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47th season | 395th event

Sunday May 27, 2018

Mazzoleni Hall, Royal Conservatory of Music

5:15^{pm} Introduction | 6:00^{pm} Concert


New Music Concerts presents

Zipangu!



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Réseau canadien pour les musiques nouvelles

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SATURDAY OCTOBER 6, 2018

Betty Oliphant Theatre
Linda Bouchard's
**Murderous
Little World**
multi-media performance
with Bellows & Brass

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 11, 2018

Music Gallery 918 Bathurst
Generation 2018
O'Callaghan, Tidrow,
Giguere, Dupuis
Ensemble contemporain
de Montréal
Véronique Lacroix

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 2018

Betty Oliphant Theatre
Koerner's Choice
Stravinsky, Ives,
Schafer, Milhaud
NMC Ensemble
Robert Aitken

FRIDAY JANUARY 25, 2019

Walter Hall
Toshio Hosokawa
A Portrait
NMC Ensemble
Robert Aitken

SUNDAY APRIL 28, 2019

Betty Oliphant Theatre
Luminaries
Tremblay & Boulez
Louise Bessette, piano
Patricia Green, mezzo
Robert Aitken
Brian Current

SUNDAY MAY 26, 2019

Betty Oliphant Theatre
Concerto/Cantata
recent works by
Sokolovic & Andreyev
Andréa Tyniec, violin
NMC Ensemble
Robert Aitken

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Zipangu!

Programme:

Brian Harman (Canada b.1981)

to dash against darkness (2018) ♦ ●

Commissioned with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council

Stephen Sitarski, Corey Gemmell, Mark Lee, Lynn Kuo, Aysel Taghi-Zada violins Doug Perry, Rory McLeod, Diane Leung, Sheila Jaffe, Yolanda Bruno violas David Hetherington, Amahl Arulananda cellos Adam Scime contrabass Rick Sacks, Ryan Scott percussion Robert Aitken direction

Roger Reynolds (USA b.1934)

not forgotten (2007-2010) ♦

Giverny – Iannis – Toru – Ryoanji – Elliott – Now

Accordes (generously supported by Roger D. Moore):

Erika Raum, Marie Bérard violins Doug Perry viola David Hetherington cello

—Intermission—

Roger Reynolds

'O'o (2018) ♦ ●

Robert Aitken flute IRIS Ensemble: Yolanda Bruno, Mark Lee violins Rory McLeod viola Leana Rutt cello

Claude Vivier (Canada 1948-1983)

Zipangu (1980) ♦

Commissioned with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council

Stephen Sitarski, Corey Gemmell, Yolanda Bruno, Mark Lee, Sheila Jaffe, Lynn Kuo, Aysel Taghi-Zada violins Doug Perry, Rory McLeod, Diane Leung violas David Hetherington, Amahl Arulanandam cellos Adam Scime contrabass Robert Aitken direction

● World Premiere ♦ Canadian Premiere ❖ NMC Commission

Please join us for a post-concert reception (complimentary snacks and cash bar) at Brewhaha, downstairs at the Duke of York, 39 Prince Arthur Avenue, one street north of Bloor at Bedford.

This concert is being recorded for archival purposes.
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HARMAN Brian Harman's compositions are frequently inspired by extra-musical ideas such as technology, architecture, dance, and concepts of ritual. In 2016 he was the recipient of the KM Hunter Artist Award for Music. His compositions *Hum* (for double sextet), *Sewing the Earthworm* (for voice and piano), *Cherry Beach* (for violin and piano) and *Inverno* (for solo piano) have recently been commercially released on the Redshift and Centredisc labels. He has collaborated extensively with artists in other disciplines, including performance artist Nina Arsenault, writer David Brock, dancer Jennifer Nichols and visual artist Danilo Ursini. Brian received his Doctor of Music from McGill University in 2012, and served as Ontario Councillor and President of the Canadian League of Composers from 2013 to 2016.

Brian Harman (Canada b.1981)

to dash against darkness (2018) ♦ ●

For this commission, I was asked to write a piece inspired by Claude Vivier's *Zipangu* – one of my favourite pieces of music. Vivier's work has been influential on my music in so many ways – from small technical ideas to overarching themes and extra musical ideas. Like Vivier, I often employ melodies as central components of a composition that guide other compositional decisions. We also share an interest in ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of music. I thought a lot about Vivier, his music and his life while writing the piece, but did not attempt to make explicit connections between my new work and *Zipangu*.

to dash against darkness is in two movements. It uses more violas and cellos than violins, allowing me to explore the depths of this rich ensemble. I'm interested in distorting musical materials by submerging them into the lower register, as if plunging them underwater, rendering them murky and less clear. This is quite different from much of my music, which tends to reside mostly above middle C.

I always find it strange, and difficult, to give a title to a piece of music. *to dash against darkness* is a line from an e. e. cummings poem, entitled *i will wade out*, that reflects what I was thinking about while writing the piece. — *Brian Harman*

REYNOLDS Roger Reynolds: composer, writer, producer and mentor, pioneer in sound spatialization, intermedia and also algorithmic concepts, an inveterate synthesizer of diverse capacities and perspectives. His notorious (1961) composition, *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, which uses graphic notation to depict performer location on a stage, was widely imitated. In it, eight singers and a jazz trio gloss, while musically manifesting, a Wallace Stevens poem. In fact, Reynolds's work often arises out of text.

One of his Ircam commissions, *Odyssey*, (1989-93) sets a bilingual Beckett text; his Pulitzer prize-winning composition, *Whispers Out of Time*, for string orchestra, muses over a poem by John Ashbery. The FLIGHT project arose out of a collection of texts that stretches from Plato to astronaut Michael Collins. This body of work demonstrates how seamlessly text, electroacoustic resources, and novel presentation strategies can be melded with live instrumental and vocal performance.

Projects with individual performers and ensembles, theater directors, choreographers, and scientists have provoked challenging inter-personal collaborations, including *Sanctuary* (2003-2007) for percussion quartet and real-time computer processing with Steven Schick. About it, *Gramophone* writes: "Reynolds goes right inside sound. ... Here's the most outstandingly original view of percussion since Varèse's *Ionisation*." A recent cycle of duos for solo instrumentalist and real-time computer musician includes *MARKed MUSIC* (with contrabassist Mark Dresser), and *Shifting/Drifting* (with violinist Irvine Arditti). About a Mode 2-disc set of Reynolds's complete cello music featuring Alexis Descharmes, *Gramophone* wrote: "fresh-minted but also thrillingly open-ended ...". In addition to continuing musical composition, Reynolds' current projects include an innovative collection of texts and images, *PASSAGE*, and a collaborative book exploring Xenakis' creative ways as exemplified in a Desert House he designed for Karen and Roger Reynolds.

Reynolds' music is published exclusively by C.F. Peters Corporation, and his manuscripts are housed in a Special Collection at the Library of Congress, as well as at the Sacher Foundation in Basel. He has been commissioned by the Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, BBC, and National symphonies and the Japan Philharmonic, and also by the British Arts Council, the French Ministry of Culture, IRCAM, the Fromm, Rockefeller, Suntory, and Koussevitzky foundations. Reynolds's students occupy leading positions at Harvard (Czernowin), SUNY Buffalo (Felder), University of Michigan (Daugherty), University of Florida (Koonce), and North Texas (May).

Reynolds envisions his own path as entailing the principled weaving together of threads from tradition with novel provocations originating outside music. The elements (wind, fire, water) have spoken in his works beginning with the vocal storm in *VOICESPACE I: "Still"* (1975), and continuing in *Versions/Stages* and *The Red Act Arias*. Mythic themes are also frequently drawn upon. Reading about and research in psychoacoustics have affected his outlook. Research in the Sacher Foundation's Collections resulted in publications about Varèse's conceptualization of "space": *The Last Word is Imagination: Parts I and II*. His long friendships with Cage, Nancarrow, Takemitsu and Xenakis also inform his outlook in procedural and personal ways. Reynolds conceives of composition as "a process of illumination", a path toward (occasional) clarity in turbulent times. He seeks the satisfaction of proposing and experiencing unexpected

connections, of bringing the elevating capacity of music into public spaces, of engaging with other arts and artists to discover new amalgamations of sensation and insight that can “improve the human experience.”

Roger Reynolds (USA b.1934)

not forgotten (2007-2010) ◆

not forgotten is an assemblage of individuals, music, and places that came into my mind and have not left. As memories often enter as barely noticed traces, flowering engrossingly, then displaced, replaced by others, four of the six movements of this work are introduced by solos that gradually evolve into movements for the full quartet. *Giverny* always begins a performance. The culminating *Now*, always ends it. It is my intention that the other four movements (*Elliott*, *Toru*, *Ryoanji*, and *Iannis*) will occur in differing order at each performance, lending a touch of the unexpected even when the content of the materials themselves is fully mastered. Why should music not be, as life is, not entirely predictable?

Performance notes: *Giverny* This is a malleable chorale, responding to a memorable sketch Monet used to suggest his aims for one of the miraculous water lily paintings. The harmonic content is formed from a succession of superimposed dyads. There is a wrinkle, however. The left hand is set so as to produce a particular interval in a particular register, and that fixed “hand set” wanders higher or lower on the same strings, so that the heard interval continuously changes, shrinking as the hand moves towards the bridge, and widening as the hand moves up the fingerboard. The performer fixes the hand so as to produce the required interval, and then uses this unchanging hand set, guided by the curving glissando indications. The “target interval” for each phrase sounds normally at a central moment in each phrase-gesture, but its effects wanders variably before and after this moment of stability. There are occasional trilled chords – more stable and unanimous – that bloom briefly on the surface of the overall, aquatic surface.

Now is an aggregated solo, involving all four players, often in unison. It surveys the materials out of which the remaining movements are made, but in a constant temporal flux. There are occasional bifurcations, when duos (the violins in contrast to the two lower instruments) separate. There are also four still centers, when similar motives are languidly overlaid for a long while, as though unable to return to the clarity and decisiveness of the present moment.

Iannis is built around a moment in Xenakis’ elemental *Tetras*. A memorable moment in Huddersfield in the early ’80s introduced me

both to the Arditti Quartet and to what was then Xenakis’ entire output of chamber music for strings. Alternating between tremulous unanimity and assertive independence, my music converges upon and then emerges out of his specifics. Another element – The Aegean – frames this movement, recalling the periodic variabilities of one’s experience with the glittering wave patterning of the waters that surround Greece.

Ryoanji This movement responds to the raked sand and surrounded rocks of the fifteenth century Zen garden in Kyoto. It is almost devoid of pitch. Utilizing a repertoire of nine noise sources, temporal patterns, echoing repetitions, and occasional moments of more forceful cohesiveness, it evokes a parched landscape of sounds with only the faintest touch of the lyric.

Toru Takemitsu was almost as enamored of film as he was of sounds and their music. His scores include one for Teshigahara’s haunting *Woman in the Dunes*. Takemitsu converted this music into a chamber work for strings, *Dorian Horizon*. A central, expressive quote from this piece forms a core to my *Toru* movement, towards which, again, my music converges and then departs. There are some startling interruptions in the form of auditory wasabi.

Elliott This movement was adapted from a short string quartet written on commission from the Cité de la musique as a tribute to Elliott Carter. His riotous Third String Quartet includes a passage during which the cello rises in a powerfully expressive challenge to successions of acerbic, block-like chords. I have followed a similar process again here, arriving at and departing from the (almost) literal essence of the seminal Carter passage. — *Roger Reynolds*

Roger Reynolds

Oo (2018) ◆●

In the Summer of 2017 Bob Aitken and I were on Nova Scotia, talking about repertoire. He expressed the wish that there were more music for flute and string quartet. I realized, immediately, that the prospect of such a quintet was appealing – entailing a “repositioning” of the string quartet medium that I have found so continuously engaging so as to include another, distinctive, treble voice. We quickly came to agreement that I would compose something for him, and, in the following weeks I “opened myself” as I do when considering a new project, so that breezes familiar and remote could come in and seed my mental space.

The perils of climate change, and of the related loss of one after another evolutionary line of fellow creatures, are clear. I happened upon a poignant tale of the last remaining pair of 'O'o birds that had retreated to the Alaka'i swamp on the Hawaiian Island of Kaua'i as their former environment degraded. Both male and female of this species sang. It seems that the male of the last pair lived for four years after his mate ceased responding. My plan was to fashion a sonic environment within which, the outlines of a calling and responding would gradually emerge. In the resulting quintet, different instrumental pairings try out responsive interaction and finally settle on the flute as caller and the cello (all high-register harmonics) as respondent.

I am less interested in the melodrama of a haunting narrative of loss and constancy, than by the ways in which varied musical behaviours evolve successively, as a "coming to awareness" of the need to call out: fields of pizzicato points, the gradual occurrence of sustained tones, stable threads weaving into cloud-like strata, intermittent warbles urging the strata into harmonic blocks, and the blocks then stretching and fragmenting so as to provide a ground against which the calls and responses increasingly occupy a listener's attention.

'O'o is dedicated to Robert Aitken, and was commissioned by New Music Concerts and the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance, with the financial assistance of The Koerner Foundation; The Merryweather Fund; Austin and Beverly Clarkson; Camille Watts; Véronique Lacroix and Paul Taub. — *Roger Reynolds*

VIVIER Born April 14th 1948 in Montréal, **Claude Vivier** studied composition with Gilles Tremblay and piano with Irving Heller at the Conservatory there. He subsequently went to Europe to study composition with Karlheinz Stockhausen and electronic music with Gottfried Michael Koenig and Hans Ulrich Humpert. He obtained several grants from the Canada Council and was named "Composer of the Year" by the Canadian Music Council in 1981. The two years of study with Stockhausen revealed a musical personality with a strong predilection for monody and for writing for the voice (solo and choral), but it also began to show the importance Vivier was to place on texts and unveiled a style of writing that was to stray progressively farther from the usual contemporary music trends to become more and more personal and transparent. In 1977 Claude Vivier undertook a long journey to Asia and the Middle East. This trip had a significant influence on his writing. The great variety of musical influences he received had the effect, paradoxically, of purifying his own musical expression. Melody gradually occupies a foremost position in his works and his concept of music as being an integral part of daily life is confirmed. Following a few years of teaching in Montreal, Claude Vivier devoted

his time entirely to composition. He was writing a piece prophetically titled "Do you believe in the immortality of the soul" when he died in Paris the 7th of March 1983. He left some forty works characterized by one of the most personal and expressive styles in the evolution of Canadian music.

Claude Vivier (Canada 1948-1983)

Zipangu (1980) ❖

Commissioned by New Music Concerts, *Zipangu* was written in 1980 and first performed in Toronto under the direction of Robert Aitken. The piece is written for two groups of strings: on the one hand, six violins and on the other, one violin, three violas, two cellos and one double bass. Claude Vivier writes: "*Zipangu* was the name given to Japan during the time of Marco Polo. Building around a melody, I explore different aspects of 'colour' in this piece. I have tried to veil my harmonic structures by using different bow techniques. A colourful sound is obtained by applying exaggerated bow pressure on the strings as opposed to pure harmonics when returning to normal technique. In this way melody becomes 'colour' (chords), grows lighter and slowly returns as though purified and solitary." The melody the composer is speaking of is always present in this work. It is clearly expressed both at the beginning and the end of the work, but undergoes all sorts of transformations throughout the rest of the piece. In one of the most beautiful passages we hear a solo violin playing a very fanciful air against a texture made up entirely of harmonics and in which we recognize the basic harmony and its harmonization. It is a work which towards its end achieves a deeply moving lyricism in a grave and sombre passage. — *Serge Garant*

MUSICIANS World renowned Canadian flutist, composer and conductor **Robert Aitken** has been honoured with the Order of Canada and is a Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France). In 1970, having previously served as principal flute for both the Vancouver and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, Aitken embarked on a solo career that has taken him to virtually every corner of the globe. He has more than 70 recordings to his credit and such notables as John Cage, George Crumb, Elliott Carter, Toru Takemitsu, Gilles Tremblay, John Beckwith and Bruce Mather have dedicated works to him. In 2003 he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Flute Association (USA). In 2004, he retired as Professor für Flöte at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, a position he had held for 16 years. In 2009 Aitken was the recipient Canada's largest arts award, the prestigious Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts. As a composer, he holds Bachelor and Masters degrees from the University of Toronto and all of his works are published by Universal Edition, Salabert, Ricordi

and Peer Music. Robert Aitken was director of the Banff Centre Winter Program in Music, founder and artistic director of Music Today, Music at Shawnigan and co-founder, with Norma Beecroft, of New Music Concerts which he has directed since its inception in 1971.

Accordes evolved out of a string quintet that was formed in 1975 to perform John Beckwith's *Musical Chairs*, a commission from the Toronto Symphony Women's Committee. Frequently heard on CBC radio, they have performed on the Roy Thomson Hall Chamber Music Series and constitute the core string players of the New Music Concerts series. This concentration on contemporary music has allowed Accordes to give Canadian, and sometimes world, premieres of works by such composers as Elliott Carter, Ben Johnston, Peter Paul Kropowski, Brian Cherney, Peter Michael Hamel, Michael Tippett, Henri Dutilleux, György Kurtág, Jörg Widmann, Ann Southam and Hope Lee. They have recorded extensively for the Canadian Music Centre label Centrediscs, including discs devoted to the music of Harry Freedman (Spirit Song), Harry Somers (Somers String Quartets, nominated for a JUNO award in 2001) and Alexina Louie (Dénouement). Their recording of NMC co-founder Norma Beecroft's *Amplified String Quartet with Tape* was nominated for a JUNO in 2004. Internationally, Accordes travelled to Cologne with Robert Aitken in 2004 to perform a program of Lithuanian music including works by Balakauskas, Kutavicius and *The Oriental Elegy* by Raminta Šerkšnytė, a NMC commission. More recently in 2013, under the auspices of Soundstreams, they travelled to Taiwan to perform Tan Dun's *Ghost Opera* and to Beijing for the Beijing Modern Music Festival.

The Iris Ensemble is a trans-Canadian chamber music collective made up of a spirited, adventurous, and committed group of musicians who are each carving out exciting careers in their home communities. Originally formed as the ensemble in residence at The Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance (LAMP), The Iris Ensemble has worked with both young and established contemporary composers, premiering new works and unveiling hidden gems of the earlier Canadian repertoire. After a thrilling first summer of music-making, in 2018 they will premiere newly commissioned works with Robert Aitken and New Music Concerts at the 21C Festival in Toronto in May. In June, they continue their tour of concerts, playing an intimate Pocket Concert on June 3rd, at Pontiac Enchanté (Ottawa), and returning to LAMP for the two weeks of workshops and performances with young Canadian composers. For information and tickets to their Pocket Concert performance in Toronto on June 3, visit pocketconcerts.ca.

New Music Concerts thanks **Sandor Ajzenstat** (stage direction),
John S. Gray (sound engineer), **Alan Glennie** (videographer)
and the staff of The Royal Conservatory of Music for their
invaluable assistance in the presentation of *Zipangu!*

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