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ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE
DE MONTRÉAL

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THE ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL AND RAFAEL PAYARE UNVEIL THEIR 2025–2026 SEASON

*Music is key
Emotion is key
Passion is key*



Montreal, April 10, 2025 —Today, the **Orchestre symphonique de Montréal** proudly **unveils its 2025–2026 season**. With sumptuous and varied programming for all tastes and budgets, Rafael Payare embarks on his 4th season as Music Director, the **OSM's 92nd** season, where music, emotion, and passion are key. The OSM will be joined by an array of renowned artists from near and far, including many anticipated return performances and a great diversity of repertoires. This will be a season of **symphonic masterworks**, **symphonic happy hours**, **music and film concerts**, over-the-top **éclaté** concerts, **POP** concerts, and concerts for young audiences. Our public will discover, or rediscover works by Mozart, Brahms, Moussa, Stravinsky, Gougeon, Shostakovich, and of course, Mahler, performed by distinguished guests including Barbara Hannigan, Emanuel Ax, Véronique Gens, Joseph Tawadros and James Ehnes.

Presenting a variety of themes and a host of renowned, emerging, and culturally diverse artists, the 2025–2026 season opens a wide window on the world. Continuing the artistic journey begun since my arrival at the OSM, this programming brings together essential classics and new discoveries. The OSM’s educational mission also takes on a new dimension with the Programme El Sistema OSM, inspired by my own educational background and providing young people with rewarding musical training through group practice. This season will beautifully epitomize the joy of playing together and of sharing music that lives.

—**Rafael Payare**, OSM Music Director

PASSION IS KEY UNDER RAFAEL PAYARE’S BATON



After delighting audiences in Europe and at the Maison symphonique with Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*, the OSM and Rafael Payare will open the 25–26 season in grand style with the same composer’s ***La damnation de Faust***, a captivating and powerfully emotional lyrical drama.

In October and in February, Payare will move forward with his **Mahler cycle** begun in 2022. OSM audiences will first hear the composer’s Symphony no. 9, then his Symphony no. 4. The **Shostakovitch cycle** also continues, with a performance of the “Leningrad” Symphony no. 7 in April 2026, conducted by Rafael Payare. Beethoven’s Symphony no. 8 will open this concert. Also, under Payare’s direction, on April 22, the Orchestra will perform Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, as well as the world premiere of a work commissioned by the OSM to **Denis Gougeon** and Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto no. 2 featuring **Bruce Liu** as soloist.

In December, Rafael Payare will be joined by the amazing Dutch violinist **Simone Lamsma** in Korngold’s Violin Concerto in D major, followed by Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra. In January, **Emanuel Ax** will be the OSM and Payare’s guest for a performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto no. 3. This concert will also feature the world premiere of a commissioned work by British Canadian composer **Isabella Gellis** as well as Prokofiev’s Symphony no. 5. In March, Rafael Payare and the OSM continue their cycle of Mozart operas to libretti by Lorenzo Da Ponte. This season, audiences will hear *The Marriage of Figaro*. In May 2026, to close the season, Rafael Payare will conduct Wagner’s *The Ring*

Without Words, preceded by Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor, performed by the legendary **Yefim Bronfman**.

FEWER CATEGORIES, MORE SAVINGS: THE OSM'S NEW PRICING STRUCTURE

The OSM is attuned to the current economic context and has redesigned its pricing and seating plan. To begin, the pricing structure has been streamlined, with 6 price categories, down from 9, and seats in all categories on both the Parterre and Corbeille levels. Furthermore, our **starting price** is now reduced to **\$30 + taxes** per ticket, with **20% of the hall's seats available at this rate**. These seats are divided between the Parterre, Chœur, and Balcon sections.

What this means is that more than half of the venue's seats are now discounted by 5% to 75%, compared to last season. The base rate of **\$30 + taxes** has also been designated as the **new 35-and-under rate**. With a subscription, an additional 25% discount applies, which amounts to 4 concerts for only \$90 + taxes. Finally, the OSM is launching a new loyalty card, the **OSM Card**, at a membership cost of \$50, offering a **20% discount** on the purchase of single tickets throughout the season. An **OSM+ card** will also be available for \$200. It offers a **25% discount** on the purchase of single tickets, plus a \$150 donation and several privileges, including exclusive access to a dress rehearsal conducted by Rafael Payare. A fabulous way to enjoy a preferential rate without committing to a subscription.

I am delighted that a clientele of all ages is coming together at our concerts. I believe that everyone should have access to moments of wonder such as the OSM can offer. I am confident that this redesigned seating plan and pricing structure will enable all types of audiences to experience the thrill of an OSM concert from a prime seat in the house, as their means permit, and as often as they wish.

—**Mélanie La Couture**, OSM Chief Executive Officer

SYMPHONIC HAPPY HOUR: A UNIQUE AFTERWORK MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

With colleagues or friends, what better way to unwind after a busy workday than with happy hour-style classical greatness? This year, the series comprises three concerts conducted by Rafael Payare, Jessica Cottis, and Dina Gilbert. Spectators can enjoy a drink before the concert as they chat with comedian and actor **Philippe-Audrey Larrue-St-Jacques**, who for a second season will introduce and guide them through the series' programming with his signature humour. From the nostalgia for Europe of exiles to America in the 20th century, to Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Stravinsky's phenomenal *Firebird*, this **shorter, no-intermission** concert format enhanced by **live listening guides** offers a perfect break from the weekday routine!

THREE ÉCLATÉ EVENTS!

In stride with the hugely successful folk Christmas party featuring *Le Vent du Nord* and a Gatsby-themed evening in the 24–25 season, the OSM is announcing three new rollicking

éclaté concerts for the 25–26 season. The compact, no-intermission concerts will all be followed by lively evening celebrations in the foyers of the Maison symphonique. On October 30, for Halloween, a spine-chilling evening is in store with Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead* conducted by **Dina Gilbert**. On February 5, peerless Canadian conductor and soprano **Barbara Hannigan** will give a concert on the theme of *Gaîté parisienne* and ballroom dance with works by Offenbach, Kurt Weil, and Glenn Miller. Then, on March 12, the OSM will explore Middle Eastern and Balkan folklore in a concert showcasing the improvisations of Syrian clarinetist **Kinan Azmeh**, conducted by **Rafael Payare**.

HALLOWEEN, THE WINTER HOLIDAYS, AND SPRING BREAK WITH THE OSM

To celebrate **Halloween**, the OSM will give audiences the choice of three different programs: an *Isle of the Dead*-themed éclaté concert, a concert for young audiences crawling with vampires and monsters, and laden with pumpkins, and a music and film concert dedicated to *The Phantom of the Opera*. A lineup where no family member or age group can escape from the goosebumps!



The **holidays** will be a time for enjoying two beloved classics that have turned into a cherished OSM tradition. Conductor Emeritus **Kent Nagano** and storyteller **Fred Pellerin** will reunite for a 7th edition of the annual *Holiday Tale*. This mainstay event that brings to life characters from the town of Saint-Élie-de-Caxton, complete with their incredible and fantastical stories, will be presented on December 17, 18, and 20. Another OSM holiday classic is also back, Hallelujah! On December 10 and 11, the Orchestra will perform **Handel's *Messiah*** under **Rafael Payare's** direction. This iconic oratorio is guaranteed to immerse spectators of all ages in a festive atmosphere, with its lush and contrasting musical tableaux. A great opportunity to (re) discover Handel's massively famous work, supercharged with all the spirit and energy of Rafael Payare. Finally, during **spring break**, the OSM will offer a magical experience and activities for the whole family with two concerts to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the first **Harry Potter** movie release, as well as a richly coloured Symphonic Happy Hour featuring Stravinsky's *The **Firebird***.

THE OSM PLAYS IN MOVIES (AND VIDEO GAMES!)



This season, five concerts will revisit landmark themes from great movie classics and from video games. To celebrate Halloween, as well as the film's centenary, organist Jason Roberts will improvise on the Grand Orgue Pierre-Béique to accompany the screening of Rupert Julian's ***The Phantom of the Opera***, released in 1925. In November, Stanley Kubrick's cult classic ***2001: A Space Odyssey*** will be shown with live orchestral accompaniment conducted by Ben Palmer. With ***Stellar: the organ's balancing act***, OSM organist-in-residence Jean-Willy Kunz creates for us a rare experience, with works by Philip Glass and Hans Zimmer's *Interstellar Suite* in collaboration with the *Cirque Le Monastère*, on February 7 and 8. To celebrate 25 years after the first film release depicting a magical universe, and to delight witches and wizards of all ages, music from **Harry Potter** composed by John Williams, among others, will be presented on its own without the film, during spring break. In May, under the baton of Kevin Zakresky, ***Heroes: A Video Game Symphony*** will immerse us in the greatest video game themes, from *Fallout* to *Assassin's Creed*, as well as *World of Warcraft* and *Final Fantasy*, with projections and sequences from these landmark games for several generations.

THE TRADITION OF POP CONCERTS CONTINUES



Throughout the 25–26 season, the OSM's POP series will feature diverse programs and **uncommon musical alliances**. In October, the Acadian band **Salebarbes** will join forces with the OSM. And whenever Salebarbes is on stage, there's sure to be a party! 2025 was a spectacular year for the band and the OSM is excited to welcome them to launch the season's POP series and to celebrate their massive hits in symphonic form. With orchestral arrangements by Antoine Gratton, conducted by Dina Gilbert, get ready for a toe-tapping evening you won't soon forget.

In February, immerse yourself in the eccentric world of **François Pérusse** with ***Pérusse symphonique: from the Snack bar to the OSM***. Will you see François Pérusse the comedian? Will you hear François the singer, Pérusse the musician? You won't want to miss this **epic encounter!** From the first *Album du Peuple*, celebrating its 35th anniversary, to the present day, his immense, rich and humorous oeuvre in symphonic version is sure to leave a lasting impression. Under the direction of conductor Simon Rivard and with symphonic arrangements by Hugo Bégin, François Pérusse will deliver several **famous excerpts** from his imposing repertoire, surrounded by **surprise guests** for the occasion.

Don't miss it ! **Another artist will be announced at a later date. Stay tuned and prepare for a blast!**

EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF THE OSM'S MISSION: A SEASON FILLED WITH MUSICAL DISCOVERIES

Every year, the OSM lights up the classical stage for over 20,000 young people and their families who visit the Maison symphonique. This season, the **Children's Corner** series will feature three enthralling concerts. For Halloween, **Trick or Treat!** conducted Dina Gilbert, with Jean-Willy Kunz at the organ, will transport the audience to an enchanted world through works by Saint-Saëns, Goulet, and Grieg. **Symphonic Olympics**, under the baton of Adam Johnson, will explore connections between music and sports, showing us that athletes and musicians possess the same kind of stamina. Lastly, An OSM Carnival, conducted by Julien Proulx and staged by Martin Gougeon, will present Quebec composer Maxime Goulet's *The Carnival of the Insects*, in which every instrument portrays a fascinating tiny creature.

In parallel, some dozen **school matinees** will guide young students in their discovery of the Orchestra, in concerts supplemented by pedagogical guides to enrich their learning. As for the **OSM Competition**, it will reach its 86th edition, which is dedicated to the voice. The Competition's final round will be conducted by Jacques Lacombe. Let us recall that, since 1934, the OSM has attributed the highest value to providing first-rate exposure and support for young Canadian talent, a commitment confirmed by the appearance this season of guest soloists who are all former laureates of the OSM Competition: the pianists **Bruce Liu**, **Godwin Friesen**, and **Jaeden Itzik-Dzurko**, as well as the saxophonist Jason Xu. In addition to these promising projects for the future of the OSM, a wide variety of mediation activities will be held at the Maison symphonique, the Espace OSM, and in schools.

THE OSM RESONATES AROUND THE WORLD

A leading cultural ambassador throughout Quebec, Canada, and internationally, the OSM is committed to sharing its art across borders and around the world. In the 25–26 season, the OSM will be broadcast in partnership with **Mezzo**, **Medici.tv**, and **Symphony.live**, and will record a new album in addition to releasing an album devoted to Hector Berlioz, recorded on December 19, 2024.

A FIRST ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR AND A NEW COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE



The OSM is pleased to announce the addition of two outstanding artists to the OSM family. Conductor **Dina Gilbert**, who served as Assistant Conductor to Maestro Kent Nagano from 2013 to 2016, will return to the OSM in the role of **Associate Conductor**, becoming the first Associate Conductor in OSM history. She will hold the position over the next two seasons and will conduct four different programs in 25–26.

The OSM welcome Peruvian **Jimmy López** as **composer-in-residence**, in conjunction with the **San Diego Symphony** (SDS), for which Rafael Payare also serves as Music Director. The OSM will present three works by López during the season: the tone poem *Aino* in September, *Perú Negro* in February, and *La caresse du couteau* for string quartet, to be performed by OSM musicians as part of the OSM's chamber music series at Bourgie Hall. In connection with Jimmy López's residency, the SDS and the OSM have co-commissioned an orchestral work from him, to be performed in 2026–2027.



*Subscriptions and single tickets for all concerts may be purchased as of **April 10 at 10 a.m***
osm.ca | 514-842 9951 | 1-888-842-9951

BMO is proud to be associated with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal's 92nd season, which promises to be vibrant. The main theme, accessibility, will encourage newcomers and devoted enthusiasts alike to let themselves be carried away by the melodies interpreted by the orchestra, while our budding musicians will be delighted to discover music from around the world, thanks to the many educational initiatives put forward by the OSM. Once again this year, we'll be treated to the creativity, talent and dedication of the troops ably led by Rafael Payare.

—**Grégoire Baillargeon**, President, BMO Financial Group, Quebec

« The OSM, one of the world's greatest orchestras »

— **BBC Music Magazine, March 2025**

THE OSM THANKS ITS PARTNERS, ITS DONORS, ITS SUBSCRIBERS, AND ITS PUBLIC

Contributions from the Orchestra's public-sector partners are essential to carrying out its mission. The OSM gratefully acknowledges its main partner, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, as well as the Canada Council for the

Arts, the Government of Quebec, and the Conseil des arts de Montréal. The OSM is proud to have the support of its loyal partners and wishes to thank Hydro-Québec, its presenting sponsor and BMO Financial Group, its season presenter.

We also wish to extend our thanks to Power Corporation of Canada, Fondation J.A. DeSève, IG Wealth Management, Air Canada, Canada Life, Cogeco, National Bank, Spinelli, BFL Canada, Bivouac, Clarins, Volvo, Solotech, Iris, Long & McQuade Musical Instruments, Bière Boréale, Distillerie de Montréal (Rosemont), Symphony.live, Radio-Canada, Medici.tv, La Presse, PWC, and McKinsey & Company. The OSM likewise thanks its other partners and donors, as well as its subscribers and its public, who in various ways provide essential support to its activities.

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THE ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

Founded in 1934 by Antonia Nantel, Wilfrid Pelletier and Athanase David, the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) is a distinguished leader in the musical life of Quebec and Canada and is internationally recognized as one of the finest orchestras in the world. A frontline cultural ambassador, the OSM welcomes the world's greatest conductors and soloists to the Maison symphonique de Montréal each year. Under the direction of Venezuelan conductor Rafael Payare, the Orchestra continues to fulfill many rich traditions that stem from the Orchestra's long history of social involvement, far-reaching projects, world-class tours, and high-quality recordings. Rooted in the world of today, the OSM refreshes the symphonic repertoire while firmly maintaining its place at the heart of Quebec's great metropolis. Over the years, the OSM has toured throughout Quebec's Far North, the United States, Latin America, and in several European and Asian countries. Its discography comprises over 100 recordings on the Decca, Analekta, CBC Records, ECM, EMI, Philips, Sony, and PENTATONE labels, which have garnered over 110 national and international awards.

RAFAEL PAYARE — MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE OSM

Rafael Payare's prodigious musicianship, technical brilliance and charismatic presence on the podium have made him one of the world's most sought-after conductors. A graduate of the celebrated El Sistema music education



program in Venezuela, Mr. Payare began his formal conducting studies in 2004 with José Antonio Abreu. Since winning the prestigious Malko International Competition for Young Conductors in Denmark in 2012, Maestro Payare's career has advanced rapidly. Since 2015, he has served as Principal Conductor of the Castleton Festival, founded by his mentor the late Lorin Maazel. He was Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Ulster Orchestra from 2014 to 2019 and in 2019, took up the position of Music Director of the San Diego Symphony. In recent years, Rafael Payare has conducted many of the world's most prestigious orchestras, including those of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Zurich, Berlin, Vienna, London, Munich, Chicago and Paris. He has also made important opera debuts at the Glyndebourne Festival, Stockholm's Royal Swedish Opera, the Royal Danish Opera, and most recently at London's Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. In the 2022-2023 season, Payare became the ninth Music Director in the history of the OSM.

MÉLANIE LA COUTURE — CEO OF THE OSM

Mélanie La Couture is an influential executive recognized for her leadership in culture and healthcare. A seasoned manager, she combines strategic vision, rigor and the ability to mobilize talent to transform the organizations she leads. A graduate of Polytechnique Montréal and holder of an MBA from the University of Western Ontario, she joined the OSM in 2002. Initially Director of the OSM Foundation, she became Chief Operating Officer, playing a



key role in the Orchestra's financial consolidation and the completion of the Maison symphonique, inaugurated in 2011. In 2013, she took over the management of the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) Foundation, where she significantly increased revenues. Appointed CEO of the MHI in 2017, she is modernizing the institution and strengthening its excellence in care and research. Her human and rigorous leadership enabled the ICM to weather the pandemic while maintaining quality care. In 2024, she returns to the OSM as CEO, succeeding Madeleine Careau. Enthusiastic about working with Music Director Rafael Payare, she is dedicated to raising the Orchestra's profile and strengthening its roots in society. Her experience and dynamic vision enable her to meet the challenges of major cultural organizations. Mélanie La Couture stands out for her collaborative approach and her commitment to innovation and excellence. Her career path illustrates a constant desire to make a lasting impact on the organizations she leads.

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