



## Global Influencers

**Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Music Director Alexander Shelley look to the future with striking 2022-23 programme**

**Season includes world premiere of works commissioned from Barbara Assiginaak, Jake Heggie, Alison Yun-Fei Jiang and Keiko Devaux, diverse compositions by Lili Boulanger, Sebastian Fagerlund, Sofia Gubaidulina, Samy Moussa, Carlos Simon and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and semi-staged performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni***

**Jessica Cottis, Karen Gomyo, Hilary Hahn, Håkan Hardenberger, Angela Hewitt, Joshua Hopkins, Bernard Labadie, Gabriela Montero, Eva Ollikainen, Jordan de Souza, John Storgårds and Nobuyuki Tsujii feature among NAC Orchestra's international roster of guest soloists and conductors**

Orchestral music's future and bold strategies to influence its course matter to Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and its Music Director, Alexander Shelley. They stand among the shaping forces behind the programme of their 2022-23 season and are set to guide the Ottawa-based ensemble's development for years to come. This season's run of concerts covers a wide expanse of repertoire, embracing such symphonic works as Richard Strauss's monumental *Eine Alpensinfonie* and Holst's *The Planets* together with a compelling mix of contemporary compositions. The Orchestra will build on its inaugural Mentorship Program, a side-by-side scheme open to outstanding young musicians aged 18-plus from around the world who are entering the orchestral profession.

The NAC Orchestra's season includes the world premieres of Jake Heggie's keenly awaited collaboration with Margaret Atwood, *Songs for Murdered Sisters*, and *Concerto grosso* by one of the Orchestra's Creative Partners, Odawa First Nation composer Barbara Assiginaak. Young Canadian conductor Jordan de Souza, hailed by *The Arts Desk* for his 'meticulous shaping' of Puccini's *La bohème* at this summer's Glyndebourne Festival, will make his debut with the Orchestra. His beguiling programme celebrates International Women's Day with Lili Boulanger's *Nocturne* for violin and orchestra, the Violin Concerto 'Adrano' by rising-star Canadian composer Samy Moussa (with Karen Gomyo as soloist), and the world premiere of Alison Yun-Fei Jiang's *Flowing Waters*, a NAC Orchestra commission (8 & 9 March 2023). Alexander Shelley will crown the season with a semi-staged performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (15-17 June).

"One of our strategic priorities since coming out of the pandemic is to help lead the performing arts sector to recovery," comments Nelson McDougall, Managing Director of the NAC Orchestra. "We intend to increase and expand our investment in Canadian art and artists through ambitious commissioning, recording and touring plans and innovative creative collaborations and partnerships here in Canada and internationally. The other very exciting thing for us is the continuation of our Mentorship Program, which we launched this summer as part of our broader commitment to professional development. Young players will join the Orchestra and Alexander Shelley in rehearsal next May and take part in performances of *The Alpine Symphony* and *The Planets*. I see a bright future for this initiative, which is also open to young composers and conductors. As we livestream our side-by-side performances, we intend to mentor young camera operators and video producers. The side-by-side approach, which draws outstanding young talents to Ottawa from around the world, benefits our players as well as the young people who are part of the scheme. I'm pleased and very proud to say that the Mentorship Program grew out of discussions with Alexander and the players."

The orchestral version of Jake Heggie's *Songs for Murdered Sisters*, co-commissioned by the NAC Orchestra and Houston Grand Opera, was to have received its first performance last season. It was postponed, however, by a nationwide surge in Covid cases last Christmas and the trucker convoy that brought central Ottawa to a standstill soon after. The song cycle, to eight new texts by Margaret Atwood, was written for baritone Joshua Hopkins, whose own sister was one of three women killed in their homes by a vengeful ex-partner. Heggie's score stands as a memorial to the individual murder victims and a reminder of the ubiquity of male violence against women. It will be performed for the first time at the National Arts Centre's Southam Hall on 9 & 10

February and repeated in Toronto and Kingston on February 11 & 14 respectively. The work will be framed by Barbara Assiginaak's *Concerto grosso*, a NAC Orchestra commission, and Brahms's Symphony No.4.

Two of the NAC Orchestra's seven Creative Partners are poised to offer fresh perspectives on familiar music this season. Bernard Labadie brings his ace choir La Chapelle de Québec to Southam Hall for a Mozart double bill of his Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major and *Requiem* (9 & 10 November), while Gabriela Montero brings her thrilling brand of spontaneity and dynamism to Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1. The latter stands at the heart of a programme conducted by Eva Ollikainen that includes Sofia Gubaidulina's *Fairytale Poem* and Sibelius's four-movement *Lemminkäinen Suite*, Op.22 (1 & 2 March).

Other season highlights include Dvořák's stirring Violin Concerto conducted by Alexander Shelley and with Hilary Hahn as soloist, presented together with Carlos Simon's Beethoven-inspired *Fate Now Conquers* and Beethoven's Symphony No.5 (18 & 19 January); Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 with Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii as soloist conducted by Alexander Shelley, in a programme prefaced by the world premiere of a NAC Orchestra commission from Canadian composer Keiko Devaux and completed by Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* (10 & 11 May); and Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir's *Catamorphosis* and Holst's *The Planets* conducted by Alexander Shelley (18 & 19 May). Mozart's Violin Concerto No.4 with NAC Orchestra concertmaster Yosuke Kawasaki and Principal Guest Conductor John Storgårds shares the bill with Haydn's Symphony No.31 'Hornsignal' and the Canadian premiere of Finnish composer Sebastian Fagerlund's Chamber Symphony, a NAC Orchestra co-commission with the Tapiola Sinfonietta (29 & 30 March), while Angela Hewitt and Australian-British conductor Jessica Cottis explore Mozart's Piano Concerto No.25 in C major, K. 503 (5 & 6 April).

"Opera has been rather absent in Ottawa for the past several years," notes Nelson McDougall. "We're thrilled to bring it back with *Don Giovanni*. I am delighted, too, that we're finally able to perform Jake Heggie's *Songs for Murdered Sisters*. It will share the bill with Brahms's Symphony No.4, which we will record for the fourth and final release in our *Clara-Robert-Johannes* album series. There are so many good things in our season and a feeling of renewal about it after the difficult years of the pandemic. Although I only became Managing Director this March, I've been with the NAC Orchestra since 2004 and consider them to be family. I absolutely love the National Arts Centre. It's a great honour for me to take on this new role and to work closely with Alexander, whose contract has been extended until 2026, our wonderful world-class players and everyone else here at the NAC to shape the Orchestra's future."

During his time at the National Arts Centre, Nelson McDougall has been responsible for originating and delivering a series of landmark creative projects, among them *Life Reflected*, an immersive multi-media symphonic experience comprising works that tell of the struggles and triumphs of four remarkable Canadian women who overcame enormous challenges to discover their own voice. His credits during his time as Orchestra and Tour Manager include a three-week, seven-city tour of China, the presentation of *Life Reflected* in Paris and Gothenburg during the Orchestra's 50th anniversary tour in 2019, and the creation of *UNDISRUPTED*, a four-part television series created during the pandemic by Canadian visionaries Measha Brueggergosman, Shawnee Kish, Nicole Lizée, and Ana Sokolović, and first broadcast on CBC Gem in 2021.

Music Director, Alexander Shelley commented: "With our audiences at the NAC and on tour we look forward to celebrating through our programming the full range and diversity of the symphonic genre, from new music by some of the leading composers of our time, to fresh takes on the classics. That we continue to place the orchestra at the forefront of the important conversations of our time and that we continue to serve not only as a favoured partner for established stars of the industry but also as an increasingly renowned springboard and training ground for great talents of the next generation is of particular importance to me. I look forward with great anticipation to this season, to my coming years with this magnificent orchestra and to the start of an exciting chapter with our new Managing Director Nelson McDougall, for whom I have such admiration."

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