

Gala de la Terre: Nicolas Ellis Conducts *The Rite of Spring*

SATURDAY

4

JULY
7:30 P.M.

AMPHITHÉÂTRE
FERNAND-LINDSAY

PROGRAM

> **CLAUDE CHAMPAGNE**
(1891-1965)

SYMPHONIE GASPÉSIENNE – 20'

> **MAURICE RAVEL**
(1875-1925)

SHÉHÉRAZADE – 19'

INTERMISSION – 20'

> **KATIA MAKDISSI-WARREN**
(née en 1970)

CHORUS NUNAVIK – 10'

> **IGOR STRAVINSKY**
(1882-1971)

THE RITE OF SPRING – 33'

Présenté par



ORCHESTRE
DE L'AGORA

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ARTISTS

Nicolas Ellis, conductor

Julie Fuchs, soprano

Lydia Etok et
Nina Segalowitz,
throat singers

The Gala de la Terre

The Orchestre de l'Agora's Gala de la Terre invites audiences to engage with initiatives dedicated to protecting fragile ecosystems here in Quebec. Since 2020, the event has raised \$513,000 for the environmental cause, supporting six Canadian organizations and their respective projects. Winner of the Prix Opus for Musical Event of the Year in 2022, the Gala de la Terre was also a finalist for the same award in 2024.

This year, \$5 from every concert ticket will go to the St. Lawrence project of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, dedicated to preserving and restoring land along the St. Lawrence River. To date, the project has protected 15 islands and 115 kilometres of shoreline, for a total of 2,655 hectares of natural island and riverside habitats. Claude Champagne's Symphonie gaspésienne will be performed in tribute to this project.

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PROGRAM NOTE

In his book *Manières d'être vivant*, the writer and philosopher Baptiste Morizot observes that we have gradually ceased to inhabit the world, becoming merely its managers. The living world no longer appears to us as a community of presences, but as a backdrop. And yet certain musical works remain capable of reopening that lost relationship — as does the journey of this concert. Far from describing nature, it draws us back into it.

From the shores of the Gaspé to the imagined landscapes of the Orient, from the voices of Nunavik to the telluric powers of Stravinsky's pagan spring, each work reminds us that music was born, above all, as a way of resonating with the world. «Alone together, the mountain Jingting and I, gazing on and on, never wearying of each other.» This reciprocity of the gaze, this possibility of a presence shared between the human and the landscape — offered to us since the eighth century, and with sublime concision, by the Chinese poet Li Bai — runs silently through the works on this program.

Claude Champagne's *Symphonie gaspésienne*, composed in 1945, was born of a profound fascination with the Quebec landscape. A pupil of Vincent d'Indy in Paris, Champagne sought throughout his life to build a musical language capable of expressing a distinctly French-Canadian identity, and here he sets his sights on the Gaspé region. The broad orchestral lines, the modal colours, the ample movements of the sonorous material evoke an intensely lived landscape: «immensity is within us,» to paraphrase Gaston Bachelard.

With *Shéhérazade*, Ravel leads us into the territory of the imagination. Composed in 1903 to poems by Tristan Klingsor, this work for voice and orchestra speaks of a dreamed Orient, threaded with perfumes, colours, and impossible journeys. Through its anaphora of «Je voudrais voir...» («I should like to see...»), Asie, the first song, unfurls a long litany of visions and desires in which music becomes a space of projection, of fascination, of the unknown. Ravel's orchestra, of an extraordinary sensuality, dissolves all contours and creates a floating atmosphere in which time seems suspended. This Orient of Ravel's reveals a nostalgia for a world still enchanted — a refuge or remedy for the «disenchantment of the world» that Max Weber would theorize a few years later. Harmonies, timbres, and silences become so many vanishing points, transformations of the gaze.

Far from fantasy and enchantment, another song — anchored in the vast expanses of the tundra — has animated the Inuit peoples since time immemorial, the sacred inheritance of an experience shared with the forces of nature. Throat singing takes centre stage in Katia Makdissi-Warren's *Chorus Nunavik*, conceived in a spirit of intercultural encounter. In Inuit cosmologies, the human does not occupy a central position but takes part in a web of relations in which animals, winds, ice, and spirits likewise possess a soul and a voice. The anthropologist Tim Ingold — notably in his books *Being Alive* and *Lines* — invites us to think that we do not inhabit the world as the owners of a territory, but as travellers caught in a network of paths, winds, voices, and relations. In this 2022 composition, Makdissi-Warren seems to listen precisely to those invisible lines where breath,

memory, and territory meet, in a dialogue unfolding on many levels.

Finally comes Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, premiered in Paris in 1913. Few works have provoked such an upheaval. From the bassoon's opening bars in its high register, something ancient and unknown seems to rise to the surface. In this imagined rite, in which a young girl is sacrificed to ensure the return of spring, Stravinsky stages a nature that is neither consoling nor decorative. It is power, cycle, violence, and rebirth. The Rite belongs to that family of works that allow us to reconnect with the Dionysian forces of the world, those energies that precede order and reason. In the final part, the *Danse sacrée* exposes the body to a pulse that overwhelms it. The irregular accents, the stubborn *ostinatos*, the colliding orchestral masses seem to dissolve the individual into a movement vaster than itself. Many interpreters of *The Rite* have recognized here what Nietzsche called the Dionysian forces: those powers in which the human being ceases to think of itself as the centre of the world and comes to feel its belonging to a collective, earthly, and ancient energy.

From the salt shoreline of the Gaspé to the mysterious kisses of the Orient's enchanted flute, from Arctic voices to primal dances, this *Gala de la Terre*, set amid the wild forests of Lanaudière, is an invitation to perceive an ancient intuition: music does not imitate the world. It teaches us, once again, how to inhabit it.