



AZRIELI MUSIC PRIZES

Programme

Featuring Premieres by

Hana Ajiashvili, Nicholas Denton Protsack, Adrian Mocanu & Dalit Hadass Warshaw

Maison symphonique de Montréal
October 15, 2026, 7:30 p.m. ET



ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE
DE MONTRÉAL



Place
des
Arts

2026
**AZRIELI
MUSIC
PRIZES**

GALA
CONCERT

The Azrieli Foundation is a proud,
independent Canadian charity inspired by
our Jewish values, including tikkun olam:
'healing the world.'



The Foundation strives to improve people's lives through strategic and impactful giving in education, research, healthcare and the arts, across Canada and Israel.





A welcome message from

Sharon Azrieli

We are thrilled to welcome you to our sixth Azrieli Music Prizes Gala Concert.

When I first imagined these prizes in 2013, two years before their launch, I never would have predicted the incredible journey they would lead us on. AMP has grown tremendously since then.

To date, we've premiered the prize-winning works of our 14 accomplished laureates both in Montréal and in great concert halls around the world. Online, we've had impressively large audiences from over 190 countries tune in to watch and listen. As a result, the

Azrieli Music Prizes have expanded into a truly global platform, connecting music lovers around the world to the best musical voices of today. More importantly, the Prizes have, and will continue to, inspire reflection, exploration and discovery of the human condition through the powerful medium of music.

The four composers that we will hear tonight are not only master storytellers, but artists of the highest caliber and varied genres; using their communicative abilities; painting, weaving and sculpting their ideas through the time, space and language of music.

Our team is committed to giving them every opportunity to stretch their creativity and advance their craft. Alongside the premieres and cash prizes, these winning works will be given studio recordings of the highest level. Soon, we will record our sixth studio album.

This year, we have engaged over 125 musicians and soloists, both orchestral and choral. They are here to perform the four magnificent prize-winning works written by our brilliant 2026 laureates: Adrian Mocanu, Dalit Hadass Warshaw, Nicholas Denton Protsack and Hana Ajiashvili. Together, we will hear how they explore themes of memory, identity and resilience through their distinct musical voices. They draw from unique sources of medieval poetry, family history, environmental beauty and forgotten voices to transform the past into something beautiful, relevant and timely. Together, these works explore the meaning of loss, remembrance and renewal, resulting in a powerful tapestry of contemporary classical music.

We are pleased to be returning to work with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM), this time to hear their skilled chorus and orchestra under the direction of conductor Asher Fisch. We are also grateful to our broadcasting partners: Medici.tv, Amadeus.tv and The Violin Channel. By presenting and preserving the most important world premiere of these works, we hope that they will continue to inspire audiences for years to come.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and support of so many exceptional people. These include the AMP Advisory Council:

chair Ana Sokolović, Lawrence Cherney, C.M., Brian Current, Jonathan Goldman, Sylvia L'Écuyer, C.M., Barbara Seal, C.M.; and the AMP team: Rebecca Cuthbert, Neil Edwards, Jason van Eyk, Mariam Omar and Catherine Willshire. Our sincere gratitude goes to the members of the Canadian Music Jury: Barbara Assiginaak, C.M., O.Ont., Kelly-Marie Murphy, David Pay, Colleen Renihan and Ana Sokolović; the Jewish Music Jury: Ofer Ben-Amots, Gisèle Ben-Dor, Avner Dorman, Neil W. Levin, Steven Mercurio and Na'ama Zisser; and the International Music Jury: Chaya Czernowin, Margareta Ferek-Petrić, Jonathan Goldman, Daniel Kidane and Samy Moussa. I am also grateful for the support of our Board of Directors as well as our new CEO, André Beaulieu, and my sister Naomi.

Thank you for being part of this special evening. I hope tonight's performances move you, inspire you and remind you of the enduring power of music to tell our stories.

And please send us your comments and impressions! Your involvement helps ensure that new music of the highest quality will continue to be created, performed and shared around the world.

Sharon Azrieli, C.Q., D.Mus
Chair, Azrieli Music, Arts and
Culture Centre

A welcome message from

Naomi Azrieli and André Beaulieu

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 Azrieli Music Prizes (AMP) Gala Concert.

While the Gala is always a highlight of the Foundation's event calendar, tonight's performance includes three unique highpoints. First, it marks the 10th anniversary of the Prizes' very first concert, celebrated in this same beautiful Maison symphonique with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM). Second, it signifies a pinnacle of AMP's music cycle, with four prize-winning works performed by over 125 musicians across the OSM Chorus, Orchestra and eight outstanding soloists, all led by the astounding Asher Fisch. Last, and perhaps most auspicious, is that tonight's event marks 18 Gala premieres. In Judaism, 18, or *chai* ("life") is a number associated with celebration and good fortune. On this *chai* anniversary, we celebrate the Prizes as they reach this historic milestone, honouring a legacy of vision, creativity and impact that continues to inspire today.

AMP fully embodies the Azrieli Foundation's commitment to identifying, uplifting and advancing excellence in the arts. And over the past dozen years, the Prizes have evolved to become an even stronger beacon for what the Foundation seeks to achieve. Under the umbrella of our Azrieli Music, Arts and Culture Centre (AMACC), chaired by the

visionary Dr. Sharon Azrieli, C.Q., D.Mus, AMP has strengthened its commitment as one of the world's most important competitions of its kind. We see that commitment not only tonight, but also across the many other concerts, recordings and international events through which AMP is making its mark.

We would like to personally congratulate the 2026 Laureates for their remarkable compositions, which draw from medieval poetry, personal family history, vast landscapes and vanishing languages. These masterful works have reinvented how we experience remembrance, resilience and renewal in ways only music can express.

We are incredibly grateful to Sharon for creating these Prizes for the Azrieli Foundation and to the extraordinary AMP team, led by Jason van Eyk, Managing Director of AMACC, for maintaining the artistic integrity and excellence that define this competition. To our dedicated AMP Advisory Council, we extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks for your generous commitment to this important work.

The first performance is an unforgettable moment. May you all be moved by tonight's exceptional artistry. And may these new creations become tomorrow's masterpieces.



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André Beaulieu
CEO, Azrieli Foundation

Naomi Azrieli, O.C., DPhil
Chair, Azrieli Foundation



A welcome message from

Mélanie La Couture

It is with great pride that the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal once again joins forces with the Azrieli Foundation to present the Azrieli Music Prizes Gala Concert, dedicated to contemporary composition.

Over the past decade, the Azrieli Music Prizes have established themselves as one of Canada's most important composition competitions and have become a truly vital source of support for contemporary voices in classical music. These prizes embody a bold vision: to support today's new creations and to champion works that contribute to shaping the repertoire of tomorrow.

This evening, we have the privilege of witnessing a rare and priceless moment: the birth of new works. The winners of the 2026 edition will hear their scores come to life on stage, performed by the OSM Chorus and Orchestra.

The programme invites us on a rich artistic journey across eras, territories and imaginary worlds: from evocative Canadian landscapes to echoes of medieval Europe, from stories steeped in history and memory to the cultural and musical heritage of many traditions. Such diversity is a tribute to the vitality of contemporary creation and the manifold voices within it.

In keeping with its mission, the OSM takes pride in making these new works heard and in supporting the artists who are redefining the contours of our musical landscape. By performing the music of our time, we reaffirm our commitment to a living, ever-evolving culture.

We offer our most sincere congratulations to the winners of this 2026 edition. Their talent, insight and creative imagination are sure to move and inspire you.

To our cherished audience: thank you for your presence and your steadfast support. It is your listening that gives these creative moments their full meaning.

I wish you a concert filled with new discoveries and deep emotion.

Mélanie La Couture
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Orchestre symphonique de Montréal

PROGRAMME

ASHER FISCH, guest conductor

Orchestre symphonique de Montréal

ANDREW MEGILL, chorusmaster

Orchestre symphonique de Montréal Chorus

ADRIAN MOCANU

de l'encra escafada ("from faded ink") for choir, orchestra and four violas da gamba

(WORLD PREMIERE)

LES VOIX HUMAINES

Susie Napper, Elinor Frey, Felix Deak and Thomas Baeté, bass viols

DALIT HADASS WARSHAW

Letter from Across the River for solo baritone and soprano, SATB choir and full orchestra

(WORLD PREMIERE)

HILA PLITMANN, soprano

NOAM HEINZ, baritone

INTERMISSION

NICHOLAS DENTON PROTSACK

Height of Land for chorus, orchestra and cello solo

(WORLD PREMIERE)

ARIEL BARNES, cello

Act I: Murmuring Land

Act II: Scoured Land

Act III: No Man's Land

HANA AJIASHVILI

Riddle for soprano, symphonic orchestra and mixed choir

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

HILA BAGGIO, soprano

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Azrieli Music, Arts and Culture Centre acknowledges that tonight's performance takes place in Tiohtià:ke, on unceded land stewarded by the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. This land has long served as a place of gathering and exchange between nations, and today is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations. We are grateful to the Kanien'kehá:ka for their care of the land and waters on which we gather this evening, and we thank them for the opportunity to make music with our national and international community of musicians, composers and audience in this place.



**FOR THE TEXT AND
TRANSLATION THAT
ACCOMPANY THESE
WORKS, PLEASE SCAN
THE QR CODE.**

2026 AZRIELI COMMISSION
FOR INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Adrian Mocanu

de l'encra escafada

("from faded ink") for choir, orchestra and four violas da gamba

PROGRAMME NOTE

BY DIANE KOLIN, PH.D

Early music has been a constant source of creativity for Adrian Mocanu, as a link between past, present and future. *de l'encra escafada*, which translates as "from faded ink," finds its inspiration in the only surviving piece by a *trobairitz*, a female troubadour author from the 12th-century Occitania, named Beatritz de Dia. The *canço* (song) is titled by its first stanza "A chantar m'er de so qu'eu no volria," ("I must sing of what I do not want") written in Occitan, a Romance language most closely related to Catalan. This traditional genre of music talks about separation of secret lovers at dawn. In Beatritz de Dia's poem, the character complains about a lover who betrayed her, demanding to be treated with dignity, showing traits of both vulnerability and strength.

In Mocanu's work, the poem is used in its entirety, through words and symbolic sound material. The title, *de l'encra escafada*, refers to the ink gradually revealing itself on an old manuscript. In order to preserve the poem's balance between fragility and intensity, he uses a compositional approach called *granular synthesis*, employing a technique that breaks down the original song into its micro elements. The text is expressed with non-pitched vocal techniques, representing the ink slowly appearing on the paper, becoming words, then phrases until finally the language is revealed.

Mocanu refers to the musicians and singers as *auto-sufficient protagonists*, each playing a role in the dialogue. Spatialization is an important aspect of how this dialogue works: the choir stands behind the orchestra and the sound travels from one direction to another, ascending or descending, playing

on amplitude and density. Four bass violas da gamba act as soloists alongside the choir and the orchestra, triggering instrumental gestures which are then carried by the rest of the ensemble. The sound is occasionally amplified or distorted when instruments play with extended techniques, using non-pitched or creaky metallic noises, or scratch tones. The percussion section creates texture and rhythm, working as a mediator between the choir and the orchestra.

At the very end, the original quotation of Beatritz de Dia's melody can be fully heard, played in a range of five-octaves by the orchestra and the violas da gamba. But no one is playing it at full capacity. The ink is finally revealed. We can see it, but it is still very fragile.

For the entire duration of the work, audience members can witness the process of a pure sound being born, developed and evolved, until the point where the intonation stabilizes and then slowly fades out. It represents the bridge being built between the past, the present and the future, as a form of cultural legacy. Beatritz de Dia's centuries-old song becomes a source of current reflection, asking listeners how the future could be perceived.

de l'enca escafada
for choir, orchestra and four violas da gamba
full score

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BIOGRAPHY

Adrian Mocanu is a Romanian-Ukrainian composer born in 1989 in Kyiv. He has received numerous scholarships and residencies, including the Gaude Polonia scholarship from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; a Postcolonial Recherche fellowship with Ensemble Recherche; an artistic residency at Casa de Velázquez – Académie de France à Madrid; and residencies at The Green Room for Performing Artists in Cologne, Malévoz Quartier Culturel in Switzerland and through the Odyssée program of the Association des Centres culturels de rencontre (ACCR) and the French Ministry of Culture.

Mocanu served as composer-in-residence with Juventudes Musicales de España for the 2023/24 season and was subsequently a Weltoffenes Berlin fellow and composer-in-residence with the vocal ensemble Maulwerker. He was also awarded a 2025/26 residency scholarship at the Royal Academy of Spain in Rome.

His distinctions include the Frederic Mompou International Award; second prize at the International Composition Competition GMCL/Jorge Peixinho; first prize at the Borys Lyatoshynsky Composition Competition; and second prizes at both the Mauricio Kagel Composition Competition and the Young Composers Prize Fundación SGAE-CNDM. He also received second prize ex aequo at the George Ștephănescu International Composition Competition and was commissioned by the DEBUT Classical Singing Competition to compose the compulsory contemporary vocal work for its 2024 competition. Most recently, he won the inaugural St. Francis of Assisi International Composition Competition.



© Fotografía Giu

Mocanu has collaborated with and written works for Ensemble Musikfabrik, Maulwerker, Ensemble Recherche, IEMA Ensemble, Ensemble Mosaik, Barcelona Modern Ensemble, PinkNoise Ensemble, Bilbao Sinfonietta, Continuum XXI and Anima Vox Duo. His music has been premiered across Europe, North America and South America.

Mocanu studied composition at the National Music Academy of Ukraine and completed his postgraduate studies at the Centro Superior de Enseñanza Musical Katarina Gurska in Madrid, Spain.

SOLOISTS

LES VOIX HUMAINES CONSORT OF VIOLS

Susie Napper, Elinor Frey, Felix Deak and Thomas Baeté, bass viols

Taking a refreshing look at the spectacular repertoire for viols, Les Voix humaines Consort presents unique and controversial ideas that offer a new profile of consort playing in which rhythmic freedom and ornamentation play an integral role.

Beyond the grand consort repertoire, such as John Dowland's *Lachrimae*, Bach's *Art of Fugue* and the Purcell *Fantasias*, the Consort performs lesser-known gems by Cima, Trabaci, Lupo, Moulinier and Charpentier to which they bring years of experience and experimentation as viol, recorder, fiddle and bass violinists!

For the past thirty years, the prize-winning consort has toured in Canada, the U.S., Mexico, France, Poland, Scandinavia and the Baltic States and recorded Bach's *Art of Fugue*, Purcell's *Fantasias*, Dowland's *Lachrimae* as well as their own, unusual arrangement of Vivaldi's *La Quattro Stagioni* for equal viols: *4 Seasons, 4 Viols*.



© Katia Briand



2026 AZRIELI COMMISSION
FOR JEWISH MUSIC



Dalit Hadass Warsaw

Letter from Across the River

for solo baritone and soprano, SATB choir and full orchestra

PROGRAMME NOTE

BY DIANE KOLIN, PH.D

Letter from Across the River describes the journey of Dalit Hadass Warshaw's great-grandfather, Dov Hudes, who was a notable personality of Dubienka, Poland during World War II. The story the work depicts is a crucial moment for Dubienka's inhabitants, a realization of their probable tragic fate. Hudes undertook a dangerous swim across the River Bug to Soviet-occupied Ukraine to mail a farewell letter to his three sons who had emigrated before the occupation of Poland. Instead of choosing to stay where he might be free, he swam back to Dubienka to join his family. Parallel to Hudes' swim, the work recounts the Biblical account of Jacob's battle with the angel after crossing the Jabbok River by night. The similarities between the stories, and the idea of self-sacrifice in the name of love or duty, are at the heart of this composition.

The work is written for orchestra, chorus, baritone solo and soprano solo. Three languages can be heard: English, to carry the words of Hudes; Yiddish, representing the "old world" of Dubienka; and Hebrew, as it is spoken today. The choir acts as a Greek chorus, as a wise narrator, but changes throughout the piece to illustrate the river and to introduce the battle with the angel. They sing in Yiddish and Hebrew, sometimes pitted against each other in biblical texts, while the baritone depicting Hudes describes his experience in English. The soprano portrays the angel and the content of Hudes' letter in Hebrew.

Meanwhile, the orchestra is joined by a theremin, a fantastical electronic instrument also played by the composer. The theremin uses an electromagnetic field through which the player moves their arms or fingers. It takes on an evocative role in the work, with glissandos and ethereal, sometimes otherworldly sounds in multiple octaves. While it is fully integrated into the orchestral texture at the beginning of the work, the theremin becomes more tempestuous as the orchestra and the chorus assume characteristics of the river. One could imagine the actual physical motion of swimming, of going against the waves. In the final part, the theremin emerges as a solo instrument, "singing" the wordless soprano solo while the soprano singer musically engages with the theremin.

Letter from Across the River conveys the story of the composer's family, but set to music, it becomes a universal story of self-sacrifice, love and resilience. With the sound of the tempestuous river, the struggle and prayer of blessing, listeners from across the globe will relate to this deeply human story.



© Dov Hudes, photo courtesy of the Warshaw family

BIOGRAPHY

An American composer, pianist and thereminist of international acclaim, Dalit Hadass Warshaw's works have been performed by numerous orchestral ensembles, including the Houston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Boston and Albany Symphony Orchestras, the Cleveland Orchestra and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra. Described by *Gramophone* as "abound[ing] in narrative suspense and elation, with orchestral writing that embraces everything from the subtle and glistening to a voluptuousness that likely would tickle Richard Strauss and Maurice Ravel," Warshaw's music has been praised for its distinctive harmonic vocabulary, emotional intensity and vivid sense of character.

Accolades in recent years include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Copland House Residency Award, three MacDowell Fellowships, a commission from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

As a piano soloist, Warshaw premiered *Conjuring Tristan*, her own piano concerto, with the Grand Rapids Symphony in 2015 and has appeared with the Rockland Symphony, the Cheyenne Symphony and the Misgav Chamber Players under the direction of Lukas Foss. She has been featured widely as both soloist and chamber musician in venues such as Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall and Bargemusic, where she debuted her seven-movement piano work *Different Loves: A Cycle of Classical Portraits* in 2021.



© Chris Lee

Having studied theremin with the renowned Clara Rockmore from an early age, Warshaw has appeared as theremin soloist with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the New York Festival of Song and the San Francisco Symphony. She has performed with ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra.

Warshaw holds master's and doctoral degrees in composition from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University. A full-time member of the composition faculty at the Boston Conservatory from 2004 to 2014 and a former faculty at Juilliard Extension and Pre-College, she currently teaches at the Mannes School of Music and at Brooklyn College (CUNY).

SOLOIST

HILA PLITMANN, SOPRANO



© Bobby Zu

With a “wondrous voice, which gleams in all registers” (*Gramophone*), Hila Plitmann is renowned for her expressive, fearless performances across opera, concert and film. A leading interpreter of contemporary music, she is celebrated as “a composer’s dream” (*Star Tribune*) and is widely recognized for premiering and championing new works.

Soon after graduating from Juilliard, Plitmann made her New York Philharmonic debut in the world premiere of David Del Tredici’s *The Spider and the Fly*. She has since appeared as a soloist with major orchestras worldwide including the New York, Los Angeles and Israel Philharmonics, as well as the Chicago, Boston, BBC, Atlanta, Detroit, Hamburg, Stockholm and Melbourne Symphonies, Minnesota Orchestra and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. She has collaborated with conductors including Leonard Slatkin, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Kurt Masur, Marin Alsop,

Thomas Adès, Giancarlo Guerrero and Robert Spano.

Plitmann is also featured on major film soundtracks including *The Da Vinci Code*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, *Hail, Caesar!* and *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice*. Her discography includes GRAMMY-winning and GRAMMY-nominated recordings, notably in collaboration with leading contemporary composers such as John Corigliano, Richard Danielpour, Andrea Clearfield, Eric Whitacre and George Benjamin.

An active educator, Plitmann regularly presents residencies and masterclasses that integrate vocal technique with mindfulness and performance practice. Her work reflects a deep engagement with text, nature and artistic exploration, aiming to expand the expressive possibilities of the voice.

SOLOIST

NOAM HEINZ, BARITONE

Baritone Noam Heinz is an Israeli-British-American artist based in Berlin. He began his musical path as a bassoonist before discovering his passion for singing at the age of sixteen. A graduate of the Komische Oper Berlin's studio program and the Meitar Opera Studio of the Israeli Opera, he performs regularly on leading stages across Europe and Israel.

In 2024, Heinz was featured on the recording of Josef Tal's *Exodus* with The Orchestra Now and performed the work at Carnegie Hall. In 2025, he appeared at the Aix-en-Provence Festival as Mr. Redburn in Britten's *Billy Budd* while also participating in the festival's Académie.

The 2025/26 season brought several important engagements, including returns to the Israeli Opera as Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, his U.S. debut in the title role of *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera in Williamsburg and an appearance at the Staatsoper Stuttgart in *Der rote Wal*. He was also a finalist in the Paris Opera Competition.

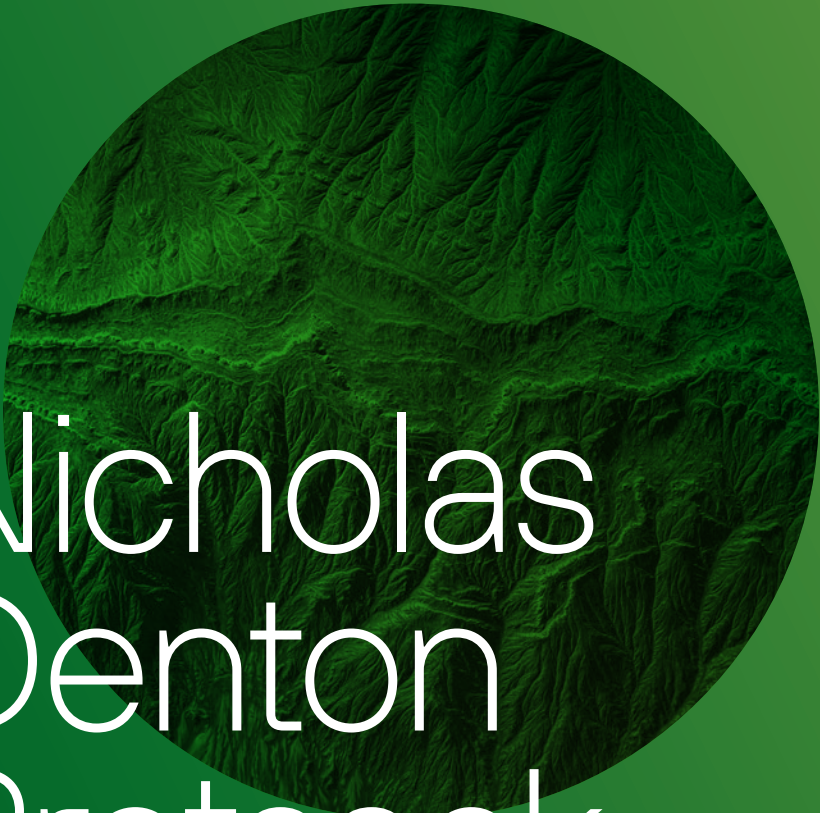
At the Komische Oper Berlin, he has appeared in leading roles spanning both classical repertoire and contemporary works. At Israeli Opera, he created the title role in the world premiere of *Theodor*, composed by Yonatan Cnaan and appeared in major Mozart and Puccini productions.

A laureate of the Ronen Foundation, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Leon Nacht Foundation, Heinz studied at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University. His growing international career reflects a combination of versatility, strong stage presence and commitment to both established repertoire and contemporary works.



© Michael Pavia

2026 AZRIELI COMMISSION
FOR CANADIAN MUSIC



Nicholas Denton Protsack

Height of Land

for chorus, orchestra and cello solo

PROGRAMME NOTE

BY DIANE KOLIN, PH.D

Growing up in Kelowna, British Columbia, and currently living in New Zealand, Nicholas Denton Protsack's relationship with nature directly impacts his composition practice, based on what he visually hears: for him, certain sounds, when mixed together, create textures and shapes, like a spatial kind of synesthesia. From this concept, he created a framework of ecologically informed music, which in his doctoral research he called *musical ecopoiesis*, a term that combines *eco*, which means environment or place, and *poiesis*, which means to create.

Denton Protsack challenged himself to redefine what Canadian music means from the perspective of an ecologically informed composer, conscious of the history of the land on which Indigenous people lived and worked for centuries. He applied his framework to bring the sonic qualities of the Okanagan, a scenic region of British Columbia defined by pine forests, fruit orchards and the basin of the huge Okanagan Lake, into his composition. His desire was to work with the physical characteristics of the landscape to permeate every single layer of the music, not just an attempt to bring these elements into the music, but equally to bring the music into these elements.

The resulting work for chorus, orchestra and violoncello solo is an anti-concerto: the soloist is not the main character, but a supporting character to the choir and orchestra, creating a collection of life forms that all collaborate and work with

one another as an ecosystem. A portion of the choir and the solo cellist are located at the back of the hall, defying the traditional classical setting. The choir, the closest to being the main character, acts as a collective elemental force in the larger orchestral sound, using vocalizations, consonant sounds and unpitched effects which sometimes imitate wind, rustling tree branches or the sound of a crackling fire.

The work unfolds in three acts. The first act, called *Murmuring Land*, draws on the specific soundscapes of the composer's youth. The second act, *Scoured Land*, is about history, including colonization and genocide, with a viewpoint of nature in which the humanness is seen as separate from it; during this act, the cello is exposed and the choir is almost entirely silent. The third act, *No Man's Land*, carries the idea of an unclaimed land with the notion of participation, describing how the land is not owned by any man, but aiming to find a world in which humans are truly part of nature.

Through this composition, Denton Protsack invites the audience to consider the participatory process as an act that challenges the perceived separation between humans and the natural world.



BIOGRAPHY

Nicholas Denton Protsack is a New Zealand-based Canadian composer and cellist whose work promotes collaboration between music and the natural world. Described as having “shimmering layers ... with surprises and unusual sounds”, his ecologically informed works often blend notated and recorded media with experimental improvisation. His music has been performed internationally in a range of concert settings, including frequent performances across North America, Europe and New Zealand.

In 2025, Denton Protsack was named the SOCAN Emerging Composer-in-Residence with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. He has also been a recipient of a BMI Foundation Composer Award and multiple SOCAN Foundation Young Composers Awards. Recent commissions include works for Stroma Ensemble, the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, the Toronto Summer Music Festival and Ensemble for These Times (E4TT).

As a cellist, Denton Protsack focuses on contemporary classical and exploratory music, often engaging in collaborative projects that bridge classical and avant-garde idioms. He is a founding member of Moth Quartet as well as the Canadian-based groups Branchroot Ensemble and Sounds Like Things. While primarily a chamber musician, he has also appeared as a soloist with orchestras including the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra.

Denton Protsack is the founder and artistic director of Whatnot Records, a genre-defying independent label dedicated to producing, promoting and distributing experimental music in all its forms. Since early 2023, the label has released a variety of collaborative and solo projects by Denton Protsack and by other artists worldwide.

He recently completed his Ph.D in music composition at Victoria University of Wellington, where he studied with composers Michael Norris and Dugal McKinnon.



© Hagen Hopkins

SOLOIST

ARIEL BARNES, CELLO

Canadian cellist Ariel Barnes is recognized internationally for his depth of expression, commanding technique and versatility. Praised for his “mesmerizing” performances and “luscious tone,” he has established himself as one of Canada’s leading cellists.

Barnes has appeared as a soloist, chamber musician and recitalist across Europe, North America and Asia, performing in major venues including Taiwan’s National Concert Hall, Prague’s Smetana Hall and Munich’s Hercules Saal. His concerto engagements include collaborations with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia Varsovia, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, among others.

A dedicated advocate for contemporary music, Barnes has inspired a significant body of new work, including 10 concerti and 12 chamber compositions written specifically for him. This includes an upcoming triptych of cello concerti to be released as an album in the coming year, featuring works by Jocelyn Morlock, Marcus Goddard and Dorothy Chang, recorded with the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra and conductor Jonathan Darlington.

His recordings are available on multiple international labels, and he has been featured on major broadcast networks including CBC Radio and BBC Radio 3. Among his honours are First Prize at the International Johannes Brahms Competition, two Western Canadian Music Awards and a JUNO Award nomination.

Currently based in Germany, Ariel Barnes serves as Principal Cellist of the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra while maintaining an active international career as a soloist, chamber musician and educator.



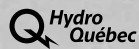
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The logo for the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, featuring the letters 'oSM' in a stylized font.

ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE
DE MONTRÉAL

26/27
Season

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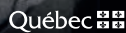
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2026 AZRIELI PRIZE
FOR JEWISH MUSIC



Hana Ajiashvili

Riddle

for soprano, symphonic orchestra and mixed choir

PROGRAMME NOTE

BY DIANE KOLIN, PH.D

Hana Ajiashvili grew up in Georgia, where polyphonic singing is part of everyday life. Her work is influenced by the Georgian folk music of her childhood, presenting multiple independent voices with rich harmonies, and by contemporary art. She hears musical harmony, rhythm, texture or structure as colours and shapes.

Despite her deep interest in contemporary art and music, Ajiashvili's composition *Riddle* is based on a 900-year-old text by the poet Yehuda Halevi, who is well known for his riddles. Usually, Halevi includes the answer in his writing, except for the one poem Ajiashvili chose as a source of inspiration. It tells the story of a physically small object that can cause great destruction with terrifying power. She eventually uncovered the riddle's meaning through discussions with rabbis in Israel: it refers to a quill dipped in ink used to sign death sentences. This mysterious text is symbolic. It remains relevant today in how it mirrors the permanent state of war and terror, much like what Ajiashvili experiences in Israel today. She connects its allusions to historical violence and antisemitism to modern tragedies where "people are killed for nothing," making *Riddle* a reflection on the recurring nature of human suffering.

Written in 2022, *Riddle* was originally composed for soprano, orchestra and chorus and was further expanded in this current iteration. The chorus, representing people who are sentenced to death, starts with a scream, wordless but powerfully communicative. Meanwhile, the solo soprano

illustrates the unity of all voices of the chorus. In Ajiashvili's interpretation of the poem, the quill draws the sentence quietly while the people scream. This emotional contrast appears through musical sections during which the orchestra plays either in unison or with special effects. Two of these effects are particularly noticeable: fist tremolo is a specific technique for woodwind instruments executed by the musician playing or pressing on the keys of the instrument using their fist. The other is the use of super balls (much like a rubber bouncy ball mounted on a stick), played on the surface of the timpani or other percussive instrument, producing a rumbling glissando effect. Taken together, Ajiashvili treats music as if it were a painting, depicting the text and its emotional world with colourful moments contrasted with darkness and shadows.

Ajiashvili's work represents a bridge between historical Jewish trauma and the modern-day reality of war and terrorism. By utilizing a mystical medieval text which resonates as a contemporary poem, Ajiashvili emphasizes that the cycle of violence and the struggle for survival are not confined to the past but are ongoing challenges that define the human condition today.

BIOGRAPHY

Hana Ajiashvili is a Georgian-Israeli composer whose works are performed internationally by leading ensembles including the Meitar Ensemble, Musica Nova, Ensemble XXI Century, Continuum and the Studio for New Music in Moscow. She has received numerous awards, including the Israel Contemporary Players' Young Israeli Composers Prize, the Israel Prime Minister's Prize for Composers, the ACUM Menachem Avidom Prize and first prizes in international competitions such as Contempus—University of Macedonia and the "Artistes en Herbe" International Composer Competition.

Ajiashvili has received commissions from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, including *Zoominout* (2011) for the Israel Contemporary Players and *Impossible Sketches* (2023) for the Meitar Ensemble. Her opera *Cut Glass* (2020), with a libretto by Royce Vavrek, was widely performed, and she again collaborated with Vavrek in 2023 on the oratorio *Philosophies*.

Her music for the film *Miracle* earned international recognition, winning awards in Poland, Belgium and China. Her works are performed worldwide by ensembles such as the Israel Contemporary Players, The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Momenta Quartet, Mivos Quartet, Reconsil, defunensemble, Riot Ensemble and Trio Catch. Her music has appeared at festivals including Heroines of Sound, CEME, Arco (Universität Mozarteum), ISCM World New Music Days, the Asian Composers League Festival, Sound Roads, Dresden Nights, Ha-Teiva Marathon, Tzili Meudcan Festival, SaxOpen, Moscow Autumn and Alternativa.

Ajiashvili earned her master's diploma in piano and composition from the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire in 1995 and continued her studies with Vladimir Tarnopolsky at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where she collaborated with the Studio for New Music and the Young Composers' Committee of the Moscow Composers' Union. In 2007, she completed her doctorate at Bar-Ilan University under the supervision of Gideon Lewensohn and Betty Olivero. She currently serves as director of the Or Yehuda Conservatory.



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SOLOIST

HILA BAGGIO, SOPRANO



© Studio Andrea

Soprano Hila Baggio is acclaimed for her versatility, musical intelligence and emotionally grounded artistry across opera and concert repertoire. A frequent guest at leading international houses and festivals, she has appeared with Semperoper Dresden, Vienna Volksoper, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro Massimo Palermo, Israeli Opera, Rossini Opera Festival, Wexford Festival, Bergen National Opera and Opéra de Rennes.

Her performances also have been heard in major venues including the Berlin Philharmonie, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Wiener Konzerthaus, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Dresden Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and Wigmore Hall.

Baggio's repertoire spans major bel canto and Mozart roles such as Violetta, Lucia, Susanna, Gilda, Adina, Pamina, Rosina and Olympia, alongside contemporary roles including Gepopo and Venus in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*.

Renowned for her affinity with 20th- and 21st-century music, she has given acclaimed performances in works by Ligeti, Schönberg, Betty Olivero and Ayal Adler. In concert, she has sung major works by Mahler, Brahms, Mozart, Beethoven, Bernstein, Berg, Haydn, Pergolesi and Mendelssohn with leading orchestras under conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Zubin Mehta, Lahav Shani, Manfred Honeck and Speranza Scappucci. She also toured with the Jerusalem Quartet on *The Yiddish Cabaret*, which was recorded and released by Harmonia Mundi.

A dedicated educator, Baggio gives master classes and teaches at the Conservatoire de la Ville de Luxembourg. Her artistry has been recognized with awards from the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition, the Israeli Minister of Culture and the Rosenblum Prize for the Performing Arts.

ABOUT THE OSM

Founded in 1934 by Antonia Nantel, Wilfrid Pelletier and Athanase David, the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) is a distinguished leader of musical life in Québec and Canada. Recognized as one of the finest orchestras in the world, whose core activity is to perform the vast orchestral repertoire with conductors and soloists of the highest calibre, the OSM is an essential cultural ambassador. Under the direction of conductor Rafael Payare, the OSM perpetuates several rich traditions rooted in its long history of social involvement and embodied in far-reaching projects, world-class tours and a superb discography. Firmly anchored in today's world, the OSM's innovative artistic programming in both

concerts and recordings brings modern-day relevance to the symphonic repertoire while strengthening the orchestra's place at the heart of its home base in Québec's metropolis. Over the years, the OSM has crisscrossed Canada and toured abroad, travelling to Québec's Far North as well as to the United States, Latin America and several countries in Europe and Asia. The OSM's discography totals more than a hundred recordings on the Decca, Analekta, CBC Records, ECM, EMI, Philips, Sony and PENTATONE labels, earning more than 110 national and international awards.

The Orchestre symphonique de Montréal is presented by Hydro-Québec.



ASHER FISCH

GUEST CONDUCTOR

Asher Fisch is the Principal Conductor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and the Music Director of the Tiroler Festspiele in Erl. Internationally recognized as a leading conductor, he boasts a vast repertoire across both opera and concert stages. Fisch has been based in Australia since 2014 and began his tenure in Erl in the 2025 season.

He began his career as an assistant to Daniel Barenboim and as a conductor at the Staatsoper in Berlin. Since then, he has conducted at major European opera houses, including those in Vienna, Milan, Munich, Paris and Madrid. Renowned as a Wagner specialist, Fisch has recorded two complete 'Ring' cycles and a critically acclaimed rendition of *Tristan und Isolde*. Additionally, he has performed widely in the Italian repertoire and recently conducted a Puccini album featuring tenor Jonas Kaufmann and six leading sopranos. From 1998 to 2008, he was he was music director of the Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, where he led more than thirty new productions.

As a symphonic conductor, Fisch has led prominent U.S. orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra, along with European ensembles like the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France and London Symphony Orchestra.



© Nik Babic

As a pianist, he performed piano concertos, mostly conducting from the keyboard. He has also recorded a solo piano CD of Liszt's arrangements of excerpts from Wagner's operas.

ABOUT THE OSM CHORUS

The Orchestre symphonique de Montréal Chorus was established in the 1980s at the request of Charles Dutoit. Composed of 50 professional singers and 80 to 100 volunteer singers, the Chorus has joined forces with the OSM for hundreds of performances of masterworks from the repertoire.

The OSM Chorus has been heard in Montréal, Toronto, Ottawa, New York, Philadelphia and Saratoga Springs in works as diverse as Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's Mass in B Minor, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Verdi's *Requiem*, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection", Shostakovich's Symphony

No. 13 "Babi Yar" and Dallapiccola's *Il Prigionero*. In addition to singing under the direction of Rafael Payare, Kent Nagano and Charles Dutoit, the OSM Chorus has collaborated with guest conductors such as Nicholas McGegan, Zubin Mehta, Krzysztof Penderecki, Robert Shaw, Iwan Edwards (its director for some 20 years) and Andrew Megill, chorus master since 2011. Among the many OSM recordings on which the OSM Chorus can be heard, noteworthy are Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which was honoured with a GRAMMY Award in 1996, and Holst's *The Planets*, which received the Grand Prix du disque - Canada in 1988.



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ANDREW MEGILL

CHORUSMASTER

Andrew Megill is recognized as one of the leading choral conductors of his generation, known for his unusually wide-ranging repertoire, extending from early music to newly composed works. He has prepared choruses for the American Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Dresden Philharmonic, the National Symphony and the New York Philharmonic, and he has worked with conductors such as

Pierre Boulez, Charles Dutoit, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Jane Glover, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta and Kent Nagano. He is Director of Choral Organizations Activities at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and serves as Artistic Advisor and Director of Choral Activities for the Carmel Bach Festival and Choral Director for Music of the Baroque in Chicago. This year he begins his tenure as Artistic Director of Theater of Memory, a Chicago-based professional vocal ensemble specializing in Baroque music. He previously taught at the University of Illinois and Westminster Choir College, and has been a Guest Conductor for the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Broadcast by Public Radio International and the BBC, his work can be heard on numerous recordings, including Magnussen's *Psalm* (Albany Records), Haydn's *Masses* (Naxos), and works by Caleb Burhans (Cantaloupe).



© Karolina Kownacka



CHORUS MEMBERS AND INSTRUMENTALISTS OF THE OSM

First Violins

Andrew Wan^{1,2}, concertmaster
Olivier Thouin, associate
concertmaster
Marianne Dugal,
2nd associate concertmaster
Jean-Sébastien Roy,
1st assistant
Ramsey Husser, 2nd assistant
Satoka Abo
Sydney Adedamola
*Sponsored by Mrs. Sue
Wehner.*
Dominique Bégin²
Marc Béliveau
Annie Guénette²
Marie Lacasse
Ariane Lajoie
Ingrid Matthiessen
Abby Walsh^{2,3}
Richard Zheng²

Second Violins

Alexander Read, principal
Marie-André Chevette,
associate
Brigitte Rolland, 1st assistant
Joshua Peters, 2nd assistant
Ladusa Chang-Ou
Eliane Charest-Beauchamp²
Ann Chow
Mary Ann Fujino
Alison Mah-Poy
Katherine Palyga
Austin Wu
Daniel Yakymyshyn

Violas

Victor Fournelle-Blain²,
principal
Charles Pilon², associate
Emily Rekrut-Pressey,
1st assistant
Joseph Burke

Scott Chancey
Sofia Gentile
Sebastian Gonzalez Mora²
Natalie Racine
Rosemary Shaw

Cellos

Brian Manker, principal
Tavi Ungerleider², 1st assistant
Sophie Van der Sloot,
2nd assistant
Geneviève Guimond
Justine Lefebvre
Sylvain Murray²
Peter Parthun
San Rim
Julien Siino²

Double Basses

Ali Yazdanfar, principal
Eric Chappell, assistant
Scott Feltham
Andrew Goodlett
Peter Rosenfeld
Edward Wingell

Flutes

Timothy Hutchins, principal
*Sponsored by Mr. Jacques
Lamarre, in loving memory
of Céline Robitaille Lamarre.*
Albert Brouwer, associate
principal (interim)
Florence Laurain, 2nd flute
Christopher James,
principal piccolo

Oboes

Alex Liedtke, principal
Vincent Boilard,
associate principal
Tai Yokomori, 2nd oboe
Jean-Luc Côté

Clarinets

Todd Cope, principal
Alain Desgagné,
associate principal
Ryan Toher, 2nd clarinet
and Eb clarinet
André Moisan, bass clarinet
and saxophone

Bassoons

Stéphane Lévesque, principal
Mathieu Harel,
associate principal
Martin Mangrum,
2nd bassoon
Michael Sundell,
contrabassoon

French Horns

Catherine Turner, principal
Denys Derome,
associate principal
Corine Chartré-Lefebvre,
2nd horn
Florence Rousseau, 3rd horn
Nadia Côté, 4th horn

Trumpets

Paul Merkelo, principal
Stéphane Beaulac,
associate principal
Robert Weymouth,
2nd trumpet
Samuel Dusinberre,
4th trumpet

Trombones

James Box, principal
Charles Benaroya,
2nd trombone
Pierre Beaudry, principal bass
trombone

Tuba

Austin Howle, principal

Timpani

Andrei Malashenko, principal
Hugues Tremblay,
associate principal

Percussion

Serge Desgagnés⁴, principal
Corey Rae

Harp

Jennifer Swartz, principal
*Sponsored by Mr. François
Schubert, in loving memory
of Marie Pineau.*

Piano & Celesta

Olga Gross

Theremin

Rob Schwimmer, guest artist

Music Librarian

Michel Léonard

Sopranos

Nadya Blanchette
Susan Elizabeth Brown
Rebecca Dowd
Marian Guay
Marie Magistry
Stephanie Manias
Bahar Mohaghegh Harandi
Brittany Rae
Kathryn Riopel
Gerda Nicole Schiess-
Findeisen
Emily Wall
Ellen Wieser

Altos

Marie-Annick Béliveau
Gabrielle Cloutier-Therrien
Charlotte Cumberbirch
Kristen De Marchi
Ghislain Deschambault
Amelia Keenan
Josée Lalonde
Rosalie Lane Lépine
Isabelle Ricard
Maddie Studt
Danielle Vaillancourt
Meagan Zantingh

Tenors

Jean-Sébastien Allaire
Ryan Doyle
Aldéo Jean
Michael Lockley
Haodong Ma
Thomas Macleay
David Menzies
Dominic Poulin
Michel Raymond
Michiel Schrey
Arthur Tanguay-Labrosse
Simon-Charles
Tremblay-Béchar

Basses

Pierre-Etienne Bergeron
Alasdair Campbell
David Cronkite
Alain Duguay
Gabriel Frank
Pascal Germain-Berardi
Thomas Jodoin-Fontaine
Benoit Le Blanc
Emanuel Lebel
Kexa Kevin Marimbu
Philippe Martel
Nathaniel Watson
Noah Wright

¹ The 1744 Bergonzi violin played by Andrew Wan is generously loaned by patron David B. Sela.

² Andrew Wan's 1860 Dominique Peccatte bow; Marie Lacasse's 1695 Giovanni Battista Grancino violin and 1895 Arthur Vigneron bow; Abby Walsh's Eugène Sartory bow; Richard Zheng's 1780 Lorenzo Storioni violin and Eugène Sartory bow; Éliane Charest-Beauchamp's 1840 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin; Dominique Bégin's c. 1895 Joseph Alfred Lamy bow and c. 1845 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin; Annie Guénette's 1768 Gagliano violin and Joseph Alfred Lamy bow; Victor Fournelle Blain's 1757 Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi viola (Milan); Charles Pilon's David Pizzorno viola and Hill & Sons bow; Sebastian Gonzalez Mora's Louis Gillet bow; Tavi Ungerleider's c. 1830 Raffaele & Antonio Gagliano cello and 1860 François Nicolas Voirin bow; Sylvain Murray's 1734 Domenico Montagnana cello and c. 1950 Louis Gillet bow; as well as Julien Siino's Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume cello and Jules Fétique bow, are generously made available to them by CANIMEX INC. of Drummondville, Quebec.

³ Abby Walsh's Nicolas Vuillaume de Mirecourt violin is generously loaned by Ulys Collectif Inc.

⁴ The carillon bells were generously donated to the OSM by CANIMEX INC. of Drummondville, Quebec.

THE 2026 AMP JEWISH MUSIC JURY

Ofer Ben-Amots

Ofer Ben-Amots, an American-Israeli composer, was born in Haifa in 1955. He studied composition in Tel Aviv, Geneva and at Germany's Detmold University of Music, where he earned degrees in composition, music theory and piano. After moving to the U.S. in 1987, he earned his Ph.D in music composition from the University of Pennsylvania, studying with George Crumb. Ben-Amots currently teaches composition and theory at Colorado College. His compositions, known for their emotional depth and personal expression, are regularly performed at concert halls and festivals worldwide. A recipient of the Vienna International Composition Competition, the Kavannagh Prize and the Kobe International Competition for Flute Composition, among others, Ben-Amots blends folk elements with contemporary textures and imaginative orchestration to create a dynamic tension that defines his unique musical language.

Gisèle Ben-Dor

A formidable and incandescent presence on the podium, conductor Gisèle Ben-Dor is described by the *Los Angeles Times* as "a star on the rise – a ferocious talent." "Ben-Dor casts her spell," the *Boston Globe* reported, "a tremendous musician, expert technician, charismatic performer." These comments reflect the overwhelming praise Ben-Dor has garnered in her appearances as guest conductor with major orchestras and opera houses throughout the world. Amongst her past successes, Ben-Dor has led the London, Houston and New World Symphonies, the New York, Los Angeles, Israel and Helsinki Philharmonics, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Minnesota Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Israel Chamber

Orchestra. As well as being renowned for her interpretations of the established classics, as a Uruguayan by birth and upbringing, she is a champion of Latin American music – notably the works of Ginastera, Revueltas, Piazzolla and Luis Bacalov – and is widely regarded as one of the world's finest and most dedicated exponents of this repertoire.

Avner Dorman

Avner Dorman writes music of intricate craftsmanship and rigorous technique, expressed with a soulful and singular voice. A native of Israel now living in the U.S., he draws on diverse cultural and historical influences, creating music that is emotionally powerful and explores new territories. His works feature complex rhythms, unique timbres and vivid orchestration, becoming contemporary staples in orchestral, chamber and solo settings.

Dorman's music is championed by conductors such as Zubin Mehta and Christoph Eschenbach and performed by leading soloists and major orchestras worldwide, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony and Israel Philharmonic. His awards include the Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music for *Nigunim* and Israel Prime Minister's Prize for Composers. His opera, *Wahnfried*, was a finalist at the International Opera Awards.

Dorman studied with John Corigliano and holds a doctorate from Juilliard. He is Professor of Music Theory and Composition at Gettysburg College.

Neil W. Levin

Neil W. Levin is one of the world's leading experts in the field of Jewish-related music, having authored hundreds of publications on the subject. He has served on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America since 1982 and has been the Anne E. Leibowitz Visiting Professor in Residence in Music at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research since 2016. Levin is the Artistic Director and Editor in Chief of the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, which documents, preserves and disseminates music of the Jewish experience, including the groundbreaking 51-CD series released by Naxos. He devised, scripted and supervised the Archive's theatrical-concert, *One People – Many Voices*, premiered in 2006 by the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the baton of Gerard Schwarz. Levin is also an accomplished pianist and choral conductor. He founded the Schola Hebraeica and has directed numerous concerts at Lincoln Center, the Royal Festival Hall and the Barbican Centre.

Steven Mercurio

Steven Mercurio is an internationally acclaimed conductor and composer whose musical versatility encompasses the symphonic and operatic worlds. Currently the Music Director of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, he has previously led the London Philharmonic, Prague Philharmonia, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, among others. He has also served as the Music Director of the Spoleto Festival and as Principal Conductor of the Philadelphia Opera. Mercurio has conducted numerous historic telecasts, including the *Christmas in Vienna* series with the Vienna Symphony

Orchestra for Sony Classical, highlighted by the 1999 concert featuring The Three Tenors; and the PBS special *American Dream – Andrea Bocelli's Statue of Liberty Concert* with the New Jersey Symphony. Mercurio also led the worldwide tour of Sting, featuring the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and culminating in the DVD *Live in Berlin*. Also a composer, Mercurio's *For Lost Loved Ones* was premiered by Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic.

Na'ama Zisser

Na'ama Zisser is a UK-based composer whose interdisciplinary work spans opera, contemporary dance, film and instrumental music with a focus on texture, repetition and intimacy. She has been commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and National Opera Studio, among others.

Zisser has held residencies and fellowships with LSO Soundhub, Britten-Pears Arts and Sound & Music. Her work has been supported by Arts Council England, PRS and Jerwood Arts, and has been performed in major venues in London and internationally.

Between 2015 and 2019, Zisser was a doctoral composer-in-residence with the Royal Opera House where she composed *Mamzer/Bastard*, the first opera to feature Orthodox Cantorial music with a role written for a Cantor. Most recently, she scored the first season of BBC Radio 4's new horror audio anthology, *Lusus*. Zisser studied at the Royal College of Music and holds a doctorate from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

THE 2026 AMP CANADIAN MUSIC JURY

Barbara Assiginaak C.M., O.Ont.

Barbara Assiginaak C.M., O.Ont. is Anishinaabekwe (Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi; Mnidoo Mníssing, Giniw dodem) and has been active internationally as a composer and musician for over three decades. She balances her time composing, performing and teaching with continued work in outdoor environmental education rooted in traditional Anishinaabeg teachings, working alongside Elders in ceremonies and traditional singing, and supporting Indigenous youth.

She graduated from the Hochschule für Musik in Munich and the University of Toronto, and studied composition and theory with Samuel Dolin, Sasha Rapaport and Arthur Levine. She completed other composition studies with Sir Peter Maxwell-Davies, Robert Saxton and Helmut Lachenmann. Apart from her music for traditional First Nations flutes and voice in the Anishinaabe way, which she started at an early age, her music for soloists, chamber ensembles, orchestra, film, theatre, dance, interdisciplinary performance and multimedia has been premiered internationally in over 12 countries. Assiginaak is currently Assistant Professor in Composition at the Faculty of Music, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Colleen Renihan

Colleen Renihan is Associate Professor and Queen's National Scholar at the DAN School of Drama and Music at Queen's University. She holds an M.A. and Ph.D in Musicology from the University of Toronto and an Artist Diploma in Opera from the Vancouver

Academy of Music. Her research focuses on issues of voice, gesture transmission, memory, temporality and the role of the arts in healthy aging. She has published chapters in several edited collections on opera and in the following journals: *Twentieth Century Music*, *The Journal of the Society for American Music*, *U of T Quarterly*, *The Journal of Music, Health, and Wellbeing*, *The Journal of Singing and Music*, *Sound, and the Moving Image*. She has researched and published widely on topics in Canadian music, both historical and contemporary. Her monograph, *The Operatic Archive: American Opera as History*, was published by Routledge in 2020.

David Pay

David Pay is the founder and Artistic Director of Vancouver's Music on Main. Since 2006, he has earned an international reputation as one of today's leading-edge classical and contemporary music programmers. He focuses on how music from different eras and different genres can shed light on each other, and his programming creates innovative ways for audiences and musicians to engage. His concerts have been praised for delivering "a program that spanned the range of human experience" (*Huffington Post*).

Pay is a frequent speaker at conferences across North America and Europe and has served as Artistic Director of ISCM World New Music Days 2017, the largest new music festival in Canada's history. He has been on faculty at The Banff Centre and Capilano University and sits on the Executive Committee of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

Ana Sokolović

Composer Ana Sokolović was born in Belgrade and, since 1992, has been based in Montréal. Her vast catalogue, inspired by differing artistic disciplines, playful images and Balkan rhythms, has been performed regularly throughout Europe and North America.

Sokolović's works have been recorded on more than 20 albums, earning her two consecutive JUNO Awards for Classical Composition of the Year. Her opera *Svadba*, which "seems to invent a universal phonetics of the human heart" (*Le Monde*), has been performed more than fifty times. In 2021, Sokolović was appointed Composer-in-Residence of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. In 2022, she was awarded the First Canada Research Chair in Opera Creation at the Université de Montréal, where she is a Professor in Composition. Sokolović's music is published by Boosey & Hawkes.

Kelly-Marie Murphy

With music described as "breathtaking" (*Kitchener-Waterloo Record*), "imaginative and expressive" (*National Post*) and "a pulse-pounding barrage on the senses" (*The Globe and Mail*), composer Kelly-Marie Murphy is a leading voice on the Canadian music scene. She has written extensively for major ensembles including the Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, as well as acclaimed artists such as the Gryphon Trio and James Campbell.

Her music has been performed internationally in venues including Carnegie Hall and the Concertgebouw. Murphy is the recipient of numerous national and international honours, including the Jules Léger Prize and the Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music and is currently the Composer-in-Residence with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Italy and raised across Canada, she studied at the University of Calgary and holds a Ph.D from the University of Leeds. After many years in Washington D.C., she is now based in Ottawa.

THE 2026 AMP INTERNATIONAL MUSIC JURY

Margareta Ferek-Petrić

Composer and curator Margareta Ferek-Petrić was born in Zagreb in 1982 and, since 2002, has been based in Vienna. She studied composition with Ivan Eröd, Klaus Peter Sattler and Chaya Czernowin at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

Ferek-Petrić's music is recognizable by its immediate colourfulness, while its extreme impulsiveness and expressive constructions are lived through the interplay between obvious beauty and mischievous profundity. Inspiration for her scores is drawn from literature, art, film, satire, science, politics, philosophy, remarkable individuals or bizarre life situations. She was granted scholarships from various international institutions, and her work has been awarded numerous prizes. In addition to being a composer, Ferek-Petrić served as Artistic Director of Music Biennale Zagreb and has worked as part of the curators' team for Wonderfeel Festival 2025 in the Netherlands. She serves as part of the Music Advisory Board of the Goethe-Institut in Munich (since 2021) and is active in numerous international juries.

Jonathan Goldman

Jonathan Goldman is Professor of Musicology at the Université de Montréal Faculty of Music, where his research focuses on modernist and avant-garde music. His book *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) won an Opus Prize for book of the year. In November 2018, his co-edited volume of Boulez's writings (*Music Lessons*) was published

by Faber and University of Chicago Press. He edited a volume on Québec composers in 2014 (PUM) and was editor of the contemporary music journal *Circuit* from 2006 until 2016. His book, *Avant-Garde on Record: Musical Responses to Stereos*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2023.

Goldman also performs on the bandoneon, having appeared as a soloist with such orchestras as I Musici de Montréal, Signature Symphony Tulsa and Symphony Nova Scotia. In 2015, he won a JUNO Award alongside the other members of the Canadian tango ensemble Quartango for best instrumental album, as well as two Opus Prizes.

Daniel Kidane

Daniel Kidane's music has been performed extensively across the UK and abroad, as well as being broadcast on BBC Radio 3. His work has been described by the *Financial Times* as "quietly impressive" and by *The Times* as "tautly constructed" and "vibrantly imagined". He studied at the Royal College of Music Junior Department, in St. Petersburg and at the Royal Northern College of Music. He received an honorary doctorate from Coventry University in 2022 and teaches composition at the RNCM and Cambridge University. Recent highlights include the world premieres of *Sun Poem* by the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle and his violin concerto *Aloud* by Julia Fischer. Kidane is represented globally by Rayfield Allied Artists and his music is published by Schott Music.

Samy Moussa

Montréal-born composer-conductor Samy Moussa is one of the world's leading composers. Moussa's work has been performed by many of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Dutch National Opera and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

He has served as Composer-in-Residence at the Helsinki Philharmonic and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Orchestras he has conducted include the Bayerisches Staatsorchester, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, RSO Wien, MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig and Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana. His works remain popular with internationally renowned conductors such as Manfred Honeck, Kent Nagano, Kevin John Edusei, Christian Thielemann and Christoph Eschenbach. Moussa was awarded the Villa Massimo Fellowship at the German Academy in Rome, the Hindemith Prize, the Ernst von Siemens Composer Prize and is a laureate of the Fondation Banque Populaire Awards.

Chaya Czernowin

Internationally recognized composer Chaya Czernowin is the Walter Bigelow Rosen Professor of Music at Harvard University and was a Professor for Composition at both the University for Music and Performing Arts Vienna and the University of California San Diego. Czernowin works imaginatively and analytically with metaphors as a means of

achieving a sound world that is unfamiliar and never taken for granted. She is best known for her works *HIDDEN* for quartet and electronics; the operas *Pnima*, *Infinite Now* and *Heart Chamber*; and works for large ensembles *Maim*, *The Fabrication of Light* and *Atara*. Previously the composer-in-residence at the Salzburg and Lucerne Festivals, Czernowin is a recipient of the Ernst von Siemens Composer Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fromm Music Foundation Commission, the German Record Critics' Prize and the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis at Darmstadt Ferienkurse. She is a member of the Akademie der Künste Berlin and the Akademie der Schönen Künste Munich. Her work is published by Schott Music.

THE AMP ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ana Sokolović, Chair

See page 45 for biography.

Sharon Azrieli C.Q., D.Mus

Award-winning, Montréal-born Sharon Azrieli has had a 30+ year career as a performer of opera, jazz and cantorial music, and is now adding acting in movies to her artistic pursuits. She started with leading roles at the Southeastern Savoyards and the Light Opera of Manhattan, then went on to perform at Carnegie Hall, the Canadian Opera Company, L'Opéra de Paris (Bastille), the Metropolitan Opera, Sarasota Opera and L'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal as well as with great orchestras worldwide.

For her multi-decade versatile career, she was awarded the Chevalière du Québec in 2019. Her recent concert schedule highlights include the U.S. premiere of *Out of the Depths I have cried to thee, O Lord* by A. Harlap, concerts of Jewish music in Amsterdam, Berlin, Romania and Bayreuth and jazz concerts in many venues in Montréal. In February 2026, Sharon created a sold-out new show *ISHARON! Mostly Canadian* in Montréal which will be repeated in summer 2027 in six locations.

Her discography includes *Secret Places: A Tribute to Michel Legrand*, *Easily Assimilated*, *Sharon Azrieli Sings Canadian Musical Theatre with the Jonathan Monro Orchestra* and *Rosh Hashanah Live in Synagogue*.

On screen, Azrieli has enjoyed diversifying her career in acting in films. Her film credits include Dina in *SHTTL* and Helen in *Irena's Vow* (2024), and soon to be released roles include Dr. Goldenberg in *Kaet Might Die*, Jackie in *Mini-War*, Rosa in *Ashes to Iron* and Sharon in *Killing Hitler*.

She serves as the Chair of AMACC for the Azrieli Foundation where she created the annual Hatikvah Project across Israel. There, she also created the Azrieli Music Prizes, which celebrated its 10th Anniversary in October 2024, and the McGill-UdeM Piano-Vocal Arts Residency. Sharon is a Voting Member of the McCord Stewart Museum and sits on the boards of the Azrieli Group and the NAC Foundation.

Brian Current

Brian Current's music has been broadcast in over 35 countries, and he has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, Barlow Prize, Premio Fedora, Jules Léger Prize and a Selected Work at the International Rostrum of Composers. In 2016, he won the inaugural Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music.

Current's pieces have been programmed by all major symphony orchestras in Canada and by dozens of professional orchestras, ensembles and opera companies worldwide. His music appears on ten commercial recordings, including three albums devoted exclusively to his works. The Naxos recording of his opera *Airline Icarus* earned him the 2015 JUNO Award for Best Classical Composition of the Year.

Current is also an in-demand guest conductor and regularly leads ensemble and orchestral programs of contemporary music. In 2021, he was appointed Artistic Director of New Music Concerts (NMC). Since 2007, Current has been Director of the Glenn Gould School's New Music Ensemble at The Royal Conservatory.

Jonathan Goldman

See page 46 for biography.

Sylvia L'Écuyer C.M.

Sylvia L'Écuyer C.M. is dedicated to the vitality of the arts and music in Canada. A musicologist by training and a skilled communicator, she retired from Radio-Canada, where she shared her love of classical music with audiences for over 30 years as a producer and host. She has also served as Radio-Canada's Director of Musical Programming and has been a jury member for several arts boards. In addition to her active involvement in the community, L'Écuyer co-founded the Société pour les arts en milieu de santé. She is also an Associate Professor at the Université de Montréal Faculty of Music. She made a documentary film (*Bali by Heart*) about a project that mixed Balinese and Western music in 2006.

In 2007, the French government awarded her the title of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. In 2017, she was named a member of the Order of Canada.

Barbara Seal C.M.

Barbara Seal C.M. is a former citizenship judge, former municipal councillor for the City of Hampstead and a former board member of Place des Arts, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, Montreal Urban Community and the National Forum on Climate Change. She is actively involved in public and community spheres and presently sits on the boards of the National Arts Centre Foundation, the Segal Centre for Performing Arts and the Advisory Board at the McGill School of Continuing Studies. She has received numerous awards and distinctions for her dedication to the community, such as the Canadian Cancer Society Award, the Canadian Parks and Recreational Association

Award, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the National Assembly Award as well as the Order of Canada in 1993.

She established the Barbara Seal Scholarship for Newcomers to Canada at McGill University in 2012 and participated in the creation of a science internship scholarship for Québec female students at Tel Aviv University in 2018.

Lawrence Cherney C.M.

Lawrence Cherney C.M.'s first professional engagement as an oboist was under the baton of Igor Stravinsky with the CBC Symphony Orchestra. A charter member of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, he went on to embark on a career as an oboe soloist of international distinction, commissioning more than 150 works for his instrument, and recording and touring these works on three continents. Cherney became Founding Artistic Director of Soundstreams in 1982, and for almost 50 years has been at the forefront of Canadian music, often referred to as Canada's "Ambassador of New Music". Under his leadership, Soundstreams produces two eclectic annual series in Toronto featuring new music and music theatre/opera, and has become one of the leading organizations of its kind in the world. In recent seasons, Soundstreams' touring productions and co-productions have received high praise on the international stage from *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

AMP TEAM

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Mariam Omar

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and Culture Centre

SPECIAL THANKS

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To all those we might have forgotten, but to whom we are no less grateful, thank you!

CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

The Azrieli Music Prizes celebrate today's most compelling concert music and the conversation continues long after the final applause. We invite you to continue the journey with us at upcoming concerts and events, through our livestreams and recordings, and online through our website and social media.

OUR UPCOMING CONCERTS

2024 Azrieli Music Prizes Laureates

Experience AMP-winning choral works by Josef Bardanashvili, Yair Klartag, Jordan Nobles and Juan Trigos, featuring conductor Benjamin Goodson and ensembles Klangforum Wien, the BBC Singers and the Basler Madrigalisten.

Basel, Switzerland | February 27, 2027

Martinskirche, Basel
In collaboration with the Interfinity Festival

Paris, France | June 8, 2027

Amphithéâtre, Opéra de Paris (Bastille), Paris
In collaboration with the Interfinity Festival



LISTEN TO THE STORIES BEHIND THE MUSIC

Explore conversations with the 2026 Laureates on the Azrieli Music Prizes podcast. Each episode offers an inside look at the composer's vision for their music, hosted by our Musicologist-in-Residence, Diane Kolin, Ph.D.

STAY CONNECTED

Learn more about the Azrieli Music Prizes, our archive of concerts and podcasts, future Calls for Proposals and upcoming performances and announcements.

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