

# In Recital

## **Gordon Fitzell, composition**

This recital is presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Master of Music degree  
for Mr Fitzell.

**Tuesday, October 17, 1995 at 8:00 pm**

**Convocation Hall, Arts Building**



**Department of Music  
University of Alberta**

## Program

94 dB (1995, première)

Roger Admiral and Matthew Wiggins, piano

Three Songs of Praise (1995, première)

1. Shout with Joy to God
2. Hear My Prayer
3. Rock of Our Salvation

Tamara Schwartzentruber, conductor  
Michelle Crouch, Lisa Fernandes, Ardelle Ries,  
and Barbara Sadler Wells, soprano  
Wendy Grønnestad, Joy-Anne Murphy,  
Lynne Anne Roberts, and Elisabeth Scholtz, alto  
Roger Admiral, Jacob Cooper, Tom Macleay,  
and Gavin Meyers, tenor  
Kevin Gagnon, Kevin Heshedahl, Curtis Knecht,  
and László Nemes, bass

Inoculation (1994)

Gordon Fitzell, Jay Lind, David Wall, and Ian Knopke, guitar

The Lamp of Poor Souls (1995)

Gordon Fitzell, conductor and candle lighter  
Gavin Meyers, tenor  
Kevin Gagnon, baritone  
Bill Damur, ocarina, recorder, and slide whistle  
Steve Williams, trumpet  
Roger Admiral, harpsichord  
Miriam Lewis, viola  
Stephen McGonigle, double bass  
Silvia Yee, musical glass  
Nicole Arendt, Chris Brown, Greg Ferguson, Nancy Jacobs,  
Helene Jurkat, Steven Kelter, and Erin Zier, percussion

## Double Quartet for Plucked Strings (1995, première)

- I. Precision
- II. Bi-tones
- III. Harmonics
- IV. Aleatory
- V. Harp Mallets
- VI. Tremolo
- VII. Ordinario

Derek Tuba, conductor  
Gordon Fitzell, ukulele  
Bill Damur, lute  
David Wall, guitar  
Jay Lind, acoustic bass guitar  
Keri Zwicker, harp  
Jim Cockell, violin  
Miriam Lewis, viola  
Kerri McGonigle, cello  
Stephen McGonigle, bass

## Program Notes

*94 dB* is an extensive reworking of my earlier piece for two pianos, *Fourhand Knowledge*. The new version features a combination of aggressive keyboard playing and delicate inside-the-piano techniques. The diverse timbres resulting from these two very different playing styles are unified through gestural motives and by the harmonic language that arises from the elision of two tetrachords.

*Three Songs of Praise* is a hymn-like setting of excerpts from the Biblical Psalms 66, 102 and 95. Rhythmic devices such as hemiola and shifting meter characterize the first song. The second song features a folk-like mezzo-soprano solo, while the third song, in effect, divides the chorus into two complete SATB choirs to facilitate an antiphonal finale. The first of these three songs was recently selected to be performed at the Ithaca College Choral Composition Contest on November 11, 1995 in Ithaca, New York.

### Program Notes (continued)

Originally written for performance with modern dance, *Inoculation* features a number of extended performance techniques including bi-tones, "drumming" on the body of the guitar, and foot stamping. This short piece is based entirely on a single left hand formation. The tape part, which is composed of only guitar sounds, also features material arising from this same hand formation.

Based on the poem of the same name by Canadian poet Marjorie Pickthall, *The Lamp of Poor Souls* attempts to express the hypocrisies of the church during the period before the Reformation. Each of the instruments and voices represents some aspect of the poem. The pure, shimmering sound of the musical glass, for instance, represents the continually burning Lamp of Poor Souls, which is itself a symbol of everlasting spirituality. The relentless trumpet, on the other hand, speaks as the obstinate voice of the church. In addition, unmetered sections reflect the seamless purity of spirituality, while metered sections represent the church's artificial imposition of order. The work also makes reference to Franz Joseph Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony (No. 45) through various programmatic and thematic analogies to its final movement. I have made this peculiar connection to form a metaphor reflecting my view that if society wishes to experience true spirituality, it desperately needs to cast off the shackles of dogmatic religion.

In writing *Double Quartet for Plucked Strings* I was interested in exploring the extremities of composer control versus performer freedom. The mechanical precision of the opening and closing sections is sharply contrasted by the progressive ambiguity that characterizes the middle sections. Consequently, the beginning and ending sections of the score are written in specific musical notation, whereas the middle sections are represented by aleatoric, abstract graphics. The harp plays a particular role in this piece, namely that of a musical mediator between the two quartets. As the piece moves further away from order and closer to chaos, however, the harpist eventually rebels against the surmounting anarchy through a harp solo that is depicted only by an abstract picture. This move toward abstraction is paired with a continuous transformation of unusual timbres and textures.

Thanks to Ian Knopke for stage managing.