

## NEW MUSIC CONCERTS, 1971-1989

by Norma Beecroft©

### In the Beginning.....

Norma and Bob founded a baby. This was not your usual conception, but a brainchild which would revolutionize the City of Toronto's musical public - we hoped. In fact, it was not our brainchild, but seeds that were planted by the Canada Council, which found fertile ground in the thoughts and dreams of both of us.

What were we going to call *it*?

Three people hunkered down in my living room in downtown Toronto one afternoon in the spring of 1971, pondering the '*it*'. The '*it*' was Number 242636 CONCERTS, hardly an appropriate name for a new and exciting venture whose main purpose would be the dissemination of *only* contemporary music to Toronto audiences, music that was and would be written by living Canadian composers and presented side by side with their foreign counterparts. There was no other organization in Canada in the 1970s with this sole purpose, the only exception being the Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ) in Montreal which began its series of concerts in 1966.

Those three persons worrying about an appropriate title were Robert 'Bob' Aitken, Norma Beecroft and John Wright, my ex husband who was a lawyer. Both Bob and I had considerable experience in the field of contemporary music, and in the eyes of Guy Huot, Head of Music for the Canada Council for the Arts (1966-73), we were the appropriate combination to undertake the formation of a concert series devoted to music of our time. Both of us were composers, and Bob Aitken had also distinguished himself as a first rank flute player. We did not wish to emulate the SMCQ by calling our new venture a 'society', nor did we want to use the word contemporary, and "Music Today" and "Music of Today" were already in use by Bob and Norma respectively in their current lives. So after much thought and consultation with Roget's Thesaurus, we settled on the simplest words - NEW MUSIC CONCERTS. Thus the numbered company finally had a name. The first Board of Directors could be officially appointed, and the necessary resolutions regarding banking, auditors, etc. could be put in place, legally, in accordance with the Corporations Act (Ontario). We were finally in business - we thought!

Let me paint a brief picture of the musical arts in Canada in the post war years. In the immediate decade following World War II, the world of arts generally began to flourish, if not explode, and the art world in Canada was no exception. In 1951, the beginning of the Canadian League of Composers (CLC) was germinating; in 1952 CBC Television went on the air for the first time, and the CBC Symphony was formed the same year; in 1954 the CLC formed a concert committee called the Canadian Music Associates; and of great importance, the Canada Council for the Arts was formally inaugurated in 1957. This surge of activity was just a smattering of what was happening in the musical arts in the 1950s.

In the arts in general, the atmosphere was electric. Toronto was then a relatively small town, and everyone emerging from various fields of the arts knew each other, more or less, and supported each other to a great extent. I remember the Pilot Tavern as the great meeting place for the painters, Clem Hambourg's late night hangout for musicians to get together and jam, the Colonial Tavern as one of the centres to hear jazz, Mo Koffman's restaurant as another venue for jazz players. Av Isaacs and Dorothy Cameron opened galleries for young artists to show their works - Michael Snow and Graham Coughtry, two visual artists, started their Artists Jazz Band, and so on. There was a huge variety of talent bursting at the seams to be seen and heard. And, of course, in those days CBC was supportive of the arts in all fields, radio and television, hiring many artists to work in the new field called television. Out of this exciting environment emerged many outstanding talents in all fields.

I met Bob Aitken when I returned to Toronto from my studies in Europe in 1962. Bob was on the Board of Directors in an organization called Ten Centuries Concerts, which had just started its concert series that same year. It was only natural that I too would be drawn to such an organization whose inspiration arose from the minds of my Toronto colleagues, so I also joined the new venture. While the series was highly successful in its first year, the audiences gradually lost interest, and the amount of labour invested in putting on concerts of music predominantly from the past, was overwhelming, so the series ended in 1967. Bob and I found ourselves primarily interested in the promotion of music written today, and so the Canada Council's invitation to start a new series was perfect timing and a welcome challenge.

Bob Aitken was enjoying a booming career as a flute virtuoso in those early years, a tribute to his young age. By the time we met in 1962, he was just twenty three years old, yet had accomplished a great deal in the preceding years as an orchestral player (Vancouver Symphony Orchestra 1958-59, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Stratford Festival Orchestra) and then determined to pursue a solo career. He was also a composer. He formed the Lyric Arts Trio in 1964, with his wife Marion Ross, pianist, and Mary Morrison, soprano, and between 1970 and '72 he directed a series "Music Today" at the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake. So, he was an ideal candidate to realize an ongoing program of contemporary music, and accepted the invitation to start a new music series with one proviso - that I be his partner in the venture. I was now an established composer, published by Universal Edition in Vienna, had expertise in contemporary music through my broadcasting work at CBC, and first-hand knowledge of the European scene from my three years in Europe, mainly Italy. I had either met or knew many of the major names in international contemporary music, through my visits to that hive of postwar activity in Darmstadt, Germany, or because of my extracurricular travels throughout central Europe and my frequent visits to the U.K.

Bob's career as a soloist was in the hands of a public relations firm called Douglas D. Maxwell, and it was quite normal in his mind that this new organization New Music Concerts could be managed by the same company. They took over the nitty gritty of all the details required to put on concerts, after the artistic decisions were finalized-and, believe me, there are a myriad of details! Bob Pugh was the account executive, and he had a couple of capable women to carry out our instructions. However, before Douglas D. Maxwell became involved, we had the help of John Brown, who was managing the National Youth Orchestra among other musical enterprises, and John prepared our first formal application to the Canada Council for funding, an obligatory task even though we had been guaranteed startup monies. Then we had to formalize the new not-for-profit organization, and all the legal requirements that were necessary in order to receive government grants and issue receipts for future donors. There was a lot to accomplish, completely aside from designing the first season of

programs! As we had no official office, all the meetings and correspondence were conducted from my home on Poplar Plains Crescent in Toronto.

NEW MUSIC CONCERTS Letters Patent were drawn up by John Augustus Wright, then a partner with the corporate law firm of Campbell, Godfrey and Lewtas. The main objects of the new corporation were as follows:

- a) TO promote interest in the art of music and contemporary musical ideas;
  - b) TO advance knowledge and appreciation of musical culture, with special emphasis on contemporary music;
  - c) TO perform, preserve, publish, record and broadcast all forms of contemporary music;
  - d) TO establish and maintain a series of concerts to compare, contrast and illuminate by imaginative and experimental programming music of the modern age;
- and so on.

The first Directors of the Corporation were just three persons, Bob Aitken, myself and my husband as Secretary, and this was acceptable to the Canada Council, as both Bob and I had serious reservations about having a larger board of directors, based mainly on our experience with Ten Centuries Concerts where there were too many cooks and nothing was easy to produce. The Canada Council had advised that there was \$20,000 to invest in our series, and, based on this commitment, we approached the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). They had an entirely different view of organizations and insisted that our Board be expanded, and accordingly John Brown, John Beckwith, composer and Dean of the Faculty of Music at U. of T. at that time, and C. Laughton Bird, who was Director of Music at the North York Board of Education, were appointed directors in November of 1971. As a result of this expansion, we became the recipient of \$10,000 from the OAC.

Now we were really off to the races, and five concerts were planned for our first season, to be presented in Walter Hall at the U. of Toronto's Edward Johnson Building, home of the Faculty of Music. Our anticipated budget for the new season was \$30,000 in government funding, an estimated \$5,000 in ticket sales, donations, etc., which today would appear to be an impossibly low figure to pay for musicians/performers and arrangements for 5 concerts. However, one must remember that the Canadian dollar in 1971 was worth \$614.08 in 2018 dollars, according to the consumer price index. In today's currency, that would be over \$250,000., and that was a lot of money for a new venture.

The concerts were all held at Walter Hall in the Edward Johnson Building, home of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, and the first season opened with a program of music by Luciano Berio, whose name was quite well known in music circles in those days, and a person I had known from my years in Italy. The date was - January 6, 1972. I remember designing an advertising campaign for the opening, which ran in the newspapers for a few weeks before the January event: 'Berio is coming' the first ad; 'Berio is coming' the second ad one week later, and so on until; 'BERIO IS HERE', with details of when and where. It was quite effective and we had a full house, and an enthusiastic crowd, which augured well for the beginning of a brand new venture. The second concert featured two lengthy works, one by Murray Schafer, "Music for the Morning of the World", which was held in darkness with Phyllis Mailing, contralto and Murray's wife, on stage performing while holding a candle. The second work was equally lengthy, by Roger Reynolds, "I/O: A Ritual for 23 Performers", also performed in a gloomy atmosphere. And sorry to say, we lost some of our audience with this program.

The season continued with three concerts including many works by Canadians, among them my own "Contrasts for Six Performers", pieces by John Hawkins, Gilles Tremblay and Brian Cherney. Other composers with whom Bob and I were familiar with included Goffredo Petrassi, Luigi Nono, Arne Nordheim, Gyorgy Ligeti, Toru Takemitsu, Vinko Globokar and George Crumb, a good cross section of known international names, with the exception of one chap, David Bedford from England, whom I had not previously come across.

The second season began in December 1972, and David Bedford became a special guest. I can't help but remember an amusing story here. It was de rigueur in those days that to dine in a decent restaurant, men had to wear jackets, and ties preferably. Well Mr. Bedford arrived without a jacket, and so was lent one by one of the waiters of this particular restaurant. He enjoyed his dinner and left the restaurant complete with jacket, which he wore for the duration of his stay in Toronto. He left Toronto presumably with the jacket still on! Starving composers!!!! The advent of David Bedford was memorable in other ways. He engineered a piece titled "With 100 Kazoos" which was intended to involve audience participation. Well, the trouble was where to find one hundred kazoos, and that became NMC's problem.

While this second season consisted of five concerts, it had a different makeup, beginning with a multi-concert event featuring the Canadian Electronic Ensemble (CEE), Nexus and David Rosenboom, all performing on the same occasion in different rooms in the basement of the Edward Johnson Building. I recall this concert attracting the presence of Hugh Le Caine from the National Research Centre in Ottawa, our great pioneer in the field of electronic music. He traveled far and wide to hear what was going on in this new area of music, and he came to hear the CEE. NMC started a practice of cosponsorship of groups with similar objectives, and so Les Solistes de L'ORTF appeared as one of the featured events, and Vinko Globokar's New Phonic Arts group closed the season. Of course, Canadian music was included in the series, with works by Gustav Ciamaga, John Beckwith, Alan Heard, Gilles Tremblay as well as the Canadian focus of the multi-concert event, and so we balanced the season with domestic and foreign contributions.

At this point in the NMC history, at the end of the 1972-73 season, we had completed ten concerts in two series, presented a concert in Ottawa as part of Festival Canada 1972 at the National Arts Centre, courtesy then of Hugh Davidson who was the music administrator at the time, and had started presenting concerts outside of Toronto. The CBC had begun recording our concert series for broadcast on its FM network, and very quickly our reputation began to grow. Our audiences continued to be enthusiastic and most of our concerts were sold out. The third season began a new tradition, as we invited two international groups to open our series, Les Percussion de Strasbourg and the Contemporary Music Orchestra of Paris, both groups appearing in Toronto as part of their tours of North America. Canadian music was well represented with works by Sydney Hodkinson, Murray Schafer, Steve Gellman, Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux, Alcides Lanza and one of my own pieces, a NMC commission, titled "Rasas III". Foreign composers came from all parts of the world to Toronto to mingle with the musicians and public, Sten Hanson from Sweden, Luis de Pablo from Spain, and Karel Goeyvaerts from Belgium. A highlight of the season was undoubtedly the closing program of music exclusively by George Crumb, who was becoming quite famous internationally for the quality of his sensitive, compelling music.

But our arrangement with Douglas D. Maxwell's new subsidiary, Artists Canada Management or whatever it was called, was starting to unravel, and a decision made by the Board of Directors in

December of 1973 terminated the relationship as of January 1st, 1974. We were on our own, with the entire management on my shoulders, assisted by Laraine Herzog, our first loyal employee, and of course Bob remained as Artistic Director. We rented office space for a short while from Franco Colombo and his wife, publishers, located on Davenport Road then, and it was Franco who educated me into the minutiae of book-keeping and balancing my records with the bank statements.

By the end of our fiscal year on May 31, 1975, our budget had almost doubled from year one, with a revenue of \$76,380, which left us with a surplus of almost \$8,000. Ticket sales had increased, and we were organizing local tours, which accounted for much of the increases in both revenue and expenditures. Our 1974-75 season continued to bring to Toronto the world's outstanding creators of contemporary music trends, and included such luminaries as Mauricio Kagel, often referred to as a master of instrumental theatre, possible music of the absurd - a delightful character. Heinz Holliger, oboe virtuoso, made his appearance on the series, as did Toru Takemitsu from Japan, Harpans Kraft from Sweden, and Lukas Foss closed the season. Of course, there were 9 Canadian premieres, and a good sprinkling of Canadian music, by Murray Schafer, John Weinzweig, Harry Somers, Bengt Hambraeus and Bruce Mather. In between, at the invitation of Hubert Howe, composer and President of the ISCM section of the American League of Composers, (League-ISCM) NMC presented a concert of Canadian music (Pedersen, Tremblay, Beecroft, Freedman, Hawkins and Aitken) at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York, our first venture outside of Canada. We were moving along very rapidly.

Through Bob's contacts, in 1974 we received an invitation to participate in the 1976 Nordic Music Days, a fifty year old prestigious festival revolving from one Scandinavian country to the next, which was to be held that year in Iceland, and Canada was chosen to be the guest country. Another invitation came from the Swedish Radio to participate in a radio festival called "Canadian Spring", and based on these two invitations we contacted the Department of External Affairs to determine if they would support a European-Scandinavian tour, which would be a first for a group performing solely contemporary music, with a great quantity of Canadian composer content. This was perhaps one of the most significant events in the history of New Music Concerts, and worthy of some detailed recounting. It took place between May 19th and June 21st, 1976, was exhausting but highly successful, at the end of which I wrote a detailed report about the tour, from inception to realization. I copied sections of my report, as follows.

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## **New Music Concerts 1976 Spring Tour**

### *BACKGROUND AND PREPARATION*

*The 1976 Spring Tour of NMC was initiated early in 1974 mainly by two invitations from Scandinavia, the first forthcoming from the prestigious, fifty-year-old biannual festival called Nordic Music Days. This is a revolving festival which moves from one Scandinavian country to the next, and Iceland is the host country every fifth occasion. In order not to become too inbred, the Nordic Music Days in this decade decided that each festival should feature one guest country and the 1974 festivities which took place in Copenhagen invited Poland to take part. The 1976 events of the Nordic Music Days were to be held in Iceland in combination with the Reykjavik Festival, and Canada was to be the featured country.*

*The second proposal came from the Swedish Radio in Stockholm which was planning several months of broadcasts of Canadian music and musicians for a radio festival in 1976, "Canadian Spring". Contact with the Swedish Radio was made personally by Robert Aitken, Artistic Director of NMC, who during his personal tour in the spring of 1974 also communicated with the BBC in London. Both radio organizations at that time indicated their willingness to undertake the sponsorship of NMC. The interest expressed by the Nordic Music Days, the Swedish Radio and the BBC, offered a singular opportunity for NMC to present at least six programs to audiences unacquainted with contemporary music activity in Canada. With the patronage of these three major organizations assured and the essential two years to plan, and because NMC was confident of its growing international reputation achieved through five years of successfully presenting the most recent of contemporary music, NMC management determined to attempt its first major tour.*

*The Cultural Division of the Department of External Affairs was approached for support of the project in a letter dated June 12, 1974 to Mr. Freeman Tovell, in which details of the various invitations including Iceland were outlined, as well as a general description of the form and content of the tour. Mr. Tovell responded positively to the proposal (letter dated August 13, 1974) and advised NMC that its request for subsidy would be presented to the Department's Advisory Committee in September. A tentative budget was requested for this meeting, and Robert Aitken provided a rough estimate of direct costs based on an itinerary of twenty days for fifteen musicians, which was in the neighborhood of \$30,000 to \$35,000 (letter dated September 5, 1974).*

*No further communication took place between NMC and External Affairs until February 1975, when the President of NMC, Norma Beecroft, contacted Mr. Roger Plourde by telephone. As a result of this call, Mr. Plourde verbally confirmed that the Advisory Committee had approved the tour in principle. Although additional concerts with the Bergen Festival in Norway were being arranged in this interim period, the oversight on the part of External Affairs in neglecting to advise NMC of its decision to subsidize the projected tour, and, in retrospect the hesitancy on the part of NMC to inquire of the decision of External's Advisory Committee, proved to be costly. NMC realized that many possible engagements would regretfully be lost to the organization because of this time delay, as many public and radio festivals are generally finalized at least two years in advance. Without the letter confirming the involvement of External Affairs, NMC intensified its efforts to secure additional concerts in Scandinavia and Europe, and issued letters and information to well over one hundred personal contacts, Canadian embassies and appropriate festivals. At this point, the dates in Norway and Iceland had been finalized, which determined that the tour would have to be extended to four weeks. A revision of the budget was drawn up and submitted, with expenditures in the amount of \$73,800 and revenue from twelve concerts (seven of which were confirmed) of \$18,000. The subsidy requested from External Affairs in a letter addressed to Roger Plourde dated February 19, 1975, was \$55,800, an amount confirmed in his reply on March 7 to be the basis of the NMC tour budget, but with the understanding that increases would be considered should NMC be able to add other concerts to its schedule. It is significant to note here that to this date at no time did External Affairs state that it would not subsidize the Icelandic leg of the tour.*

*Never before had a Canadian contemporary music society undertaken an extensive world tour; to have their music presented to international audiences in quality performances and in a scope that had long been a dream of Canadian composers. The New Music Concerts 1976 Spring tour was to be the first of its kind, one step on the part of a few individuals toward the achievement of this dream. However, no precedent was available to NMC from which to glean advice or assistance. The Touring Office of the Canada Council was in its formative stages, and was uninvolved with the project. External Affairs, due to staff shortages, was unable to be of great assistance. The experiences of large orchestras or small string quartets, for example, could only be of limited help. Robert Aitken, from his own extensive touring with symphony orchestras and with the Lyric Arts Trio, as well as a soloist, was reasonably acquainted with one aspect of touring - the physical hazards - and NMC drew on this knowledge. The*

*budget estimates were unfortunately modest at the beginning, particularly in the area of instrument transportation, and managerial and promotion requirements had not been considered in the overall costs. In addition, increased costs due to galloping inflation had not been taken into account, all of which contributed to the rather high cost of such a tour. The management of NMC admits to its naiveté in this important aspect of the organization of the tour, but because of its numerous personal contacts and extensive experience with composers, at no time did NMC consider engaging an outside agency.*

*To add to its problems were the difficulties with the very crucial area of programming. Two major compositions from the international repertoire ("Ancient Voices of Children" by George Crumb, and "Nouvelles Aventures" by Gyorgy Ligeti) were requested by foreign sponsors, being in the repertoire of NMC. These important works dictated the make-up of the touring ensemble, and as a result few existing Canadian compositions fitted the unusual instrumentation required by these two pieces. It was a necessity to commission composers to write specifically for the group: Five new works were created and premiered during NMC's 1975-76 season and the pre-tour concerts that were part of the Toronto Arts Productions 'Canadian Sound' Festival. Four of these commissions were performed frequently during the tour, and were successfully received in most instances. However, NMC acknowledges that it is rather dangerous to program unknown works for an important international tour.*

*All in all, a total of twenty two compositions constituted the NMC touring repertoire (thirteen Canadian works), which provided many possibilities to vary program content. In retrospect, two complete programs would have been easier to manage.*

*By the beginning of March, 1976, one year later, eleven concerts were confirmed in Sweden, Norway, Belgium, France, England and Iceland, plus the two pre-tour concerts under the sponsorship of Toronto Arts Productions. Negotiations with Canada House in London were deadlocked, and the proposed Round House concert under the management of London agent, Robert Slotover, was cancelled. Dealings with Marius Constant for a concert at L'Espace Pierre Cardin in Paris had fallen through, as had an appearance at the Prague Festival. It also seemed that Canadian representatives in embassies abroad were most reluctant to sponsor concerts of Canadian music, especially of such contemporary styles.*

*In a letter to Jean-Paul Picard of External Affairs, (dated March 1, 1976) NMC expressed its despair and frustration that engagements could not be secured in at least the two major centres of Europe, Paris and London, and pleaded for the assistance of External Affairs to help fill the gaps in the unsettled middle area of the tour. At this eleventh hour, the Department seemed anxious to assist, its staff having been increased, and its personnel made numerous contacts to its agencies abroad on behalf of NMC.*

*At this late stage, it was somewhat shattering to learn that External Affairs would not underwrite the Icelandic part of the tour, because of a lack of cultural agreement between the two countries. NMC reiterates that this particular invitation was one instigation for the entire tour, and it was known through correspondence that the Iceland engagements were firm. At no point until this communication with Mr. Picard, which was verbal, was NMC advised that tours in Iceland could not be considered. Had the Nordic Music Days been held in Sweden, for instance, perhaps no problem would have arisen.*

*Two months before departure, the complete tour had expanded to five-and-a-half weeks including the Nordic Music Days. It had not been possible to condense the duration of the tour as both sponsors at either end of the itinerary, Swedish Radio and Nordic Music Days festival, were inflexible. Thus a further revision of the budget, including*

*Iceland was submitted to External Affairs on March 25, 1976, which contained a substantial increase of \$40,000 over the budget of the previous year. It is understood that the increase was largely due to the addition of eight days to the itinerary plus the inclusion of performer fees for pre-tour rehearsals, and to a lesser degree, to the expenses incurred by two additional and necessary people, the business and road/stage managers. In a period of financial restraint, and with cutbacks in the overall budget of External Affairs, it was perhaps understandable that NMC's increased submission caused considerable alarm. Meetings in Ottawa resulted in an attempt to pare down the budget and hopefully juggle the itinerary. NMC was represented by its President and Artistic Director, while External Affairs offered three of its personnel plus two from the National Touring Office of the Canada Council. No basic agreement was reached in terms of cutbacks on the duration of the itinerary: however, the Department, in view of its commitment to the project and the high costs, increased its subsidy by \$4,200. At this meeting the Department also committed themselves to guaranteeing the ATA Carnet, some forty percent of the value of instruments and equipment to be transported. Unfortunately this was not in writing.*

*Based on this understanding of a \$50,000 support of the tour by External Affairs, NMC modified its costs to what is generally referred to as a shoestring budget. The performers, top professionals in their chosen fields, were asked to accept \$300. a week instead of the hoped-for \$500. fee. This represented to each one a considerable loss of income from local activities, notwithstanding NMC's embarrassment at having to contract musicians at such a low rate. All accepted however, which surely and certainly indicated the artists' support of the unknown venture. The 'shoestring' budget (submitted April, 1976), however, still projected a deficit of \$13,600 to NMC, and in the opinion of NMC management, a deficit in line with its March 25th budget (in excess of \$20,000) would have been more realistic.*

*As the foregoing implies, the latter days of preparation were exhausting; NMC was obliged to raise considerable monies on its own, and the organization of passengers and instruments became a full-time occupation for NMC management and specially-hired staff. Communications with Ms. Ann Garneau of External Affairs were frequent and often helpful.*

*On Thursday night, May 13, three days before departure, fifteen concerts had been confirmed with two additional events in Toronto., one of them occurring on the aforementioned night. Following the first concert in the 'Canadian Sound' festival, a reception was given for the performers at the home of NMC's President and General Manager, Ms. N. Beecroft, during which the performers were to be presented their air tickets, per diems and an advance on their fees - a 'send-off' party. NMC had received exactly \$11,000 (\$9,000 from Toronto Arts Productions and a donation of \$2,000 from BMI Canada Ltd.) against its tour costs. Furthermore the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, after deliberating for several days, had ultimately decided not to accept the guarantee of funds from External Affairs, as stated in the letter dated April 15, 1976 from M. Jacques Asselin, Director of Cultural Affairs Division, in which was agreed that \$54,000 would be advanced to NMC, with \$6,000 payable on receipt of a final report and financial statement. To add to this predicament, a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Culture was verbally confirmed, but no document existed which could be construed as a guarantee had the C.I.B.C. been receptive. Of other significance, an appeal to the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada was referred to its Board of Directors. A grant of \$21,298 was approved from this organization on September 16, approximately three months following the conclusion of the tour. External Affairs had verbally undertaken the guarantee of an ATA Carnet with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, in the amount of approximately \$11,000., forty percent of the value of the instruments to be transported. At the penultimate moment, Wednesday, May 12, External Affairs retracted its guarantee, by telephone, therefore putting NMC in a completely untenable position with the C.I.B.C. In other words, 90 percent of the tour costs would have had to be underwritten by the*



*bank, due to the totality of the foregoing - and the C.I.B.C. refused all. At 8:45 a.m., Friday, May 14, the President of NMC negotiated a loan of \$15,000 with her own bank, and the Artistic Director was on the verge of requesting the same. It was the same morning the famed cheque of \$54,000 arrived from External Affairs, having been issued on May 13. Thus was NMC launched on its first international tour. The first contingent left on Sunday night, May 16, followed by a second group on May 17.*

*The preparations have been dealt with in some length to outline the complexities of organizing an extensive tour, to frankly state where errors might be avoided in future with resultant benefits to all similar societies and potential sponsors.*

#### FINAL ITINERARY - NEW MUSIC CONCERTS

*MAY 19th SWEDISH RADIO CONCERT, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN  
MAY 20th SWEDISH RADIO CONCERT, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN  
MAY 23rd BERGEN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL, BERGEN, NORWAY  
MAY 24th BERGEN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL, BERGEN, NORWAY  
MAY 28th SAARBRUCKEN RADIO CONCERT, CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL,  
SAARBRUCKEN, GERMANY  
MAY 31st SWISS RADIO CONCERT, CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SERIES,  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND  
JUNE 2nd CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE, PARIS, FRANCE  
JUNE 3rd EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC FESTIVAL(GMEB), BOURGES, FRANCE  
JUNE 8th CANADIAN EMBASSY, NANTES, FRANCE  
JUNE 10th FLEMISH RADIO, STUDIO RECORDING, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM  
JUNE 10th CANADIAN EMBASSY, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM  
JUNE 14th BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION, STUDIO RECORDING,  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
JUNE 16th BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION, STUDIO RECORDING,  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
JUNE 16th CANADA HOUSE, LONDON, ENGLAND  
JUNE 20th NORDIC MUSIC DAYS, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND  
JUNE 21st NORDIC MUSIC DAYS, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND*

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While the above is lengthy, the entire report was thirty seven pages, plus the numerous reviews from the concerts presented on the tour. The tour itself was exhausting, from everyone's viewpoint. Fifteen musicians, two administrative staff and three 'roadies' constituted the bodies that moved from place to place. In each location where accommodation was arranged or co-arranged by Canadian embassies abroad, this was one of the most difficult aspects of the five and a half week venture, with the worst case being the seedy hotel in the red light district of Brussels where each room was rather unclean, an understatement. That almost caused a riot within the ranks, requiring a steady hand to calm everyone down.

Aside from the accommodation problems, the transportation of sixteen hundred pounds of musical instruments and electronic equipment was a great concern, moving from one country to another by truck or air. No travel agency seemed to have experience with this kind of transportation, and External Affairs were singularly unhelpful, also unacquainted with the touring requirements of large numbers of musicians and their instruments. They did seem to understand that an ATA Carnet was required to move equipment from one country to another, and underwrote, finally, the cost of this necessity. And the Canada Council's Touring Office was just sprouting its wings, so they too were on a learning curve, and unable to offer much practical assistance. Jim Montgomery and Bill Buxton, both composers, and Alan Beard, percussionist, all three not necessarily practiced in the art of moving heavy furniture, were NMC's trusted 'roadies', and they did a magnificent job, deserving a lot of accolades from all concerned.

The statistics of the tour, as noted above were quite astonishing in retrospect: sixteen concerts within slightly more than a month, in 8 countries (Scandinavia, central Europe, the UK and Iceland), and 2 pretour concerts, all within a budget of \$110,249. We ended up with a small deficit of \$636.00. There were many sacrifices made on the part of our musicians, especially the all important one of finances, as we could only pay each one \$300. per week instead of the \$500. they were promised. They could have earned more by staying at home, but they were loyal to NMC and wanted the experience of performing in various countries. We had the pick of the crop of performers: Mary Morrison, soprano, Patricia Rideout, contralto, Robin Engelmann and Russell Hartenberger of Nexus fame, Erica Goodman, harp, Monica Gaylord and John Hawkins, pianists, William Kuinka, mandolin and a few others of note. And they delivered first class performances of many Canadian works and those from the international repertoire, under the direction, of course, of Robert Aitken. Music heard on the tour by Canadian composers included Bruce Mather, Gilles Tremblay, Serge Garant, Donald Steven, Harry Freedman, John Hawkins, Harry Somers, William Buxton, and myself Norma Beecroft. A special program of music by George Crumb had been requested by some of our European sponsors, and thus his music received a fair amount of play. By and large, the response to the music was very positive throughout the tour, with enthusiastic audiences and sponsors. As there were no works for the entire touring ensemble, I decided last minute to put together a piece for the ensemble, which was an amalgam, more or less, of two of my previous works, and featured Bob as soloist and conductor. I called it "Collage '76", and it was played on ten occasions during the tour - pretty decent exposure for sure.

There were many outstanding moments of the tour, some traumatic, and some very pleasant. Before we even left Canada, our cellist Eric Wilson lost his instrument on the evening of my party before our departure. How you can lose a cello is beyond my imagination. I suspect he had imbibed a little too much and forgot where he left his precious instrument. On my part, my naiveté in organizing such an adventure caused me to neglect opening an international bank account while travelling, and I found myself with a purse full of a lot of cash in different currencies on the trip, which I had to carefully oversee all the time. The amount of travelling caused nerves to fray occasionally, but the musicians were mostly accommodating in the interests of the experience. On two occasions, the venues caused some major problems. In Bourges, the temperature dropped considerably and the musicians had to play with coats and scarves on, and adjust their instruments accordingly to the freezing temperatures. In Bergen, Norway, on the occasion of the second concert at the Bryggens Museum, the theatre was small, with no backstage facilities and minimum stage area, NMC was to

premiere a specially commissioned work by Norwegian composer Olav Anton Thommessen which utilized the entire NMC ensemble, plus dancer and lighting effects. Norwegian Radio and Television were there with numerous TV cameras, microphones and staff, and this plus the sold out audience of two hundred produced nothing short of chaos. In spite of the problems in both those locations, NMC triumphed with positive critical response, and several of the finest reviews ever received at the Norwegian Festival for contemporary music.

Without question, the trip to Iceland was perhaps the highlight of the Spring Tour. The two concerts of Canadian music were extremely well received by audiences of two hundred and fifty on each occasion, a testimony to the calibre of NMC performances. The Nordic Music Days Festival principal directors met us at the airport, organized the transportation of the instruments to the concert hall, gave a magnificent reception following the first of the concerts, arranged a tour of Iceland for the group, complete with tour guide, and on the last concert of the tour, the director of the festival gave a party for the entire ensemble. I remember clearly this celebratory evening, as it was the summer solstice, and one could look out of the picture window on the glaciers in the distance to see the sun dipping below the horizon, only to pop up again half an hour later. Iceland is an amazing country when viewed from the air. It is like landing on the moon, as it is mostly volcanic and there is little green to be seen. It was a fitting end to a grueling but satisfying tour. Unfortunately, due to an air traffic controllers' dispute, the voyage home was delayed in New York, by one day, which was a great inconvenience to all the members of the ensemble.

As life settled down, I wrote my lengthy report to External Affairs, in order to collect the \$6,000. remaining of their grant. Based on our experience, I made many recommendations to External, which hopefully would be of use to them in considering future tours of small ensembles. The complete report is available in the NMC archives.

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New Music Concerts continued to present its concert season at home in spite of the amount of time and concentration required by the 1976 Spring Tour. The 1974-75 season introduced new faces to Toronto from abroad, such as Mauricio Kagel and founder of his Cologne New Music-Theatre Ensemble in their North American debut. I remember attending a concert in Darmstadt where Kagel was poking fun at old masters, and it caused a minor scandal. Kagel created controversy wherever he went, as his musical ideas were quite wicked and almost sacrilegious. Other foreign guests of NMC that season included Toru Takemitsu from Japan, Heinz Holliger, world renowned oboe performer and composer from Switzerland, the American Lukas Foss, my former teacher, and a group of young musicians from Sweden, Harpans Kraft. Of course, the season was balanced with Canadian content, the duo pianists Bruce Mather and his wife Pierrette Le Page in a mixed program of music by Canadians and others. Murray Schafer presented his *Canadian Soundscape*, and music by Harry Somers, Gilles Tremblay, John Wyre, and Bob Aitken's *Lalita*, for chamber ensemble, rounded out the season.

The fifth season of NMC, 1975-76, offered again a cross-section of contemporary sounds from varied cultural environments, such as Poland with the Warsaw Music Workshop under the leadership of composer/pianist Zigmunt Krauze; Peter Maxwell Davies, from the UK, founder of a famed

group called "The Fires of London"; and two Maxi Concerts which included the hypnotic music of Steve Reich. The latter also included the presentation of the SAL-MAR, a real time performance instrument constructed by Salvatore Martirano, and the experimental ensemble MEV, Musica Elettronica Viva, whose members employ everything from synthesizers to musical instruments to found objects in their collective creations. Canadian composers occupied a major part of the six-program series, with many premieres, some commissioned by NMC, and the season concluded with special guest Iannis Xenakis, one of the most original composers of that period, and his featured interpreter, Yuji Takahashi, pianist.

Regarding Xenakis, I was puzzled by the fact that I had never encountered him during my years in Europe, and finally there was an explanation in that I understood that he had been excluded from the Boulez/Stockhausen camp of serialists, whose centre was Darmstadt. Of course his music departs from a totally different perspective, and was 'banned' by the serialists, especially after he had written a well quoted article on the Crisis of Serial Music, published in Hermann Scherchen's *Gravesano Blätter*. I expected to meet a formidable person whose intelligence would be somewhat intimidating, but instead I found a delightful, friendly Greek, with a great deal of charm, and one who obviously adored and respected women. We became good friends, even at a distance, and he was most encouraging to my own work, much later writing an excellent letter of reference in support of a Canada Council Application of mine for a Senior Arts grant.

The sixth season 1976-77 saw an expansion of activities, with seven concerts and the equivalent number of informal lecture-workshops. Highlights of this season began with a collaboration between NMC and the Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec, a tour which terminated in Boston at the 1976 ISCM Festival. The Fires of London with its director, composer Peter Maxwell Davies made its first Canadian appearance, and Iannis Xenakis returned for a second visit, where Russell Hartenberger performed his amazing work "Psappha" for solo percussion. The Trio Exvoco from Stuttgart presented a program of new names and sounds, and Elliott Carter, one of the preeminent composers of the USA was a special guest of NMC. Each season continued to bring new names to Toronto's public, and CBC Radio was right there to record most of the concerts, bringing a wider audience to our cutting edge fare.

At the conclusion of the 1976-77 season, I was invited to attend the 1977 ISCM Festival in Bonn, Germany, as the Canadian delegate appointed by the Canadian League of Composers. This trip coincided nicely with my own travel plans to Europe, the period in which I conducted my major interviews for what was to become my book on the pioneers of Electronic Music. While in Germany, I received a call from Bob, along with the disappointing news related to our grant from the Ontario Arts Council. Apparently, they were choosing to withhold the funds pending a meeting with myself and Bob and their executives. Bob chose to tackle the OAC on his own, and reported back that they were insisting that we substantially increase our public support through fundraising, knowing full well that contemporary music is not an easy sell. This funding shift became a continuing problem for NMC, and was difficult to resolve.

In spite of the pressures from the Ontario Arts Council, the 1976-77 season marked an impressive record on behalf of contemporary music in that New Music Concerts had successfully executed 40

concerts in Toronto, and the same number of concerts outside of Toronto, including the 16 events of the 1976 Spring Tour of Europe and Scandinavia. Word spread quickly about the quality of our performances and the adventurous programming, with exciting guests and a great forum for Canadian composers. We were in demand! Our budget slowly increased from its modest beginnings to over \$100,000., just for local activities.

The 1977-78 season's brochure announced that "works by composers from such varied cultural environments as Cuba, Greece and Hungary are thrown into vivid contrasts with the most recent compositions of Canadian composers". Reading those words now make me realize that I was writing all the copy for brochures, program notes, and press releases for NMC for all the years I was associated with the organization, and perhaps was stretching the imagination a bit by using the verbal phrase 'thrown in', as if the series was hastily put together. None of the programs were ever simple to organize. Bob Aitken came up with his ideas, ran them by me, I added to them with my knowledge of what was going on in the world of contemporary music, and then the never ending details were worked out, the costs, the dates, the halls, the guests, and so on. Each season was a challenge, trying to fit everything into a schedule that accommodated everyone.

October 1st, 1977, International Music Day, brought the great American iconoclast John Cage to Toronto to celebrate his sixty fifth birthday with a concert of his music spanning four decades of his career. It was a fun occasion as John Cage turned out to be a very warm, friendly and humorous individual, and his presence in Toronto commanded a great deal of attention. This concert was the highlight of the season. That fall we also presented Murray Schafer's opera "Loving/Toi", which we had decided to mount as the premiere stage production of the piece (it was first produced by Pierre Mercure as a television production in 1966 on CBC's French Network "L'Heure du Concert" series) but our production was poorly reviewed. . It was an ambitious undertaking for New Music Concerts, but was criticized as being full of musical cliches, etc. Ironically, the only Toronto critic who had any kind words to say about the opera was the often notoriously negative John Kraglund. Three concerts in that season featured foreign groups - the Grupo de Instrumental de Buenos Aires, The Norwegian String Quartet, and The Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble from the USA.

1978 marked the departure of Laraine Herzog, who had worked hard on behalf of NMC but probably felt at times that she was alone in her efforts for the organization, between the absences of Bob and myself. Laraine was the glue that held us together in many respects. Being a small operation, we could not afford a large office space, sufficient to accommodate two working persons, and so Laraine was on her own for much of the time. I worked from my home, juggling my CBC work, composition, and whatever personal life I had, all with NMC taking the majority of my hours. Also, our budget was still rather modest, so we could not afford to pay top salaries, and Laraine could well justify her departure on that count alone. After she left, we had a succession of women who did not work out to either their satisfaction or ours, so I finally took over the whole job in 1979, until another suitable person was found.

The 1978-79 season was supposedly to star Karlheinz Stockhausen, perhaps the leading international figure in those years on the world stage of new musical invention. This was to have been a collaboration with the Goethe Institute, but at the last moment Herr Stockhausen cancelled his Toronto appearance, and a concert of his "Mantra", a lengthy work for two pianos and electronics,

was presented by the Kontarsky brothers, Alfons and Aloys, as the sole Stockhausen event. The season featured an interesting new kind of event - a collaboration with the eleventh International Festival of Sound Poetry, which brought together for the first time in North America sound poets from Europe as well as North America, who presented a week of concerts and workshops on all facets of their art form. NMC also devoted an evening to the delightful theatrical works of Montreal composer Gabriel Charpentier, and included in its season four lecture concerts at Innis College Town Hall at the University of Toronto. It was a different series than in previous years, perhaps not as star studded, but continued to demonstrate the various aspects of contemporary music activity in the western world primarily.

The final season of the 1970s brought new music fans a great array of exciting names, including a number of senior composers of international stature. Witold Lutoslawski made one of his rare North American appearances, conducting a program of his imaginative music, and the American serialist and electronic music pioneer Milton Babbitt was the other well established guest. Philip Glass and his Ensemble offered listeners access to his blend of primitive, classical, rock and jazz music, referred to at the time as "mesmeric, lush and buoyant ....space age music of the spheres", to quote Time Magazine. And of course, NMC paid due respect to the twentieth Anniversary of the Canadian Music Centre in a program of music by leading Canadian composers, which opened the season. Seven concerts in all called the Maxi Series, and seven events which we called the Mini Series comprised the 1979-80 season, with plenty of Canadian music interspersed over the season. Our budget was steadily increasing, to include broadcasting rights from CBC Radio, commissioning monies from the Canada Council primarily, and from year to year, monies from touring activities. It is interesting to note that the total revenue for season number nine was \$176,621. Having started off the decade in 1971 with a budget of \$40,000, this increase of budget seemed to be quite a remarkable statement of support from both governments and audiences, underlining the importance of providing a first class hearing of what was going on in the world of music in its time.

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## The Second Decade

Summating the first decade of NMC, it could be argued that with the advent of New Music Concerts and the Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec, the 1970s was possibly the most important musical decade in 20th century Canada. Contemporary Canadian composers finally had organizations dedicated to playing their music, underlining an obvious point of view in that music does not exist without the performer, the interpreter, unlike the visual or literary arts. The advent of NMC and the SMCQ stimulated growth in other centres of Canada, with Vancouver launching Days Months and Years to Come in 1974, Vancouver New Music Society in 1973, Music Inter Alia in 1977 in Winnipeg, Nova Music in Halifax in 1971, Espace Musique in Ottawa in 1979, and many other small groups primarily of performers, like NEXUS (percussion), The Canadian Brass, The Canadian Electronic Ensemble, and so on. It was the beginning of a musical revolution in this beloved country. In the first 10 years of NMC's existence it presented over four hundred works, the majority of them being premieres, or at least first hearings in Canada. The organization became 'establishment', a testimony to this statement was the request that NMC contribute its expertise to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, making recommendations based on its short

experience regarding touring, the need for suitable and permanent performance space, publishing and recording, promotion, and so on. Not unimportantly, NMC was invited to discuss the financial problems of raising money for such an esoteric product; and the continuing need for funding from all levels of government.

In the course of the past decade, it became apparent that NMC needed to pay attention to the equipment required to present all these concerts. In spite of the expertise of the Canadian Electronic Ensemble and its technical equipment, and the services of super percussionists like Russell Hartenberger and Robin Engelman, there was a need for NMC to consider some capital expenditures on essential equipment. The demands of certain composers and their compositions were not always met to the satisfaction of either the composers themselves or our high standards of performance. So we determined to look into the purchase of some percussion and technical equipment, and applied for subsidy from the Ontario government through its Wintario program. A budget of almost \$99,000. was set, one half to be raised by NMC and matched by Wintario. This was quite an undertaking, may I say, the beginning of another era affecting me personally.

Our fund raising program really began, with the great help of Michael Koerner, a well-known figure in the investment world, famous also for his philanthropic generosity. We purchased an array of percussion instruments including a super celeste, marimba, timpani, chimes, drums of all sizes, temple blocks, and so on, and packing cases for all of them, and then music stands for both instruments and performers, and then, of immense pleasure to me, a raft of technical equipment, which was not only used by NMC but also became the basis of my own personal electronic music studio. The rationale for this, of course, was that the technical equipment needed a home, and what better place than a home where it would be used.

I recall clearly the day that the Soundcraft 800 Audio Console arrived at my house on Lyndhurst Court. It had twenty-six inputs and eight outputs, and there were no cables - just the board. Bob and I took one look at this and said, 'what are we going to do with this?' This was a \$21,000. investment without any attachments! Of course, I was familiar with such technology from my years as a producer at CBC, but at CBC there was a union called NABET which prohibited non-members from touching the equipment. We obviously needed help, or should I say, I obviously needed help. Thus I was introduced to Ron Lynch at Octopus Audio, who gradually supplied all the cables and snakes required to operate the Soundcraft board and all the peripheral equipment which we had purchased, the amplifiers, Studer tape recorder, loudspeakers, microphones, etc. So with this amount of gear, not only was NMC in business but I too found myself on a steep learning curve to understand how to connect it all, along with my own personal equipment. Through Ron Lynch, I slowly learned how to dismantle my studio, and rewire it when NMC returned the equipment to its 'home' after concerts.

To return to the 1980-81 season, the tenth anniversary of NMC, we decided to celebrate the occasion by inviting the audience favourites from the past nine seasons, and so returned Luciano Berio who was the first guest opening the inaugural concert of NMC in 1972, and Bob's favourite composer/performers Vinko Globokar, trombonist, and Heinz Holliger, oboist. Both of these gentlemen presented what might be called the cutting edge of new music experimentation, with the

exploitation of their instruments, producing so many utterly strange sounds. John Kraglund was not impressed as expected. William Albright, the American virtuoso on the keyboards of piano and organ, appeared in the series, in a different venue than usual, St. James Cathedral, a very beautiful Anglican church in lower Toronto. This concert featured works including the organ by William Bolcom (USA) and a new piece by Canadian Otto Joachim for organ, horns and percussion, as well as a new work by Torontonion Walter Buczynski for a similar group - quite a different concert from our usual fare. But this was NMC! Gyorgy Ligeti was supposed to have been a major guest, but his appearance didn't happen. Leo Brouwer, the Cuban classical guitar virtuoso was another popular guest, along with Japanese composer Joji Yuasa, and the Studio Experimentele Muziek from Belgium made an appearance during its tour celebrating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the creation of Belgium. And of course, there was a sprinkling of Canadian music throughout the series, from Brian Cherney, Michael Colgrass, Claude Vivier, Maryan Mozetich and a new piece, "Folia", by our artistic director, Robert Aitken.

At this point in time, we had Maggie Anderson as our one employee, a delightful and cheerful personality. Our devoted designer Keith Jones, who moved to the USA to take up a new position, had worked very hard to come up with some wonderful brochure designs and program covers, even attending the concerts to help him understand what we were promoting. I appreciated working with him, he was so eager to learn. Theo Dimson, a commercial artist whom I had met during my years at Hayhurst Advertising, was then retained, at great cost I will say, to design our brochure and programs. Of serious concern was the fact that NMC was now running a deficit in the amount of \$20,000. plus, and so my attention had to turn to the problem of fund raising. This was largely a paper deficit, as we were covered by our term deposits from the Wintario project, but nonetheless, a deficit which caught the attention of the Councils. Fund raising was a difficult task for an experimental arts organization, generally understaffed and without the kind of profile which would attract the professional fund raisers. We turned to the federal government's deficit reduction program, a component of the Special Program of Cultural Initiatives, and received a small grant of \$6,832. We made numerous plans to appeal to foundations, corporations and members of our small public, and we endeavoured to reduce our costs for the forthcoming seasons. And so we began our second decade.

The eleventh season (1981-82) opened with what was intended to be a spectacular event, held in the outdoors at Heart Lake in Brampton, by Murray Schafer, "The Princess of the Stars". It was the premiere of a musical-theatrical composition for musicians, singers, dancers, sound poets and canoeists, to be presented at dawn - 5:30 am. NMC hired buses to transport the audience, and a lot of money and energy was spent preparing this ritual. But of course, the weather didn't cooperate, and it poured rain. I have pictures which showed people standing at the edge of the lake with umbrellas. So much for environmental experiments.

Probably the highlight of this season was "Roaratorio", when John Cage payed homage to James Joyce in his musical rendering of Finnegans Wake, as part of the celebrations of James Joyce's centenary. Now it's worthwhile to describe this evening, January 29, 1982, an event which was repeated two nights later. John Cage sat in the centre of Convocation Hall reading from a 41 page text, (Writing For The Second Time Through Finnegans Wake), a text constructed by Cage which constantly forms and reforms the name James Joyce. To quote William Littler, "The great majority



of his words disappeared ...into the surrounding sound texture. And what a texture it was! For, while he was reading and the musicians were playing, speakers positioned round the circumference of the hall poured out a collage of miscellaneous natural and electronically manipulated sounds, many of them reportedly recorded on location at the actual sites mentioned in Joyce's bewildering book." The composer wanted it to be music in the sense of Finnegans wake. Anyone who has read the book would comprehend the concept. In any case, it was a very successful endeavour, and drew audiences from far and wide through Canada's winter weather. Ron Lynch organized and supervised the massive technical setup required for the production, with half a dozen tape recorders on stage, multi speakers placed around the hall, musicians also performing from different positions in the hall, and with the master John Cage himself, all connected to a master controller, our new Soundcraft Mixing console operated by John Cage's technical director, whose name I cannot recall at the moment. It was a John Cage triumph - a weekend which also crammed in Paul Zukovsky, an American violin virtuoso, who together with Nexus presented a concert of Cage's music in between the two performances of "Roaratorio". John was extremely happy with the reception he was receiving in Canada through NMC and its followers, noting that it far exceeded the dismal reception he receives in New York. Quite a compliment!

This same season brought back Iannis Xenakis for a return visit, and his complex music has constantly received critical attention, as his ideas often apply laws of mathematics and physics to musical operation. As an example of the problems of performing Xenakis scores, according to Bob Aitken who conducted Xenakis' "Pleiades" for six percussionists, it took some 35 hours of rehearsal plus hours of private practise to arrive at the satisfactory performance, with Toronto's most experienced players hired for the occasion. The season continued with the presence of Helmut Lachenmann from Germany, with the Elmer Iseler Singers, then duo pianists Aki Takahashi & Ursula Oppens playing music from the USA and Japan, and on that program my "Cantorum Vitae" was given its Toronto premiere. The eleventh season ended in cooperation with the Goethe Institute with the controversial Mauricio Kagel in one of his musical theatre manifestations. In my estimation, this was one of our most successful seasons, with plenty of new sounds to challenge our audiences, and not so much of the 'comfort' music that used to make critics like John Kraglund so happy.

The 1982-83 season, NMC's twelfth, offered subscribers a different format, a series which we called Contemporary Encounters, eight concerts divided into three thematically-based subseries - First Hearings, Perspectives and Personalities. The first group presented a good quantity of Canadian content, with new pieces by Harry Freedman, Alexina Louie, Barbara Pentland, James Montgomery, Bill Buxton, John Thrower, Brian Cherney, and yours truly in the premiere of "Troissonts" for solo viola and two percussion. The stunning viola player Rivka Golani made her first solo appearance on out series, as did the guest ensemble Harkins and Larson from the USA. When I refer to Rivka as stunning, she certainly had a unique stage presence, with her flaming red hair, knee high boots and intense concentration on what she was playing. Rivka was also a visual artist, and I had the pleasure of visiting her on occasion and seeing her paintings, just as vivacious as the musician herself.

Perspectives featured a program of Mexican music and a retrospective on the music of Stefan Wolpe. And finally, Personalities featured our beloved "Dean of Contemporary Music", John Weinzweig, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, and Toru Takemitsu in a program of his choice. The Weinzweig event was quite an undertaking for NMC, with the cooperation of Roy Thomson Hall

management, who donated the hall and a fine reception for John. Unfortunately the three thousand seat hall was not full for the concert, but we made an occasion of it by commissioning Harold Town to paint a portrait of John Weinzweig, which was duly presented to the composer at the event. John certainly appreciated the honour bestowed on him by his colleagues, and he designed a program which included a work by a composer who had been a major influence for him, ie., Stravinsky, and he selected one of his students, Kristi Allik, as his choice of a promising composer in the early stages of her career. Of course, he chose his own music for performance, his "Triologue" which was written for the Lyric Arts Trio, Bob Aitken being the founder of this group, and "18 Pieces for Guitar" played by Philip Candelaria. We couldn't afford the price of a symphony orchestra, so the musical fare was modest in that cavernous hall.

But we did afford an expensive tour to the United States, at the invitation of our American colleagues, Paul Zukovsky, the virtuoso violinist who performed in our 11th season, and Joel Chadabe, an American composer, also President of Composers' Forum Inc., who was aware of what was happening in the world of contemporary music outside of the USA. We presented concerts at Symphony Space in New York, and at the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington. The Washington venue demanded a program of John Cage's music, which was duly performed by our great percussion ensemble Nexus and Paul Zukovsky himself. Nexus played, with great care, a piece titled "Branches", created for four cactus plants on which the percussionists plucked the sharp thorns of the plants - it was a memorable result, a quiet restful music which only John Cage could imagine. It was also part of the program presented in New York. The tour also included a workshop at Georgetown University in Washington, and attempted to organize a concert in Chicago, but to no avail. It was a costly but important venture by NMC, and was underwritten in part by the Laidlaw Foundation as well as the government of Canada.

Taking a pause now to look at NMC after twelve years of concert giving, it is apparent that the organization was becoming well known outside of Canada. The spread of information about us was partially due to the circulation of complimentary remarks by NMC guests, from all parts of the contemporary world of music, and the skills of our musicians under the baton of Bob Aitken. I don't believe that Bob ever thought he would become a conductor when we started out our venture, but that is what he became, and he was more than just a conductor waving his arms around and beating time. Bob really got into the scores in order to understand what the composers were trying to convey through the various forms of notation. I can remember him telling me of his experience with a certain, now well known, Canadian composer and how little she understood about writing for certain instruments, making it necessary for him to practically rewrite the whole piece. His skills in this department as well as his virtuosic ability as a soloist certainly were beneficial to NMC. Our deficit had been creeping up and at the end of the 1982-83 season was over \$20,000, requiring great efforts to reach out to prospective donors. The total revenue for the year ending May 31, 1983, was \$258,131, which was a long way from the 1st year of operation, and the grants from the various arts councils were steadily increasing, but minimally, and not in step with the increases per annum of the CPI. Our Board of Directors was made up mainly of musicians and not of high powered business people, with the odd exception, Michael Koerner, so to him we pleaded for increased help in this department. Planning continued for the next season.....and we marched on.

The 1983-84 season continued to present celebrated international composers, a series of seven concerts, lectures and films, and Canadian music. The series began with a program of music by Elliott Carter, the influential American composer who was celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday. My memory of Carter's music was that it was complex, not easily understood, and stemmed from an intellectual approach. Nonetheless, he was one of the most distinguished of the American generation that emerged from WWII, and deserved all the accolades that he received. On the other side of the musical spectrum from the USA, was Morton Feldman, whose two-hour composition for String Quartet (No. 2) we presented, which was an endurance test for those unacquainted with Feldman's output. Other foreign guests in the season included Alexander Goehr from the U.K., Sven-Erik Bäck from Sweden, and a return visit by Mauricio Kagel, plus the Ensemble Kaleidocollage from France. The Kagel visit lasted an entire weekend, with North American premieres of his music and two evenings of his films. Kagel was regarded as a master of music-theatre, often satirizing famous figures, and one of the films, titled appropriately "Ludwig Van" was hilarious, with an entire room papered with Beethoven's scores. To me, it was unforgettable. Interspersed in the season of course was the Canadian content, many of the compositions premieres, either Canadian or North American. We heard works by John Rea, Phillip Werren, Charles Wilson, Raymond Luedeke and Talivaldis Kenins.

In documenting some of the highlights of New Music Concerts during my tenure as President and General Manager, I had not intended to go into detail about each season, but looking through old brochures and files, I can't help but recognize the amazing amount of contemporary musical activity we unearthed each season. The programs were carefully planned, often in collaboration with other sponsors or organizations, and included touring groups as well. Of course, there were favorite composer/performers that Bob admired and especially liked to feature, such as Vinko Globokar and Heinz Holliger, and the American composer Roger Reynolds who often appeared in the series. John Cage had become a favorite guest of NMC, and was heard again in his "Dance/4 Orchestras", along with Reynolds, and Gilles Tremblay in a different kind of program at Convocation Hall, with the orchestra of the Professional Training Program under the direction of Paul Zukovsky and Bob Aitken. This particular program was sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, a rather unusual sponsor. Mr. Globokar revisited Toronto and NMC to participate in the World Premiere of a special symposium entitled "Laboratorium for ten musicians and one coordinator" which inaugurated the International Symposium on Music Theatre of the 1984 ISCM, a two day event held at the Premiere Dance Theatre, Harbourfront. Jim Montgomery, a composer who was working for NMC as a production manager recalls attending a rehearsal at the theatre with his nine year old son, where percussionist Russell Hartenberger was practicing several complex passages on some drums. The young lad told his dad that he would not go into a theatre again because he was 'afraid of being beaten' - Russell, a very gentle personality, certainly made an impression on the youngster: apparently, the young man kept his vow and did not set foot in a theatre for two years following that event. The SMCQ under Serge Garant made its appearance on the series in Wolfgang Rihm's full length dramatic opera "Jacob Lenz", again a co-produced event with the Goethe Institut.

A special event in April, 1985, for me, was the presence of my Italian teacher, Goffredo Petrassi, whom we invited to help celebrate his eightieth birthday. He arrived in Toronto accompanied by his young daughter, whom he chaperoned like a dutiful Italian father. On this program, with the

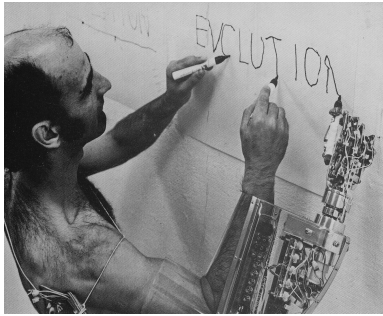
essential help of Ron Lynch, my "Jeu II" was premiered, a highly technical piece, for performers Rivka Golani and Bob Aitken, whose playing of fragments from J.S. Bach and Alban Berg were digitally altered on the spot, and accompanied by a tape part, perhaps the most adventurous piece I had ever tackled, and which could not have been rendered successfully without Ron's mastery of new technology. The use of music by Bach and Berg was in celebration of their three hundredth and one hundredth birthdays respectively, and followed on the heels of a large work for tape and orchestra which I titled "Jeu de Bach", written for the opening of the Bach 300 Festival. "Jeu II" was a reactionary piece if I may say so, for the premiere of the Bach 300 piece had a very embarrassing beginning, after which I swore off technology forever - but was easily swayed to continue by Ron's encouragement, and tempted by new pieces of digital equipment to try out.

1985-86 was the fifteenth Anniversary season of NMC, and as usual NMC continued to present new names in the world of contemporary music. One name not new was J. S. Bach, and how he got programmed on the series was due to Harry Somers, and one of our Board members, Austin Clarkson. These two gentlemen proposed a celebration of Reginald Godden's life, Reg who was celebrating his eightieth birthday, and was well known as a pianist with a most unusual approach to the instrument, and to the literature for it, in particular the works of J.S. himself. Harry Somers who was a student and longtime friend of Godden presented the maestro Godden's theories on Bach to the audience, and also presented his own NMC commissioned work "Chura-Churum", a piece for eight voices which was performed by the Tapestry Singers. This kind of program was certainly a departure from New Music Concerts fare.

Closer to our mandate were programs such as "Lontano", the title of a group from London, England, playing a number of works representing the activities in that great city in the UK, pieces by Peter Maxwell Davies, Brian Ferneyhough, Jonathan Harvey, Odaline de la Martinez (the conductor of Lontano) and others. Canadian composers such as Allan Bell, John Hawkins, Tim Brady, Henry Kucharzyk were heard, and as a matter of fact, the American Society of University Composers Festival had allocated Canada as the country of the year for 1986. The season offered a variety of challenges to our audiences including some microtonal music for a number of harps by James Tenney.

Without question, the highlight of the 1986-87 season was STELARC, in a program entitled Laser Eyes, Eternal Ears, held at the Ice House, Harbourfront, in January, 1987. STELARC was advertised as a performer/composer/scientist from Japan, who hailed originally from Australia. His presentation was described as an "Event for Amplified Body, Laser Eyes and Third Hand", and what one saw on stage was a naked man all wired up in every part of his body, with blank eyes shooting forth laser beams, and a third arm. What one heard was the sounds emanating from various parts of his body, amplified and mixed together in a predetermined system. Now, this was without doubt the most complex technical production NMC ever mounted, and is deserving of mention in some detail. Stelarc departed from his scientific observations that the human body is obsolete, that "it is no longer of any advantage to either remain 'human' or to evolve as a species. Evolution ends when technology invades the body, splitting the species. It is time to diversify and depart." He developed his "Post-Evolutionary Desires" by subjecting his body to internal probing, and stressful situations including body suspensions by insertions into the skin. Having probed the limitations of the body, he became interested in ways of extending the body's capabilities, and developed an artificial hand which is

attached to the body and activated by the EMG muscle signals, what he termed the Third Hand Project.

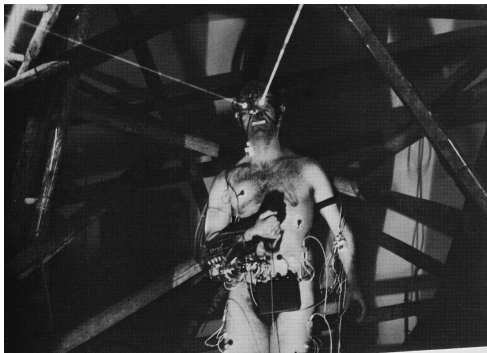


**Evolution "Handwriting "**

**Photo: Akiko Okada, Maki Gallery, Tokyo**

The real left arm is remote controlled by a muscle stimulator with varying voltage and frequency, and is used as a sound source along with the motor mechanism picked up by a contact microphone. As if this isn't complicated enough, the other sounds are amplifications of body processes, brain waves, muscles, hear beat, blood flow, etc, - a combination of percussive and wind sounds, random and repetitive, and sometimes triggered sounds, all carefully orchestrated by selective tuning in an out of the various channels of sound.

Then we have the Laser Eyes, which were small mirrors stuck to the eyes, with laser beams which allowed the head to be safely turned without losing the beams, and these laser eyes are modulated by the heartbeat, pulsing on and off. All of this emanating from one man supported by what he called a tensegrity structure, made from a pattern of wood and cables.



**STELARC**

**Photo:Maureen Merritt, Tokyo**

This was indeed a production, and due to popular demand was repeated a second night. The other half of the program, almost lost in the dizzying display by Stelarc, was a work by Michael Bussiere titled "Fields of Light: the Eternal Feminine," a kind of sacred cantata for soprano, choir and electronics, which was performed by soloist Elizabeth Dobie and the Opera in Concert Choir under Robert Cooper. Importantly, I must acknowledge that this program could not have happened without Stelarc's electronic engineer Kasutaka Tazaki, Takuro Osaka, visual artist, and our own people such as Jim Montgomery, NMC's Production Manager, who helped coordinate all the

technical equipment required, and supervised the building of the tensegrity structure, and Ron Lynch, who was our Technical Director. It was an amazing feat, and in Ron's words, the 'most bizarre' event in our history to date. It also cost NMC an arm and a leg, as Stelarc made extra demands for his presentation, and we were not successful in soliciting the help of Japan Airways to pay for the transportation of three people plus equipment. While successful, these two evenings contributed greatly to our overdraft.

The balance of this season paid tribute to Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim and George Crumb on a return visits to Toronto, and paid homage to John Weinzweig, John Beckwith and Jean Papineau-Couture on his seventieth birthday, and presented a recently formed group - the Trio Basso, a string trio from Germany. Canadian composers were again well represented throughout the series -Ann Southam, Wes Wraggett, Bruce Mather, Steve Tittle and Lothar Klein. A new collaboration with the Royal Conservatory of Music was initiated under the title Composer's World with seven events interspersed throughout the season, with master classes also being held at the Conservatory with featured guests of NMC.

The opening event was a high tech concert featuring the concepts of two Montreal composers, Marcelle Deschênes and Alain Thibault. Thibault, in collaboration with video artist Miquel Raymond, created a video opera with an elaborate set up including a MIDI "Videotizer", specially invented to control the switching of thirty two video monitors with any kind of MIDI live instruments or composition software. Titled "Out", the work involved a large group of Quebec specialists, including the soprano Pauline Vaillancourt, and posed many questions to our perceptions of reality in the 21st century, among other concerns. The other work, by Marcelle Deschênes, was a collaboration with Thibault on the musical side, and based on a concept by Renêe Bourassa who also directed the production. This opus was titled "Lux", and was described as a "multi-media work for mimes, electroacoustic and computer music, computer-programmed multi-images, 3-D sets". Here were two very complex conceptions, in collaboration with the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto where the event was held, and I don't recall that our staff had anything to do with the set up of the production. According to Jim Montgomery, he recalled that it was 'very good', and that is high praise from this composer.

NMC cooperated again with the Conservatory in an all Krzystof Penderecki program during this season. Penderecki was one of the major names of the period who emerged from Poland onto the European scene back in the 1960s, one whose music was sonically very rich in textures, appealing to audiences world wide, and it was appropriate that he be represented in Canada. On this concert our star viola player, Rivka Golani was featured, and she was paired with her French counterpart Gerard Caussé in another program in the series. New faces continue to be found each season, and it will be impossible to even begin to detail the quantity of composers' and performers' names as the years progress, so I am not going to attempt this task in this document at least. There are some things that are noteworthy, if one compares the early years to almost twenty years later. In the beginning we had no competition, and we drew substantial audiences to our fare. Some loyal subscribers remained faithful to NMC, but gradually our public was split in favour of other series, of new groups that had formed with their own mandates, or perhaps some simply lost interest in the 'new'. While we produced our own concerts in the early days, as time wore on, we collaborated more and more with other organizations on special events. These collaborations had financial advantages, attracted some new audiences, and certainly allowed our Artistic Director the free time to pursue his own career. We weren't just producing concerts, but also many events such as Master Classes, Film and Video Nights, many talk sessions, the number of such events outweighing the number of actual concerts - too many events. While our own musicians were often featured in solo roles, there were often just as many specialists featured from countries outside of Canada.

In looking through old files, it becomes apparent that I was becoming exhausted with the responsibilities of running NMC, with all the pressures pertaining to each concert, pressures from the OAC, Bob's absences and criticisms, our minimal staff, and last but certainly not least, the ongoing need to raise money to pay the bills. By the year ending 1982, and one decade of concert production, our total revenue for that season came in at \$227,421., and we were starting to run a small deficit. By the season ending 1987, our revenue jumped to \$311,524. with an increased deficit. The increases were largely due to artistic and administrative expenditures. In 1987, Michael Koerner hosted an elaborate fund raising party at the Royal Bank Tower, and this was most helpful, but still fundraising remained a large problem inspite of his help and the extensive efforts from me and my

staff, who, at that time consisted of Kathrine McMurdo and Jim Montgomery, and to a certain extent, the efforts from some of our Board members. Fundraising revenue was only 8.74% of our total revenue. We obviously needed to cut back on something, at least a concert or two.

At this point in our history, Bob was the main person designing the programs, with little input from me, as I was no longer travelling nor working for CBC, with the exception of doing documentaries on Canadian composers, so my input on foreign activities in contemporary music largely ceased. Our office situation had changed with Kathrine and Jim taking over more responsibility. Jim resigned in 1987 to take over the direction of the Music Gallery, and Ron Lynch had stepped down from his position as Technical Director. In addition to those changes, I had to let Kathrine McMurdo go, for reasons I went into at this point. Canada Council grants were showing modest increases, but the Ontario and Metro Toronto grants held steady, and even decreased as the years progressed through the 1980s. Government subsidy from all three levels did not even keep up with the increase in the CPI. On top of that there were external problems raising grave concerns at the Ontario Arts Council with consequences for its artistic clients, of which we were one. A situation involving the Toronto Humane Society had come to the attention of the Attorney General, in which directors of a not-for-profit organization were being paid, and this was against the prevailing law. Of course this directly affected arts organizations like NMC that were run by boards of directors who were mostly artists, and many were being paid for their services to particular arts organizations, the only sensible thanks to those who administrate on behalf of their fellow artists and art forms. This was a very serious problem in the eyes of the OAC, and it seems that NMC was spearheading the battle for music administrators, and other clients of the OAC. We attended many meetings with the OAC, the Public Trustee and our own legal advisor, Jim Bradshaw, a senior partner at the corporate law firm of Campbell, Godfrey & Lewtas. We even had to furnish job descriptions for both Bob and myself, and defend why artists such as we are and were usually the only people with sufficient world experience to understand, first of all, why organizations like NMC are necessary, and, secondly, why we were quite qualified to administer NMC. It was a nightmare, which went on and on, taking up a huge amount of my time. More meetings and more meetings. In addition, the CBC was creating concerns by introducing a lengthy contract which made unreasonable demands on NMC, and by withholding monies that they owed NMC for concerts already recorded for broadcast, which meant more meetings, and more lawyers. The internal administrative problems were becoming overwhelming.

At the Annual Meeting on October 10, 1988, in my President's Report I announced my intention of stepping down from my various roles as I badly needed some free time for myself, and was exhausted. There were a few events during the 1988-89 season that remain in my mind, one being what Robert Everett-Green of the Globe and Mail called a 'tryst with Iannis Xenakis', which 'turned out to be a true affair of the heart', as Xenakis was no longer permitted to travel due to a heart condition. Nonetheless, a concert of four of his works, was presented, along with compositions by Canadian Greek composer, Christos Hatzis. Of interest was the week long demonstration of Xenakis' UPIC system at St. George's College, with an all UPIC concert concluding the week. Now UPIC is an acronym for Unite Polygogique Informatique de CEMAMU, which is again an acronym for a French research facility run by Xenakis. UPIC is a computer and synthesizer which enables the user to draw his or her music, and was designed by Xenakis to 'loosen up creative musical thinking'

without having to worry about the technology. UPIC was on tour in North America, and Toronto was one of its stops.

Another event of the 1988-89 season causing attention was work of Morton Feldman, written for the painter Philip Gaston in 1986. What was so remarkable about this Feldman opus was that it lasted almost four and a half hours, performed by Robert Aitken, pianist Barbara Pritchard and percussionist Robin Engelman. It was an endurance feat for both performers and audience, and I'm afraid I was one who did not last the evening. Regarding his music, Feldman has stated: "I never understood the need for a 'live' audience. My music, because of its extreme quietude would be happiest with a dead one". Morton Feldman died in 1987.

Technology continued to play its important role in NMC programming, often in conjunction with other art forms, and Andrew Culver, a Canadian known as a software designer for John Cage, created "Hard Lake Frozen Moon" of simple structures that could be twanged, stroked or hit into some audible activity together with Culver's voice amplified through cylinders. The striking set of vibrating sculptures were set in motion by a solemn woman moving about the stage, but the end sound result was interrupted by radio interference, whether intentional or otherwise. And so another season comes to an end with a smashing performance by American trombone virtuoso Stuart Dempster. Of course there were compositions by Canadians, and a riveting performance of works by Quebec pianist Louis-Philippe Pelletier, plus music from Mexico.

At this point in time, my mind was saturated with too many problems, not the least of which was the survival of NMC and all its behind-the-scenes difficulties, I needed a break from the stress. I submitted an application for a Senior Arts Grant to the Canada Council, which was approved, and so I tendered my resignation as President and General Manager to be in effect at the end of the 1988-89 season. I remained on the Board, but left the Directors to find solutions to the administration of NMC, attending only the odd meeting during the next year. I should mention that I had also sold my house at Lyndhurst Court and moved out to the Scarborough Bluffs with my two little dogs, Rufus and Hildegard, an upheaval all of its own for all three of us.

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As a kind of Epilogue to the above story, New Music Concerts continues to this day, which is the year 2020. Robert Aitken remained at the helm for all these intervening years. He now shares the podium and artistic direction with a young composer/conductor making a name for himself, Brian Current, and the office is run by Adam Scime, another composer, and a Board of Directors of musicians as well as a handful of music lovers who contribute skillsets from many other walks of life. Almost a complete changing of the guard, as it were, who are now finding their feet in a different world than we faced in 1971. 2021 marks the 50th Anniversary of New Music Concerts - Happy Birthday NMC!!!!



