussion

Special thanks to:

Jerry Lawton and Wayne Snell of CTV
James Frost of The Atlantic Center
for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida
and Jim Shedden of The Art Gallery of Ontario
for their assistance with the film portion of this
evening's event

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new music concerts presents:
an homage to

Morton Feldman

Fighting a constant battle to leave time and sounds undisturbed, [Feldman's] music dwells, microscopically, on 'the area between pianissimo and piano.' The slow durations and tempi, the entirely non-rhetorical style, the absence of dialectic, the concentration on non-attack and decay, are completely loving, revolutionary and romantic, pure and unsullied by (almost) 'composing.'

—Michael Nyman

New Music Concerts' fourth event of its twenty-fifth anniversary season commemorates what would have been the seventieth birthday of one of the musical forefathers of abstract minimalism, the late American composer **Morton Feldman** (12th January 1926—3rd September 1987).

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Feldman had his first lessons in music at the age of 12, under the guidance of a prototypically aristocratic Russian pianist, Madame Maurina-Press. Young Morty's first original pieces, conceived under Madame's tutelage, are reportedly redolent of her beloved Scriabin—a not inappropriate model for a budding composer with an acute sensitivity to the effects of aural and visual rhythms and colours.

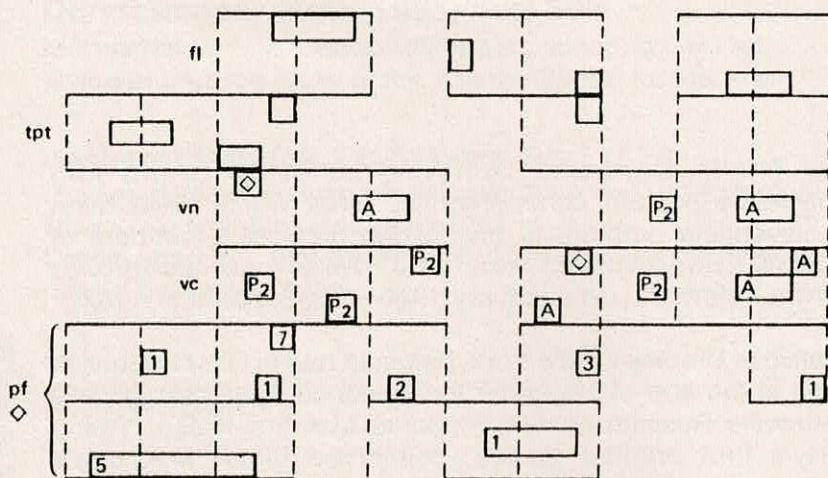
At 15 he began a series of rather disorganized but revelatory theoretical studies with the distinguished American serialist Wallingford Riegger and at 18 survived some rather more fruitful yet challenging sessions with Stefan Wolpe.

Stefan was never authoritarian in his teaching. As you know, when you teach, there are only two ways to teach, either you help the student do what they are doing better, or you try to lead them into something else. And what is interesting about the years I was with Stefan is that

he didn't employ either of these approaches. He didn't help make what I was doing better, and he never lead me into something else. This has become a model for my own teaching. With Stefan it was always that confrontation with the piece at hand.

—Morton Feldman, in conversation with Austin Clarkson, 13 November 1980

Wolpe, in addition to his skills as a composer, was a committed socialist and a man intimately acquainted with the musical analogies often drawn upon by contemporary visual artists such as Klee and Kandinsky (both painters were also musicians) and other members of the Bauhaus school.

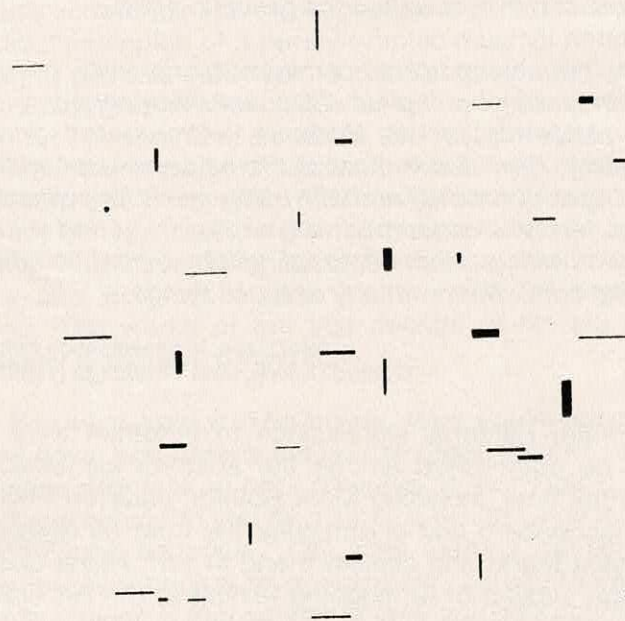


Morton Feldman, *Projection II* (1951)

John [Cage] at that time lived on the top floor of a tenement on Grand Street overlooking the East River. Just a few potted plants, a long low marble table and a constellation of Lippold sculptures along the wall. It was in this room that I found an appreciation and an encouragement more extravagant than I had ever before encountered.

—Morton Feldman: *Essays*
edited by Walter Zimmermann

Feldman's association with John Cage in the 1950's was crucial to his further development in several regards, not only in the initial sense of what Feldman later described as Cage's example having given him the "permission" to have confidence in his own instincts, but also as a result of the close artistic association Feldman came to have with the other musicians who frequented Cage's studio, notably the exceptionally gifted young pianist David Tudor and a precocious teenager by the name of Christian Wolff. It was he who gave Cage a copy of his father's recently published English edition of the *I Ching*, the Chinese divinatory procedure that was to inspire Cage's conception of indeterminacy to the end of his life. Tudor was introduced to Cage by Feldman and became an indispensable presence in Cage's future performances.



Earle Brown, *December 1952*

... the most famous and most far out and most notorious piece that I or anybody else ever did, except for Cage's 4'33" (4 minutes and 33 seconds) of silence. —Earle Brown, in conversation with Richard Duffalo, from *Trackings* (1989).

Earle Brown was the last to join the group. Initially trained as an engineer and mathematician, Brown's creativity had been sparked by the mathematical references he found in the then-popular Schillinger System of Musical Composition and the delicate spatial engineering of the mobile sculptures of Alexander Calder. As with the others, Cage's influence led Brown to develop concepts of open form and graphic notations that transcended his previous training.

According to Cage, Feldman was so enraged by Brown's intrusion into the group that he broke off his friendship with Cage for quite some time. This proved to be an especially delicate situation as Feldman had recently moved into the same building as Cage and they were accustomed to seeing each other daily. Feldman maintained this animosity long after all concerned had been evicted from the building, until mutual friends sponsored a Town Hall concert that re-united the group in 1958.

Many people are not concerned with originality, even though they may be original. They are often concerned with expressivity, or as Earle is, with control and expressivity. Christian is more apt to be concerned with something about society and with using music for political reasons. Morty is concerned with expressivity and with beauty and with a rather personal notion of what beauty is. I'm not concerned with any of those things.

—John Cage, in conversation with Richard Duffalo, from *Trackings* (1989)

Of even greater personal significance to Feldman were the friendships he established among the abstract expressionist painters of that time, including Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg and in particular the man he described as "my closest friend and closest friend in art", Philip Guston (presently the subject of an ongoing exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario.)

Soon after meeting Rauschenberg, I met Jackson Pollock who asked me to write music for a film about him that had just been completed. I was very pleased about this since it was just the very beginning of my career. Pollock lived way out on Long Island and only came to the city sporadi-

cally, making it difficult to establish a real continuity to our relationship. In thinking back to that time, I realize now how much the musical ideas I had in 1951 paralleled his mode of working. Pollock placed his canvas on the ground and painted as he walked around it. I put sheets of graph paper on the wall; each sheet framed the same time duration and was, in effect, a visual rhythmic structure. What resembled Pollock was my "all over" approach to the time-canvas. Rather than the usual left-to-right passage across the page, the horizontal squares of the graph paper represented the tempo – with each box equal to a pre-established ictus; and the vertical squares were the instrumentation of the composition.

—from Feldman's essay, "Crippled Symmetry" (1981)

Feldman's 'indeterminate' works of the early 1950's are among the earliest examples of a purely graphic musical notation and give only a general indication of pitch, register and duration. Despite the degree of chance involved, they exhibit an exacting concern for the control of densities and instrumental combinations, presented in a highly subdued, carefully shaded dynamic range. From 1953 onwards, Feldman gradually returned to a completely conventional notation of the melodic component of his works while developing strategies to ensure a measure of memory and free association to the realm of rhythm and durations. The works of the last decade of his life took on increasingly expansive proportions.

You want a piece to be logical. Well, you're not going to sit down and have a ten-course meal of logic; you're satisfied with just an hors d'oeuvre, a little logical hors d'oeuvre served to you by a famous waiter! You want a piece to be beautiful. OK, give them a moment of beauty—how much more do you need? So what happens in a long piece is that sooner or later you go through the whole parameter of possibilities, and everybody's going to get something out of it, I'm sure. The form of a long piece is more like a novel—there's plenty of room for everything.

—Morton Feldman, in conversation with Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, from *Soundpieces* (1982)

The boundaries of near and total silence became of particular concern to him: *Silence is my substitute for counterpoint. It's nothing against something. The degrees of nothing against something. It's a real thing. It's a breathing thing.* He regarded musical form not as a pre-ordained rhetorical structure but as a rhythmic sequence of events in a non-repetitive and often protracted cycle of exact time proportions and durations: *I prefer the word 'change' to 'variation' and 'reiteration' to 'repetition'. I'm involved with both. I don't make a synthesis, but they're going on at the same time. The change then becoming that which then becomes the reiteration, and the reiteration is changing. And it's not a calculated dialectic, because I have to watch what happens.*

Eclipsed only by Cage, Feldman was by far the most articulate, musical and pedagogically gifted member of the mid-century American musical avant-garde. He was renowned for his highly influential teaching at the State University of New York at Buffalo and was frequently invited to present lectures and performances throughout the world.

This evening's performance of *Crippled Symmetry* completes New Music Concerts' performances of the trilogy of works Feldman conceived for his fellow artists in residence at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Eberhard Blum, flute, and Jan Williams, percussion, premièred all three works with pianists Nils Vigeland (*Crippled Symmetry*), Yvar Mikhashoff (*For Philip Guston*) and Morton Feldman (*Why Patterns*).

Stasis, as it is utilized in painting, is not traditionally part of the apparatus of music. Music can achieve aspects of immobility, or the illusion of it: the Magrittelike world Satie evokes, or the "floating sculpture" of Varèse. The degrees of stasis, found in a Rothko or a Guston, were perhaps the most significant elements that I brought to my music from painting. For me, stasis, scale, and pattern have put the whole question of symmetry and asymmetry in abeyance. And I wonder if either of these concepts, or an amalgamation of both, can still operate for the many who are now less prone to synthesis as an artistic formula.

—from Feldman's essay, "Crippled Symmetry"

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Flute (FL.) in 4/8 time, showing a melodic line with a trill. The middle staff is for Vibraphone (VIB.) in 5/8 time, featuring a complex, rhythmic pattern with a 'no motor' marking. The bottom staff is for Piano (PF.) in 3/8 time, featuring a complex, rhythmic pattern with 'ped.' and '1/2 ped.' markings.

Morton Feldman, *Crippled Symmetry* (1983)

Note the characteristic alternations of sound and silence, slightly changing reiterations, and the total independence of the parts.

I felt that memory forms in music were primitive, based on a small attention, on convention. So what am I doing? I'm not doing anything different than Beethoven, who was writing a piece which is getting longer. And he does something else that nobody else ever did. He threw in another three tunes. I'm not throwing it in as a memory, I'm throwing it in in a more Proustian sense.

And many times I would turn and say, "Didn't I do this over here?" And I would go over and look through it and then use it another way, of course. I can compare it to Remembrance of Things Past, where you begin idealistically and then you get more and more into reality as your experience grows.

I don't work in a continuity, I work modularly. I have pieces where I don't repeat the tones retrograde, but I repeat the whole module retrograde. I'm not involved in linear information. Modular construction could be the basis for organic development, however, I use it to see that patterns are 'complete' in themselves and in no need of development, only of extension.

—Morton Feldman: Essays
edited by Walter Zimmermann (1985)

Notes by Daniel Charles Foley

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Biographies

New Music Concerts has had a long-standing relationship with Feldman's music, culminating with the historic 1984 world première of his Second String Quartet in a five-hour performance by the Kronos Quartet. A 1988 memorial concert featured the Canadian première of Feldman's four-hour composition, *For Philip Guston* in a performance by the same artists gathered here tonight. Aitken and Engelman's 1980 performance of Feldman's relatively miniscule (30 minute) *Why Patterns* (with the composer at the piano) moved even the notoriously acerbic John Kraglund of *The Globe and Mail* to describe the results as "hypnotic, very peaceful and consistently lovely...a piece that could easily become a favourite."

Pianist **Barbara Pritchard** is an avid interpreter of contemporary music, and her recitals include such diverse composers as Feldman, Satie and Stockhausen. Her many solo performances include the Glenn Gould Conference in Toronto in 1992, the Skinnskatteberg Elektronmusikfestival in Sweden in 1990 and the International Computer Music Conference in Columbus in 1988. From 1987 to 1991 she was a regular guest faculty pianist at the Banff Centre for the Arts' New Music Residency Program.

A founding member of the percussion ensemble Nexus, **Robin Engelman** has performed internationally with orchestras and at music festivals. He was principal percussionist with three American orchestras, and the Toronto Symphony and Canadian Opera Company orchestras. He has conducted concerts for New Music Concerts, Chamber Concerts Canada, and the CBC. His compositions *Bridge* and *Remembrance* have been recorded by Nexus.

Internationally respected as a performer, composer, conductor and teacher, **Robert Aitken** has toured more than 30 countries, can be heard on over 40 recordings and has had some 50 works composed for him by noted composers. He became principal flutist with the Vancouver Symphony at age 19, and co-principal flutist with The Toronto Symphony Orchestra at age 24. He currently teaches at Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.

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