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Robert
Aitken
artistic
director

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concerts

Wednesday, March 6, 1996
The Gallery School
Art Gallery of Ontario

A Tribute to the Group of Seven

Michel Longtin (b.1946)
Pohjatuuli (1985, rev.1990) dur. 28min
NMC Ensemble conducted by Robert Aitken

Rose Bolton (b.1971)
Ostinato (1994) dur. 12min*
NMC Ensemble conducted by Robert Aitken

INTERMISSION

Alban Berg (1885-1935)
Kammerkonzert (1923-25) dur. 38min
I Thema scherzoso con Variazioni
II Adagio
III Rondo ritmico con Introduzione (cadenza)
(the movements of the Concerto are played without a break)

Fujiko Imajishi, violin
Marc Widner, piano
NMC Ensemble conducted by Robert Aitken

Mr. Widner plays on the Steinway CD 464 Piano
provided by **Remenyi House of Music**
Tonight's concert is presented in collaboration with
The Art Gallery of Ontario and the



*first performance

New Music Concerts Ensemble

Dianne Aitken	Piccolo
Bill Brennan	Percussion
Colleen Cook	E-flat and B-flat clarinets
Margaret Gay	Cello
Michelle Gagnon	Horn
Margaret Gillie	Bass clarinet
Eric Hall	Bassoon
Miles Hearne	Horn
Jerry Johnson	Trombone
Stuart Laughton	Trumpet
Stan McCartney	Clarinet
Tracy Mortimer	Bass
Steve Mosher	Contrabassoon
Nancy Nelson	English Horn
Roberto Occhipinti	Bass
Douglas Perry	Viola
Rick Sacks	Percussion
Doug Stewart	Flute
Cynthia Steljes	Oboe
Trevor Tureski	Percussion
Paul Widner	Cello
Robert Aitken	Conductor

Michel Longtin *Pohjatuuli* (1985/1990)

Michel Longtin was born in Montreal in 1946. Prior to his musical career, he pursued advanced studies in theatre and pantomime while attending the Banff School of Fine Arts in the early 1960's. Longtin's compositional training took place with André Prévost and Jacques Héту. He received the first doctoral degree in composition awarded by the University of Montreal following studies with Serge Garant.

Electroacoustic music dominated Longtin's output for a long time, and he still holds some of this production in high regard. His instrumental compositions are characterized by an expressionist and non-abstract musical language. Michel Longtin has written film scores, chamber music and several works for orchestra, including *La route des pèlerins reclus*, which was commissioned by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and premiered in 1985. Since 1987 he has taught composition at the University of Montreal. Longtin describes the concept of *Pohjatuuli* as follows:

Pohjatuuli is an old Finnish word which means "the North Wind" (*pohja*—north, *tuuli*—wind). The work was inspired at once by northern climatic attributes (wind, cold, ice, etc.), by paintings of the Canadian painters from the Group of Seven as well as Tom Thomson, and by the music of Jean Sibelius. The works by these painters characterize exceptionally well the personality and Nordic essence of our country. Sibelius has always symbolized and evoked in my mind the vastness and solitude of Northern landscapes. He also represents peace of mind and serenity. This work intends to merge the language of so-called "new" music with Sibelius's more traditional idiom. It also includes "imitations" of several musical cells from Sibelius' Symphonies numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

A commission from the Toronto International Festival, *Pohjatuuli* was premiered at Roy Thomson Hall on June 25, 1984, by the ensemble of the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec with Serge Garant conducting. The work won the Jules Léger Prize in 1986.

The composer has chosen slides of the following paintings to be projected during the performance of the work:

Lawren Harris, *North Shore, Lake Superior*
 Tom Thomson, *Northern Lake*
 Tom Thomson, *West Wind*
 J.E.H. MacDonald, *October Shower Gleam*
 F. Varley, *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay*
 Arthur Lismer, *September Gale, Georgian Bay*
 J.E.H. MacDonald, *Solemn Land*
 Tom Thomson, *Northern River*
 J.E.H. MacDonald, *Church by the Sea*
 Franklin Carmichael, *Autumn Foliage*
 J.E.H. MacDonald, *Mist Fantasy*
 Lawren Harris, *Composition 1, 1940*
 A.Y. Jackson, *Algoma, 1935*
 Lawren Harris, *Above Lake Superior*

Rose Bolton
Ostinato (1994)

Rose Bolton is a recent honours graduate of the University of Western Ontario, where her composition teachers included Alexina Louie, Jack Behrens, David Myska and Peter-Paul Koprowski. In addition to her activities as a composer, she has been a violinist with the chamber orchestra of the Royal Conservatory of Music and performs regularly as a fiddler in a local Celtic trio.

Rose Bolton's compositions to date have been divided between acoustic and electronic media. In the past month Ms. Bolton was a featured composer in a Music Gallery concert by the Canadian Electronic Ensemble. This April she will participate in the orchestral reading sessions for young composers hosted by the Scarborough Symphony Orchestra. In the summer she will attend the 10th annual Young Composer's Workshop sponsored by Toronto's ARRAYMUSIC.

Her composition, **Ostinato**, was awarded the \$3,000 first prize donated by the **Herbert Aitken Foundation** in New Music Concerts' 25th Anniversary Composers' Contest. **Kelly-Marie Murphy** of Calgary and **Yannick Plamondon** of Quebec City

were also singled out for honourable mentions. The jury, chaired by NMC President Austin Clarkson, consisted of composers John Beckwith, David Jaeger, and Doming Lam, who reviewed some seventy scores in an anonymous process. Concerning her prize-winning work, the composer has written:

I planned to write a piece that would contain slow evolving musical patterns, and ones that would change more abruptly. I wanted this material to be in the foreground, without necessarily having a minimalist sound. The finished work is close to what I expected but there are now more foreground events.

The first part consists of a gradually accelerating three note figure in the clarinet, bass clarinet, and viola which reaches top speed and becomes the background for the "alarm" sound which begins the second half. In the second part ostinatos change more abruptly until they slow to a sustain. The ending of the piece is more loosely repetitive: the intervals at which the different instruments repeat are independent of each other, creating three or four ostinatos that complement each other and form a larger pattern.

I was inspired to write such a piece by listening to the repetition of everyday sounds—cars driving by, machinery, rain, wind, the occasional dog bark, and people talking. The most beautiful ostinatos can be heard by standing still in the woods of Northern Ontario, where many different sounds of nature repeat themselves independently and at a fixed time interval.

—Rose Bolton

Alban Berg **Kammerkonzert** (1923-25)

At the time of the composition of his *Kammerkonzert* Alban Berg had looked to Arnold Schoenberg for advice in all things for close to two decades. He first came to study with him at the impressionable age of 19. Schoenberg's overnight sensation, the string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, had just received its long overdue première, and the composer was finally receiving

responses to his advertisements for private students. In the autumn of 1904 young Alban was joined in his studies by Anton von Webern. Many more students were to follow, but few rivalled Berg and Webern in their devotion and contributions to the astounding transformation of their master's musical language.

Daunting though it may have seemed to be associated with a triumverate destined to be compared with Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, the Viennese birthright that Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), Alban Berg (1885-1935) and Anton Webern (1883-1945) had in common made the analogy inevitable. The magisterial figure of Schoenberg, warmly encouraging or cruelly intimidating by turns, saw to it that his acolytes would be equal to the historic final mission of the Second Viennese School.

In the two years (1923-25) between the private publication and the first of many performances of his operatic masterpiece, *Wozzeck*, Berg planned and executed a double concerto that would serve as an elaborately programmatic *homage* to his master. The dates of its composition are contemporaneous with Schoenberg's emergence from a self-imposed creative silence of several years and his subsequent development of a 'method of composition with twelve tones related only to one other'. Schoenberg's invention was destined to change the face of both European and American music for decades to come.

The following excerpts are taken from Cornelius Cardew's translation of Berg's structural analysis of his *Kammerkonzert*. The original article was first published in the February 1925 issue of the Viennese musical magazine, *Pult und Taktstock*.

9th February 1925

My dear honoured friend Arnold Schönberg!

The composition of this Concerto, dedicated to you on your fiftieth birthday, has been completed only today, on my fortieth birthday. Though late presented, I beg you nonetheless to accept it in a spirit of friendship; all the more so since it has also turned out—though unintended from the start—to be a little memorial to a friendship now twenty years old. In a musical motto that precedes the

first movement the letters of your name, Webern's and my names have been captured—as far as is possible in musical notation—in three themes (or motifs) which have been allotted an important rôle in the melodic development of this music.

This already announces a *trinity of events*, and such a trinity—it is after all a matter of your birthday, and all the good things, that I wish you, makes three—is also important for the whole work.

As Dr. von Webern—in fact one of the young pioneers of the then nascent discipline of musicology—might have observed, Zarlino [*Istituzioni harmoniche*, 1588] first described the vocal origins of the *soggetto cavato* as the "carving out" of a melody by assigning certain vowels of a text to their corresponding solimisation syllables— ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la. The possibilities of the spelling out of letters or words through the use of the traditional German musical nomenclature are even greater from a literary standpoint, with the addition of the letters 'H' (B-natural; the letter 'B' signifies B-flat) and 'S' ("Es", or E-flat) to the alphabetic sequence 'A' to 'G'. It was through just such a device that J.S. B-A-C-H summarized the culmination of his vast output in 1749 [*The Art of Fugue*].

Other alphabetically well-endowed composers include Robert S-C-Humann, D. S-C-Hostakovich, and, of course, the mystic tryptich of the Second Viennese School, **Arnold SCHÖNBERG** (represented here by the piano), **Anton WEBERN** (associated with the violin), and **Alban BERG** (whose muted horn-call heralds the arrival of both a twelve-tone theme and the remaining twelve instruments of the ensemble):

*Molto. *) Aller guten Dinge...*
Langsame ♩.

Violin (Viol.)
 Horn (F)
 Klavier

Berg goes on to explain how his choice of instruments (and much else besides) was influenced by Schoenberg's *Kammersinfonie* of 1906. He continues the exegesis of his own work by emphasizing its numerous symmetrical aspects:

In the first movement we find a six-fold recurrence of the same basic idea. This idea, stated like an exposition by the wind ensemble as a ternary variations theme of 30 bars, is repeated by the piano alone in the virtuoso character of that instrument, thus constituting a first variant (first reprise). Variation 2 presents the melody notes of the 'theme' in inversion; variation 3 uses them in retrograde order; and variation 4 uses the inversion of the retrograde form (these three middle variations can be regarded as a sort of development section in this 'sonata first movement'). The last variation returns to the theme's basic shape.

The structure of the *Adagio* is also based on 'ternary song form': A1-B-A2, where A2 is the inversion of A1. The repetition of this first half of the movement (120 bars) takes place in retrograde form, partly a free formation of the reversed thematic material, but partly—as for example the whole of the middle section B—in the form of an exact mirror image.

In clothing the language of his earliest serial compositions in eighteenth-century dance forms (including literal repeats) Schoenberg was appropriating certain neo-classical tendencies recently emerging in the music of Stravinsky and Hindemith. Mindful of this influence, Berg is careful to stress the traditional aspects of his formal plan of the first two movements.

The *third* movement, finally, is an amalgamation of the two preceding movements. As a consequence of the repetition of the variation movement that this necessitates—although it is enriched by the simultaneous reprise of the *Adagio*—the architectonic construction of the whole Concerto also manages to be ternary in form.

Tabular General Survey

I	Thema	Var. I	II	III	IV	V	Number of bars
Thema con Variazioni	in the basic shape		retrograde	inversion	retrograde inversion	basic shape	
	(Exposition)	(First reprise)	(Development)			(Second reprise)	
	bars: 30	30	60	30	30	60	240
II Adagio	A1	Ternary B	A2	A2	Retrograde B	A1	
			(inversion of A1)		(mirror form of preceding B)		480
	bars: 30	12 36	12 30	30	12 36	12 30	240
III (=I plus II)	Introduction (cadenza for violin and piano)	Exposition	Development			Second reprise or coda	
Rondo ritmico con Introduzione	bars: 54		96	79		76	305
			Repeat: 175				175
							480
							960

In the conclusion of his essay Berg summarizes the ternary symbolism of his rhythmic and formal procedures:

Three rhythmic forms: a primary rhythm, a secondary rhythm, and a rhythm that can be considered a sort of motif, are laid under the melody notes of the main and subsidiary voices. It was in a scene in my opera *Wozzeck* that I showed for the first time the possibility of this method of allotting such an important *constructive* rôle to a rhythm.

Berg's characteristic use of 'constructive rhythms' (*Hauptrhythmen*) as an architectural device was initially suggested by the fateful cardiac rhythm that permeates the first movement of Mahler's ninth symphony. Often syncopated and angular, recurring rhythmic patterns serve as powerful rhetorical icons in Berg's later works, notably the *Violin Concerto* and the opera *Lulu*.

The whole of the variations movement was in *triple* time; the Adagio is predominantly in *duple* time; the Rondo on the other hand is constantly changing between all conceivable even and odd, simple and compound metres, so that in the metrical field too I accentuated the ever-recurrent trinity of events.

Berg shared with Schoenberg a fascination with numerology. Schoenberg was obsessed with the number '13'; for Berg the fateful number was '23', which may be also symbolized in rhythms or durations of 2 or 3 units. Numerology and the serialisation of musical "signatures" were to play an even greater rôle in Berg's next composition, the *Lyric Suite* for string quartet.

This is also expressed in the *harmony*: besides the long stretches of completely dissolved tonality, there are individual shorter passages with a tonal flavour, and also passages that correspond to the laws set up by you for 'composition with twelve tones related only to one another'. Finally I should mention that the *number of bars*, both in the whole work and in the individual sections, was also determined by divisibility by three; I realize that—insofar as I make this generally known—my reputation as a mathematician will grow in proportion (...to the square root of the distance) as my reputation as a composer sinks.

Douglas Jarman (*The Music of Alban Berg*) has aptly described the finale of the Concerto as "one of Berg's most radical experiments in the possibility of using rhythm as a self-sufficient structural element". The 'amalgamating' process of the finale and its pre-ordained structure also breaks new ground in the exploration of certain philosophical implications of the serial method with which its inventor was less than comfortable.

Decades later John C-A-G-E (one of Schoenberg's last pupils) faced a similar challenge in propagating the concept that the imposition of abstract pre-compositional limitations could be applied at many levels.

From an academic perspective Berg's tentative serial manipulations might be seen to demonstrate that he "understood nothing at all, at the time" of dodecaphonic procedures, as George Perle charges in his definitive article on Berg in *The New Groves*. Perle also maintains the conviction that the Concerto is "the least successful of Berg's mature works", largely on the grounds of its apparently "contrived and arbitrary" structure. Berg might possibly have responded to these criticisms by quoting his second-favourite maxim (after "all good things come in threes"): *The best things in music are not to be found in the notes.*

Programme notes © 1996 by Daniel Charles Foley

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BIOGRAPHIES

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Violinist Fujiko Imajishi, winner of both the Montreal and Toronto Symphony competitions, came to Canada after graduating from the Toho University in Japan. She has studied with Lorand Fenyves, Ruggiero Ricci, Franko Gulli, and the Hungarian Quartet. Ms. Imajishi has performed as soloist with many leading Canadian Orchestras, including the Toronto Symphony, the Montreal Symphony and the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra. In addition to her long association with CAMERATA, she also performs in concert with the St. Andrews Consort, the Accordes String Quartet, the Toronto Octet, and New Music Concerts.

Fujiko Imajishi has had vast experience in all aspects of music, and has been a member of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Orchestra and the National Ballet Orchestra. She is also active in the commercial recording scene in Toronto. Ms. Imajishi rounds off her career with an active teaching programme.

Marc Widner, piano

Pianist Marc Widner graduated with a Master's Degree from the University of Toronto, where his teachers included Boris Berlin, William Aide, Greta Kraus and Boris Lysenko. He won a silver medal at the Geneva International Competition in 1975, as well as the first prize in piano at the International Stepping Stones of the Canadian Music Competitions in 1981.

He has been heard as soloist and chamber musician throughout Canada, the United States and Europe, and has appeared with ensembles such as Nexus and the Orford String Quartet. He is also well-known for his two decades of performances for New Music Concerts, which has included the premières of John Burke's *Dreampaths*, John Beckwith's *Études for Piano* and Timothy Brady's *Chamber Concerto*. Mr. Widner is presently Director of the School of Music at l'Université de Sherbrooke.

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Special Announcement:

New Music Concerts extends its warmest wishes to the distinguished Canadian composer, **Murray Adaskin**, who will turn 90 on March 28, 1996. Dr. Adaskin has composed many works in nearly every genre of concert music. As a teacher, he has been an inspiration to succeeding generations of composers.

Dr. Adaskin is a member of a distinguished Canadian family which includes Gordon Adaskin, painter; musician brothers the late John and Harry Adaskin; and his late wife, Francis James, soprano.

Born in Toronto, March 28, 1906, where he started his musical studies, Adaskin continued further work in New York and Paris. Violinist for ten years with the Toronto Symphony, Adaskin also studied composition with John Weinzweig, Charles Jones and Darius Milhaud.

Adaskin was appointed Head of the Department of Music at the University of Saskatchewan from 1952 to 1966 when he became Composer-in Residence until 1972 (the first composer to receive this post at a Canadian university). Dr. Adaskin helped make Saskatoon a major centre for the performance of contemporary Canadian music by conducting the Saskatoon Symphony for five years, commissioning new works, and organizing concerts of Canadian music. He was appointed to the Canada Council from 1966-1969, and retired to Victoria in 1973, where he continues to compose.

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