

The Fourth Contemporary Accordion Music Concert

CUNY Concert No. 4 Big Success Despite Small Audience

An enthusiastic, if small, audience enjoyed the fourth of a series of concerts at Elebash Hall, in the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, on Friday evening, October 10. As is true in the previous two concerts of this series (winter and fall, 2005), a new AAA commissioned work enjoyed its world premier: the original free bass version of Samuel Adler's *Canto XVIII*, performed by the



Dr. Robert Young McMahan

producer/narrator of the program, Robert Young McMahan. (The stradella version of this piece was premiered earlier this year by Beverly Roberts Curnow at the AAA 70th Anniversary Concert in Valhalla, New York.) Dr. Adler, who was present and joined in the pre-concert panel discussion, is one of America's most renowned senior composers and the author of the most

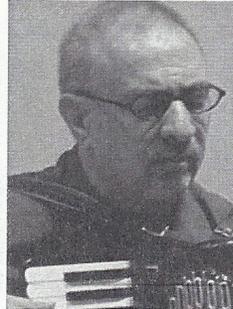
celebrated textbook on orchestration in the field (Dr. McMahan will be assisting him in adding a chapter on the accordion in the upcoming fourth edition). Retired from the famous Eastman School of Music, where he headed the composition department for decades, he now teaches composition at the Juilliard School. Having reached the milestone age of 80 this year, he has consequently enjoyed many celebrations of his amazing career in commemorative concerts and guest appearances around the world during this period. The AAA was therefore honored to join in these celebrations via the concert at CUNY. For those who are curious, the other two AAA commissioned works premiered in the 2005 concerts were *Triologue*, for violin, cello, and accordion, by Lukas Foss, and *Accordion Samba*, for accordion, bassoon, cello, and scat singer, by Gary William Friedman. Both composers were present for these performances and participated in the pre-concert panel discussions as well. Another world premiere took place in the program as well: *Retrospections*, for accordion and piano, by the Balkan accordionist/composer Todor Vasilev Gerov, brilliantly performed by Mary Tokarski and the composer's daughter, pianist Dessie Vaughan.



Mary Tokarski

The title of the concert was "*Vintage Classical Accordion: A Sampler of Neo-Romantic and Neo-Classical Works for or Including Accordion, with a Few Surprises.*" Those selections that bordered on the more-or-less Romantic side were Frosini's *Rhapsody No. 3*, Robert Russell Bennett's Broadway-like *Four*

Nocturnes, both brilliantly performed by Beverly Roberts Curnow, and Gary Daverne's *Concert Waltz*, arranged for accordion soloist and five accompanying accordions for this occasion, with Mary Tokarski soloist, and Julie Cardona, Beverly Roberts Curnow, Robert McMahan, Marilyn O'Neil, and Linda Reed serving as the accompanying "orchestra." The more modern and at times dissonant neo-classical selections were Adler's *Canto XVII*, Gerov's *Retrospections*, and Henry Cowell's *Iridescent Rondo* (another AAA commissioned work), the last played in an altered "cover" version, including some vocals, by William Schimmel. In addition to Schimmel's unusual rendering of the Cowell composition, the "surprises" were the same artist's rendering of the usually romantic style accordionist/composer Pietro Deiro's unexpectedly dissonant *Atonal Studies*, written in 1949, near the end of the great accordion pioneer's long career, and two works which were well outside the conservative bounds



Dr. William Schimmel

of neo-romantic and neoclassical idioms, following rather the various trends of the post World War II era in contemporary music, and added more for the purpose of contrast than surprise, William Schimmel's multi media, though Kurt Weill-like, *The Kid: Billy*, for accordion, video, and dancer, performed by the composer and his wife, dancer/choreographer Micki Goodman, and McMahan's more atonal *Romp*, for violin, accordion, and piano, performed by the composer, violinist Ruotao Mao, and pianist Tomoko Kanamaru (all three of whom are on the music faculty of The College of New Jersey).



Tomoko Kanamaru, Pianist

There is no date set for the next such concert of contemporary original music for or including the accordion, but it will likely occur when the next AAA commissioned work is to have its debut. Stay tuned for that announcement and please do come for an unusual and enjoyable evening.



Samuel Adler, Beverly Roberts and Dr. Robert Young McMahan