



Ottawa
Symphony
Orchestra



Night on Bald Mountain



Mélanie Léonard,
conductor

Featuring Matthew Larkin, organ

October

29

3:30 PM

2023-2024 Season

ottawasymphony.com/upcoming-events/231029

Welcome

Dear friends of the OSO,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Ottawa Symphony Orchestra concert season.

Our opening concert will take you on a journey through themes of legends, witches, rituals and the underworld.

Our concert begins with the thunderous, Bach-like, gothic opening of Poulenc's *Organ Concerto*, which leads us through a playful and quirky fast movement, a lyrical lamenting tune, and four alternating quick and slow sections with touches of Stravinsky-like ostinato. A wonderful moment is the beautiful viola solo, encircled by organ and timpani, near the end of the work.

Next is *Night on Bald Mountain* composed by Mussorgsky and arranged by Rimsky-Korsakov. The work is inspired by Russian literary works and legend. Mussorgsky composed a "musical picture" of St. John's Eve on Bald Mountain featuring a Witches' Sabbath. Immediately

recognizable to anyone who has watched Disney's *Fantasia*, this driven and demonic work evokes the pagan festivities involving fire, water, and fertility rituals as well as the gathering of witches and spirits. The ending brings resolution at the break of dawn as we hear church bells disperse the demons and spirits.

Next, Wagner's *Eine Faust Overture* is a wonderful picture of the restlessness of the soul, its aspirations, and its struggles with destiny. Based on the first part of Goethe's *Faust*, Wagner composed this overture to represent Faust as he aspires to learn everything that can be known.

We conclude our concert with Hétu's *Légendes*. The composition consists of three movements, each inspired by a Quebec legend. One of the movements "Alexis le Trotteur" follows the legendary character from the Saguenay region known for his racing exploits. According to legend, he could run faster than any horse, car or train! The music is energetic and lively and several easily recognizable Quebec folk themes can be heard.

Erica Miller, Concertmaster

Program

ORGAN CONCERTO, OP.36

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

INTERMISSION

NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) arr. Rimsky-Korsakov

EINE FAUST-OUVERTÛRE, WWV 59

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

LÉGENDES, OP.76

1. Alexis le trotteur
2. Le diable au bal
3. La chasse-galerie

Jacques Hétu (1938-2010)

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and expert advice.



Musicians

VIOLIN 1 Erica Miller, Concertmaster
Galina Rezaeipour
Ellen Allers
Sara Gobel*
Alana Gralen
Bennett Van Barr*
Gabriella Nowicki*
Solange Tremblay
Natalie Deschesnes
Erika Castillo
Justin Azerrad-Kendall*

* Associate (student) members



Musicians

VIOLIN 2 Sarah Williams, Principal Second
Violin (*William Robson Chair*)
Carolyn Ho
Brigitte Amyot
George Stathopoulos
Micheline Kinsella
Aaron MacFarlane
Cathy Beehan
Alla Perevalova

VIOLA Emily Kistemaker, Principal Viola
Ryan Vis*
Gunnar Foerstel
Syara Robert*
Sarah Als*
Emma Dunbar*

* Associate (student) members

Musicians

CELLO Thaddeus Morden, Principal Cello
(David R. Gardner Chair)
Alonso Flores* *(David Wright Chair)*
Jean-Francois Marquis
Abigail Greenland*
Aidan Fleet
Erin Pickering

DOUBLE BASS Patrick Bigelow, Principal Bass
(Ed Hounsell Chair)
Peter Kilpatrick
Andrew Roberts
Mark Trecarten

FLUTE Jeffrey Miller, Principal Flute
Lara Deutsch
Pascale Margely

OBOE Susan Butler, Principal Oboe
Frédéric Hodgson

* Associate (student) members

Musicians

CLARINET Shauna Barker, Principal Clarinet
Ludovik Lesage-Hinse

BASSOON Ben Glossop, Principal Bassoon
Orlando Corabian
Gordon Slater

FRENCH HORN Nigel Bell, Principal Horn
(Maurice Haycock Chair)
Jennifer MacDonald
Cresta deGraaff
Michel Levasseur

TRUMPET Travis Mandel, Principal Trumpet
Malcolm Horava

TROMBONE Léonard Pineault-Deault,
Principal Trombone
Nicolas Blanchette
Leonard Ferguson

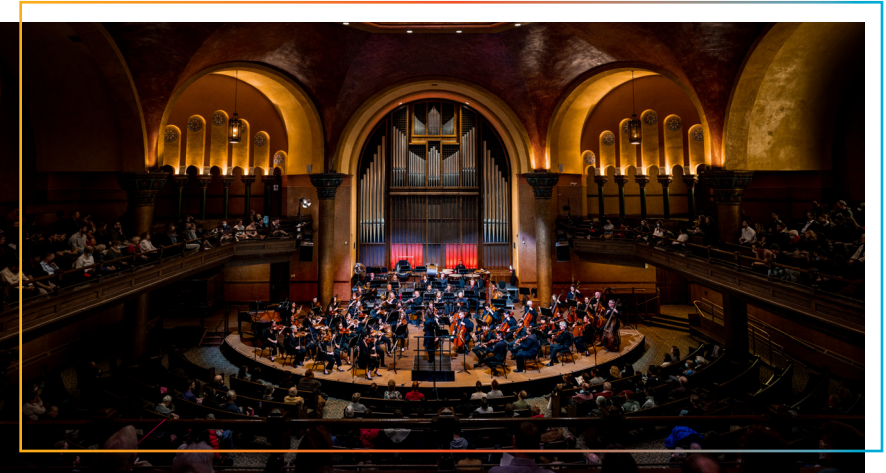
Musicians

TUBA Martin Labrosse, Principal Tuba

HARP Caroline Leonardelli, Principal Harp

TIMPANI Dominique Moreau, Principal
Timpani

PERCUSSION Andrew Harris, Principal Percussion
Nathaniel Mears
Jackson Kelly



Conductor

Mélanie Léonard

Born in Montreal, Melanie Leonard is the Music Director of Symphony New Brunswick. She was resident and associate conductor at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director at the Sudbury Symphony Orchestra.

As guest conductor, she worked with many institutions such as the Montreal Jazz Festival, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Métropolitain and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, as well as the symphony orchestras in Edmonton, Regina, Victoria, Winnipeg and Nova Scotia.



Conductor

On recordings, Ms. Leonard worked on soundtracks for AURA at the Montreal Notre-Dame Basilica, *Paradise City* in South Korea, for Cirque du Soleil's *Land of Fantasy*.

In 2023-2024, Ms. Leonard will return to the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, Les Violons du Roy, Symphony Nova Scotia and Victoria Symphony and Orchestre Symphonique de Sherbrooke. She will also be making her debut with Newfoundland Symphony and Orchestre Symphonique de Laval.

Ms. Leonard was the first woman to complete a doctorate in orchestra conducting from the University of Montreal. In 2012, she received the Canada Council for the Arts Jean-Marie Baudet award for orchestral conducting.

Soloist

Matthew Larkin, organ

Organist, conductor, composer, and educator Matthew Larkin has been at the forefront of concert, liturgical, and ensemble choral and keyboard performance in Canada for thirty years.



He received his early musical training as a cathedral chorister, and undertook advanced studies at the University of Toronto (as Organ Scholar of Trinity College), and the Royal College of Music. He has since served in a leadership role in the music of several prominent Canadian churches, including St. James Cathedral (Toronto) and Christ Church Cathedral (Ottawa).

Soloist

Matthew has served as Music Director of the Ottawa Choral Society, Canada's most historic philharmonic choir, and he founded Ottawa's Caelis Academy Ensemble in 2017, who now stands among Canada's finest chamber choirs. As organist, pianist, and collaborator, he has performed throughout North America, Europe, and China, and as soloist with several of Canada's orchestras including that of the National Arts Centre, the Toronto Symphony, and the Vancouver Symphony. His discography is extensive, and he is both a Naxos and ATMA recording artist.

Currently, Matthew serves as Custodian of Music at Ottawa's St. Andrew's Church, is Resident Conductor of New Opera Lyra, and keeps a very full diary of concert events. Matthew is thrilled to appear in concert with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra.

Program Notes

by David Gardner

Dr. David Gardner B.Sc. Ph.D is one of the first members of the OSO joining in 1967. He was Principal cellist for 37 years, and was also President of the OSO Board for a decade. He is the author of four books on classical music, and a generous OSO donor.

Francis Poulenc (France 1899-1963)

Concerto for organ, strings and timpani

Poulenc had a natural melodic gift, an attribute that earned him favourable comparison with Schubert, for his output was dominated by close to 150 art songs

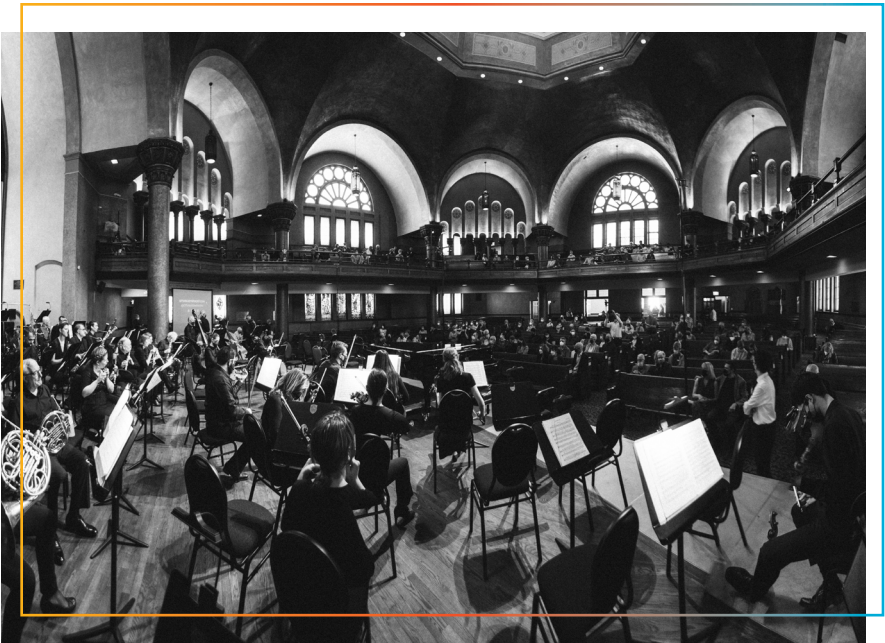


(*mélodies*). Poulenc regarded himself as a self-taught composer who considered it safer, by and large, to steer clear of the more traditional formal musical structures. He felt more at ease for music for the ballet (for instance, *les biches*) for which his abundant gallic wit and humour stood him in excellent stead with *Mélodies*, or, perhaps more unexpectedly (given his alignment with the tongue-and-cheek irreverence of *Les Six*) with music for the church, which mined a deeper, more serious vein in his character. All of this makes an organ concerto an unlikely venture for a composer of such particular gifts. Yet, in 1938 he accepted a commission from the Princesse Edmond de Polignac (the American sewing machine heiress, Winnaretta Singer) to write such a work.

Conceived in a quasi-baroque idiom, it is a one movement work in seven continuous sections in the style of a Buxtehude Fantasia. Yet it is unmistakably French, not least from the choice of organ stops (for which Poulenc received help with the registration from his friend, the great French organist Maurice Duruflé). Also pitting the strings and timpani against the organ without any interference from brass or woodwind is a master stroke and gives the work its very special sound texture.

The Organ Concerto is full of dramatic contrasts of mood and style. The introduction with its majestic *fortissimo* chords from the solo organ and its marvelously jarring harmonic twists is only the first such example. The slow sections reflect his melodic gifts, while the faster ones have such a sufficiency of changing rhythms that eager toe-tappers are constantly thwarted, and 'well-tempered' ears are wickedly tweaked by mischievous injections of polytonality.

All together an out-and-out winner.



Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (Russia 1839-1881)

Night on Bald Mountain

Mussorgsky - a member of that extraordinary group of 'amateur' Russian composers based in St. Petersburg, "the Mighty Handful" - was always susceptible to exotic themes. He had been mesmerized by Gogol's *St. John's Eve* as early as 1858, and had toyed with the notion of turning it into an opera. But then he became interested in Mengden's drama *The Witch*. By 1860 he had composed an act on Bald Mountain - a witch's sabbath, separate episodes of wizards, and a triumphal march



of all these nasties. The completed score was called *St. John's Night on Bald Mountain* and included: Assembly of the witches, their chatter and gossip; Satan's journey; Black Mass; and Sabbath. The music was certainly diabolical - and harmonically so wayward that Mussorgsky's mentor, Balakirev, was intensely critical of it. Mussorgsky withdrew the score and it was not performed during his lifetime. However, in 1886, Rimsky-Korsakov, on reviewing the manuscript, thought it far too good to waste. He re-orchestrated, re-arranged, and re-harmonized the score into the 'masterpiece' that swept it into the canon of orchestral favourites. It doesn't bear too much resemblance to Mussorgsky's original, but at least Rimsky-Korsakov "put it on the map".

Richard Wagner (Germany 1813-1883)

A Faust Overture

1840 was the period in Wagner's life when less ambitious men would have accepted defeat.

He was experiencing the duplicity of opera managers, and writing articles for such journals as the *Gazette Musicale* to keep alive. It was during this period that Wagner set about the composition of *A Faust Symphony*. All that he completed, however, was the first movement which he later referred to as an "Overture to the first part of Goethe's *Faust*".



Its beginning has a sinister brooding quality - a quality that persists throughout the work. Wagner himself said that his *Faust Overture*, with all its contrasts, was intended to describe the soul of Faust at the culmination of his weariness of life.



Jacques Hétu (Canada 1938-2010)

Les Légendes

Jacques Hétu was born in Trois-Rivières in 1938. He began his musical studies with Father Jules Martel at the University of Ottawa before studying with Clermont Pépin and Jean Papineau-Couture. He then won the Prix d'Europe in 1961 which sent him to Paris to study with Dutilleux and Messiaen. He returned to Montreal where he taught at Laval and Montreal until his death in 2010.



Every nation needs a good story to hold it altogether. This leaves Canada in a tricky spot given the width and breadth of our land and the variety of people who have come to call Canada their home. But that has never stopped the composer Jacques Hétu who has delighted in the stories associated with Quebec. In *Les Légendes* he has chosen three particularly strong stories. He begins with the tale of Alexis le trotteur, followed by *Le diable au bal* and *La chasse-galerie*. They contain easily recognisable Quebec folk themes. The first movement is about Alexis Lapointe, known as Alexis Trotteur – the legendary character from the Saguenay region known for his racing exploits. According to legend, he could run faster than any horse, car or train. Quite a feat! Hétu's music is right on point - *vigoroso!* The next two movements more or less describe themselves. For the 'flying canoe' (*chasse-galerie*) just think of the indigenous folks flying over whitewater rapids – what a feat that was!

Les Légendes received its première performance by the orchestre symphonique de Quebec in 2008 directed by Yoav Talmi.

And does Hétu ever know how to write for triumphant French Horns!

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