

Hallucination Building

**CANADIAN COMPOSER
CHRISTOS HATZIS' *MIRAGE?*
PREMIÈRES IN EDMONTON
WITH A BANG — SEVERAL OF
THEM, IN FACT**

DAME EVELYN GLENNIE

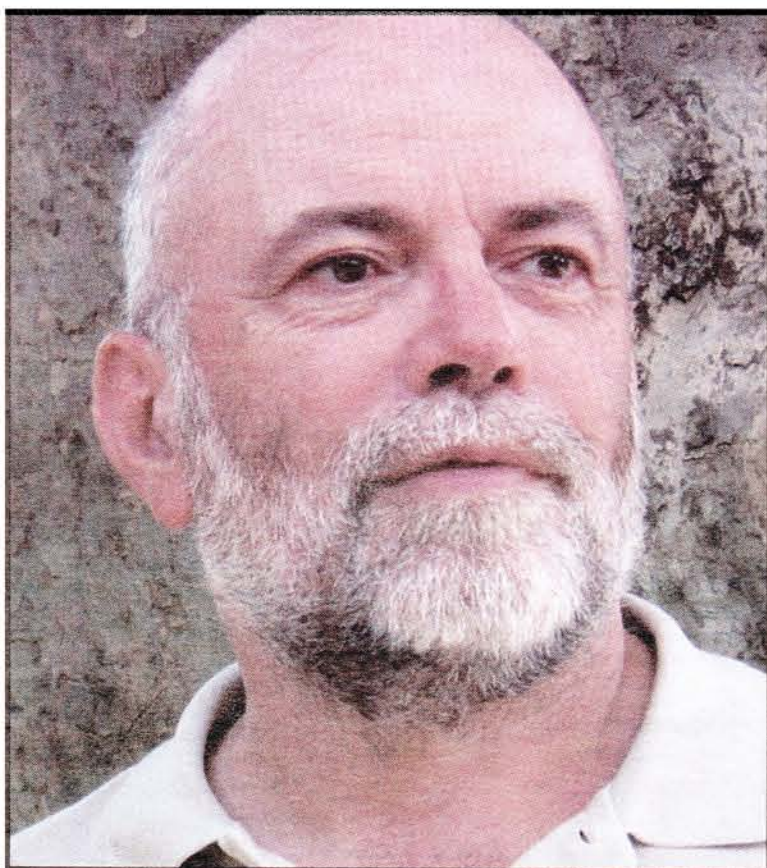
w/ The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. Presented by the Edmonton Chamber Music Society. Featuring works by Vivaldi, Evangelista, Duddell, Hatzis, Shostakovich. Convocation Hall (University of Alberta). Sun, Sep 20 (4pm). Tickets: \$10-\$30.

"A modern Canadian composer attends the première of a work to hear its last performance."

This bon mot by the distinguished Calgary musician Quenten Doolittle has become proverbial. Yet there are exceptions to the rule — and Toronto's Christos Hatzis is one of them. To say that Hatzis is a successful composer would be a grave understatement. The "contemporary Canadian master," as *The New Yorker* described him, was born in Greece, spent some years in the U.S. where he received his academic training, and then became Canadian by choice.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Hatzis has slowly but surely built a tremendous career. With a string of recordings on EMI, Sony, Naxos, CBC Records and other first-rate labels, often successfully competing in sales with pop albums, his presence on the international classical stage is now comparable to that of Philip Glass, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Arvo Pärt, Krzysztof Penderecki, or Steve Reich. The man already is a Canadian icon and an international cultural institution.

Despite his success, the composer oozes modesty and restraint. "I call myself an imitator," he is quick to



Use Your Illusion | You're not dreaming: Edmonton audiences will be the first ones to hear Christos Hatzis' new composition *Mirage?* PHOTO SUPPLIED

confess, "but not in the conventional sense of the word. When I say I'm an imitator, I refer to Him who guides me and maps out creative decisions for me.... As a musician and a human being, I feel that I must follow my conductor's cue. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but what I think much art lacks most these days is spirituality."

Spirituality permeates practically every one of Hatzis' compositions, including his groundbreaking multimedia masterpiece, Constantinople, for which he received a Juno. The newest one, *Mirage?* for percussion and chamber orchestra, which has its Edmonton première on Sept. 20,

follows the same path. Hatzis explains its origins:

"The piece, a percussion concerto, was commissioned by CBC for the Scottish virtuosa Dame Evelyn Glennie — also known in the pop world for her collaborations with Björk and Bobby McFerrin — and the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra led by the truly fantastic Anne Manson, for their Western Canadian tour, which is now in progress. The music deals with the modern societies' blatantly materialistic obsessions and temptations. I see a connection between the years preceding the present crisis and the 'Roaring '20s' leading to Black Tuesday [Oct. 29, 1929] and the subsequent Great Depression. It is a sad piece, perhaps even a cry of despair, but for the modern world to survive, it is imperative to turn away from the seductive mirages of the exorbitant lifestyle."

Maestra Anne Manson speaks about Hatzis in almost poetic terms. "His sounds breathe space," she says. "The opening build-up, with more and more light let in, is enchanting. At times, the music feels incredibly free, perhaps because it is so imbued with jazz. The piece is marvelous, and rarely have I seen a modern composition so successful with audiences. It is a veritable tour de force!"

Hatzis means business. He's currently hard at work on another big project which promises to cause a stir — a chamber opera centring on the last days of another Canadian legend, the 19th-century First Nations poet and writer Pauline Johnson. His co-writer? Some unknown author named Margaret Atwood.