

New Music Concerts presents
The Utaoni Choir of Japan

Nobuyuki Koshiba, conductor

On **Monday, May 1, 2000**, at **Glenn Gould Studio** in Toronto, **New Music Concerts** hosts one of Japan's finest vocal ensembles in a program of choral masterworks by **R. Murray Schafer** and **Toru Takemitsu**. The 40 members of the superb **Utaoni Choir** will offer their award-winning performance of Schafer's ***Magic Songs*** (1988) and the Canadian premiere of a composition commissioned by the choir, Schafer's ***Seventeen Haiku*** (1997). They will also perform Toru Takemitsu's most important choral work, ***Wind Horse*** (1961–66), as well as an arrangement of traditional Inner Mongolian music.

Since their founding in the city of Tsu (Mie) in 1974 the "Singing Demons" of the **Utaoni Choir** have advanced to the forefront of Japanese choirs. The excellence of their performances have been celebrated with three consecutive gold medals in the All-Japan Choir Competitions of 1995 to 1997. They are specialists in the performance of contemporary repertoire with a particular affinity for the choral works of R. Murray Schafer. Their prize-winning performances of Schafer's *Magic Songs* so impressed the composer that he readily agreed to compose a new work for the choir.

Schafer's *Magic Songs* were commissioned the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1988 for the Orphei Dranger Choir of Uppsala, Sweden. The composer describes the nine chants of this cycle as leading us "back to the era of 'tone magic', when the purpose of singing was not merely to give pleasure but was intended to bring about a desired effect in the physical world. In spirit culture, everything has its voice and the aim of the singer is to duly unify himself with this voice." Schafer has declared the Utaoni Choir's performance of this work "the best performance of *Magic Songs* I have ever heard. Finally a choir who understood that the work was not merely a collection of pretty songs but real tone magic. You have to believe that you can change the world with your voice in

order to perform *Magic Songs*. Then the effect on an audience can be astounding — almost terrifying.”

The composition of *Seventeen Haiku* came about through the instigation of Nobuyuki Koshihira. The text of this work, composed in Japanese with the guidance of Schafer's friend and colleague Komei Harasawa, is a collection of traditional haiku and new poems the composer solicited from members of the choir. From these resources the composer formed “a collection that takes us from sunrise, to sunset and a festival after dark, closing with the stillness of night.”

Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996) held a close relationship with Canada since the 1960s, when Seiji Ozawa first performed his orchestral works with the Toronto Symphony. He had been a welcome guest of **New Music Concerts** on several occasions over the past three decades and was the recipient of the 1996 Glenn Gould Prize. The Utaoni choir will offer a performance of his large choral work, *Wind Horse* (*Kaze no Uma*, 1962–1966). Jon Washburn, conductor of the Vancouver Chamber Choir, has observed that the title of this work refers to “a divination practiced by Tibetan nomads, which they use to decide the direction of travel when they move from one encampment to the next. Over a high, vast plateau of open space, they stretch a rope to which they tie or hang various pieces of cloth of many hues from their colourful costumes... The nomads take the direction in which the cloths are blown as an indication of the route they should follow. This rope is called a ‘wind horse’.” The sound of the wind is emulated in the four “Vocalise” movements of the work, which are interspersed with settings of texts drawn from a longer poem, also called *Wind Horse*, by Kuniharu Akiyama.

The concert will be preceded by an **Illuminating Introduction at 7:15** prior to the **performance at 8:00**. **Tickets** to this event are priced at \$20 and \$10 and are available at the **Glenn Gould Box Office** at 250 Front St. West. or by calling **416-205-5555**. This concert is part of a **Japan Mini-Fest** presented in conjunction with **Encounters 2000** and the **Japan Foundation**. A **special package price of \$50** for tickets to all three events (**May 1** New Music Concerts presents the **Utaoni Choir**; **May 9** Encounters presents **Karen Tanaka** and **Kelly-Marie Murphy**; **May 14** New Music Concerts presents **The Soundworld of Toshio Hosokawa**) is available from the Glenn Gould Studio Box Office until April 30.

New Music Concerts Presents
The Sound World of Toshio Hosokawa

On **Sunday, May 14, 2000**, at the **Glenn Gould Studio** in Toronto, **New Music Concerts** presents a musical portrait of one of Japan's most active and innovative composers. Four works by this master of moving sounds through space and time will be presented, along with works by **Isang Yun, Chiyoko Szlavnic, and Barbara Pentland**.

Toshio Hosokawa was born in Hiroshima in 1955. After his initial studies in piano and composition in Tokyo he traveled to West Berlin in 1976 to study with Isang Yun at the Hochschule der Künste. From 1983 to 1986 he studied with Klaus Huber and Brian Ferneyhough at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg. He was the Artistic Director for the annual Akiyoshidai International Contemporary Music Seminar from 1989–1998. Since 1990 he has been a guest lecturer at the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt. Hosokawa's prolific output has been performed, recorded and broadcast throughout the world, and he has been invited to nearly all the major contemporary festivals in Europe as guest composer or lecturer. His principal compositions include several large orchestral works, numerous works for small ensembles (including compositions for or with traditional Japanese instruments), film scores, vocal music both solo and choral, and an opera, *Vision of Lear*, commissioned by the city of Munich for the *Münchener Biennale* of 1998.

Hosokawa's *Memory* (1996) for violin, cello and piano was composed in memory of his teacher, Isang Yun. It will be performed by Fujiko Imajishi, David Hetherington, and David Swan. *Landscape II* (1992) is scored for harp and string quartet and features a performance by Erica Goodman and the Accordes String Quartet. Robert Aitken joins the Accordes quartet in *Fragments II* (1989) for alto flute and string quartet. Hosokawa's *Vertical Time Study* (1992) will be performed by clarinetist Joaquin Valdepeñas, cellist David Hetherington and pianist David Swan.

Acclaimed as the most significant Korean composer of the 20th century, **Isang Yun** was born in 1917 in Tongyong, South Korea, and received his first musical training, in cello and composition, in Korea and Japan. His resistance to the Japanese occupation of his country resulted in his imprisonment from 1943 until the end of World War II. After a period of teaching in Korea, he traveled to Europe in 1956 to continue his studies in Paris and Berlin, eventually settling in Berlin in 1964. Yun came to international attention with the premiere of his orchestral work *Réak* at the 1966 Donaueschingen Festival. In 1967 Yun was kidnapped by the South Korean Secret Service and returned to Seoul, where he was indicted as a Communist, tortured and sentenced to death. After an international lobbying campaign he was released and returned to Germany in

1969. He taught at the State College in Hannover and was professor of composition at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin from 1970 to 1985, becoming a West German citizen in 1971. He died in Berlin on November 3, 1995. Yun's works are characterized by aesthetic and philosophical issues relating to Asian traditional music, Chinese Taoism and Western avant-garde compositional procedures. We will hear a performance of his *Novellette* (1980) for flute, harp, violin and cello.

As is customary in NMC's "Portrait" concerts, the guest composer is invited to programme works by both an influential mentor such as Isang Yun and a younger colleague. As a result of their encounters in Darmstadt and Berlin, Mr. Hosokawa has chosen the Japanese-Canadian musician **Chiyoko Szlavnic**. Ms Szlavnic is a flutist, saxophonist and composer with an international career based in Toronto and Berlin. She is a founding member of the *40 fingers* saxophone quartet and performed in the *Hemispheres* ensemble from 1992–1997, contributing several compositions to these ensembles' repertoires. Szlavnic has also composed music for contemporary dance and theatre projects, working in collaboration with Floyd Favel and Michael Greyeyes, Bill James, Robin Poitras, the Froth Collective, Guillaume Bernardi, and Roland Brus. Her European performances include premieres at the Éclat festival in Stuttgart, Darmstadt's Ferienkurse, and at the Akademie Schloß Solitude. Ms. Szlavnic's new work is scored for mezzo-soprano, viola, piano and percussion and is based on the poetry of the Japanese-Canadian author, Gerry Shikatani. She describes the composition as "one of a series of explorations of working with text, both spoken and sung" which will foreshadow a larger work based on a Japanese myth they intend to collaborate on in the future.

On Saturday, February 5, 2000, Dr. **Barbara Pentland**, CM, OBC died, peacefully, at home after living a half-decade with Alzheimers. Dr. Pentland had been a pioneer of new music in Canada in an era that was frequently hostile to both her innovations and her gender. Her exposure to the music of Anton Webern during a visit to Darmstadt in 1955 led her to crystallize a style of exceptional clarity and economy to which, in later years, she incorporated elements of controlled chance and, in certain works, outspoken social commentary. She defined her artistic credo in an oft-quoted statement: "The creative force has to be such that the laws necessary for its expression should be continually challenged. There is an element of daring in all great art." New Music Concerts will honour Dr. Pentland's memory with a performance by Robert Aitken and Erica Goodman of her *Trance* (1978) for flute and harp.

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