

John Weinzweig 1913-2006

John Weinzweig (b. Toronto, 1913) studied composition at both the University of Toronto and the Eastman School of music in Rochester, New York. At Eastman, Weinzweig worked with Howard Hanson and was exposed to serialism. Upon his return to Canada, the young composer worked at the CBC and National Film Board, composing incidental music for radio and film. In 1951, Weinzweig, along with a consortium of Canadian composers, formed the Canadian League of Composers, an advocacy organization which strove to promote the performance, recording, and publication of Canadian music. During the following year, Weinzweig began teaching at the University of Toronto where his pedagogy shaped generations of Canadian composers. In the period between 1952 and the mid-1970s, Weinzweig worked as a fervent advocate for music in Canada. During this time he served as the president of the CLC twice, fought for the founding of the Canadian Music Centre, and served as the president of CAPAC. From the late 1970s until his death in 2006, Weinzweig returned to an exploration of concert music, chamber works, and vocal/dramatic genres. He completed his series of 12 Divertimenti for chamber groups and solo instruments in 1988.

Throughout his life, Weinzweig has been awarded the Order of Canada (1974), the Canada Council Medal (1978), President Emeritus of the CLC (1981), the Molson Prize (1981), The Roy Thomson Hall Award (1991), the Toronto Arts Award for Music (1998), and in 2004 at the age of 91, the SOCAN life achievement award. He is remembered as a great composer and pedagogue and a staunch advocate for Canadian music.