

Across the board, there's a spring in the seasonal step!

PAUL ENNIS

In what promises to be an unforgettable night, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra is bringing all five of their living music directors to the Roy Thomson Hall stage on April 9 at 7:30 for a unique historical event. The five conductors' tenures span the last 47 years, as the TSO eases into its hundredth year. Former TSO music directors Sir Andrew Davis (1975-1988; 2018-2020), Günther Herbig (1989-1994), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (1994-2001)



Marion Newman

and Peter Oundjian (2004-2018) will join current music director Gustavo Gimeno and host Marion Newman for this special Centennial Season event – a program of orchestral showpieces highlighting key moments in TSO history.

Davis starts the evening off by taking the podium for Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture* which has been conducted by seven of the TSO's music directors, notably by Davis as part of the TSO's Canadian Odyssey tour of the North in 1987. Davis also leads the orchestra in Delius' *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, paying tribute to Davis' British roots. (British-trained Canadian, Sir Ernest MacMillan, is the only other TSO music director to have performed it.)

In a nod to his German origins, Herbig (who recently turned 90) will conduct Wagner's *Overture to Tannhäuser*, a work that has been conducted by eight of the ten TSO ten music directors since the orchestra's founding in April 1923. It is a piece that the TSO has



Gustavo Gimeno and TSO cellist Emmanuelle Beaulieu Bergeron

programmed 51 times since 1924, when it was conducted by TSO founder Luigi von Kunits.

Next, Finnish-born Saraste conducts Sibelius' "Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island" from *Lemminkäinen Suite*. First performed by the TSO in 1998 under Saraste's baton, the Sibelius suite was part of the orchestra's tour to Carnegie Hall later that year and was subsequently recorded (with Saraste) in 2000.

Toronto-born Oundjian conducts Alexina Louie's *The Ringing Earth* as a tribute to his championship of contemporary and particularly Canadian contemporary music. Louie's piece was also part of the Oundjian 2005 Northern tour. Oundjian and the TSO performed "Sárka" from Smetana's *Má vlast* on a 2014 residency at the Prague Spring Festival. Programming Smetana on April 9 is a tribute to the TSO's Czech-born music directors, Karel Ančerl and Walter Susskind.

Gimeno brings the event to a close with Ravel's dazzling *Rapsodie espagnole*, acknowledging his own Spanish roots. (Five of the ten TSO music directors have performed it.)

Performing Arts Sundays in Hamilton

Hamilton's Performing Arts Sunday Series (PASS) – now in its first season – was put together by HCA Dance Theatre and the Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts. It stems from the Conservatory's long-standing Concert Series, growing to include a wider range of performing arts. This season so far they have welcomed a flamenco performance featuring Compañía Carmen Romero and an opera recital with soprano Adrienne Pieczonka (who also led a masterclass for emerging opera singers). This spring they will host three pianists: Valerie Tryon, André Laplante and Janina Fialkowska. Tryon's bountiful



Valerie Tryon



Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts

recital at 2pm on March 20 begins with two Scarlatti sonatas, two Schubert impromptus (D899), three pieces from Brahms' Op.118 and two from Brahms' Op.76. Debussy's *Suite: Pour le Piano* and Rachmaninoff's transcriptions of Kreisler's *Liebesleid* and *Liebesfreud* complete the afternoon program.

I reached out to Vitek Wincza, artistic director of the Hamilton Conservatory, for some historical context. "The Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts has a history of chamber music performances that predates its modern history," he explained. "When it operated as the Royal College of Music in the early 1900s, the building was erected with the express intent to host musicians in the Recital Hall. Knowing this rich history, Zdenek Konicek of Trio Canada approached me with the interest of rebuilding the concert series, and we worked tirelessly to continue the Conservatory's tradition of live music."

Working closely with Jan Narveson at the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society (no strangers to this column), they cultivated shared programming and the HCA Concert Series was born. Then, just before the pandemic, they received a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation that allowed them to reinvigorate their Recital Hall. "New technical equipment, cosmetic upgrades, and a name refresh have allowed us to emerge from lockdowns with a beautiful new space: The Black Box Theatre. These technical improvements allow us to explore new methods of performance, including livestreaming."

The reinvigoration of the space was the inspiration for the Performing Arts Sunday Series, or PASS. "Along with a long-term goal to host events every Sunday throughout the year, we are thrilled to begin to expand our programming to include our historic chamber music concerts, as well as opera, theatre and dance. In addition, we look to offer masterclasses with our esteemed artists so that young people studying to develop an artistic career can find inspiration and mentorship."

As mentioned, for this, their inaugural season, they have invited pianists Valerie Tryon [March 20], André Laplante [April 10] and Janina Fialkowska [May 8] to return to the Conservatory. "These artists

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While I have spent the majority of my creative life in theatre in one form or another, through friendly coercion and also with great joy, I have written a number of symphonies. — Philip Glass

L to R: Philip Glass, Peter Jennings

have long-standing relationships with us, having performed at the Conservatory several times in the past,” says Wincza. “Our upcoming recital with Valerie Tryon will be our first livestreamed event, broadening our audience reach and making high-quality arts programming accessible. I couldn’t imagine a finer lineup of musicians to celebrate this thrilling new beginning!”

Philip Glass: Symphony No. 13

On March 30 at Roy Thomson Hall, – the first concert of a mini-tour to Toronto, New York and Ottawa – the National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO) will present the world premiere of Philip Glass’ *Symphony No. 13*, a work commissioned by the Orchestra on the theme “Truth in Our Time.” Under the direction of Alexander Shelley and featuring violin soloists Blake Pouliot (Roy Thomson Hall) and James Ehnes (Carnegie Hall and the National Arts Centre), the concert will also feature music by Nicole Lizée (*Zeiss After Dark*: SESQUIE for Canada’s 150th), Dmitri Shostakovich (*Symphony No. 9*) and Erich Korngold (*Violin Concerto*).

Glass’ *Symphony No. 13* is a tribute to Toronto-born journalist Peter Jennings who died in 2005. A highly respected ABC News anchor, Jennings was also a trustee of Carnegie Hall during his years in New York City, the founding director of the American chapter of the Friends of the NAC Orchestra and a lifelong champion of Canadian artists.

Philip Glass provided the following introduction to his new work: “I started to compose *Symphony No. 13* in the summer of 2020 in New York City. My life as a ‘symphonist’ began 30 years ago in 1992, when, at the suggestion of conductor Dennis Russell Davies, I was commissioned to write my First Symphony. While I always thought of myself as a theatre composer – which has the virtue of being true – it was Dennis that ‘didn’t want me to be one of those opera composers who never wrote a symphony.’ So, while I have spent the majority of my creative life in theatre in one form or another, through friendly coercion and also with great joy, I have written a number of symphonies which were purely instrumental, as well as another group which included vocal materials or were based on outside material: poetry, wisdom traditions, and even popular music.”

Glass’ connection with the National Arts Centre Orchestra dates back to 2016. “I first heard [them] live in 2016 at the Glenn Gould Prize concert when they performed my *Symphony No. 8*. I have had a home in Nova Scotia for over 50 years and come here every year. And a number of my pieces have premiered in Canada over the years. When invited by the NAC Orchestra to compose a new work, I began to think of a new full-scale instrumental symphony to be part of their program ‘Truth in Our Time.’ The piece is part of the kind of music which I view to be a new body of work that started with *Symphony No. 7* from five years ago. The journey continues to explore my own ideas about the language of music as it has evolved for me in the form of these symphonies.”

So, what can a piece of music express about the idea of truth?

“When we consider a figure like Peter Jennings – a Canadian by birth, an immigrant, a journalist, an American by choice – rather than making a proclamation about ‘what is truth,’ for the composer we are on much better ground when we talk about ‘This is the music that I listen to, this is the music that I like, and this is the music that I write.’”

The Esmé Quartet at Music Toronto

Praised for their warm sound and powerful stage presence, the Esmé Quartet makes its Toronto debut on March 24 with a program featuring two pillars of the string quartet repertoire, Debussy’s *String Quartet in G Minor* and Beethoven’s *String Quartet Op. 59 No. 2 “Razumovsky.”*

Formed in 2016 at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, Germany by four Korean musicians, the Esmé made a sensational entrance into the string quartet world by winning the first prize and sweeping four of the special prizes, among them the Mozart and Beethoven prizes, at the 2018 London Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. They began touring internationally and in the summer of 2018, they were named as the quartet in residence at the Aix-en-Provence festival and also appeared at the McGill International String Quartet Academy in Montreal.

The name of the quartet – Esmé – is borrowed from an old French word meaning “being loved.” Based in Germany, the quartet has been mentored in masterclasses with artists such as Günter Pichler (Alban Berg Quartet), Alfred Brendel, Eberhard Feltz, Andraś Keller, Christoph Poppen and Jonathan Brown (Cuarteto Casals). The quartet also studied with Heime Müller (Artemis Quartet) and Oliver Wille (Kuss Quartet).

The Esmé Quartet

