



new music concerts

98/99



Robert Aitken artistic director

Weston R H  
mather

May 16, 1999

@ 60



## PROGRAMME

**Quintette à Vents op 443 \*(final work) (1973) dur 17'** Darius Milhaud  
Robert Aitken, flute, Keith Atkinson, oboe, Joaquim Valdepenas,  
clarinet, Frederick Rizner, horn, Kathleen McLean, bassoon

FRA

**Doisey Daëne (1997) dur 8'**  
Robert Aitken, flute, Bruce Mather, piano

Bruce Mather

CAN

**Un cri qui duerait la mer (1985) dur 20'**  
Michel Ducharme, baritone, Bruce Mather, piano

Bruce Mather

CAN

## INTERMISSION

**Épanoui (1995) dur 12'**  
Robert Aitken, flute, David Hetherington, cello, John Hess, piano

James Harley

CAN

**Tempranillo (1997) dur 7'**  
Rachel Gauk, solo guitar

Bruce Mather

CAN

**Advanced Harmony (1995) dur 9'30"**  
New Music Concerts Wind Ensemble  
Douglas Stewart, flute, Christine Little, flute & piccolo, Dianne Aitken,  
alto flute, Keith Atkinson, oboe, Barbara Bolte, English horn, Joaquim  
Valdepenas, Bb clarinet, Raymond Luedeke, Eb clarinet, Robert Stevenson, bass  
clarinet, Frederick Rizner, French horn, Kathleen McLean, bassoon, James  
Gardiner, trumpet, Robert Fergusson, trombone

Bruce Mather

CAN

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SOCAN  
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## MATHER @ 60

In 1949 Toronto newspapers announced that ten-year-old **Bruce Mather** had won a fifty-dollar prize in the junior composition competition sponsored by CAPAC (the ancestor of the SOCAN performing rights organization) for his piano piece, *Romance in D-flat*. This modest laurel ultimately moved his parents to send him to study composition privately with Godfrey Ridout and then, for over five years, with Oskar Morawetz. The composers that most attracted Bruce in those days, and continue to command his respect, are Delius, Scriabin, and Szymanowski.

Though his family contained no musicians, they did have an interest in culture (particularly French culture) and had started Bruce at the piano at age six. He studied piano with Alberto Guerrero and Alexandre Unisky at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto and music theory at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, completing his Bachelor's degree there in 1959.

It was as a pianist that he obtained a scholarship to continue his studies with Unisky at the Aspen Music Camp in Colorado in the summer of 1957. His teacher also arranged permission for him to attend the master classes in composition with **Darius Milhaud**, to whom Mather would return the following summer.

**Milhaud** (1892-1974), whose distinctive polytonal works are still widely performed, was born in Aix-en-Provence. He spent the war years following the fall of France in 1940 teaching at Mills College in Oakland, California. After his return to France in August 1947 he combined his Mills College post with that of professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, and established a long lasting relationship with the Aspen Music Camp.

Milhaud was a tremendously prolific composer whose music was distinguished by its highly personal technique of polytonality and the abundance of lively and often exotic rhythms the composer came to love during his world-wide travels. Though the notion of composing in simultaneous tonalities was hardly a new idea when he first began exploring it in 1913 (the earliest known example, by H.I.F. von Biber, dates from 1673), Milhaud made a science of it, determining exactly which combination of tonalities would create the greatest euphony. In 1949, while Bruce Mather was just beginning his studies, Milhaud was composing a pair of string quartets (numbers 14 and 15, out of a total of 18 quartets) that were so cleverly constructed that they could be played together or separately to equal effect.

Milhaud's *Quintette pour Instruments à vent* (1973) was composed in the last year of a career that had seen the premieres of over 440 works, including 15 operas and 17 ballet scores. It exhibits all the hallmarks of Milhaud's distinctive sonic universe. The texture, as always, is airy and highly contrapuntal, and when homophonic textures do occur they are often quite astringent. The melodies that animate these shifting networks of interactive tonalities are relentlessly jaunty, diatonic and self-assured. The overall harmonic field created by these converging tonalities conveys a dazzling, three-dimensional effect that has been compared to the linear definition Cezanne contributed to the development of Impressionist painting. The three movements of the *Quintette*, marked *Gai*, *Lent*, and *Allegre*, follow the conventional pattern of a *divertissement*. The *Quintette* was commissioned by the French government and is dedicated to his wife, Madeleine, "With fifty years of happiness."

For Mather, Milhaud's classes were a revelation: "It was Milhaud who opened my eyes... I said to myself then that music could not keep on using the clichés of 1900." In 1959 he traveled to Paris to continue his studies with Milhaud and to attend the master classes of Olivier Messiaen at the Conservatoire. The two men influenced him in different ways: Mather was fascinated by the cosmopolitan personality of Milhaud, but Messiaen had a far greater influence on his musical technique. Equally revelatory was a summer at Darmstadt in 1960 and the master classes of Pierre Boulez.

With the assistance of the Canada Council, Mather was able to remain in Paris until 1962, absorbing as much of the culture as he could and mastering the French language. He then moved to Palo Alto, California, where he obtained a Master of Arts degree from Stanford University after two years of studies with Leland Smith and Roy Harris. In 1964 he returned to Canada and married Pierette Lepage, whom he had known as fellow piano student at the Royal Conservatory in the 1950s. In 1966 he was appointed to the faculty of McGill University in Montreal; he completed his doctorate from the University of Toronto in the following year.

Vocal works are a crucial element in Mather's output, beginning with a series of works in the early 1960s set to the poetry of Robert Graves (including a cantata, *The White Goddess* and several art songs) and continuing in the 1970s with a highly evocative series of five *Madrigals* on poems by the Quebec poet Saint-Denys Garneau. Mather's first opera, *La Princesse Blanche*, was premiered in Montreal in February, 1994.

The song cycle, *un cri qui durerait la mer*, was commissioned in 1985 by the mezzo-soprano Jocelyne Fleury-Coutu with the assistance of the Canada Council. The text of the composition is by Marie-France Rose, to whom the work is dedicated. Mme. Rose and M. Mather have also collaborated in a song cycle for baritone and ensemble, *Travaux de nuit* (1990). *un cri qui durerait la mer* is divided into ten sub-sections. It begins at the precipice of an evolving ocean of sound with a series of sharp vertical strokes of static, brutal sonorities, unyielding like the cliffs of the sea. Subsequent sections are distinguished by far more subtle changes of texture. The voice sometimes participates in the musical dialogue as an instrument, performing without a text. Throughout the work melodic fragments leap to the fore with undular motions, suggestive of the movements of water.

When asked, in 1970, why he had not set any English-language texts since 1963, Mather replied, "Your maternal language is prosaic, while on the other hand a foreign language is musical before anything else. That's why I choose mainly hermetic texts, poems in a symbolic language where the sonorities and rhythms resonate from the first reading."

In 1979 Mather won the most prestigious composition prize in Canada, the Jules Leger Prize for new chamber music (*Musique pour Champigny*) and had received commissions from the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, The National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio France, the Societe de musique contemporaine du Quebec (SMCQ), New Music Concerts, the Esprit Orchestra, the Rouen Chamber Orchestra, Trio Basso (Cologne) and the Collectif musical international de Champigny (2e2m).

Along with his composing and performing, Mather has distinguished himself as a mentor to a generation of younger composers who have attended his courses at McGill University. One such person is **James Harley**, born in 1959 in Vernon, B.C. Harley began his doctoral studies at McGill University in Montreal in 1988, having previously studied at Western Washington University and with Paul Patterson at the Royal Academy of Music in London. While in Europe he also studied aesthetics (Iannis Xenakis) and musical acoustics at the Universite de Paris, attended seminars at IRCAM and the College de France (Pierre Boulez), and worked extensively with the UPIC computer music system at CEMAMu. Then, in 1987, Harley moved on to Warsaw, thanks to a Polish Government Scholarship, to spend a year at the Chopin Academy of Music. He attended the composition class of Włodzimirz Kotonski, participated in the Summer Courses for Young Composers organized by the Polish Society for Contemporary Music, and had a piece premiered at the 1987 Warsaw Autumn Festival. Harley

graduated in 1994 with his D.Mus. in composition, having completed a large-scale thesis work, *Cantico Delle Creature*, under the supervision of John Rea and Bruce Mather. In the fall of 1996 he moved to Los Angeles, and has been teaching part-time at USC and the California Institute of the Arts.

Harley's trio for flute, cello and piano, *Epanoui*, was composed in 1995 and was commissioned by the Phoenix Trio for the Edmonton Composers' Concert Society New Music Festival with the generous support of the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Quebec.

In 1974, on one of his annual trips to France, Mather met the octogenarian Russian composer Ivan Wyschnegradsky. He had been a pioneer in the evolution of microtonal music and was the composer of a substantial repertoire of visionary works that included a number of pieces for two pianos, one of which was always tuned to a different intonation than the other. Mather and his wife Pierette Lepage soon introduced many of these works to North American audiences, and Mather began to incorporate microtonal procedures into his own music.

Two such microtonal works are to be heard on tonight's programme. Both are also examples of a genre the composer refers to as his "oeuvres vineuses," a series of works inspired by the alchemy of fine wines. Mather's numerous works inspired by wine saw him initiated into the prestigious "Confrerie des Chevaliers du Tasting" at the Chateau Clos de Vougeot in 1987. Three years later the SMCQ, an organization he had been associated with since its inception, celebrated Mather's 50th birthday and his two great passions, music and wine, in a concert at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal. In 1993 he won the Jules Leger Prize a second time with another wine-inspired work, *Yquem* for 4 pianos and 4 ondes Martenot.

Concerning the first of these two microtonal works, the composer has provided the following note:

**Doisey Daëne** for flute and piano was written in March and April 1997 at the request of the outstanding French flutist, Pierre-Yves Artaud. *Doisey Daëne* takes its name from one of the finest Sauternes wines. I have often noticed that only very fine flutists are capable of playing loud and soft in all registers. The first section of the piece with its echo effects shows off these qualities of the performer. The second section exploits quarter tones. Then there is a rapid dialogue between flute and piano followed by a three-part counterpoint which slows down gradually.

The first performance was given August 26th, 1998 in Montrejean, France, by Pierre Yves Artaud with the pianist Francesca Costa.

**Bruce Mather**

**Tempranillo** is composed for a guitar tuned in sixths of tones. The six strings of the instrument, normally tuned to the notes E-A-D-G-B-E, are replaced with three low E-strings and three D-strings. Within each of the two sets of three strings the first string is tuned to the normal pitch, the next string is tuned a sixth of a tone higher, and the third string is yet another third tone higher. Structurally, it has a strictly strophic and clearly audible form, in which each extended musical phrase is immediately repeated with the same rhythms but a new series of pitches. The work was written in the summer of 1997 at the composer's chalet in La Bouillecrere, France, and is dedicated to Didier Aschour.

Harmony is a pivotal element in the music of Bruce Mather, and a sign of his individuality. In 1977 he observed that "These days, most composers are working with masses of sound and, to some extent, rhythm, but composers who are really interesting harmonically are very few." Scriabin was fond of saying, "Melody is harmony unfurled," and would add, "Harmony is furled melody." Scriabin's words are an apt description of Mather's recent composition, **Advanced Harmony** (1995-96). There are two movements to this large work for twelve wind instruments. The first movement begins simply enough on a unison middle 'c,' yet quickly unfurls into dense, shifting thickets of sound. The exquisitely voiced and carefully calculated harmonies congest from time to time, only to send out new shoots. The second movement of the work stands this procedure on its head with a type of enhanced melody that has certain precedents in the "monodies" of Milhaud's equally long-lived colleague, Charles Koechlin (1867-1951). Scriabin's "furled harmony" is here expressed by means of a unison melody entwining itself through the various instrumental harmonic timbres of the ensemble.

#### **Program notes by Daniel Foley**

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Michel Ducharme, baritone**

After completing his Master's degree at Laval University, Michel Ducharme obtained his doctorate in performance from the University of Montreal under the direction of Mme. Louise André. He also participated in master classes in Europe and in the USA with Gérard Souzay, Dalton Baldwin, Wieland Kuijken, René Jacobs and William Christie. Very active as a soloist in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, he is in demand as a recitalist in operas and oratorios and in concerts of contemporary and baroque music. In addition to the Montreal and Quebec Symphony Orchestras, he sings regularly with "Tafel Musik Baroque Orchestra" of Toronto, the Studio de Musique Ancienne in Montreal and with the Societe(accents on both e's)de Musique Contemporaine du Quebec and the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne. He has also made recordings of works by Faure, (accent on e)Vivier, Garant and Mather and of motets of the 17th and 18th centuries. Since 1985, Michel Ducharme is in charge of the voice class and director of the Opera Studio of the School of Music of Laval University.

### **Rachel Gauk, guitar**

Several important debuts in recent seasons have confirmed Ms. Gauk's arrival on the international music scene. She performed the Rodrigo "Concierto de Aranjuez" with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, presented a solo recital at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, and performed two concerti with the New World Chamber Orchestra in Mexico City. In June of 1992, she released a solo debut compact disc, "Danzas y Canciones", on the Marquis Classics label. Her current season includes solo debut performances with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Windsor Symphony Orchestra, and in Jan/2000 she will be featured once again as a soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Her particular affinity for the contemporary voice of the guitar continues to generate many performances and world premieres, including the challenging "Concerto" by Harry Somers, and a recent world premiere of Bruce Mather's "Vega Sicilia" for New Music Concerts and CBC Radio.

A highlight of 1999 will be Ms. Gauk's premiere of a new guitar concerto, *Flegies*, written by Omar Daniel, celebrating a decade of collaboration. Her first duo recording, "Toward the Sea", with flutist Susan Hoepfner, was launched with Marquis Classics in London, England. Ms. Gauk's second solo recording with Marquis Classics, "Scarlatti Sonatas", was released to outstanding reviews, and was followed by a second duo disc, "Histoire du Tango". Her next solo release, entitled

"Panorama", prompted RPM Magazine to comment that she "proves her mastery of the guitar and her fine attack on Spanish and Latin American Music". Rachel Gauk's newest recording, "My Angel", just released, features works by Canadian composer and 1997 Jules Léger prizewinner Omar Daniel. Cannes' Best Classical Label, Grammofon ABIS, will soon release her upcoming disc, showcasing Japanese repertoire.

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