



Saint-Saëns Symphonie No.3

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Orchestre Métropolitain

Philippe Bélanger

Organ BACHRATH

Oratoire Saint- Joseph

Montréal





**SYMPHONY NO. 3
IN C MINOR OP. 78
("ORGAN SYMPHONY")**

Saint-Saëns was a virtuoso pianist, a great organist—the greatest of his day, according to Liszt—and an extraordinarily prolific composer. He composed, he said of himself, “like a tree producing leaves.” He was the very paradigm of the child prodigy who turns out well, achieving a brilliant career and enviable affluence. He made a name for himself not only in continental Europe but also in England and the United States, and even in Russia. His numerous tours were widely reported by the press of the day. Here in Quebec he was a major influence in the teaching of music up until the time of the *révolution tranquille*.

Saint-Saëns was far from being an unknown when, in 1886, the London Philharmonic Society commissioned a symphony from him. Since 1871 he had been performing frequently in England as a pianist, and his compositions were played there. He had even enjoyed the signal honor of playing before Queen Victoria. This had opened for him the doors of Buckingham Palace’s music library, where he discovered numerous manuscripts by Handel. Like Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, Saint-Saëns was powerfully influenced by the master of the oratorio. It was Saint-Saëns who

reintroduced Handel's music to France and who breathed fresh life into the form by composing three oratorios. Of these, *Le Déluge* (1876) most strongly shows the creative influence of Handel.

When he received the commission from the noble society (which on the occasion of its centenary in 1913 was renamed the Royal Philharmonic Society) Saint-Saëns was no novice. He had already composed five symphonies: two juvenile works that were not published, his Symphonies nos. 1 and 2, and his Symphony in F ("Urbs Roma"). As the list of his complete works shows, however, he was not very interested in the symphonic genre, and much preferred that of the symphonic poem, which Liszt had developed.

In order to attract large audiences and to assure financial success, the Philharmonic Society had a long-standing tradition of commissioning works from the most celebrated composers of the day. We often forget that this is the society that commissioned the Ninth Symphony from Beethoven, the "Italian" Symphony from Mendelssohn, and the Eighth Symphony from Dvorak. The society also invited prestigious musicians such as Spohr, Mendelssohn (many times), Brahms, and Wagner to lead its concerts. (It invited Berlioz too, but he couldn't accept because of his commitments to a rival organization.) When Saint-Saëns took to the podium to conduct the premier of his symphony, he was in august company.

He was, at that time, known as the greatest living French composer, the author of *Samson et Dalila* and of *Le Déluge*, of magnificent concertos for piano and cello, not to mention his chamber music. While composing his Symphony no. 3, Saint-Saëns learned of the death of Liszt and, naturally, dedicated the work to the memory of the man who was both his beloved friend and a giant of 19th-century music.

From the organ lofts of the Sainte-Trinité church and the Palais de Trocadéro, Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) rekindled interest in organ recitals, and laid the foundation for the new genre that Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) called the symphony for organ. Repertoire written in this new genre was performed particularly on the organs of the Saint-Sulpice church.

Both Guilmant and Widor were students of, and particularly fascinated by, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, a Belgian organist of uncommon virtuosity. Lemmens transmitted his love of Bach to his two students. In France, in those days, the great cantor's music was neglected; most musicians characterized it as lacking melody, and would have nothing to do with it. Guilmant and Widor, however, made Bach known by playing his music in their numerous recitals, while also taking advantage of the rapid development of Cavallé-Coll organs to develop a new style of playing Bach.

The march based on Handel's "Lift up your Heads," a chorus from *Messiah*, shows all the virtuosity and imagination which young Guilmant mustered to impress audiences. By composing *Carillon de Westminster*, Louis Vierne (1870-1937) showed that he, too, could create a sensation. Dedicated to the composer's friend Henry Willis, the London organ maker, this piece consists of variations on the well-known tune tolled by the bells of the most celebrated English abbey—and its composer was one of the best-known musicians to hold the post of organist at Notre-Dame de Paris.

The Allegro Vivace movement from Widor's Sixth Organ Symphony never fails to make an impression. Along with his Toccata, it is one of the composer's best-known, best-loved, and most representative works.

PIERRE VACHON
TRANSLATED BY SEAN MCCUTCHEON



YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN CONDUCTOR

Conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin is as well-loved by the public as he is appreciated by his peers, who awarded him the Canada Council for the Arts Virginia Parker Prize in September 2000. At the helm of the Orchestre Métropolitain since March 2000, Yannick Nézet-Séguin has worked tirelessly to broaden the scope of the orchestra's involvement in a variety of venues, while always maintaining his own rigorous standards and keeping in close touch with the music-loving public. In 2001, Nézet-Séguin became artistic director of the Concerts Populaires de Montréal, and led the Orchestre Métropolitain as official orchestra for the series. In January 2003, he was also appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Victoria Symphony.

The 2004-2005 season heralded Yannick Nézet-Séguin's European debut with, among other formations, the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Flemish Radio Orchestra, and the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also performed as guest conductor of several major Canadian orchestras, notably those of the cities of Toronto, Halifax, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver. In August 2005, after conducting the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, he was guest conductor of Australia's Sydney Symphonic Orchestra. In 2005-2006, Yannick Nézet-Séguin will conduct orchestras in the United States, England, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

In February 2003, Yannick Nézet-Séguin launched his first CD recording as conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain, an album entitled *Nino Rota : La Strada*. This début album with the orchestra earned the Opus Prize for Recording of the Year in January 2004. The awarding of this prize coincided with the launching of a second album, a recording with the Orchestre Métropolitain of Symphony no. 4 by Gustav Mahler. *Mahler 4* was acclaimed by reviewers in *Diapason* and *Classics Today*, who awarded it their highest marks. It earned the Opus Award for Recording of the Year and for Best Record Production of the Year, and earned Yannick Nézet-Séguin the Opus Award for Best Interpreter of the Year 2004. Spring 2005 saw the release of the CD *Kurt Weill*, recorded by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Orchestre Métropolitain, and singer Diane Dufresne. In October 2005 ADISQ (Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle, et de la vidéo), awarded to this CD the Félix Prize for best classical recording of the year by an orchestra and large ensemble.



PHILIPPE BÉLANGER

ORGANIST

PHILIPPE BÉLANGER

ORGANIST

When Philippe Bélanger was nine years old he was named organist at Saint Paul's church in Aylmer, Quebec, his native city. He studied organ with Monique Gendron at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Hull and with John Grew at McGill University in Montreal. Philippe Bélanger furthered his musical studies through master classes with Marie-Claire Alain, Daniel Roth, and Ludger Lohmann. He has held posts as organist in the Ottawa region, at St-Rémi's church and at Our Lady of Ottawa Cathedral Basilica and, in Montreal, at Saint Matthias' Church in Westmount, at the Presbyterian College, and at the Maison mère des sœurs grises.

In November 2002, when he was still only 27 years old, Philippe Bélanger won the competition to become the organist at Saint Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. He has performed in Canada, the United States, and France. He has been heard on CBC and Radio-Canada, and has recorded for the National Film Board of Canada. In 2001, he won first prize in the John Robb Organ Competition of the Royal Canadian College of Organists and, in 2002, first prize in the Ligue d'improvisation à l'orgue.

Philippe Bélanger is also known for his love of organ building. He is currently artistic director of the organ manufacturing company Les Orgues Baumgarten.



Photo : Martin Laporte



THE ORCHESTRE MÉTROPOLITAIN

The Orchestre Métropolitain was founded in 1981 by a group of Canadian musicians, graduates of the faculties and conservatories of music of Quebec, to take up with brio the challenge of promoting both classical music and the talents of Canadian musicians, composers, and artists. Its particular artistic and pedagogical approaches, its emphasis on reaching out to the community and, especially, its excellence have made the orchestra an important Montreal institution.

The Métropolitain often strides off the beaten path. As part of its mission to help a new and wider audience discover the richness and diversity of the symphonic repertoire, the orchestra does not shy away from appearing in less conventional venues. The Métropolitain also gives high priority to promoting classical music among young people, notably through matinee concerts adapted to the tastes of tomorrow's music lovers.

The Métropolitain's artistic approach is to keep in touch with the varied interests of a broad public while emphasizing a level of excellence that commands the respect of the most discerning ear. The Métropolitain loves to surprise with original concepts, including encounters between classical music and dance, theatre, and painting. The principle that guides the programming choices made by the artistic director is to expand ever wider the public's musical horizons.

In March 2000, Yannick Nézet-Séguin took over the musical direction of the orchestra. His musicianship, maturity, passion, and charisma have already seduced the public. This is the fourth disc recorded by the Orchestre Métropolitain on the Atma label. In collaboration with artists such as Anton Kuerti, Karina Gauvin, Joseph Rouleau, and Lyne Fortin the orchestra has made numerous previous recordings, all of which have won critical acclaim.



MUSICIANS

First violins

Denise Lupien, solo / *principal*
Johanne Morin, solo assistant /
principal assistant

Alain Giguère
Carolyn Klause
Alexander-Raphaël Lozowski
Florence Mallette
Linda Poirier
Ariane Bresse
Sofia Gentile
Daniel Godin
Jean-Aï Patrascu
Annie Guénette

Second violins

Noémi Racine-Gaudreault, solo / *principal*
Claude Hamel, associé / *associate*
Sylvie Harvey
Brigitte Lefebvre
Lucie Ménard
Claudio Ricignuolo
Helga Dathé
Silviu Patrascu
Nathalie Bonin
Nancy Ricard
Heather Schnarr

Violas

Brian Bacon, solo / *principal*
Yukari Cousineau, solo associé /
associate principal
Gérald Daigle
Julie Dupras
Pierre Lupien
Pierre Tourville
Francine Lupien
Jean René
Marie-Ève Lessard
Jean Macrae

Cellos

Christopher Best, violoncelle solo / *principal*
Vincent Bernard, violoncelle solo associé /
associate principal
Louise Trudel, violoncelle solo assistant /
assistant principal
Céline Cléroux
Thérèse Ryan
Katherine Skorzevska
Guillaume Saucier
Hugo Sanschagrin
Carla Antoun

Double basses

René Gosselin, contrebasse solo / *principal*
Marc Denis, contrebasse solo associé /
associate principal
Réal Montminy
Catherine Lefebvre
Yannick Chenevert
Pierre Pépin

Flutes

Marie-Andrée Benny, solo / *principal*
Marcel St-Jacques
Caroline Séguin, piccolo solo /
principal, piccolo

Oboes

Lise Beauchamp, solo / *principal*
Maryse Fredette
Josée Marchand

Clarinets

Simon Aldrich, solo / *principal*
François Martel, clarinette basse solo /
principal, bass clarinet
Martin Carpentier

Bassoons

Michel Bettez, solo / *principal*
René Bernard
Alain Thibault

Horns

Pierre Savoie, solo / *principal*
Paul Marcotte
Christian Beaucher
Nadia Labelle

Trumpets

Stéphane Beaulac, solo / *principal*
Lise Bouchard
Mark Dhamaratnam

Tombones

Patrice Richer, solo / *principal*
Michael Wilson
Trevor Dix, trombone basse solo /
principal, bass trombone

Tuba

Alain Cazes, solo / *principal*

Timpani

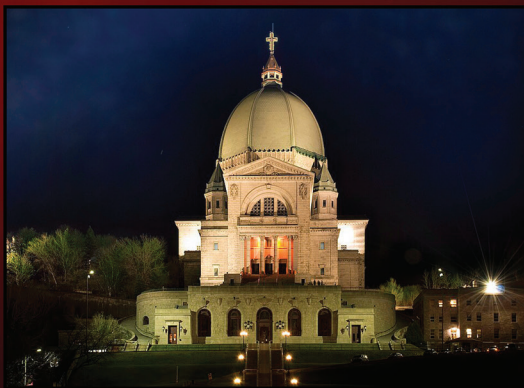
Stéphanie Dionne, solo / *principal*

Percussion

Philip Hornsey, solo / *principal*
Raymond Desrosiers

Piano

Jennifer Bourdages
Danielle Boucher



Oratoire Saint-Joseph, Montreal



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The 2xHD Fusion Mastering System: In the constant evolution of its proprietary mastering process, 2xHD has progressed to a new phase called 2xHD FUSION, integrating the finest analog, with state-of-the-art digital technology.

The mastering chain consists of a selection of high-end vacuum tube equipment. For the recordings on this album, the original DSD master was played on a Nagra REF DAC high-end tube playback converter, wired with OCC silver cables to the 2xHD analog mastering electronic tube system permitting 2xHD FUSION to obtain a better resolution and 3D imaging.

The resulting signal is then transferred back into high resolution formats by recording it in DSD 256 using a custom 2xHD Technologies A to D converter. All analog and digital cables that are used are state-of-the-art Siltech. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by a super capacitor power supply, using a new technology that lowers the digital noise found in the lowest level of the spectrum.

2xHD.com
Pure Emotion

Saint - Saëns Symphonie No. 3

Yannick Nézet-Séguin - Philippe Bélanger (Organ)
Orchestre Métropolitain

Symphonie no. 3 in C minor op. 78 ("Organ Symphony")

1. Adagio - Allegro moderato 10:30
2. Poco adagio 10:30
3. Allegro moderato - Presto 07:18
4. Maestoso 07:45

5. Marche sur "Lift Up Your Heads" 07:23

Alexandre Guilmant

6. Carillon de Westminster 07:09

Louis Vierne

7. Sixième symphonie pour orgue: Allegro vivace 09:37

Charles-Marie Widor

Organ: Philippe Bélanger

Recorded at the Basilique de l'Oratoire St-Joseph
du Mont-Royal (Quebec), Canada,
December 7, 8 and 10, 2005

Producer: **Johanne Goyette**

Sound engineering: **Anne-Marie Sylvestre**

Assistants: **Martin Laporte, Pierre-Philippe Boulay, François Goupil**

Organ tuning: **Denis Juget**

Booklet preparation and editing: **Marie-Noël Laporte and Sean McCutcheon**

Graphic design: **Diane Lagacé, André Perry** / Recording session photos: **Martin Laporte**

Original recording: **ATMA Classique**

2xHD Mastering: **René Laflamme**

2xHD Executive Producer: **André Perry**

