

Jane Harbury Publicity

November 17, 2008

For immediate release

AMICI CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
"END OF TIME"
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2008
3PM
GLENN GOULD STUDIO
250 FRONT STREET WEST
Pre-Concert chat hosted by Keith Horner
2:30PM

AMICI's 21ST season is under way and AMICI has begun a new chapter as founding members, **Joaquin Valdepeñas** and **David Hetherington** have officially welcomed pianist, **Serouj Kradjian** into the family.

On Sunday December 7, at 3PM long time friend of AMICI, violinist **Benjamin Bowman** joins Joaquin, David and Serouj for a special concert celebrating one hundred years since Olivier Messiaen's birth with a tribute as they play his signature piece, "Quartet for the End of Time". This programme also includes a tribute to the 20th anniversary, to the day, of the devastating Armenian earthquake with a premiere of a new work, "**Elegy for Restive Souls**" for violin, clarinet, cello and piano, composed by Amici member **Serouj Kradjian**.

Serouj Kradjian has written this piece especially for today's concert, which takes place 20 years to the day after a devastating earthquake killed at least 25,000 people, many of them children, in Armenia, then a Soviet Republic. *Serouj writes: "Elegy for Restive Souls, a one-movement piece, draws inspiration from two photographs. One shows a clock tower standing among the ruins, with the arrows pointing to 11:41, the exact time the earthquake struck - this symbolising, perhaps, the "End of Time." The other photo is of a woman holding her children; she had just lost her husband, two other children and many other members of her family. She is a symbol of anger, devastation, sadness and confusion, but still offers a glimmer of hope.*

Restive Souls not only refers to the people who perished that day, but also to the numerous others whose souls, even though they could survive and stayed alive physically, were united in death - hence the appearance of a *danse macabre* later in the piece. In their search for Eternity, Light, higher meaning and consolation, it's religion and spirituality that they first turn to. The first theme is based on a short motif of Armenian sacred music, then reminiscences of life before the earthquake (Armenian folk music based themes). The music is at times light and transparent as air, and at other times presents a violently thick texture. Short bouts of serenity are disturbed by the disarray of present reality."

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ALEXANDER ARUTIUNIAN *Suite for violin, clarinet and piano (1992)*

Born in the capital city of Yerevan, where he continues to live, Arutiunian is one of the most prominent Armenian composers. He has written in all the major musical forms, taught composition at the Yerevan Conservatory for many years and, for more than three decades, was artistic director of the Armenian Philharmonic Society. His Trumpet Concerto (1950) has been widely adopted around the world and other pieces occasionally surface - including a Violin Concerto performed in this studio three or four years ago. The Suite draws on its composer's love of Armenian folk-music.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908-1992) *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*

"It's like a detective story; only, it's a true story," said the cellist Etienne Pasquier, aged 90, ten years ago, not long before his death. He was speaking of the 1941 première of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Inside his pocket at the time of the interview he carried a faded card which read: "Stalag VIII A, Görlitz. Première of the *Quartet for the End of Time* by Olivier Messiaen. January 15, 1941. This is how one of the most seminal chamber works of the 20th century had its beginnings. In a German POW camp in 1941, four French prisoners of war gave four hundred of their fellow prisoners and a number of their captors a glimpse of the apocalypse, making time stand still, temporarily liberating them from the horrors of war.

The chillingly named Stalag VIII A was a camp in Silesia, about 70 miles east of Dresden, for prisoners of war of enlisted rank. A series of extraordinary coincidences led to the creation of Messiaen's powerful masterpiece. For a start, Messiaen, a prisoner since the summer of 1940, was not only allowed, but encouraged to compose music. A German officer, Karl-Albert Brüll, gave him a regular supply of manuscript paper, pencils, erasers – and bread. Brüll was a German nationalist but anti-Nazi, according to the account of a French POW. Some of the German officers in the camp loved music and respected musicians, though to what extent this was a conscious public relations exercise – like the better-known Theresienstadt or Terezín – is not altogether clear. Living conditions in the camp for the 30,000 mostly French prisoners were harsh. Many died. Yet in Stalag VIII A, Western European Jews, unlike their Eastern European counterparts, were incarcerated under the same terms as their non Jewish fellow prisoners.

The Quartet is anchored by two ecstatic paeans, the first for cello, and the second for violin, both with piano accompaniment. Its emotional trajectory is enormous, from the opening dawn chorus, with fragments of birdsong on violin and clarinet woven with revolving sequences on piano and cello, to the terrifying *Dance of the Fury*, with all four instruments pounding out a repeated melody devoid of harmony, for more than six minutes.

Single concert tickets Adult \$45 • Senior \$40 • Student \$10

Tickets are available by calling the Roy Thomson Hall box office @ 416.872.4255

For more information on AMICI log on to: www.amiciensemble.com

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