

Improvising at the end of a programme is for me a kind of relaxation - a chance to thank the audience for being there throughout the journey. I will be asking for suggestions of musical themes - to borrow for some more 'fresh musical beginnings'.

### Biographical notes

**Richard Causton** studied at the University of York, the Royal College of Music and the Scuola Civica in Milan. In 1997 he was awarded the Mendelssohn Scholarship, which enabled him to study in Milan with Franco Donatoni. Distinctions include First Prize in the Third International 'Nuove Sincronie' Composition Competition, a British Composer Award and a Royal Philharmonic Society Award. In 2003-5, Causton was Fellow in the Creative Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge. In addition to composition, Causton writes and lectures on Italian contemporary music and regularly broadcasts for Italian radio (RAI Radio 3).

**Dr. John Burge** was born in Dryden Ontario in 1961 and grew up in Calgary studying the piano with Dorothy Hare. He holds three degrees in Composition and Theory from the Universities of Toronto and British Columbia and since 1987, has been teaching at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, where he is a full professor. For his outstanding work as a composer over the years, in 2013 he was awarded a Queen's University Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship. He has composed a large body of instrumental and vocal music in all genres and his work, *Flanders Fields Reflections*, for string orchestra, received the 2009 Juno Award for the Best Canadian Classical Composition.

**Rodney Sharman** is a Canadian composer and flutist based in Vancouver. His music has been performed in over 30 countries worldwide. He has won several international and national awards, including First Prize in the 1984 CBC Competition for Young Composers. His chamber opera, *Elsewhereless*, a collaboration with Atom Egoyan, premiered in 1998 and has been staged 35 times internationally.

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 PM Heritage Auditorium, Assumption Hall

### Fantastical Borrowings

Douglas Finch

Richard Causton - Non mi comporto male (1993)

John Burge - from 24 Preludes (2015)

no. 13 in F-Sharp Major [One-Note Ostinato]

no. 14 in E-flat Minor (arranged/improvised by D.Finch)

no. 15 in D-Flat Major [Polytonality]

Rodney Sharman - Opera Transcription - Tristan und Isolde (2013)

Douglas Finch - Improvised Prelude

Charles Ives - Hawthorne from the Concord Sonata (1911-12)

*Pause*

Douglas Finch - Preludes and Afterthoughts - Fantasy-Transcriptions on Chopin's Preludes op. 28 (2009-11)

Chopin - 4th Ballade (1842)

Improvisations

ADMISSION Adults/Seniors \$20 / Students \$5

*Hosted by SoCA Presents*

## Programme note

### Douglas Finch

I am interested in how composers, and artists in general, borrow from one another - how they create new fantasies out of old stories. There are endless examples - such as Picasso's 'transcription' of Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, George Crumb's and George Rochberg's quotations of Bach, Chopin and other earlier composers and Michael Finnissy's more 'abstract' deconstructions of Verdi in his *Verdi Transcriptions*. In this concert, I am weaving together a number of pieces which themselves borrow in some way, but also become *objets d'art* for this 'new' collection/composition which is, in fact, the programme itself!

The hidden melody on which Richard Causton's **Non Mi Comporto Male** (1993) is based is revealed only very gradually. The title is a clue. Through five short sections, witty and dramatic combinations within dense textures and extreme registers of the keyboard playfully juxtapose fragments of the melody with invented material in contrasting tempos and moods. In the final section, the melody slowly gathers itself together like water droplets and becomes explicit for the first time. .... There is a kind of "pop groove" (as he puts it) to John Burge's **F-Sharp Major Prelude**: "the very simple materials used give the music a sense of freshness and new beginnings". I borrow Burge's **E-Flat Minor Prelude** to create a new piece which is quite the opposite to these fresh new beginnings, leading into (*preluding into*, to use 19th Century parlance) his polytonal **D-Flat Major Prelude** - the largest of his set of **24 Preludes**. This is an expansive, emotionally expressive piece, providing a kind of catharsis after which Rodney Sharman's **Tristan und Isolde** emerges as another *opposite* - not only of the previous Prelude by Burge, but of the original 'Love-Death' aria by Wagner. Sharman uses *every note* of the aria's melodic line, but their re-ordering and the almost total absence of dynamic inflection makes the experience something like an illusory memory - like quietly singing to yourself - in this case, at the end, literally. .... My postlude to Wagner and Sharman will turn into a prelude to Ives. .... Ives writes about *Hawthorne*: "... trying to suggest some of his [Hawthorne's] wilder, fantastical adventures into the half-childlike, half-fairylike phantasmal realms. .... something about the ghost of a man who never lived, or about something that will never happen, or something else that is not."

**Preludes and Afterthoughts** began as music to accompany Konstantin Iliev's play *Nirvana* at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith in 2005, and was developed further in a dance production at Laban Theatre, Greenwich, in 2010 which had Marcel Proust's poem *Chopin* (1896) as one of its starting points. Two of

Chopin's Preludes are quoted in their entirety, but in a context that changes how they are perceived. The interlinked movements are as follows: *Premonition*, *Memory 1* (the A-Major quote), *Dream*, *Whirlwinds and Sighs*, *Memory 2* (the A-Flat Major quote), *Dirge-Canon* and *Rounds*. Proust's poem:

Chopin, mer de soupirs, de larmes, de sanglots  
Q'un vol de papillons sans se poser traverse  
Jouant sur la tristesse ou dansant sur les flots.  
Reve, aime, souffre, crie, apaise, charme ou berce,  
Toujours tu fais courir entre chaque douleur  
L'oubli vertigineux et doux de ton caprice  
Comme les papillons volent de fleur en fleur;  
De ton chagrin alors ta joie est la complice:  
L'ardeur du tourbillon accroit la soif des pleurs.  
De la lune et des eaux pale et doux camarade,  
Prince du desespoir ou grand seigneur trahi,  
Tu t'exaltes encore, plus beau d'être pali,  
Du soleil inondant ta chambre de malade  
Qui pleure a lui sourire et souffre de le voir...  
Sourire du regret et larmes de l'Espoir!

(Chopin, sea of sighs, of tears, of sobs  
That a flight of butterflies crosses without posing  
Playing above sadness or dancing on the waves.  
Dream, love, suffer, scream, charm or lull,  
You are always jogging between every pain  
The dizzy and soft oblivion of your whim  
Like butterflies flying flower to flower;  
From your grief then your joy is abettor:  
The whirlwind's ardor deluding the sobs' thirst.  
Sweet comrade of the pale moon and the rain,  
Prince of despair or betrayed high lord,  
You excite yourself still, most beautiful pale being,  
The sun flooding your sickroom  
That cries for your smile and suffers from the sight.  
Smile of regret and tears of Hope!)

Chopin's **4th Ballade** needs no introduction. .... I would only say that it seems to me the perfect example of the Romantic ideal where 'form' has become both organic and inexplicable - totally at the service of feeling. And that feeling is infinitely variable and subtle, as wide ranging and comprehensive as life itself.