

CASTLES & WARRIORS: TRANSCENDENT SOUNDS

March 14, 2024 • 7:30 PM

Featuring:

Cosette Justo Valdés, Conductor – *see bio on page 7.*

Roger Admiral, Piano (ESO Debut)

Jacob Kryger, Marimba and Vibraphone

Nora Bumanis, ESO Harp

John Estacio, Host

To read the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra roster, see page 8.

This performance does not include an intermission.

VINCENT HO

Sandman's Castle (2015)

(7')*

MATTHEW RICKETTS

Piano Concerto No. 2 "Méloscuro" (2018) (Canadian premiere)

(15')*

NICOLAS GILBERT

Moment de joie en coupe transversale (2016) (ESO premiere)

(11')*

II – Cycles

III - Vol

KATI AGÓCS

Every Lover Is a Warrior (2006)

(11')*

I - John Riley

II - Love is Come Again

III - When They Take Me for a Soldier

ANA SOKOLOVIĆ

Ringelspiel (2013) (ESO premiere)

(11')*

I - mechanical

II - heavy-footed

III - merry-go-round ballerina

IV - mechanical

V - broken merry-go-round

Program subject to change.

*indicates approximate performance duration

***Sandman's Castle* (2015)**

Vincent Ho

(b. Ottawa, 1975)

First performed: January 17, 2016 in Tobart, Tasmania

This is the first work by Vincent Ho performed at an ESO concert

Vincent Ho is a multi-award winning composer of orchestral, chamber, vocal, and theatre music. His many awards and recognitions have included four Juno Award nominations, Harvard University's Fromm Music Commission, The Canada Council for the Arts' "Robert Fleming Prize," ASCAP's "Morton Gould Young Composer Award," four SOCAN Young Composers Awards, and CBC Radio's Audience Choice Award (2009 Young Composers' Competition).

From 2007 to 2014, Dr. Ho served as the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's composer-in-residence and presented a number of large-scale works that generated much excitement and critical praise. His *Arctic Symphony* has been described "as a beautiful work that evokes the Far North in a very special way" (John Corigliano), and "a mature and atmospheric work that firmly establishes Ho among North American composers of note" (*Winnipeg Free Press*). His percussion concerto, titled *The Shaman*, composed for Dame Evelyn Glennie was hailed as a triumph. His second concerto for Glennie, titled *From Darkness To Light*, was lauded as "a lasting masterpiece of sensitivity and perception" (*Winnipeg Free Press*).

Vincent Ho began his musical training through Canada's Royal Conservatory of Music where he earned his Associate Diploma in Piano Performance. He gained his Bachelor of Music from the University of Calgary, his Master of Music from the University of Toronto, and his Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Southern California. His mentors have included Allan Bell, David Eagle, Christos Hatzis, Walter Buczynski, and Stephen Hartke. In his free time, he enjoys running, reading, traveling, dancing, hiking, playing chess, and learning the keyboard works of Bach, Beethoven, Ravel, and Ligeti (among many others). He is also an enthusiast of old-time radio shows, photography, crime noir, Zen art, jazz, Jimi Hendrix, graphic novels, and Stanley Kubrick films.

His works are published and managed by Promethean Editions Ltd and Theodore Presser Company. (vinceho.com)

Of his work *Sandman's Castle*, Vincent Ho writes:

Sandman's Castle was written for Dame Evelyn Glennie as part of her "50 for 50" project to celebrate her 50th birthday – 50 composers would compose 50 measures of music for a solo percussion instrument. For this project, I chose the tam-tam as my instrument of choice. For years I had been drawn to its sonic beauty and many expressive possibilities. As well, writing for such an instrument allowed me to explore uncharted territories and open up new directions in my creative thinking, most especially the concept of "haptic listening" – where the ears function as organs of touch that feels/traces the surface, texture, and grain of every sound. For me, I view this work as a mystical journey into the world of dreams, ruled by the Sandman, with Ms. Glennie serving as the listener's guide.

Piano Concerto No. 2 “Méloscuro” (2018)

Matthew Ricketts

(b. Victoria, B.C. 1986)

First performed: April 2018 at Eastern Carolina University, North Carolina

This is the first work by Matthew Ricketts performed by the ESO.

Matthew Ricketts is a Canadian composer based in New York City. His music moves from extremes of presence and absence, from clamour to quietude, at once reticent and flamboyant. He is a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow whose works have been performed internationally. Matthew was Composer-Collaborator-In-Residence at East Carolina University from 2016-2018. In 2018, Ricketts' multilingual opera *Chaakapesh: The Trickster's Quest* (written with renowned Cree playwright Tomson Highway) opened the Montréal Symphony's 84th season to great critical acclaim and went on to tour indigenous communities throughout Québec. Upcoming performances include the U.S. premiere of *Unruly Sun*, written with Pulitzer Prize-winning librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell for Grammy Award-winning Karim Sulayman; a new song cycle for Rihab Chaieb with Pulitzer Prize-winning librettist/lyricist Royce Vavrek; and an operatic adaptation of *The Cremation of Sam McGee* (Vancouver Opera).

Matthew is the recipient of the 2016 Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund Prize, the 2016 Jacob Druckman Prize (Aspen Music Festival), the 2016 Mivos/Kanter Prize, the 2015 Salvatore Martirano Memorial Composition Award, a 2013 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award and eight prizes in the SOCAN Foundation's Awards for Young Composers. Active as a writer as well as a composer, Matthew has published articles, reviews, poetry and libretti. He holds degrees in music composition and theory from McGill University's Schulich School of Music (B.Mus. 2009) and Columbia University (DMA 2017). Matthew's principal mentors include Brian Cherney, John Rea, Chris Paul Harman, George Lewis and Fred Lerdahl. He was a Core Lecturer at Columbia University from 2017-2020. (matthewricketts.com)

Of his *Piano Concerto No. 2 “Méloscuro,”* Matthew Ricketts writes:

The technique of chiaroscuro in painting is the use of “light and shadow” for dramatic contrast, as in the great painters of the Dutch Golden Age Rembrandt and Vermeer. My concerto begins as a study of the blurry, smeared and overtone-rich lowest octaves of the piano—a play of musical shadow, or méloscuro, a term I have here invented. The orchestra is gradually introduced, from the lowest registers upward—double basses, contrabassoon, low brass, bass drum and gongs—as a second shadow to the piano's shadows. Later portions of the concerto explore higher registers of the solo instrument but still with a similar interest in resonance, shade and shimmer. I have made use of East Carolina University's unique collection of almglocken—tuned cowbells, first introduced into the orchestra by Mahler—and a wide array of gongs and bells and harp paired with the piano, to “detune” or defocus its pitch clarity. The piece ends with a return to the solo piano, sinking into its familiar lower register before disappearing in a final cloud of soft resonance.

Moment de joie en coupe transversal (2016)

Nicolas Gilbert
(b. 1979)

First performed : May 17, 2016 in Laval

This is the ESO premiere of the piece. The ESO has previously performed his work *Tchal-Kouyrouk et la septième face du cube* (April 2011).

Nicolas Gilbert studied composition and analysis at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal with composers Michel Gonneville and Serge Provost, and at McGill University with composer John Rea.

His catalogue comprises about 40 chamber, vocal, and orchestral works that have been performed in concert series and festivals in Montréal, Toronto, Chicago, Mexico, Lima, Paris, Lyon, London, Milan, Berlin, Amsterdam, Belgrade, Warsaw, Shanghai, and many other cities around the world. He is recipient of numerous grants and awards including the 2008 “Composer of the year” Opus Prize awarded by the Québec Music Council, ten SOCAN Awards for Young Composers, and the Third and Special Prizes in the 2006 Serocki International Competition (Poland). He has also received the Opus Prize for Best Premiere of the year in both 2007 and 2008. His work is regularly supported by the Canada and Québec arts councils.

Performers of his music include the Orchestre Métropolitain, the Montréal Symphony Orchestra, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, the Polish Radio Orchestra, Ars Nova (Poitiers), Kaida (Amsterdam), ICE (Chicago), cellists Matt Haimovitz and Benjamin Carat (Lyon), pianist Stanislaw Widulin (Berlin), clarinetist Thomas Piercy (New-York) and many Canadian contemporary music ensembles (SMCQ, Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, New Music Concerts, Continuum, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Trio Fibonacci, Bozzini Quartet, Molinari Quartet, Bradyworks, etc.).

Since September 2013, Nicolas Gilbert has been composer in residence with the Orchestre symphonique de Laval. He was also the RBC Foundation Composer in residence with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada in 2011-2012, resident composer at the Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur in Montréal from 2003 to 2005, and president of the Codes d'accès concert society from 2002 to 2004. Since September 2015, he has been teaching composition at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal. He is also active as an author of fiction and has published four novels : *Le recital* (2008), *Le joueur de triangle* (2009), *La fille de l'imprimeur est triste* (2011) and *Nous* (2013), with Leméac Éditeur. (nicolasgilbert.ca)

Moment de joie en coupe transversal (“Moment of Joy in Cross-Section”) is a concerto for vibraphone, marimba, and orchestra. Nicolas Gilbert writes:

Moments of joy are always brief. And if joy seems to be a simple, pure feeling, it's perhaps precisely because it dissipates so quickly. But what would we see if we could stop time and penetrate the depths of a moment of joy, if we could open it up? I think we'd see a lot, and realize that joy is rather something infinitely complex; a feeling that draws its intensity from the multitude of strata that make it up, all of them potentially contradictory, potentially in conflict.

This exploration of a moment of joy is conducted in three moments:

I: Élan (Momentum)

II: Cycles

III: Envol (Flight)

Moment de joie en coupe transversale was premiered in 2016 by percussionist Anne-Julie Caron and the Orchestre symphonique de Laval, with conductor Alain Trudel.

***Every Lover is a Warrior* (2006)**

Kati Agócs

(b. Ontario, 1975)

First performed: March 2006 in Philadelphia

This is the ESO premiere of the piece. The ESO has previously performed her work *Devotion* (November 2021).

Born in 1975 in Canada of Hungarian and American parents, Kati Agócs earned Doctoral and Masters degrees from the Juilliard School, studying with Milton Babbitt, and has served on the composition faculty at the New England Conservatory in Boston since 2008. “One of the brightest stars in her generation of composers” (*Audiophile Audition*), Kati Agócs writes music that delivers visceral power and otherworldly lyricism with soulful directness. Her diverse and growing body of works has often been praised for its elegance and emotion. From folk music of an imaginary culture to volatile spectralism, polytextual vocal ensembles to large symphonic forces, the music of Kati Agócs embraces the 21st-century orchestra in all of its protean possibilities.

Of her work *Every Lover is a Warrior*, Kati Agócs writes:

Every Lover is A Warrior is a cycle for solo harp that takes traditional folk songs from three different countries and recasts them with original material, using ostinati (or repeating patterns) as the underpinning in all three movements. The first movement transforms the Appalachian tune “John Riley” to create a bluegrass piece for harp. The song tells of a soldier, John Riley, who returns home after eight years at war and tests the faithfulness of his girlfriend. He finds her in her garden and, seeing that she does not recognize him after so much time, presents himself as a stranger and asks her to marry him. She says no, she is waiting for her John Riley, who has been away at war, but to whom she will remain true. He asks, but what if he has died in battle? What if he has found someone else? What if he was lost at sea? And with each question she remains steadfast. Finally, he reveals his identity and says ‘weep no more, my own true love, I am your long-lost John Riley.’ The tune for the second movement comes from a French hymn which depicts a love more spiritual than romantic. It uses an ostinato consisting of harmonics. The third movement combines two Hungarian folk songs: “When they Take Me for a Soldier,” and a Csárdás in which a soldier laments having to depart for lonely barracks in Vienna, wishing he could remain behind as a rosebud in his lover’s garden. The two songs become intertwined in the quodlibet which provides the cycle’s culmination. Themes of love and war unify the work. Its outer movements present soldiers as lovers, but those they leave behind are warriors, too, in their own way — through their faith. The central movement depicts a savior

coming to earth as a warrior for love. *Every Lover is a Warrior* was written for the harpist Bridget Kibbey, who premiered the work in 2006, made the premiere recording, and edited the score.

Ringelspiel (2013)

Ana Sokolović

(b. Belgrade, 1968)

First performed: May 15, 2013 in Ottawa

This is the first work by Ana Sokolović performed by the ESO.

A key figure in contemporary music, composer Ana Sokolović was born in Belgrade, Serbia and has been based in Montréal since 1992. With a background in the rhythmic universe of Balkan folklore, her music is coloured with playful images and inspired by differing artistic disciplines. Her vast repertoire is regularly performed both in Canada and internationally. Fourth most performed female opera composer in the world in the last decade (according to Operabase), Sokolović's works are performed throughout Europe and North America. Her opera, *Svadba*, which "seems to invent a universal phonetics of the human heart" (*Le Monde*), has been performed more than fifty times.

Her career as a composer has been marked by numerous awards and recognitions, including two consecutive JUNOs in the category of "Classical Composition of the Year". Sokolović's works have been recorded on more than 20 discs. In 2020, she joined the prestigious publishing house Boosey & Hawkes. The following year, she was appointed composer-in-residence at the Montréal Symphony Orchestra for three seasons. In 2022, Ana Sokolović was awarded the first Canada Research Chair in Opera Creation at l'Université de Montréal where she is also a professor of composition.

Of her work *Ringelspiel*, Ana Sokolović writes:

Ringelspiel (Austrian-German for merry-go-round, which is similar to Ringišpil in Sokolović's native Serbian) is laid out in five short, connected sections. To most of us, a merry-go-round brings back memories of childhood and conjures up emotional responses of nostalgia and naïveté. So too does it for this composer. In addition, Sokolović has derived inspiration from the mechanical aspects of a merry-go-round — its simplicity of movement, its circular motion, and its status as an icon of the machine age.

Program notes © 2024 by the respective composers. Notes edited by D.T. Baker

Biographies

Cosette Justo Valdés

Conductor

Cosette Justo Valdés is the Resident Conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. She has been with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra since the 2018-2019 season, when she started as the Assistant Conductor and Community Ambassador. Born and raised in Cuba, as a daughter of amateur musicians, she's loved music all of her life, and she began learning piano and music theory from age 8. At 18 she saw a symphony orchestra for the first time and immediately knew she wanted to be a conductor. She took up conducting in 2002 at the National Institute of the Arts of Cuba, in Havana, and after graduating in 2009 with a Bachelor's Degree in Orchestral Conducting, she was appointed Music & Artistic Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Oriente (OSO) (Santiago, Cuba), Cuba's second-most important orchestra.

During her first three years at the OSO, Cosette organized and conducted numerous concerts of a broad repertoire of classical, jazz, pop, and traditional Cuban music, which allowed her to start consolidating her foundation as a conductor. She also developed several programs for improving the technical and musical level of the orchestra, and founded a Kid's Orchestra and a Youth Orchestra, both tutored by the musicians of the professional orchestra.

With Cuba's OSO, Cosette conducted premières for some of Cuba's best known composers. She also performed the Cuban première of Domenico Scarlatti's intermezzo *La Dirindina*, including designing the costumes, sets, super-titles and directing the overall artistic production.

In 2012, Cosette entered the Mannheim Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (State University for Music & Performing Arts) in Germany, to learn more about conducting classical repertoire from the European perspective, and she earned her Master's Degree in 2018. She has conducted many orchestral, choral, and chamber ensembles in Europe, while remaining Music & Artistic Director of the OSO and returning often to conduct it.

Her passion for 20th century music inspired her to conduct a performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 1 with the National Orchestra of Cuba in Havana for the first time in more than 30 years. She also organized several large projects combining the forces of the two major symphonic orchestras of Eastern Cuba.

Cosette also brought to the OSO for the first time pieces like Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5, *West Side Story Suite* by Leonard Bernstein (in his centenary, performed in January, 2018), Symphony No. 1 by Robert Schumann, Symphony No. 5 by Felix Mendelssohn, *Pulcinella Suite* by Igor Stravinsky, *The Unanswered Question* by Charles Ives, and others. She conducted concerts specifically for children to give them an opportunity to get to know an orchestra and its instruments. She also invited music students to listen to and play with chamber orchestras and/or symphony orchestras for the first time.

Cosette conducted the OSO for the CD "Popularmente Sinfónico", and guest-conducted several other CD recordings in Cuba. She organized the project "SinfóniJazz" for jazz quartet and orchestra, which had its first performance in December 2016 at the International Jazz Festival of Havana. For it, she commissioned music from some of the best young jazz payers and composers in Cuba. The National Orchestra of Cuba performed the première of this project, and it was a great success.

Meet the Musicians

Michael Stern, Artistic Advisor

Cosette Justo Valdés, Resident Conductor and Community Ambassador

William Eddins, Music Director Emeritus, Conductor

Violin I

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster

The John & Barbara Poole Family Concertmaster Chair

Eric Buchmann, Associate Concertmaster

Broderick Olson

Ewald Cheung

Joanna Ciapka-Sangster

Laura Veeze

Anna Kozak

Aiyana Anderson-Howatt

Anita Walsh

Violin II

Dianne New – Principal

Susan Flook – Assistant Principal

Heather Bergen

Yue Deng

Danielle Greene

Buon Park

Yeeun Ha

Zoë Sellers (on leave)

Viola

Keith Hamm – Principal

Ethan Filner – Assistant Principal

Clayton Leung

Rhonda Henshaw

Stefan Jungkind

Cello

Rafael Hoekman – Principal

The Stuart & Winona Davis Principal Cello Chair

Julie Hereish – Assistant Principal

Ronda Metzies

Meran Currie-Roberts

Victor Pipkin

Bass

Hilda Cowie – Principal

Chris Jones – Acting Assistant Principal

Janice Quinn

Rob Aldridge

Chantel Leung

Douglas Ohashi (on leave)

The ESO works in proud partnership with the AF of M (American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada) Local 390.

Flute

Elizabeth Koch – Principal

Sarah Pollard – Assistant Principal

Oboe

June Kim – Principal

Paul Schieman – Assistant Principal

The Steven & Day LePoole Assistant Principal Oboe Chair

Clarinet

Julianne Scott – Principal

David Quinn – Assistant Principal

Bassoon

Bianca Chambul – Principal

Edith Stacey – Assistant Principal

Horn

Allene Hackleman – Principal

Megan Evans – Assistant Principal

Ryan Garbett – Assistant Principal

Donald Plumb – Assistant Principal

Trumpet

Robin Doyon – Principal

Frédéric Payant – Assistant Principal

Trombone

John McPherson – Principal

Kathryn Macintosh – Assistant Principal

Bass Trombone

Tyler Cairns – Principal

Tuba

Scott Whetham – Principal

Timpani

Barry Nemish – Principal

Percussion

Martin Bui – Principal

Harp

Nora Bumanis – Principal