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45th season | 377th event

Sunday April 3, 2016

Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis Street, Toronto

New Music Concerts presents

Viva Electronica

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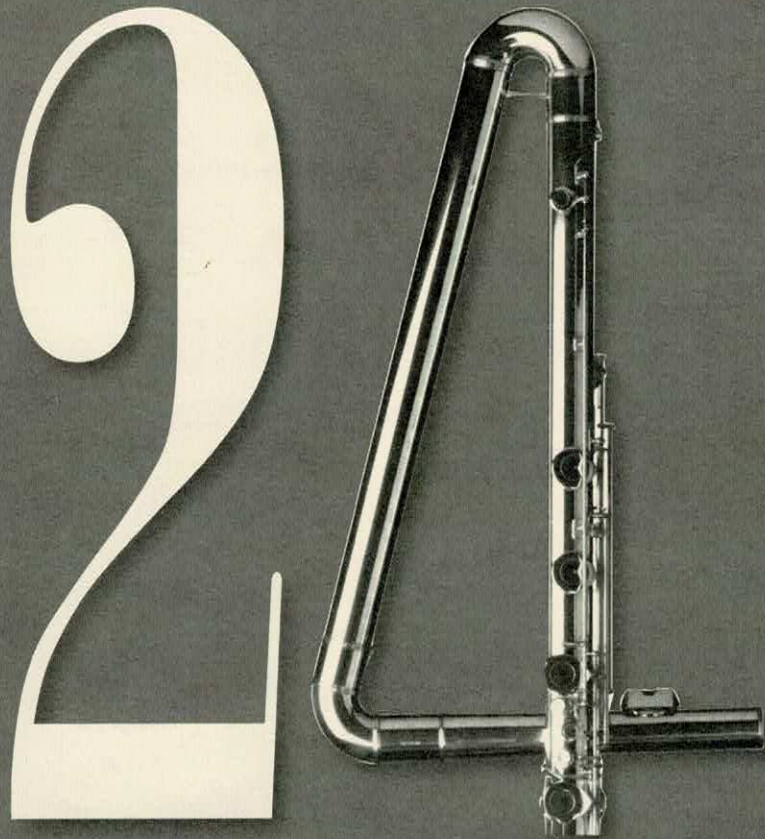


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New Music Concerts presents

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Programme:

Keith Hamel (Canada 1956)

Dianne Aitken flute Keith Atkinson oboe Max Christie clarinet Rick Sacks percussion Stephen Clarke piano
Timothy Ying violin Douglas Perry viola David Hetherington cello Robert Aitken direction

World premiere, commissioned by New Music Concerts

Dreamer (2016)

Thomas Kessler (Switzerland 1937)

Xin Wang soprano Wallace Halladay saxophone Gregory Oh sound files

Text used with the permission of The John Cage Trust

Is It Marion? (2002/2015)

Anthony Tan (Canada 1978)

Max Christie bass clarinet Peter Lutek bassoon Chris Gongos horn David Schotzko percussion
Stephen Clarke piano Douglas Perry viola David Hetherington cello Adam Scime contrabass
Anthony Tan electronics Robert Aitken direction

World premiere, commissioned by New Music Concerts with the assistance of The Canada Council

On the Sensations of Tone II (2016)

— Intermission —

So Jeong Ahn (South Korea 1956)

Gregory Oh piano Anthony Tan sound files

LOL (2012/2015)

Paul Steenhuisen (Canada 1965)

Dianne Aitken flute Keith Atkinson oboe Max Christie clarinet Peter Lutek bassoon Chris Gongos horn
Rick Sacks, David Schotzko percussion Gregory Oh piano Timothy Ying violin Douglas Perry viola
David Hetherington cello Adam Scime contrabass Paul Steenhuisen electronics Robert Aitken direction

World premiere, commissioned by New Music Concerts with the assistance of The Canada Council

Vajrayana Tantra Shift (2016)

Viva Electronica was made possible thanks to the generous support of Roger D. Moore.

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Robert Aitken, c.m., Artistic Director

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Keith Hamel is a Professor in the School of Music and Director of the Computer Music Studio at the University of British Columbia. He has written both acoustic and electroacoustic music and has been awarded many prizes in both media. Many of his recent compositions focus on interaction between live performers and computer-controlled electronics. His works have been performed by many of the finest soloists and ensembles both in Canada and abroad. He has received commissions from IRCAM (Paris), the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver New Music Ensemble, the Elektra Women's Choir, musica intima, New Music Concerts (Toronto), Hammerhead Consort, Standing Wave, Hard Rubber Orchestra, Nu:BC as well as from outstanding performers such as flutist Robert Cram, bassoonist Jesse Read, clarinetists Jean-Guy Boisvert and François Houle, saxophonist Julia Nolan, trombonists Jeremy Berkman and Benny Sluchin, and pianists Douglas Finch, Megumi Masaki, Jane Hayes and Corey Hamm.

Keith Hamel is the former Vice-President of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), a former President of the Canadian Music Centre, and a former board member of the Canadian League of Composers. His music is published by Art Music Promotion (AMP) and by Cypress Press (Vancouver.)

Keith Hamel (Canada 1956) *Dreamer* (2016)

Dreamer is based on material deconstructed from two sources. The first is the 1963 speech given by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Lincoln Memorial - the famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The second is the 1971 song *Imagine* by John Lennon. There is a strong connection between these two men and their messages. Both dreamed of a future world where peace, tolerance and equality among all people would become a reality. Both were activists and pacifists, and both were murdered. It is now almost half a century since these men imagined their better world, yet there is probably more conflict, injustice and intolerance in the world than ever.

I performed spectral analyses of Martin Luther King's speech and John Lennon's music. These sonic structures form the harmonic and melodic material used throughout *Dreamer*. You might hear vague references to the melodic contours of King's speech or to the harmonies of Lennon's music, but these references are heavily obscured and distorted - much like their dreams that have become obfuscated by decades of war and hatred. Despite this, it is important that we continue to dream of a better world. As John Lennon says, "You might say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope one day you'll join us and the world will live as one." - Keith Hamel

Thomas Kessler was born in 1937 in Zürich. After studies in German and Romanic linguistics at the Universities of Zürich and Paris he studied composition with Heinz Friedrich Hartig, Ernst Pepping and Boris Blacher in Berlin where he founded his own electronic studio in 1965. In the following years he was director of the Berlin Electronic Beat Studio and musical director of the Centre Universitaire International de Formation et de Recherche Dramatiques in Nancy. From 1973 until 2000 he taught composition and theory at the Basel Music Academy and created the well-known electronic studio there. Together with Gerard Zinsstag he founded the festival "Tage fuer Neue Musik" in Zürich and the live-electronic music festival "ECHT!ZEIT" with Wolfgang Heiniger in Basel. As a composer of numerous instrumental chamber music, orchestral music and live-electronic music compositions, he is interested in the interactions between musicians and electronics. Thomas Kessler lives in Basel and Toronto.

Thomas Kessler (Switzerland 1937) *Is It Marion?* (2002/2015)

Is it high? Is it low?
 Is it in the middle?
 Is it soft? Is it loud?
 Are there two?
 Are there more than than two?
 Is it a piano?
 Why isn't it?
 Was it an airplane?
 Is it a noise?
 Is it music?
 Is it softer than before?
 Is it supersonic?
 When will it stop?
 What's coming ?
 Is it time? Is it very short?
 Very low? Just medium?
 If I had something to see,
 would it be theatre?
 Is sound enough?
 What more do I need?
 Don't I get it whether I need it or not?
 Is it sound?
 Then again, is it music?
 Is music - the word I mean -
 Is that a sound?
 If it is, is music music?
 Is the word "music" music?

Does it communicate anything?
 Must it?
 If it's high does it?
 If it's low does it?
 If it's in the middle does it?
 If it's soft does it?
 If it's loud does it?
 If it's an interval does it?
 What is an interval?
 Is an interval a chord?
 Is a chord an aggregate?
 Is an aggregate a constellation?
 What is a constellation?
 How many sounds
 are there altogether?
 One million? Ten thousand?
 Eighty-eight?
 Do I have to ask ten more?
 Do I? Why?
 Why do I?
 Did I decide to ask so many?
 Wasn't I taking a risk?
 Was I? Why was I?
 Will it never stop?
 Why won't it?

With permission from the John Cage Trust

[The original version of] *Is it?* is based on a short text in "Composition as Progress / III. Communication" from the book "Silence" by John Cage. This text by Cage comprises 56 short questions whose order is calculated and amounted through chance operations. I have deliberately left this text unchanged in its sequence and gave each question a period of 11 seconds. The ritual sequence of these simple questions is what the singer attempts to gradually free herself from within the strictures of the music. These questions of Cage have an uncanny power. Cage gives no answers and ritualistically presses forward. His questions ask us what we are actually hearing. Therefore, in my characteristic way, the music is partly supporting the questions and partly seeking an answer.

— Thomas Kessler

Editor's Note: In 2015 Thomas Kessler reworked *Is It?* incorporating a recording of the text read by Marion Aitken (1935-2015) *Is It Marion?* is Kessler's tribute to a dear friend who passed away last September. Mr. Kessler says "I never actually thought about using the original recording of Marion Aitken in concert, but now that she is no longer with us this recorded voice takes on an entirely other meaning."

Anthony Tan is a Canadian composer-pianist, electronic musician and improviser based between Montréal and Berlin. His music is influenced by past experiences as a club DJ, training as a classical pianist and concert music composer within the Western European musical tradition.

As a composer he has been commissioned by the SWR EXPERIMENTAL-STUDIO, Ensemble Recherche, Dresden Philharmonie, Ensemble Contemporaine de Montréal, Les Cris de Paris, Ensemble Cairn, L'Orchestre de la Francophonie Canadienne, Ensemble Moderne Academie, Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, the New Orford String Quartet, Toca Loca, Turning Point Ensemble, New Music Concerts, and the Rubbing Stone Ensemble. His music has been presented at festivals including Tonlagen (Hellerau), Imatronic (ZKM), NYC electroacoustic festival, ICMC (Montreal, New York), Matrix (SWR Freiburg), Voix-Nouvelles (Royaumont), Domaine Forget, and Acanthes. Awards include a finalist for the International Edward Grieg Competition, the audience and jury prize from the ECM+ Generation 2014 tour, a 2012 Stipendium from the SWR Experimental Studio, 2011 Giga-Hertz Förder Prize, International Competition for live-electronics of the Hamburg Klangwerkstage and the Médaille d'or in piano performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music. Anthony completed his artistic training at the Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber Dresden, Germany with Mark Andre and Franz Martin Olbrisch. Additionally, he holds a Ph.D. from McGill University where he worked with John Rea (composition) and Stephen McAdams (Psychoacoustics). His dissertation research focused on the perception of timbre and its functional use in music. In 2016-2017 he will be a fellow of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University.

Anthony Tan (Canada 1978) *On the Sensations of Tone II* (2016)

This is the second work in a series that draws its title from Hermann Helmholtz's classical acoustics text: *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (1863). This book combines physics, physiology and psychological aspects of listening in order to explain the origins of musical notions of harmony and dissonance. In this series I am exploring a more physiological experience of sound, moving beyond historically conditioned notions of consonance and dissonance, and towards the ear becoming an active participant in the listening process rather than a submissive sense organ. Moments of 'music' become interspersed with sonic 'situations', whereby tension arises through the simultaneous juxtaposition of timbral qualities, suggesting a timbral counterpoint. Furthermore, I explore the evolutionary expectation of source sounds, the natural physiological responses of the ear (beatings, and virtual fundamentals) to certain acoustic stimuli, and the use of repetition and contextual placement of sounds to distort musical memory.

— Anthony Tan

So Jeong Ahn was born in Seoul, Korea and studied composition at Seoul National University and at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin, Germany. She has also been engaged with live electronic music, participating as a guest composer in the courses for electronic music by Thomas Kessler and for algorithmic composition by Hanspeter Kyburz at the Basel Electronic Studio in Switzerland. Her awards include the Tsang Houei Hsu Composition Award in Taiwan, the Salvatore Martirano Award in Illinois, USA and the Weimarer Frühjahrstage für zeitgenössische Musik in Germany. Her works have been premiered by New Music Concerts, the 'Eclat' Festival in Stuttgart, Salzburg Biennale, ISCM World Music Days, the Glenn Gould School Ensemble, Ensemble Sori and Ensemble TIMF Korea. She has been living in Berlin since 2015.

So Jeong Ahn (South Korea 1956) *LOL* (2012/2015)

The acronym 'LOL' is shorthand for "laughing out loud" in the online world. Notwithstanding the silence of the letters themselves, our mind sees the image of an exhilaratingly laughing face and hears a burst of spontaneous laughter as we read it. It's the moment where the virtual online world becomes the real world, effecting an immediate transition from the visual to the aural realm.

The process of finding the equivalent of laughter from the piano represents a similar transition or interaction between the 'musical' and 'non-musical' aspects of the instrument. The pianist is assigned the difficult task of expressing the peculiar edgy tension

of bursting into loud laughter. For the tape part I used time-stretched transformations of instrumental tones, a short phrase of my singing voice, and anonymous samples of laughter from the internet. — So Jeong Ahn

Paul Steenhuisen (born Vancouver, Canada) is an independent composer working with acoustic and digital media. His concert music consists of orchestral, chamber, solo, and vocal music, and often includes live electronics and soundfiles. Raised by parents from The Netherlands and Curaçao, the confluence of his heritage and upbringing in North American culture has informed both his education and musical output. Initially, Steenhuisen worked with Keith Hamel (DMA, UBC), simultaneously with Louis Andriessen at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in the Hague and Michael Finnissy in Hove, England, then later with Tristan Murail at IRCAM in Paris. During those years, he was laureate of more than a dozen national and international awards, including the Governor General of Canada Gold Medal as the outstanding student in all faculties (UBC), seven awards in the PROCAN/SOCAN Competition, and four in the CBC Young Composers Competition. He was a finalist in the Gaudeamus Music Week, and his piece WONDER was a "recommended" work at the International Rostrum of Composers (UNESCO, Paris). Subsequently, Steenhuisen was composer in residence with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Alberta. In 2011, he was awarded the Victor Martin Lynch-Staunton Award (Canada Council for the Arts) as the outstanding mid-career artist in music. He is also the author of 'Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composers', and host of the SOUNDLAB New Music Podcast (iTunes). His music has been called "Superb... the high point of the concert" (Neuzeit Graz, Austria), as well as "filth" (La Presse, Montréal), with a "freshness that bodes well for the future" (Paris Transatlantic).

Paul Steenhuisen (Canada 1965) *Vajrayana Tantra Shift* (2016)

Vajrayana (Sanskrit: "Thunderbolt Vehicle, or "Diamond Way", translated as "adamantine", or "indestructible") Buddhism is a highly complex school deriving from the Mahayana tradition. It is considered the most mystical and esoteric form, and the accelerated, riskier route to enlightenment in one lifetime, using mantric formulas, incantation, ritual, and magic to obtain the power to accomplish mundane and supramundane goals.

The tantra ("treatise" or "exposition" from the root tan "extend, stretch, expand" and suffix tra "instrument") sound materials are woven together to express the belief in the fundamental unity of phenomena. Simultaneously, as the dualism of the musical identities diminishes, the music shifts further inside the morphology of the sounds themselves.

Vajrayana Tantra Shift is a fantasy on memories of the profound and wide-ranging experience of listening to a ceremony I attended (in Gangtok, Sikkim, India), heard and mirrored through the comparative filter of my contemporary ear, and the outcomes of both agreeing to be a subject/subjected to (assujettissement), and giving in, or transcending, from that initial state. The work was commissioned by New Music Concerts with the assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts. Travel support was provided by an Alberta Foundation for the Arts Cultural Relations Grant.

— Paul Steenhuisen

Soloists

Xin Wang, a native of China, performs, teaches and mothers her three children in Toronto. She has distinguished herself as an acclaimed performer of contemporary music, having worked with Canadian and international composers Jeff Rayn, Melissa Hui, Christopher Butterfield, Jacques Bank, Karin Rehnquist, Chan Ka Nin, James Rolfe, Ana Sokolović, Jurg Wyttenbach and Steve Reich, among others.

A specialist in the performance of contemporary music, **Wallace Halladay** has commissioned and premiered numerous works. Wallace holds a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music, and studied at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam with Arno Bornkamp. He is Assistant Professor of Saxophone and Chair of the Woodwind Department at the University of Toronto, where he also runs the New Music Ensemble.

Gregory Oh gained his notoriety as a “new music revolutionary” but tends to wander the genres, and recent work has seen him appear in places from the legendary techno club Berghain in Berlin to the Lincoln Centre. He is the artistic director of Toca Loca and the Open Ears Festival and a frequent guest conductor of Continuum Contemporary Music. He teaches at the University of Toronto and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016)

It is with sadness that New Music Concerts marks the passing of one of the foremost musicians of our time. Maxwell Davies was a fearless figurehead for the postwar avant garde who made it his mission to connect with as many different audiences and performers as possible, writing music for children, for his Orkney community, as well as grand symphonies, concertos, string quartets and music theatre works. The Salford-born composer, universally known as Max, had been suffering from leukaemia for several years and died at his home in Orkney on March 14.