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– SUMMER FUN – RAFAEL PAYARE AND THE OSM

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ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE
DE MONTRÉAL

Hilary Hahn, violin
Rafael Payare, conductor

JULY 1st 2022 | 8:00 PM

**Amphithéâtre
Fernand-Lindsay**

SUMMER FUN - RAFAEL PAYARE AND THE OSM

PROGRAM

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

La Valse

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Finale : Allegro giocoso ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

The Miraculous Mandarin, Op. 19, Sz. 73 (Suite)

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

La Mer

- I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer (From dawn to noon on the sea)
- II. Jeux de vagues (Play of the waves)
- III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer (Dialogue of the wind and the sea)

ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

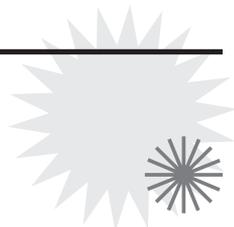
Hilary Hahn, violin

Rafael Payare, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Although they premiered within the span of less than a half-century, the works on this evening's program illustrate a great variety of colours, textures and influences that coexisted during the transition from the 19th to 20th centuries. While Dvořák and Bartók both impart touches of Slavic folklore, the former's lyricism contrasts with the dissonant modernity of the latter. Ravel and Debussy, who we often have the tendency to approximate, employ the orchestra in such personal and singular ways that we find in *La Valse* and *La Mer* two worlds as distant from one another as they are individually captivating. The aftermath of the First World War also imprints a certain form of decay and violence on the works in this program by Bartók and Ravel.

La Valse is Ravel's tribute to the Viennese waltz, which, in the composer's own words, gives the idea of a "fantastical and fatal whirlwind." The elegance, grace and levity usually associated with the genre here give way to a sequence of *tableaux* caught between a dream and a nightmare, splendour and decadence, the portrait of a world shattered by the torments of global conflict still fresh in people's memories – the work having been written in 1920. Initially composed for Les Ballets Russes, the commission was refused by Sergei Diaghilev, who deemed it undanceable—undoubtedly because of the discursions that disrupt the waltz rhythm periodically throughout the piece. The work is, nevertheless, a masterpiece of conciseness and potency, masterfully orchestrated, keeping the listener in suspense until the very last. Ravel had a keen interest in dance as a source of rhythmic inspiration, as well as great ease in assimilating outside influences—Spanish and Eastern music, blues and jazz, especially—two characteristics that are discernible in *La Valse*.



Antonín Dvořák, meanwhile, bore a steadfast love of his people and very often incorporated Bohemian folk melodies into his most prominent compositions. *The Violin Concerto no. 1* is no exception, especially the third movement, where we hear an ebullient Czech dance. This Concerto was commissioned by one of the greatest virtuosi of the time, Joseph Joachim, who had just recently premiered Brahms' Violin Concerto. Though Dvořák and Joachim collaborated for two years on its composition, it was another soloist, František Ondříček, who premiered the work in Prague on October 14, 1883. With its well-apportioned shifts between technical bravura and inspired lyricism, the great fluidity in transitions between its different parts, and its distinctive folkloric accents, this Concerto quickly made its way into a niche of coveted repertoire for concert performers and music lovers alike.

Such was not the case with Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*, which fell far short of delighting the public at its first performance in Cologne in 1926. In fact, the ballet was deemed scandalous and removed from the bill after its first presentation. The work is based on a 1917 novella by the Hungarian journalist and playwright Menyhért Lengyel which tells the story of a prostitute who lures customers into a hideout for thugs who then rob them, before murdering them. The plot leads us to the slums of post-war society such as we find in the films of Fritz Lang or in paintings by Otto Dix or Georg Grosz: an underworld of dark alleys populated by thieves, murderers and prostitutes. Bartók's ballet failing to find an appreciative audience, the composer fashioned it into a suite for orchestra in which the music need only refer to itself, evoking the world of the story without offending through its theatrical representation. Throughout what was a thoroughly modernistic work that has kept its surprise effect intact to this day, one senses the suffocating atmosphere of the city, the heroine's erotic tension, as well as the obsessive violence of the plot.

On a softer and dreamier note, Debussy's *La Mer* arrived amid a cascade of masterworks for piano (*Estampes, Masques, Images I*), in the early days of the composer's infatuation with singer Emma Bardac. Enthralled by the vastness of the sea, Debussy transposed his impressions into a highly open and freely-structure score, which, far from seeking to musically depict an image of the sea, explores the limits of a musical discourse capable of yielding the sense of "an endless succession of moments," to quote the composer's biographer André Boucourechliev. While the sea has inspired a great many artists throughout history, in Debussy it brought out his propensity for sound painting, but with an unprecedented approach for his time. *La Mer* was completed in March 1905, after a gestation period of a year and a half. Looking out from the plains of Burgundy to the banks of the English Channel, the sea is "heard" in a succession of diverse tableaux, from constellations of changing sounds and colours in "Jeux de vagues" (Play of the waves) to the "Dialogue du vent et de la mer" (Dialogue of the wind and the sea), which employs extreme dynamic and register contrasts to conjure the turbulence of crashing waves.

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Benoit Brière

A passionate spokesperson

Mr. Brière is basically wedded to classical music, given that his spouse is a cellist—and in addition, Joliette-born. “A person who marries must adopt their wife’s hometown.” One might say that our Spokesperson is steeped in classical music everyday from morning to night!

“Don’t search for me this summer: I’ll be at the Festival de Lanaudière.”

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