



## Broadening Horizons

**A celebration of the art and friendship of Clara and Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms, major commissions from Barbara Assiginaak, Anna Clyne, Kevin Lau, Kelly-Marie Murphy and Gity Razaz, and captivating combinations of diverse artists and repertoire lend distinction to the National Arts Centre Orchestra's rich 2023-24 season**

**Star-studded roster of NAC Orchestra guest artists includes Nicholas Altstaedt, Emanuel Ax, James Ehnes, Louis Lortie, Gabriela Montero and many more**

**Music Director Alexander Shelley shares conducting duties with Principal Guest Conductor John Storgårds, Joana Carneiro, Stephanie Childress, Roderick Cox, Bernard Labadie and Jeannette Sorrell**

Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and its Music Director Alexander Shelley have channelled their bold vision for classical music's future into a strikingly diverse 2023-24 programme. The season's repertoire range embraces national and world premiere performances, recent works by Andrew Balfour, Jimmy López Bellido, Gabriela Montero and Caroline Shaw, Roope Mäenpää's *Luovus*, a symphony for Sámi yoik singer, and familiar pieces placed in fresh contexts. The Orchestra's line-up of guest artists is equally distinctive, with pianists Emanuel Ax, Louis Lortie, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Gabriela Montero and Yeol Eum Son, violinists James Ehnes and Ray Chen, cellist Nicolas Altstaedt, saxophonist Jess Gillam and conductors Joana Carneiro, Roderick Cox and Jeannette Sorrell among them.

Alexander Shelley and the NAC Orchestra are set to launch the season with *Focus: Clara, Robert, Johannes*. The festival trains the spotlight on the music of Clara and Robert Schumann and Brahms and the creative dialogue that helped sustain their mutual friendship. It coincides with the completion of the Orchestra's acclaimed *Clara, Robert, Johannes* recording project, the fourth and final volume of which is scheduled for release on the Analekta label on 22 September. The five-concert series begins on 13 September with a sequence of Clara's songs, followed by Robert Schumann's Symphony No.1 'Spring' and Brahms's Piano Concerto No.1, with Emanuel Ax as soloist. Soprano Midori Marsh opens the second concert on 14 September with a second selection of Clara's songs, before Nicolas Altstaedt takes the solo part in Robert's Cello Concerto and Alexander Shelley directs the Orchestra in Brahms's Symphony No.1. On 17 September NACO Creative Partner James Ehnes joins forces with pianist Stewart Goodyear and string players from the Orchestra for an afternoon of chamber works by the three composers.

"We are thrilled to present *Focus: Clara, Robert, Johannes* as a captivating exploration of the interconnected lives and music of these remarkable composers," observes Alexander Shelley. "Through an array of exceptional concerts and thought-provoking talks, we invite audiences to embark on a musical journey that delves into the profound artistic relationships between Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms."

*Focus: Clara, Robert, Johannes* continues on 20 September when James Ehnes appears as soloist in Brahms's Violin Concerto. The programme also includes a trio of Clara's songs and Schumann's Symphony No.3 'Rhenish'. Altstaedt and Ehnes return to the National Arts Centre stage on 21 September as soloists in Brahms's Double Concerto. The festival's final concert begins with a miscellany of Clara's songs, freshly orchestrated by Canadian composers Sarah Slean and Cecilia Livingston, and includes Clara's Piano Concerto, with Isata Kanneh-Mason as soloist. Clara Schumann scholar Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers and Brahms biographer Jan Swafford will lead pre- and post-concert discussions, enabling audiences to discover more about three titans of nineteenth-century music.

"The relationship between Clara and Robert Schumann and Brahms is one of the most enthralling narratives in classical music history," comments Nelson McDougall, Managing Director of the NAC Orchestra. "People are so often drawn to music by the stories behind it. We're interested in the fact that the young Clara was, for a time, much more famous than Robert and in how that shifted after their marriage so that his career could take



Johann Sebastian Bach's violin concertos hold centre stage when James Ehnes returns to work with the NAC Orchestra on 10 & 11 January. He is joined by the Orchestra's Concertmaster Yosuke Kawasaki in the Concerto for two violins in D minor, BWV 1043 and by Kawasaki and Associate Concertmaster Jessica Linnebach in the original version of the Concerto for three violins in C major, BWV 1064. Ehnes will also perform Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041 and Violin Concerto in G Minor, BWV 1056.

Other season highlights include the intriguing pairing of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Ray Chen as soloist, and Mahler's Symphony No.5, conducted by Alexander Shelley (15 & 16 May); Stephanie Childress conducting the NAC Orchestra in Caroline Shaw's *Entr'acte*, the American Pulitzer Prize-winning composer's reimaging of the classical minuet and trio, Mozart's Flute Concerto in G major K.313 with the Orchestra's principal flute Joanna G'froerer as soloist, and Mendelssohn's Symphony No.3 'Scottish' (17 & 18 January); and John Storgårds' carefully curated combination of Mozart's Symphony No.40 'Jupiter', Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, with Jessica Linnebach as soloist, and Shostakovich's Symphony No.5 (3 & 4 April).

"This is a fantastic season for us," comments Nelson McDougall. "We're also thrilled to have Seong-Jin Cho and Angela Hewitt giving recitals in our Great Performers series and to welcome Yannick Nézet-Séguin, a true icon of music in Canada, coming to the National Arts Centre on tour with his Philadelphia Orchestra and to have the Toronto Symphony Orchestra back in Ottawa. And our growing side-by-side Mentorship Program, which brings outstanding young musicians into the NAC Orchestra to deepen their experience, is set to continue following the success of its second season in 2022-23. It's great for our musicians and for building the onstage and offstage skills of the early-career players who come to us. The next intake will take part in Gabriela Montero's 'Latin' Concerto, *Daphnis et Chloé* and Mahler Five. That will be a terrific fortnight for us and for them!"

[www.nac-cna.ca/en/orchestra](http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/orchestra)

[Facebook](#) – [Twitter](#) – [YouTube](#) – [Instagram](#)

**For press enquiries, please contact:**

Barbara Miernik at Valerie Barber PR

[barbara@vbpr.co.uk](mailto:barbara@vbpr.co.uk)

*We at Valerie Barber PR are committed to protecting your personal information and so we are letting you know that we are storing your email address, work telephone numbers and work postal address on our database so that we can keep you up to date with news on our clients. You can ask us to stop using your information at any time by emailing us at [info@vbpr.co.uk](mailto:info@vbpr.co.uk). You may also request access to the personal data we have about you, request that any incorrect personal data we have about you be rectified, or request that we erase your personal data. If you have any questions about how we care for and use your personal information please let us know us at [info@vbpr.co.uk](mailto:info@vbpr.co.uk).*

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### National Arts Centre Orchestra

Since its debut in 1969, Ottawa-based National Arts Centre (NAC) Orchestra has been praised for the passion and clarity of its performances, its visionary educational programs, and its prominent role in nurturing Canadian creativity. Under the leadership of Music Director Alexander Shelley, the NAC Orchestra reflects the fabric and values of Canada, reaching and representing the diverse communities we live in with daring programming, powerful storytelling, inspiring artistry, and innovative partnerships.

Since its inception, the NAC Orchestra has recorded for radio and more than 40 commercial recordings many of the over 80 new works it has commissioned, primarily from Canadian composers. These include:

- Angela Hewitt's 2015 JUNO Award-winning album of Mozart Piano concertos;
- The ground-breaking *Life Reflected*, which includes *My Name is Amanda Todd* by the late Jocelyn Morlock (winner of the 2018 JUNO for Classical Composition of the Year);
- Ana Sokolović's *Golden Slumbers Kiss Your Eyes*, 2019 JUNO Winner for Classical Composition of the Year (from the 2019 JUNO-nominated *New Worlds*);
- The 2020 JUNO-nominated *The Bounds of Our Dreams*, featuring pianist Alain Lefèvre;
- *Clara - Robert - Johannes: Lyrical Echoes*, nominated for Classical Album of the Year at the 2023 JUNO Awards.