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CONTINUUM PRESENTS “ILLUMINATING UKRAINE: VIRKO BALEY & THE AVANT-GARDE” FEBRUARY 22 AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL

Continuum, the adventuresome new music performance ensemble led by Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, celebrates the prodigious Ukrainian-American composer and musical activist, Virko Baley, in his 70th birthday year with a concert of his works, including several premieres, and those of major Ukrainian composers he has championed. Artists include Rachel Calloway, mezzo-soprano; Moran Katz, clarinet; David Gresham, bass clarinet; Tom Chiu, violin; Stephanie Griffin, viola; Claire Bryant, cello; Cheryl Seltzer, piano; and Joel Sachs, piano and conductor. The concert takes place on Sunday, February 22 at 2 pm at Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Center, 129 West 67th Street. Tickets: \$20; st./s.c. \$10 at the box office, at merkinconcerthall.org, or through (212) 501-3330.

PROGRAM

Virko Baley (b. 1938) *Palm of the Hand* for clarinet, violin and piano (World Premiere)
Song Without Words for cello and piano (World Premiere)
Dance Without Words for clarinet and piano (New York Premiere)
Klytemnestra for mezzo-soprano, clarinet, violin, cello and piano
(New York Premiere of 2nd version. Written for Continuum)

Valentin Bibik (1940-2003) Piano Sonata No. 4

Leonid Hrabovsky (b.1935) *Hlas II* for bass clarinet

Alexander Shchetynsky (b.1960) *Music in Memory of Valentyn Bibik* for clarinet, cello, piano
(World Premiere)

Valentin Silvestrov (b.1937) *Epitaphium (L.B.)* for viola and piano

Of special note is *Klytemnestra*, set to a text by Ukrainian poet Oksana Zabuzhko, that explores the complicated and intense emotions and desires of Agamemnon's queen as she awaits his victorious return from Troy. Virko Baley experienced the horrors of World War II, and the domination of his native country, Ukraine, by the foreign powers. These childhood experiences are perhaps present in this monumental work, where love and lust are eclipsed by murder.

Virko Baley emigrated to the United States in 1949, and received both BA and MA degrees from the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and Arts (now CalArts.) He has written a variety of compositions for orchestra, chamber groups, solo instruments and vocal arrangements. He was co-producer and composer for Yuri Illienko's film, *Swan Lake: the Zone*, that won two top awards at the 1990 Cannes International Film Festival. He is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of Nevada and until 1995, served as the founding Music Director of the Nevada Symphony. Grants and commissions have come from the National Endowment for the Arts, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, DC, the Project 1000-Winnipeg Symphony, the California E.A.R. Unit, Continuum, the New Juilliard Ensemble, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Nevada Symphony orchestra and the Nevada State Council on the Arts. He is completing his first opera, *Red Earth: Hunger*, themed on the genocide famine in Ukraine 1932-33.

Ukrainian music is now prominent among the music of other nations, and native composers' music best expresses the richness of their heritage. **Valentin Bibik** was a leading figure in the musical life of Kharkiv, an industrial center that boasts a lively musical tradition, with a major opera house and two orchestras. Bibik mobilized interest and performances of modern American music. He taught composition at the Kharkiv Conservatory and was secretary of the Composers' Union. Mr. Bibik has composed nine symphonies, the opera *Flight*, major works for chorus, concertos with piano and other solo instruments, seven piano sonatas, and chamber and vocal works.

Valentin Silvestrov, one of the most important figures of the rich European new-music world, was a pupil at the Kiev Conservatory of Boris Lyatoshynsky, the "father" of Ukrainian experimentalism, and is considered one of the leading representatives of the Kiev avant-garde. Despite being awarded the Koussevitzky Prize in 1967, Silvestrov's music met with no response in his own country. One of his earliest champions was Virko Baley, a longtime advocate of contemporary Ukrainian music in general and Silvestrov's, as well as the other three composers on this program, works in particular. His music is now featured in many festivals in Ukraine and the rest of Europe, performed by major symphonic and chamber ensembles and generously represented on CD. A DVD of his music, filmed by an Estonian documentary studio, is being released.

Alexander Shchetynsky's compositions range from solo instrumental to orchestral, choral pieces and opera, and have been performed by internationally acclaimed artists and ensembles at festivals and concerts in Europe and America. New Juilliard Ensemble audiences heard his *Face to Star* in 2004. He organized several contemporary music festivals in Ukraine and Russia, and founded the concert series, *New Music in Kharkiv*. A frequent lecturer on Ukrainian music, he serves on the Art Council of the festival *Contrasts* in Lviv, the most prestigious international contemporary music festival in Ukraine. Two CDs of his music are released in the US and France. He now lives in Kiev.

Leonid Hrabovsky also attended the Kiev Conservatory as a composition student of Boris Lyatoshynsky. After winning first prize in the 1959 All-Soviet-Union competition, he received national recognition. Mr. Hrabovsky taught at the Kiev Conservatory and wrote music for Kiev film studios. Now living in the New York area, he was composer-in-residence at the Ukrainian Institute of America. His music displays an exterior of tremendous variety and inventiveness, but is united by the meticulousness of its construction.

Continuum has enjoyed a long association with Virko Baley, performing his music around the world, including works written for the ensemble and a Baley Retrospective in 1998.. Continuum has recorded two of his compositions, *Orpheus Singing* and *Dreamtime Suite No. 1*, on the CD "Orpheus Singing" (Cambria-1087). The members of Continuum have performed together for 43 years and have forged a strong musical connection with the Ukrainian composers on this program. Recipient of the Siemens international award for distinguished service to music and four ASCAP-Chamber Music America Awards for Adventuresome Programming, Continuum has given over 125 different retrospective concerts in New York City, individual concerts devoted to the century's foremost composers and to major topics. Continuum has recorded on Naxos, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, Bridge, CRI, Capstone, Cambria/Troppe Note, TNC, and New Albion, and has been broadcast on national and European television and radio.

The next performance of Virko Baley's music is April 5 when the TALEA Ensemble, conducted by the composer, presents *Dreamtime* (the complete 19-movement work) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York.