

WHO THE H . . . IS GEORGES APERGHIS?

Georges Aperghis was born in Athens, Greece, on December 23, 1945. His father Achilles, a sculptor, and his mother Irene, a painter, gave him a rich artistic background in post-war Greece and allowed him great freedom, providing the basis for what has become a highly original, independent career as a composer.

Mainly self-taught, Aperghis divided his interest between painting and music, which he discovered through radio and the occasional piano lesson from a family friend. In Athens, he knew little about the European avant-garde but he read scores from the repertoire and heard some Schoenberg, Bartók and Stravinsky. The first experiments in musique concrete by Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry came as a revelation. By 1963, he had decided to give up painting and settled in Paris to continue studying music. There, he discovered the world of new music through the *Domaine Musical* and concerts at the *Maison de la Radio*.

His earliest works — *Antistixis*, for three string quartets, *Anakroussis* for seven instruments (1967) and *Bis* for two orchestras (1968) show the influence both of serialism and of Xenakis's research. He himself described these pieces as studies; pursuing a need to develop a freer, more personal language, he gravitated towards the work of John Cage and Mauricio Kagel and towards the theatre, which he discovered through his wife, the actress Edith Scob.

In 1971, Aperghis composed *La tragique histoire du nécromancien Hieronimo et de son miroir*, for two women's voices, speaking and singing, lute and cello. It was his first attempt at music theatre, demonstrating a fascination with the relationship between music, words and the stage, which he continues to explore today. For the Avignon Festival, he composed *La tragique histoire...* (1971), *Vesper* (1972), *Pandaemonium* (1973), and his opera *Histoire de loups* (1976).

Since 1976, he has divided his time between three central passions. After founding the *Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM)*, based in Bagnolet for 15 years, now in Nanterre, he completely changed his approach to composition. He began creating performances that used both actors and musicians; he based works — created gradually in the rehearsal process — on everyday events transported to a poetic, often absurd and satirical world. He treated voice, instrument, movement, text and staging equally, eschewing standard theatrical and orchestral hierarchies. Between *La bouteille à la mer*, in 1976, and 1990, he worked with the ATEM on some 20 productions, the most recent being *Conversations* (1985), *Enumerations* (1988), *Jojo* (1990) and *H, litanie musicale et égalitaire* (1992).

His second passion lies in developing chamber and orchestral music, vocal and instrumental works, for a wide variety of combinations. He has made an extensive series of pieces for solo instrument, composed for particular performers and often containing theatrical aspects, sometimes simply in the form of movement. His taste for experiment and provocation — for example, in *Die Wände haben Ohren* for large orchestra (1972) — is always apparent but, unlike his music theatre, this work is not specifically theatrical. Everything is determined by the writing. It is rhythmically complex and always full of a vigorous energy that springs from extreme registers, dynamics and virtuosity, and from combinations such as voice and instrument, strings and percussion, sound and noise.

His third love, opera, brings together all these concerns, where the words are the vital unifying element and the voice the principal means of expression. Aperghis has written six operas, based on Jules Verne (*Pandaemonium*, 1973), Diderot (*Jacques le fataliste*, 1974), Freud (*Histoire de loups*, 1976), Edgar Allan Poe (*Je vous dis que je suis mort*, 1978), a letter from

Aperghis At Banff
For the first time in North America

Water and Gravity
the music theatre of Georges Aperghis
August 2, 4, 7, 9, 8 pm
August 10, 2 pm

Cabaret Aperghis
Aperghis in intimate surroundings
Cash Bar opens at 9:30 pm
August 1, 3, 6, 10 pm
August 8, 10:30 pm

Concerts — Music by Aperghis and Contemporaries
includes works by Georges Aperghis, Pascal Dusapin, Marc Monnet, John Metcalf and others
August 4, 9, 10, 4:30 pm

Bettina Brentano to Goethe (*Liebestod*, 1981) and Alain Badiou (*L'Echarpe rouge*, 1984). He is currently writing his seventh, a version of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes tropiques*.

A prolific and unfailingly inventive composer, Aperghis has produced over 100 works, highly personal and unclassifiable, serious but not lacking in humour, following tradition but free of institutional constraints. For interpreters of Aperghis, the composer allows vast horizons of vitality and ease; for audiences, he skillfully reconciles musical experience for the ear and the eye.

WATER AND GRAVITY

The music theatre of Georges Aperghis

directed by Richard Armstrong
with music direction by Jean-Pierre Drouet
design by Terry Gunvordahl
and stage management by Tom Wright

August 2, 4, 7, 9, 10

Performance Conductor/Coach: Phillip Headlam • **Assistant Répétiteur:** Patrick Visseq
Singing Teacher: Selena James • **Assistant Music Director for «de l'eau»:** Russell Whitehead • **Assistant Stage Manager*:** Richard Berg • **Fight Coordinator:** Claire Frances Muir
Assistant Designer*: Michael Gianfrancesco

De la nature de la gravité

World Premiere

Text by Georges Aperghis after Leonardo da Vinci

Onstage Conductor, Philip Headlam

Soprano 1, Barbara Hannigan

Soprano 2, Erika Tanner

Soprano 3, Patricia O'Callaghan

Soprano 4, Katerina Papadoulas

Baritone 1, John Tessier

Baritone 2, Sung Taek Chung

Baritone 3, Curtis Sullivan

Actrice, Claire Frances Muir

Acteur, Michael Wacholtz

Trumpet, Russell Whitehead

Percussion #1, Catherine Pavet

Percussion #2, Andrew Morris

De la nature de l'eau

North American Premiere

After the texts of Leonardo da Vinci

Created June 30, 1974 and performed by Ensemble Polyphonique de France at the Recontres Internationales de la Rochelle

Onstage Conductor, Philip Headlam

Soprano, Barbara Hannigan

Mezzo-soprano 1, Maria Riedstra

Mezzo-soprano 2, Maria Kowan

Mezzo-soprano 3, Shannon Unger

Baritone 1, Curtis Sullivan

Baritone 2, Sung Taek Chung

Actrice, Claire Francis Muir

Acteur, Michael Wacholtz

Grand Piano, Patrick Visseq

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***De la nature de la gravité* and
De la nature de l'eau – by
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Director's Note

You will first be captivated by the sound, a dizzying array of wild and wonderful voices, sometimes fanning out to gravity-defying heights, at others deep and authoritative, vying for power and yet ready at any moment to make us laugh with the pleasure of recognizing ourselves in our daily lives. Samurai cries, shrieks of disagreement, sighs of passion, dripping sounds, whirlpools and waves, storms and sirens, rebellious adolescents, patriarchs, revolutionaries: as one popular newspaper used to say – “all human life is here!”

Welcome to the fascinating music theatre world of Georges Aperghis. Welcome to **Water and Gravity**.

After the wide range of sound qualities, instrumental as well as vocal, you'll be struck by the variety of texts, drawn from several sources and languages, all used for their potential to make music. A major component of both pieces comes from Leonardo da Vinci's observations on the nature of both gravity and water, about which he wrote extensively in his celebrated notebooks. The texts are used, however, as much for their subversive or metaphorical meaning as for their literal comments on water and gravity. The event's title is taken from the two works performed: **De la nature de la gravité** (of the nature of gravity, written in 1980, yet considered too difficult to perform until now) and **De la nature de l'eau** (of the nature of water, written in 1974 and a first time performance for North America). And if Aperghis' work were not unconventional enough, in a new departure for presenting work of this kind, “**gravité**” will be performed twice in the evening in two distinctly different stagings.

This is music theatre at its most exciting, where musical gesture is pursued to the limits of its impact on the body and on emotion within the rituals of human existence.

Georges Aperghis' music theatre compositions present a formidable challenge for all concerned in realizing them for the stage, but none more so than for the performers themselves. In creating **Water and Gravity**, I have been both thrilled and fortunate to work with a group whose enthusiasm and dedication has been second to none; many of them received advanced training in this kind of material in previous Banff Centre programs, and without their active contribution to the creation, this collaborative event would have been impossible.

– Richard Armstrong

Music Director's Note

Georges Aperghis is not a composer of abstract concert music or of opera, even though he has often applied himself to these musical *genres*, which are precisely classified in our occidental world. However, even in these cases, he remains faithful to his natural creative inclination: to contact his “dream” interior. This is manifested by the performers through sound, certainly, but also through all kinds of classic human expression: the word, the movement, the whole range of emotions, ambiguity, sensitivity, etc. All this is clearly evident in the two works presented here: the word is there, the profound and noble word of Leonardo da Vinci, interwoven with what one could describe as daily situations, even when they lead to crises and death. This dramaturgy, far from weakening the words of Leonardo, rather emphasizes the universal character within them. Simultaneously, the heightened thought of the texts puts into sharp relief the conventions and the absurdity of the characters' lives.

But the intention is also above all, the music: music as *magic* in the ancient sense of the word; the profound need to express often obscure or closed areas of the self, areas where the performers are led to immerse themselves, driven by the

total engagement demanded by the difficulties and the multidisciplinary nature of their task.

In the world of Georges Aperghis, one laughs or cries at the same time, anxiety and pleasure exist side by side: *c'est une musique a vivre très simplement.*

– Jean-Pierre Drouet

PROGRAM

De la nature de la gravité
(of the nature of gravity)
– version one

pause

De la nature de l'eau
(of the nature of water)

intermission

De la nature de la gravité
(of the nature of gravity)
– version two



Special Thanks

A special thanks to Kelly Arnsby, Kathryn LaBouff, Shauna Japp, Stephen Everison.

Cabaret Aperghis

"Music above all" (Verlaine)

August 1, 3, 6, 8

Graham Cozzubbo, *Director*
Marguerite Witvoet, *Music Director, English translations*
Deborah Ratelle, *Stage Manager*
Rhonda Coates, *Costumer*
Brent Johnson & Deborah Ratelle, *Lighting Design*
Patrick Visseq, *Coach*
Brent Johnson, *Lighting Operator*

COMPANY

Maria Kowan
Andrew Morris
Maria Riedstra
John Tessier
Shannon Unger
Patrick Visseq
Anita Wilson

PROGRAM, *in random order*

"Wise and artfull **recitations** sweetned with eloquent and gracefull inticements." (1641, Milton)

Récitations #3 (excerpt), 5 10, 12, 14 Georges Aperghis

". . . his task is to make his **inventory** complete." (1857, Trench)

Attempt at an Inventory Georges Perec

"They Gormandize at their **selfe** pleasures." (1632, Lithgow)

SELF (excerpt) Georges Aperghis

"That natural instinct which man hath to live in **conversation**."
(1594, Parsons)

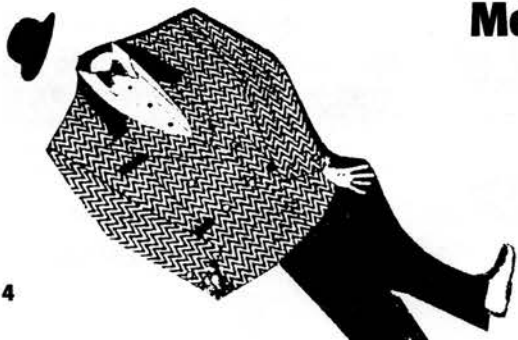
Conversations #1, 11, 13 (excerpt), 14, 15, 19 Georges Aperghis

"The fixed delusional states without excitement or depression come next, the **Monomanias**." (1883, T.S. Clouston)

Monomanias #2, 3, 5, 6 Georges Aperghis

"It is one of the most difficult and delightful subtleties of life that we must deeply acknowledge certain things to be serious and yet retain the power and will to treat them often as lightly as a game."

— C.S. Lewis



Notes on the Music

From the monomaniacal rantings of the delusional to the formal tones of a public recitation, from casual conversation tossed over the shoulder to graffiti scrawled on a wall, from the physiology of laughter to whirlwinds of breath and sound; these are the

raw materials for the music of Georges Aperghis' solo repertoire, as reflected in the titles of the works presented in this evening's cabaret program.

Implicit in each title is communication, a basic need shared by all humans. Aperghis' music celebrates the attempt to speak, as well as the joy, humour and frustration which surround that attempt.

Drawing from literary and mathematical models, Aperghis creates an intricate grammar of pitch, rhythm and sound/word. He then plays with this structure as a child plays with building blocks, delighting in the simple processes of repetition, accumulation and permutation. To borrow the words of Noam Chomsky, Aperghis "manipulate[s] symbols in ways impossible with the things they stand for, arriving at novel and even creative versions of reality . . . turn[ing] the universe symbolically inside out."

This universe is then brought to life by the performer on a spiral of breath, colouring the voice with the entire spectrum of human emotion from speech to song, with all the possible shadings in between. Aperghis pushes the limits of the singer's capacity for breath, essentially throwing the performer beyond the need for air, so that in one moment we feel s/he has both surpassed that need and yet remains completely controlled by it – a perfect bubble of impossibility.

The resulting performance is a unique distillation of sound and sense, far removed from, yet intrinsically linked to our everyday surroundings; music which is at times playful, at times profound; music which, in the best tradition of the symbolists, holds "the ocean in a glass of water" – *de la musique, avant tout.*

"Even the **Graffiti** of Pompeii have scarcely more power to . . . summon as in dreams the voices and the forms of long since buried men." (1873, Symonds)

Graffiti Georges Aperghis

"The **physiognomy of laughter** would be the best of elementary books for the knowledge of man." (1793, Holcroft)

Le Rire Physiologique Georges Aperghis

"You have to count anxiously like one learning to **tango**." (1975, Times)

Tango? Conlon Nancarrow

"A tempestuous **Whirlewind** of new calamities." (1609, Holland)

Tourbillons #1, 6 Georges Aperghis

"Some **sighes** out their woordes. Some synges their sentences." (1533, T. Wilson)

The Fine Art of Sighing (excerpts) Bernard Cooper

Marguerite Witvoet

Special Thanks

A special thank you to Jean-Pierre Drouet, Selena James, Kelly Arnsby, Richard Armstrong.



KAFKA'S CHIMP



August 1, 3, 6, 8, 10 8 pm
August 5 4:30 pm
Eric Harvie Theatre, \$20

The **WORLD PREMIERE** of an opera by composer John Metcalf and librettist Mark Morris.

Step into the future with *Kafka's Chimp*. This wacky romantic comedy follows the trials of a chimpanzee in his final transformation from chimp to man. In the hours before he gives his keynote address to the distinguished academy he must resolve the issue of relationships between men and women! This performance will take you on stage with the performers and is a rare opportunity for a close up view of the stage of the Eric Harvie Theatre.

STICKS & STONES

A play
by James Reaney

August 9 & 10, 13-18, 20-24
7:30 pm
August 17 & 18
2 pm
August 11
4:30 pm

Margaret Greenham Theatre
\$20

Sticks & Stones: The Donnellys, Part I premiered in 1973 at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre and was hailed as the first entry in the canon of world theatre to emerge from English Canada. Loaded with imagery, dramatic riffs full of humour and word play, *Sticks & Stones* is physical theatre at its best.

MUSIC AND SOUND August Events

Discover new music and invention for the next millennium in **THE FINAL DECADE** concerts *August 1 and 2*.

MUSIC AT THE WHYTE takes Banff Centre artists to town. An 8 pm performance by the Hoebig/Moroz Trio is scheduled for *August 9*.

MUSIC FOR A SUMMER AFTERNOON on *August 8 and 15* and the **GREENHAM SERIES** on *August 16*, delight audiences with concerts by some of our 150 international musicians from Canada to Germany to Taipei.

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August 23-31 11 pm

COMPARSAS

Parade of Afrocuban performers in Banff, August 31 afternoon

FIESTA HABANERA

Havana-style dance party with Chucho Valdés y Grupo Irakere at Banff Springs Hotel
September 1 8 pm

PLEASE NOTE:

Cabarets scheduled in The Club for August 2, 4, 7, 9, 13, 14 and 15 have been cancelled. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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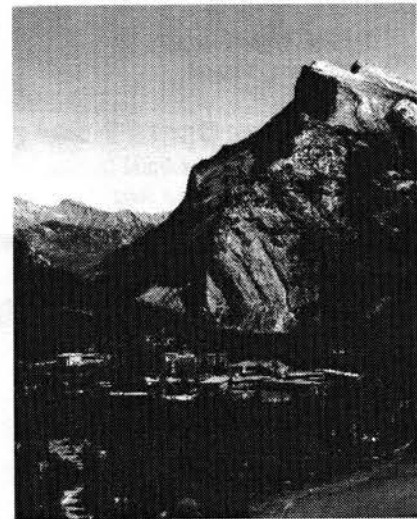
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