

## **Symphonie fantastique**

**Saturday, October 5 – 8 pm**

**Jean-Marie Zeitouni**, conductor

**Laura Veeze**, violin

**Christine Sokaymoh Frederick**, narrator

Symphony Prelude, 7 pm Upper Circle (Third Level) Lobby with D.T. Baker

### **LOUIE**

***Music for a Celebration***

(5')\*

### **CHAUSSON**

***Poème in E-flat Major, Op.25***

(16')\*

### **ESTACIO**

***I Lost My Talk*** (text by Rita Joe)

(20')\*

**INTERMISSION** (20 minutes)

### **BERLIOZ**

***Symphonie fantastique: Épisode de la vie d'un Artiste, Op.14***

(51')\*

Rêveries, Passions: Largo – Allegro appassionato e assai

Un bal: Allegro non troppo

Scène aux champs: Adagio

Marche au supplice: Allegro non troppo

Songes d'une nuit du Sabbat: Larghetto – Allegro

program subject to change

\*indicates approximate performance duration

***Music for a Celebration***

**Alexina Louie**

(b. Vancouver, 1949)

First performed: January 1986 in London, Ontario

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

Alexina Louie is one of Canada's most highly regarded and most often performed composers. Her desire for self-expression, as well as her explorations of Asian art and philosophy, have contributed to the development of her unique musical voice. Louie's communicative and highly dramatic work pushes the boundaries of convention and tradition. Performed and broadcast internationally, her commissioned works range across all musical genres, including ballet and opera.

Among her many awards and distinctions, she has twice won the JUNO Award for Best Classical Composition. In 2002 Louie received an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary. In addition, she has received the National Arts Centre Composers Award, Jules Léger Prize (chamber music), Chalmer's Award (musical composition), and the Lou Applebaum Award for Excellence in Film Music Composition. In 2002 Alexina Louie was named an Officer of the Order of Canada. Louie has recently been awarded the prestigious 2019 Canada Council Molson Prize in the Arts. The award celebrates outstanding achievement in all the artistic disciplines. In addition, in 2019 presenters in Vancouver, Calgary, and Cork, Ireland have presented concerts devoted entirely to her solo and chamber music compositions. Alexina Louie's extensive catalogue can be found at [alexinalouie.ca](http://alexinalouie.ca)

Of her work *Music for a Celebration*, Ms. Louie writes:

*Music For A Celebration* was commissioned to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Orchestra London's Sinfonia Ensemble. The gala premiere was conducted by its Music Director, Alexis Hauser in January 1986.

A 10th Anniversary of a musical organization is a great achievement and I was happy to have been asked to compose a piece to celebrate this auspicious occasion. The composition is written in AAB form with a coda. Its celebratory opening theme is followed by diminutions of the musical material that are tossed back and forth between the winds and the strings before the return of the opening material. Contrasting recurring cells of rhythmic and thematic musical gestures provide the material for the second section. Orchestral variations extend this second section. A final coda recalls the music from the opening orchestral fanfare with all the players participating in a exuberant close.

### ***Poème for Violin and Orchestra, Op.25***

**Ernest Chausson**

(b. Paris, 1855 / d. Limay, 1899)

First performed: December 27, 1896 in Nancy

Last ESO performance: May 2018

As French music moved on from its obsession with Richard Wagner's new tonal world to the pastel impressionism of Debussy and his contemporaries, it is possible that Ernest Chausson could have had an even more important role to play than he did. Unfortunately, his life was ended too soon; a bicycle accident at the age of 44 silenced an important emerging voice in late 19th century Parisian music. He was in the fortunate position of not needing to make his living via music. The son of a well-to-do family, he got a degree in law while indulging his passion – music – as a sideline. Wagner acolytes Franck and

d'Indy were major mentors for him, and he joined a group of other French musical luminaries which included Saint-Saëns, Debussy, and the violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. It was for the latter that Chausson composed his most famous work, the *Poème for Violin and Orchestra*.

Ysaÿe had originally asked Chausson for a concerto, but it is thought that the composer was at the time taken with a novel by Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), which concerned a doomed love triangle. An early sketch of the work was even subtitled "Le chant de l'amour triomphant" ("The Song of Love Triumphant"), and indeed the layout of the *Poème* is in five sections (like a classical tragedy, perhaps), alternating slow, dreamlike sequences with more animated second and fourth episodes. While a favourite work for violinist's now, Chausson had significant doubts about it, and in fact it was his friend, composer Isaac Albéniz, who paid for the work's publication out of his own pocket.

***I Lost My Talk*** (text by Rita Joe)

**John Estacio**

(b. Newmarket, Ontario, 1966)

First performed: January 14, 2016 in Ottawa

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

John Estacio ranks as one of Canada's most frequently performed composers. His works, both symphonic and operatic, have been praised for their assured command of lyricism, depth of expression and brilliant dynamism. His residencies with the Edmonton Symphony and the Calgary Philharmonic yielded numerous orchestral compositions that have gone on to receive multiple performances.

In 2003, Calgary Opera gave the world premiere of his first opera, *Filumena*, to a libretto by John Murrell. *Filumena* has been filmed for television and was commemorated by Canada Post with its own postage stamp in 2017. His orchestral sound has caught the ear of directors and choreographers; the Cincinnati Ballet commissioned him to write his first full-length ballet score for *King Arthur's Camelot* in 2014 and his score for *The Secret of the Nutcracker* earned him an AMPA Award for best original music for a film in 2008. He has received four JUNO nominations for his recorded music, most recently in 2015 for his *Triple Concerto*. His new *Trumpet Concerto* was commissioned by an unprecedented consortium of nineteen Canadian orchestras and performed across Canada in the 2017/18/19 seasons.

In 2009, Estacio was one of three composers to receive the National Arts Centre Award for Canadian Composers. The award involved three commissioned works to be written for the Orchestra, beginning with *Brio* (2011), continuing with the *Sinfonietta for Woodwind Quintet* (2014), and concluding with the work we hear tonight, *I Lost My Talk*.

Program note by the composer:

In fifteen lines of poetry, Rita Joe's poem *I Lost My Talk* captures the discombobulating fear of being forced to leave one's culture. Just as the poem is divided into four stanzas, the composition is divided

into four uninterrupted movements. A bucolic flute solo captures the halcyon days prior to the narrator's life at Shubenacadie residential school. Strings play a hymn that suddenly transforms into a harsh musical environment; the flute melody is now fractured and lost within a foreign tonal soundscape. Throughout the second movement, as shattered musical themes recover, the percussion and lower brass frequently interrupt, forcing the melody to regroup and move forward into an atmosphere that becomes relentlessly oppressive. With the words "*you snatched it away*", an aggressive third movement begins; the solo flute returns, swept up in frantic momentum. A percussion solo ushers the return of the hymn, now fractured and distorted. With the text "*two ways I talk*", the hymn is played in two different keys simultaneously. With "*I offer my hand*", the noble fourth movement begins; here, an anthem for reconciliation soars as the narrator finds the courage to act as an ambassador, bringing peace and understanding to two different cultures as well as her own life.

### ***Symphonie fantastique, Op.14 – Épisode de la vie d'un Artiste***

**Hector Berlioz**

(b. Côte-Saint-André, Isère, 1803 / d. Paris, 1869)

First performed: December 5, 1830 in Paris

Last ESO performance: January 2008

Tied into the creation of the revolutionary *Symphonie fantastique* is both a fanciful and strange story of an imaginary artist and his fervid imagination, and the very personal passions of its creator, Hector Berlioz – and *his* fervid imagination.

Having decided upon a career in music (much to his family's dismay), Hector Berlioz became a determined individualist. Not for him the grand traditions of the past – music was to be his own, intensely personal canvas upon which to expose his artistic soul. Then, in 1827, the Irish actress Harriet Smithson arrived in Paris with a Shakespearean company, and Berlioz was besotted.

He pursued her, sobbed from the balcony at her performances, and made his passion for her quite clear. Understandably, she was frightened to death. But Berlioz' ardour was transformed into something quite remarkable – the *Symphonie fantastique*. While subtitled "Episodes in the Life of an Artist," and with a strange, fictional story appended to its musical framework, the autobiographical nature of the five-movement work was lost on no one.

But divorced from its program, the work is still a brilliant piece of music, and even those who wish to only appreciate the music cannot fail to recognize the brilliant illustrative nature of much of the material. And for the consciously revolutionary Berlioz, there is a surprisingly logical, even traditional structure to the piece. And the most important musical element in the work is the *idée fixe* ("fixed idea") – a theme which recurs through the work, a theme moreover which represents an extra-musical element and, upon its every reappearance, marks a return to that important idea.

The “episodes,” as sketched out by the composer, tell the following story:

Movement 1 – “Dreams, Passions” We meet the artist in an extended slow introduction. We sense an aimlessness until, as the Allegro agitato begins, the *idée fixe* makes its first appearance: he catches sight of “the beloved,” and he is captivated. Repeats of the theme are set to different accompaniments as his obsession for her grows.

Movement 2 – “A Ball” The artist is at a grand party, though he feels on the outside as he watches the dancing and joy of the revellers. Through the crowd, he catches sight once more of the beloved – the musical detachment of the *idée fixe* theme here from the rest of the music of the movement symbolizes his singular attraction, and her elusiveness.

Movement 3 – “Scene in the Country” This is the symphony’s longest movement, as the artist wanders, as if in a fog, through a pastoral scene in which a shepherd calls out (offstage English horn) to his own love as a storm hovers in the background. Eventually, the shepherd’s call goes unanswered.

Movement 4 – “March to the Scaffold” The artist has taken opium, and hallucinates that he has killed his beloved, and a riotous martial theme escorts him to where he will be hung. Just before the trap drops him from the platform, he catches sight of the beloved – the *idée fixe* here is a squawking parody of itself on solo clarinet.

Movement 5 – “Dream of a Sabbath Night” The executed artist is present at an unholy “witches’ sabbath,” and the macabre scene is set by not only even more extreme versions of the *idée fixe*, but by a set of variations on the “Dies irae” (“Day of Wrath”) music from the plainchant *Mass for the Dead*.

As a footnote, it’s worth pointing out that, despite all seeming logic, Berlioz eventually won the heart of Harriet Smithson. They married, and the marriage proved a disaster, with the unfortunate Harriet ending her days in an institution.

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