

Saturday, March 26, 2016, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Orchestre symphonique de Montréal

Kent Nagano, *music director and conductor*
Daniil Trifonov, *piano*

PROGRAM

- Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918) *Jeux; poème dansé*
- Sergei PROKOFIEV (1891-1953) Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26
Andante – Allegro
Tema con variazioni
Allegro, ma non troppo
Daniil Trifonov, piano

INTERMISSION

- Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971) *The Rite of Spring*
Part I: The Adoration of the Earth
Introduction
Augurs of Spring
Ritual of Abduction
Spring Rounds
Ritual of the Rival Tribes
Procession of the Sage
The Sage
Dance of the Earth
Part II: The Sacrifice
Introduction
Mystic Circles of the Young Girls
Glorification of the Chosen One
Evocation of the Ancestors
Ritual Action of the Ancestors
Sacrificial Dance

*The Orchestre symphonique de Montréal is presented by Hydro-Québec.
The orchestra's USA Tour is possible thanks to the OSM Foundation,
Air Canada, Tourisme Montréal, the Canada Council for the Arts,
the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, and the Ville de Montréal.*

*This performance is made possible, in part,
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“It seems to me that the “Russians” have opened a window in our sombre study hall with its severe master, through which we might catch a glimpse of the countryside.”

—Claude Debussy (1913)

Every so often, distinctive idioms combine in unlikely circumstances, creating hybrid aesthetics greater than the sum of their parts. Such was the situation in early 20th-century Paris, when an influx of Russian émigré artists took the great cultural capital by surprise, to the delight and consternation of the natives. The dancer Vaslav Nijinsky physically embodied the zeitgeist from which the music of this period arises, provocatively dancing his way through two of the works featured on tonight’s program.

Jeux

Claude Debussy

A garden, at night. Bushes and brambles. The harsh light and deep shadows cast by an outdoor electric floodlight. A stray tennis ball bounces onto the stage, chased by a frolicking young boy and two girls. As they search for the ball, they tease, laugh, and play with each other, eventually falling into a furtive embrace. Such was the choreographic scenario to which Debussy composed *Jeux* for the Ballets Russes in 1912, though Sergei Diaghilev had originally imagined three boys in the main roles.

With Vaslav Nijinsky in the principal role, the work premiered at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in May 1913, only two weeks before the same dancer would set the gossiping classes atwitter with his controversial choreography to Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. Nijinsky’s choreography for *Jeux*, which drew more heavily on postures from golf, tennis, and jazz dance than it did from classical ballet, was not a great success. Even Debussy was non-committal, commenting only a couple of weeks later, “Among recent pointless goings-on I must include the staging of *Jeux*, which gave Nijinsky’s perverse genius a chance of indulging in a peculiar kind of mathematics.”

But the music lived on independent of the dance, and is now universally praised as an important 20th-century work in line with

Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*. As in that earlier piece, tone color, and orchestral texture take center stage. Inconclusive harmonies suggest atonality, while never fully taking the plunge. The musical themes are short, following quickly one upon the other, and the liberal use of woodwinds in various combinations makes for a character-driven and playful atmosphere.

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26

Sergei Prokofiev

As a child growing up in the Ukrainian countryside, Sergei Prokofiev was naturally experimental when it came to piano playing. His juvenile compositions were often written in a different key for each hand, creating a jarringly novel effect. This rogue instinct would follow the young composer to the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he began his sketches for his Piano Concerto No. 3 while still a student. Completing the work in 1921, Prokofiev performed the solo part himself in the premiere that same year in Chicago. He also performed in the first recording of the work in 1932, proving for all posterity that the herculean technical challenges in the score grew at least partly out of his own aptitude as an exceptionally talented pianist.

Prokofiev’s five essays in the piano concerto genre are significant for their total integration of soloist and orchestra, where each part is an active contributor to the essential character of the work. The lyrical opening clarinet theme of the first movement floats somewhere between tentative and serene, as it is joined by meandering harmonies in the strings. When the orchestra suddenly takes off with the locomotive rhythm of a speeding train, and the piano bursts into the texture with a joyful yelp, the first three notes of the clarinet melody are reversed in substance and effect, becoming motivic material for the ensuing figurations. A second theme is more sarcastic in nature, but the movement ultimately builds toward a romantic climax, recalling the opening melody in a grandiose *tutti* near the end. The second movement is a theme and variations, allowing for a full exploration of Prokofiev’s unique ability to bring out oppos-

ing characters in the same musical material—from lush and lyrical to grotesquely terrifying and exuberantly joyful. The final movement begins with a humorous topic in the orchestra, taken up and expanded by the piano, soon building to a great romantic climax. The hair-raising coda increases in energy, as piano and orchestra join in a janissary-like clamouring in the upper registers, insistent rhythms and hand-over-hand flourishes bringing the work to a powerful close in C Major.

The Rite of Spring

Igor Stravinsky

Paris, May 29, 1913: a date that lives on in musical notoriety. That night, the capacity audience at the newly built Théâtre des Champs-Élysées collectively participated in the birth of a new era—or the violent death of an old one, depending on whom you asked. The trio of *enfants terribles* at the center of the scandal were Sergei Diaghilev, the daring founder of Les Ballets Russes, Vaslav Nijinsky, his unruly choreographer, and Igor Stravinsky, Russian darling of the Parisian *avant garde*. The work, *The Rite of Spring*.

A week after the premiere, a headline from *The New York Times* trumpeted “Parisians Hiss New Ballet,” going on to report that the house lights had to be turned up to quell “hostile demonstrations” in the audience, while at one point the ruckus was so loud that the dancers on stage could no longer hear the orchestra, Nijinsky himself shouting out the choreography from the wings. Popular myth remembers Stravinsky’s shocking new music as the cause of the riots, while the UC Berkeley scholar Richard Taruskin places the blame squarely on the “ugly earthbound lurching and stomping devised by Vaslav Nijinsky.” But principal

dancer Lydia Sokolova recalled, “they had prepared in Paris for a riot... They had got themselves all ready.” On the eve of a great war, in a continent still grappling with class disparity, the people seemed primed to manifest: a row was inevitable.

Stravinsky’s frenetically propulsive score unfolds as a series of tableaux depicting imagined scenes of ancient Pagan rituals around the coming of spring. A young girl is chosen by elders and forced to dance herself to death in an act of sacrifice to the land. Fragments of Russian folk tunes are evidence of the composer’s efforts to express the elemental character of his homeland, while incessant motor-rhythms and terrifyingly unpredictable accented off-beats lend an aspect of mechanization to the essentially folkloric subject matter—an ominous contradiction at the heart of the work. In fact, this revolutionary ballet score, with its violent juxtapositions of rival tonalities, may be one of the most apt and profound expressions of the clash of the old world with an expanding mechanical age.

The Rite of Spring holds a special place in the repertoire of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. First performed in Montreal in 1957 under the direction of Igor Markevitch, *Rite* would go on to become a signature work for the orchestra during the directorship of Charles Dutoit, representing the confluence of Russian and French influences at the heart of the ensemble’s traditional programming. In 1984, it featured prominently on a tour of Canada, the United States, and Europe, and a recording made that same year was honored with a Félix Award in Quebec. Most recently, Kent Nagano led the orchestra in Stravinsky’s masterpiece in 2012 and 2016 in performances at Maison symphonique de Montréal.

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The **Orchestre symphonique de Montréal** has distinguished itself as a leader in the orchestral life of Canada and Quebec since its founding in 1934. A cultural ambassador of the highest order, the orchestra has earned an enviable reputation internationally through the quality of its many recordings and tours. The OSM carries on that rich tradition under the leadership of its music director, Kent Nagano, while featuring innovative programming aimed at updating the orchestral repertoire and deepening the orchestra's connection with the community.

The excellence and vision of the OSM have been shaped over the years by its music directors: Wilfrid Pelletier, a Montrealer by birth and first artistic director of the orchestra; Désiré Defauw; Igor Markevitch; Zubin Mehta, with whom the orchestra toured in Europe for the first time; Franz-Paul Decker; Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos; Charles Dutoit, who collaborated with the orchestra for close to 25 years and under whom the OSM achieved great prominence on the international scene; and, since September 2006, Kent Nagano.

Over the years the orchestra has performed on more than 40 tours and some 30 national and international excursions. The OSM has carried out 10 tours in Asia, 11 in Europe, and three in South America. Under the direction of Kent Nagano, the OSM presented a concert at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris (2006) and made its first cross-Canada tour (2007). In 2008, Nagano and seven musicians from the orchestra set off on a tour of Nunavik, in northern Quebec, where their program included Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* narrated in Inuktitut.

Kent Nagano and the orchestra have appeared twice in Carnegie Hall (2008 and 2011), where the OSM played almost every year between 1982 and 2004. In 2011, the OSM took part for the first time in the Edinburgh International Festival. Kent Nagano and the orchestra have together made a tour in South America (2013) and two European tours (2008 and 2014), and performed the OSM's first concerts in China (2014). The OSM is currently on its ninth major tour in the United States.

The OSM has made over 100 recordings for Decca, EMI, Philips, CBC Records, Analekta,

ECM, and Sony as well as on its own label, which have earned it some 50 national and international awards.

In September 2011, the OSM and Maestro Nagano inaugurated Maison symphonique de Montréal, the orchestra's new home. The construction of this concert hall was made possible thanks to the Government of Quebec. The hall's acoustics bear the signature of the firm Artec Consultants Inc., while its architecture was entrusted to Diamond Schmitt Architects Inc. in association with Ædifica Architects.

Inaugurated on May 28, 2014, at Maison symphonique, the Grand Orgue Pierre-Béique was generously offered to the OSM by Jacqueline Desmarais. It was manufactured by the house of Casavant on behalf of the OSM (and is the orchestra's property), with the collaboration of architects Diamond Schmitt + Ædifica for its visual design.

The OSM offers its varied audience increasingly rich programming consisting of orchestral concerts, recitals, chamber music, and performances featuring the OSM Chorus and the Grand Orgue Pierre-Béique. During the 2008-2009 season, the orchestra's 75th anniversary, the OSM presented the opera *Saint François d'Assise* by composer Olivier Messiaen, which was awarded the Grand Prix (2008) from the Conseil des arts de Montréal. The 75th season additionally was the subject of the documentary *Montreal Symphony* by director Bettina Ehrhardt, named Best Canadian Film at the 2010 edition of Montreal's International Festival of Films on Art. During the 2014-2015 season, the OSM presented *L'Aiglon*, a work by Honegger and Ibert, in a North American premiere, which was also the first project in a renewed partnership with Decca Classics, the label on which the orchestra recorded some 80 albums between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. The OSM figures prominently outside the concert hall thanks to the broadcast of concerts on a variety of platforms, enabling it to reach thousands of music lovers around the world.

To learn more about the orchestra, please visit www.osm.ca. Follow the OSM on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @OSMconcerts.



Kent Nagano (*music director and conductor*) has established an international reputation as one of the most insightful and visionary interpreters of both the operatic and symphonic repertoire. He has been music director of the OSM since 2006, a contract extended until 2020, and was also general music director of the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich (2006-2013). Nagano became principal guest conductor and artistic advisor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in 2013. Since 2015, he has been general music director and principal conductor of the Hamburg State Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra.

Born in California, Kent Nagano spent his early professional years in Boston, working in the opera house and as assistant conductor to Seiji Ozawa at the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was music director of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (1978-2009), Opéra national de Lyon (1988-1998), the Hallé Orchestra (1991-2000), associate principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (1990-1998), and artistic director and chief conductor of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin from 2000 to 2006, where he remains their honorary conductor. Kent Nagano was the first music director of the Los Angeles Opera from 2003 to 2006.

A sought-after guest conductor, Nagano has worked with most of the world's finest orchestras—including the Vienna, Berlin, and New York philharmonics, Chicago Symphony, Dresden Staatskapelle, and Leipzig Gewandhaus—and at leading opera houses including the Opéra national de Paris, Berlin State Opera,

Metropolitan Opera, and Semperoper Dresden. He has won two Grammy Awards—for his recording of Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and for Busoni's *Doktor Faust* with the Opéra national de Lyon—among other awards.

In 2013, he was named Great Montrealer by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, and received the insignia of Grand Officer of the Order of Quebec.

Recent recordings with the OSM include *Symphony and New Works for Organ and Orchestra*, with Olivier Lattry, OSM organist emeritus, and Jean-Willy Kunz, OSM organist-in-residence (Analekta); *Complete Violin Concertos of Saint-Saëns*, with OSM concertmaster Andrew Wan (Analekta); the complete Beethoven symphonies (Sony/Analekta); and *Shoka—Japanese Children Songs*, with soprano Diana Damrau and Chœur des enfants de Montréal (Sony/Analekta).

Recent tours with the OSM: in 2014, European tour in March and Asian tour in October; South America in 2013; New York's Carnegie Hall in 2011; concerts at the Edinburgh International Festival (2011).



Daniil Trifonov (*piano*) has made a spectacular ascent to classical music stardom, combining consummate technique with rare sensitivity and depth. Since taking first prize at both the Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein competitions in 2011 at the age of just 20, the Russian pianist has appeared with most of the world's foremost orchestras, including the New York, Los Angeles, and Royal philharmonics; the Chi-

ago, Boston, San Francisco, and London symphony orchestras; the Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Mariinsky orchestras; Washington's National Symphony; and Rome's Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. In solo recital he has appeared in such key international venues as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and at Boston's Celebrity Series; London's Royal Festival, Queen Elizabeth, and Wigmore halls; Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; Berlin's Philharmonie; Vienna's Musikverein; Zurich's Tonhalle; Barcelona's Palau de la Musica; the Salle Pleyel and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris; Tokyo's Opera City and Suntory Hall; and the Seoul Arts Center.

Following the August release of *Rachmaninoff Variations*, recorded for Deutsche Grammophon with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, this season Trifonov plays complete Rachmaninoff cycles with the New York Philharmonic and Philharmonia orchestras, and single concertos for debuts with the Berlin Staatskapelle and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, where he headlines the prestigious Nobel Prize Concert; an Asian tour with the Czech Philharmonic; and dates with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon, and the Munich Philharmonic. Prokofiev is the vehicle for his Orchestre symphonique de Montréal debut on the current North American tour, and for returns to the Orchestre National de France and the London Symphony. Trifonov plays Chopin with the San Francisco Symphony, Tchaikovsky with the La Scala Orchestra, and Liszt with the Pittsburgh Symphony at home and on a North European tour. An accomplished composer, Trifonov reprises his own acclaimed piano concerto with the Pittsburgh Symphony. Besides making his recital debut in Los Angeles, he undertakes an extensive, high-profile European recital tour and residencies in Lugano, Switzerland, and at London's Wigmore Hall, where he collaborates with pianist Sergei Babayan and violinist Gidon Kremer.

Last season saw the release of *Trifonov: The Carnegie Recital*, the pianist's first recording as an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist; captured live at his sold-out 2013 Carnegie Hall recital debut, the album scored both an ECHO

Klassik Award and a Grammy nomination. His discography also features Chopin on Decca and Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra.

Born in Nizhny Novgorod in 1991, Trifonov studied with Tatiana Zelikman at Moscow's Gnessin School of Music and Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music. In 2013, he was awarded Italy's Franco Abbiati Prize for Best Instrumental Soloist.

For more information, please visit daniiltrifonov.com. [Twitter.com/daniil_trifonov](https://twitter.com/daniil_trifonov). www.facebook.com/daniiltrifonov.page.

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Kent Nagano

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