

**MONDAY
EVENING
CONCERTS**

**GEORGES APERGHIS:
HAPPY END**

April 24, 2017 | 8:00 PM
Zipper Concert Hall

MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS **APRIL 24, 2017**

Georges Aperghis: HAPPY END

Jean Baptiste Mathieu – **La Tête** (1993) [4']

Georges Aperghis, voice

Georges Aperghis – **Le Corps à corps** (1978) [10']

Jonathan Hepfer, zarb and voice

Georges Aperghis – **Happy End** (2007) [56'] for ensemble, video and electronics West Coast Premiere

Talea Ensemble

Barry Crawford, flute
Rane Moore, clarinet
Marianne Gythfeldt, clarinet
Oren Fader, electric guitar
Alex Lipowski, percussion
Matthew Gold, percussion
Jonathan Hepfer, percussion
Steven Beck, synthesizer
Stephen Gosling, synthesizer
Yuki Numata Resnick, violin
Erik Carlson, violin
John Popham, cello
Hannah Collins, cello
Greg Chudzik, bass

James Baker, conductor
David Adamcyk, electronics



This concert is made possible by the generous support of the FACE Contemporary Music Fund, a program of FACE with major support from the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, SACEM, Institut français, and the Florence Gould Foundation.

PROGRAM NOTES by Paul Griffiths

Introduction

Our minds must be constantly asking what's going on; then we are all ears. (Georges Aperghis)

Born in Athens in 1945, to parents who were both visual artists, Aperghis moved to Paris when he was seventeen, and was greatly stimulated by the city's avantgarde musical life: Boulez's Domaine Musical concerts, the radio's electronic music studio, his compatriot Xenakis. In his mid-twenties, self-taught, he began to establish himself as a composer, particularly with works having some theatrical component and an edge of comedy or satire. He probably learned as much from Samuel Beckett as from Mauricio Kagel, György Ligeti, and Luciano Berio.

Over the next decade or so he proved his range, from full-length operas (an adaptation of Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste*, 1974) to solo pieces, including the percussion piece on this evening's program, *Le Corps à corps* (1979). His *Récitations* for solo soprano (1978), humorous-mysterious-scary exposures of different kinds of vocal behavior, remain his best known and most widely performed compositions.

His output is, however, by now vast, and includes a great many solo instrumental and ensemble pieces that are not theatrical, though most have a dose of the ironic, the interrogatory, or the crazy. The only thing absent from his catalogue is the orchestra.

Jean-Baptiste Mathieu (b. 1962) – La Tête

This short film, dating from 1993, features its director's head in haunting jostle with Aperghis's vocalization. Jean-Baptiste Mathieu, most of whose films have been documentaries, was to work with the composer again as assistant director on *Storm Beneath a Skull* (2006, available on DVD), a realization of Aperghis's retelling of the Charles Perrault story of Little Red Riding-Hood, scored for children and six instrumentalists.

Georges Aperghis (b. 1945) – Le Corps à corps

Jonathan Hepfer writes:

"In the simplest terms, Aperghis' *Le Corps à corps* can be described as a schizophrenic melodrama in which the percussionist recounts, in French, the events of an intense race, including details about the participants' wounds, heroic leaps, clouds of dust flying, and spectators erupting in cheer:

"Avant dix heures, autour du cadavre, ils étaient déjà répartis tout le long de la course, des deux côtés, au corps à corps. Les seules actions visibles avaient lieu à la ligne Départ-Arrivée, où de temps à autre un chariot surgissait – saisissant le casque étincelant, faisant un bond, se blessant au bras – à toute blinde du nuage de poussière, et descendait en titubant de sa meule, que l'équipe d'entretien s'empressait d'emplier d'essence et de relancer sur la piste, avec un motard tout frais dessus. De sa blessure fraîche, à son bras le sang coule. D'immenses cris s'élèvent.

"[Before ten o'clock, around the body, they were already dispersed all along the track, on both sides, packed shoulder to shoulder. The only visible actions occurred at the finish line, from which from time to time a chariot emerged – seizing the shining helmet, leaping up, injuring his arm – blasting out of the cloud of dust, and staggering down from his motorcycle, which the maintenance team rushed to refuel and launch back onto the track, with a brand new rider on it. From the fresh wound on his arm the blood flows. Immense cries arise.]

"However, in my opinion, to state that *Le Corps à corps* is simply the narration of a race does not really do it justice. The title of the piece is literally translated as 'the body to body,' but perhaps it could be deciphered less elegantly as 'the struggle of two elements,' or 'the battle.' Aperghis's text is not actually about a race, but rather about the psychological state of someone involved in a race, or perhaps being chased; there is no coherent narrative, but rather, a series of poetic images linked to the intensity of physical competition (at some points archaic and others futuristic) at the limits of physical exhaustion. I find the text to evoke a dream, complete with imagery both vivid and disorienting, from which one would wake up sweating, out of breath, with heart pounding."

Georges Aperghis – Happy End

Composed in 2007, this was Aperghis's second encounter with a fairytale by Charles Perrault, this time the story of Petit Poucet, or Little Thumb. In Perrault's tale, the diminutive hero saves his brothers from one misadventure after another, once they have all been left to their own devices by their impoverished parents. First off, he leaves a trail of white stones so that they can find their way back home. Second time, he uses breadcrumbs, with less success, as these get eaten by birds. Aperghis's music, scored for an ensemble comprising bass flute, two clarinets, three percussionists, two electronic keyboards, and strings, is jittery with its own tracks and trails – paths that sometimes coincide with the story as told and illustrated in the animated film created for the piece by the Belgian artist Hans Op de Beeck, and sometimes do not.

"The disappearance of traces," the composer has written, "alteration of memory, reference points lost in the course of unprecedented mixes, codes changed to become unrecognizable, notes crumbling into dust, melodic chains dispersed, words void of meaning, the amnesia and the anxiety that result, efforts to remember, to retrieve some meaning, some direction, the fear of being forever alone, in the midst of crowds, of gigantic cities...the effort to rediscover what once was meant by 'music,' 'word,' 'everyday gestures'."

Program notes © Paul Griffiths. Paul Griffiths is an acclaimed writer on contemporary and classical music whose books include *A Concise History of Western Music* and *The Penguin Companion to Classical Music*. He is also known as a librettist (Elliott Carter's *What Next?*) and novelist. In 2002, Griffiths was honored by the French government as a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

TEXT of "HAPPY END"

From *Little Thumb*, a fairy tale by Charles Perrault

Once upon a time, there lived a woodcutter and his wife. They had seven children, all boys. They were very poor, and their seven children were burdens on them, since none of them could make a living on his own yet. It worried them further that their youngest was very delicate and didn't speak. He was very small; he had been born the size of a thumb, and so they called him Little Thumb.

This poor child was the scapegoat of the household, and he was blamed for everything. Still, he was the sharpest and the wisest of all the brothers, and while he didn't speak much, he listened to everything.

There came a very difficult year, and there was such a famine, that these poor people resolved to abandon their children. One night, while the children were in bed, and the woodcutter was warming himself by the hearth with his wife, he said to her, his heart tight with pain: "You well know that we cannot feed our children; I can't stand to watch them perish of hunger before my eyes, and I have decided to lead them into the woods tomorrow, where they will get lost." "Ah!", cried his wife. "Do you think you would be capable of abandoning your children so?" However, after considering the pain it would bring her to watch them perish of hunger, she consented, and went to bed in tears. Little Thumb had heard the whole conversation, since he had heard them discussing some affairs and had snuck out to listen to them, out of sight.

He went back to bed, but didn't sleep a wink the rest of the night. He rose early, and went to the stream, where he filled his pockets with little white stones, and then returned home.

They went off, but Little Thumb divulged nothing of what he knew to his brothers. They went into a deep woods, where they could hardly see each other from ten paces away. The woodcutter began cutting wood and his children to gather kindling to make bundles. The Mother and Father, seeing them busy at work, distanced themselves from the children bit by bit, then fled suddenly through a small back trail. When the children discovered they were alone, they started crying and wailing with all their might. Little Thumb let them shriek, knowing full well the path home, since he had left along the way the little white stones he had collected in his pockets.

"Fear not, my brothers; my Father and Mother have abandoned us here, but I will bring you safely home, just follow me." They followed him, and he led them all the way to their house by the same path they had taken to enter the forest. At first, they did not dare enter, but pressed their ears to the door to hear what their Father and Mother were saying.

At the same moment as the woodcutter and his wife arrived home, the village lord sent them ten coins he had owed them for a long time, and for which they had abandoned all hope. This gave them renewed life, since these people were dying of hunger. The woodcutter's wife said: "Alas! Where are our poor children now? You were the one who wanted to abandon them; I told you we would regret it. What are they doing now in the forest? Perhaps the wolves have already devoured them! Alas, where are my children, my poor children?" The children, who had been huddled at the door and overheard her, cried out in a single voice: "Here we are! Here we are!" She ran to the door and embraced them, saying: "How relieved I am to see you again, my dear children! You are here, and you are hungry." They sat down to supper, and ate with an appetite that pleased their Mother and Father, to whom they recounted the fear they had had in the forest, speaking all at the same time. These good people were thrilled to have their children back, and this joy lasted as long as their ten coins.

But as soon as the money was spent, they fell back into their initial despair, and decided once again to abandon their children; this time, they would lead them further astray.

They were unable to speak about it without being overheard by Little Thumb, who resolved to save himself and his brothers as he had already done; but even though he had risen early to go collect the little stones, he could not execute his plan, since he found the house door locked from the inside. He did not know what to do, but when his Mother gave them each a piece of bread at breakfast, he resolved to use his bread, by leaving little crumbs along the way. The Father and Mother led the children into the darkest and deepest part of the forest, and as soon as they arrived there, ran quickly away, leaving them there.

Little Thumb was not worried, confident he would be able to find his way home using the crumbs he had left along the path; but he was unpleasantly surprised when he could not find even one crumb! The birds had come and eaten them all up! The children became distressed, since the more they walked, the further off the path they went. Night came, and a great wind came over them, giving them a terrible fright. They thought they could hear nothing but the howling of wolves, coming to devour them.

They dared not speak nor move. A heavy rain started falling, chilling them to the bone; they slipped at every step and fell in the mud.

Little Thumb climbed atop a tall tree to see if he could discover something; having turned his head every which way, he did see a small glow like a candle, still very far away in the forest. He came down from the tree, and once he was on the ground, lost sight of the glow; this saddened him. Still, walking with his brothers in the direction of the light he had seen, he finally saw it again when leaving the woods. They arrived at long last at the house where this candle was burning, after many terrible frights. They knocked loudly at the door, and a gentle woman came to open for them. She asked what they wanted; Little Thumb told her they were poor children lost in the forest, and that they were asking her charitable permission to stay the night. The woman, seeing them all so sweet, began to weep and said: "Alas! My poor children, what have you done? Do you know this is the house of an Ogre who eats small children?" "Oh, Madam," responded Little Thumb, trembling with

As they were starting to warm themselves, they heard – ah! – the Ogre coming home. Immediately his wife had them hide under the bed and went to open the door. The Ogre's gaze darted right and left, looking at his wife with suspicion – "I smell fresh flesh." Upon uttering these words, he made straight for the bed. "You think you can trick me, cursed woman!"

He pulled them from under the bed, one by one. These poor children knelt before him, begging for mercy; but they were facing the most cruel of all Ogres, who far from being capable of pity, was already devouring them with his gaze, telling his wife these would be delectable nuggets once she had cooked up a good sauce. He had already snatched one up, when his wife cried out: "What do you want from them at this hour? Wouldn't you have more time tomorrow morning?" "You are right," replied the Ogre. "Give them a big supper, so they don't get skinnier, and get them to bed." He drank a dozen times more than usual, which went to his head a bit, and made him groggy.

The Ogre had seven daughters, who were still no more than children. These little ogresses were all very rosy, since they ate fresh flesh like their father; but they had small grey and round eyes, hooked noses and big mouths with very sharp teeth, set far apart from one another. They were not quite mean yet, but showed promise, already biting small children to suck their blood. They had been put to bed early, and were all seven in one big bed, with a gold crown atop each of their heads.

In the same room, there was another bed about the same size; it was in this bed that the Ogre's wife tucked in the seven little boys, after which she went to bed next to her husband.

Little Thumb, who had noticed that the Ogre's daughters had gold crowns atop their heads, and who was nervous that the Ogre would regret not having devoured them that night, rose in the middle of the night; taking his brothers' bonnets and his own, he snuck over and put them on the heads of the Ogre's seven daughters, after having removed their gold crowns. He put the crowns on his brothers' heads and on his own, so that the Ogre would mistake them for his daughters and his daughters for the little boys he wanted to slaughter.

The trick was as successful as he had planned: the Ogre, his big knife in hand, approached the bed where the boys were all sleeping, all but Little Thumb, of course, who had a real fright when he felt the Ogre's hand pat his head, as he had patted his brothers' heads. The Ogre, feeling the gold crowns, exclaimed: "Really, I was about to make a big mistake! I see that's I really did drink too much last night." He then turned to his daughters' bed, where he felt the boys' bonnets. "Ah, here they are, our little fellows! Let's get to work!" Upon uttering these words he cut the throats of his seven daughters. Quite pleased with himself, he went to back to bed aside his wife.

As soon as Little Thumb heard the Ogre snoring, he woke his brothers, and told them to get dressed quickly and to follow him. They went quietly out to the garden, and jumped the fence. They ran and ran all night, trembling all the while and not knowing where they were going.

The morning come, the Ogre went upstairs, where he was quite surprised to find his seven daughters slaughtered, swimming in their own blood. "Ah! What have I done?," he wailed. "Ah! They will pay, the wretches! Give me my walking boots, so I can go catch them."

He went out chasing after them, and after having run quite far in all directions, he finally arrived at the path upon which were walking these poor children, who were not a hundred paces from their Father's house. They saw the Ogre climbing from mountain to mountain, fording rivers as easily as he would have a tiny stream.

The Ogre, exhausted, stumbled and fell asleep, snoring frightfully. Little Thumb told his brothers to run away immediately. They followed his advice and soon arrived back home.

Little Thumb, who had stayed behind, approached the Ogre and softly pulled off his boots, donning them himself. He went straight to the Ogre's house, where he found his wife weeping over her slaughtered daughters.

"Your husband is in great danger," Little Thumb told her. "He has been kidnapped by a band of thieves. At the moment they had their knife on his throat, he saw me and asked me to tell you to give me everything and anything of value, since otherwise they would kill him without mercy." The gentle woman, frightened out of her wits, immediately gave him all he had, since the Ogre was a good husband, even though he ate small children. Little Thumb, now the proud owner of all the Ogre's riches, returned to his Father's home, where he was greeted with great joy.

Once upon a time...

(Translation by Alice Teyssier)

BIOGRAPHIES

Conductor **James Baker** is Principal Percussionist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Music Director and conductor of the Composers Conference at Wellesley College, and Director of the Percussion Ensemble at the Mannes College of Music. He is Guest Conductor of the Slee Sinfonietta at the Institute for 21st Century Music in Buffalo and the principal conductor of the Talea Ensemble. He has led concerts across North America, Europe, and Asia at festivals including the Beijing Modern Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, U.S. Library of Congress, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Wien Modern, and the TRANSIT Festival. He has collaborated with composers on hundreds of world and American premieres including John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Earl Brown, Charles Wuorinen, Mario Davidovsky, Hans Werner Henze, Roger Reynolds, Hans Abrahamsen, Milton Babbitt, Donald Martino, Elliott Carter, Stefano Gervasoni, David Felder, George Crumb, Beat Furrer, Olga Neuwirth, and Georges Aperghis. An active composer of electroacoustic music, Mr. Baker has won a Bessie award for composition for dance. He has written extensively for the theater and for various ensembles with electronics and has written a number of pieces for long time collaborator, choreographer Tere O'Connor. Recent commissions include the Opera Ballet de Lyon, BAM Next Wave, The Dublin Dance Festival, and the Abbey Theater in Dublin.

Jonathan Hepfer (b. 1983) is a percussionist, conductor, and concert curator specializing in avant-garde and experimental music. He began playing classical music at age 17 after discovering the work of John Cage while studying at SUNY Buffalo. Subsequently, Jonathan attended Oberlin Conservatory, UC – San Diego and the Musikhochschule Freiburg (with the support of a two-year DAAD fellowship), where he studied with Michael Rosen (craft), Steven Schick (interpretation) and Bernhard Wulff (metaphysics), respectively. Other major influences have included Jan Williams (aesthetics), Lewis Nielson (ethics), Brian Alegant (analysis), and William O'Brien (philosophy).

Jonathan is the artistic director of Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles, on which he performs regularly. There, he has taken part in the US premieres of major works by Salvatore Sciarrino, Gérard Grisey, György Kurtág, Rolf Riehm, Jo Kondo, Aldo Clementi, Klaus Lang, Ramon Lazkano, Francisco Guerrero, Thomas Meadowcroft and Simon Steen-Andersen.

Jonathan has collaborated as a soloist, chamber musician and conductor with ensembles such as Echoi, red fish blue fish, Ensemble Mosaik, Ensemble SurPlus, asamisimasa, hand werk, the Formalist Quartet, PALIMPSEST, the Slee Sinfonietta, ICE, WildUp, Talea and Signal. As a soloist, Jonathan has focused extensively on the works of the composers Pierluigi Billone, Walter Zimmermann, Iannis Xenakis, Brian Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, Giacinto Scelsi, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Georges Aperghis and Vinko Globokar. He has given solo performances at the Stone in New York, Harvard University, the Tonhalle Düsseldorf (Germany), the Odessa Philharmonic Theater (Ukraine), and the National History Museum in Ulan Bator (Mongolia).

Jonathan has participated in academic residencies at Harvard, Oberlin, SUNY Buffalo, and the universities of Minnesota, Huddersfield and Leeds. He has contributed articles to *Percussive Notes* and *Die Musik von Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf*. Jonathan has also had the privilege of documenting the oral histories of the first generation of eminent European percussion soloists (namely, Christoph Caskel, Sylvio Gualda, Jean-Pierre Drouet, Gaston Sylvestre, Maurizio Ben-Omar). In Fall of 2015, he joined the faculty of CalArts. In the fall of 2016, he completed his doctorate at UC - San Diego.

The **Talea Ensemble** has been labeled "...a crucial part of the New York cultural ecosphere" by the New York Times. Recipient of the 2014 CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, the ensemble has given many important world and US premieres of new works by composers including Pierre Boulez, Georges Aperghis, Olga Neuwirth, John Zorn, Unsuik Chin, Brian Ferneyhough, Beat Furrer, and Pierluigi Billone. Talea has performed at Lincoln Center Festival, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Warsaw Autumn, Wien Modern, Contempuls, Newport Jazz Festival, Royaumont (France), and Art Summit Indonesia (Jakarta). Radio broadcasts of performances have been heard on ORF (Austria), HRF (Germany), and WQXR's Q2. As an active collaborator of new music Talea has joined forces with the Austrian Cultural Forum, Consulate General of Denmark, Korean Cultural Service NY, Italian Cultural Institute, and the Ukrainian Institute. Assuming an ongoing role in supporting and collaborating with student composers, Talea is currently ensemble in residence at Columbia University and has been a guest ensemble at Harvard University, Stanford University, Ithaca College, Cornell University and New York University. Talea has recorded works on the Living Artists Label, Gravina Musica, Tzadik, Innova, Wergo, and New World Records. Upcoming performances include the Time of Music (Viitasaari, Finland) and Time Spans (New York City) festivals. For more information, please visit www.taleaensemble.org

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