

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA

Canada's leader in new orchestral music

Alex Pauk, Music Director & Conductor

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Esprit Orchestra Season Opener Will Leave the Audience Seeing Stars

Esprit's opening concert, *I Hit My Head and Everything Changed*, an impactful evening of music, takes place on **Sunday October 6, 2019** in **Koerner Hall**. The concert program features works by renowned composers **Thomas Adès** and **Alexina Louie**, as well as a **World Premiere** of a commissioned work by **Brian Harman**, and a compelling concerto for the left hand by **Hans Abrahamsen**. **Artist Moira Ness**, **pianist Avan Yu**, and **the Elmer Iseler Singers** will all be featured as guest artists.

The concert begins with a blast of orchestral sound in **Thomas Adès' Overture to "The Tempest"**. With its spiraling lines, zigzagging melodic figures and head-spinning patterns, the overture signals the arrival of the unrelenting storm sending Prospero's ship to a tumultuous wreck. Mimicking the violent throws of the ship against the waves, the orchestral lines rapidly rise into the stratospherically high notes of the piccolo to just as swiftly fall down into the rhythmically slower, contrapuntally juxtaposed figures of the low brass. The climax is marked by the chorus announcing the famous Shakespearean "Hell Is Empty", thus marking the arrival of Act I of the opera and consecutively Esprit's 37th season.

The **World Premiere** of the title piece by **Brian Harman**, *I Hit My Head and Everything Changed*, is an artistic collaboration between Harman and **artist Moira Ness**. Harman, a Canadian composer, teacher, and writer, is based in Toronto. His compositions are frequently inspired by extra-musical ideas such as technology, architecture, dance, and concepts of ritual. Ness, an interdisciplinary visual artist, specializes in contemporary photo-based landscapes and algorithm generated text. Their collaborative work explores the distortion of borrowed original music and text/lyrics as a way of creating an artistic confessional. Ness has been commissioned to create both a minimalistic text-based video piece that will be projected in the concert hall while Harman's piece is performed, as well as a large art installation which will be featured in the Koerner Hall lobby. Harman's music combines and distorts musical quotations ranging from Bach and Chopin to Depeche Mode and Demi Lovato, playing with temporality and self-expression. The work was commissioned by Esprit Orchestra, with support from the Ontario Arts Council.

The concert also includes a **milestone award for renowned Canadian composer Alexina Louie**, who was announced as the recipient of the prestigious **Molson Prize in the Arts** for 2019. The award will be officially presented to her following the performance of her piece, *Love Songs for a Small Planet*. **The Elmer Iseler Singers** will be featured as guest artists. The work was Louie's first major choral composition; prior to composing the piece, Louie spent years collecting poems by Indigenous peoples around the globe, inspired by the vivid imagery and powerful love and respect for nature. In 1989, she set the poems to music, taking care to compose the music in a manner that would enhance the words, not detract from them. Louie expertly weaves them into this sensuous choral work for chamber choir, harp, percussion, and string orchestra.

Also on the program is the **Canadian Premiere** of **Hans Abrahamsen's** compelling concerto for the left hand, *Left, alone*. The composer writes, "I was born with a right hand that is not fully functional, and though it never prevented me from loving playing the piano as well as I could with this physical limitation, it has obviously given me an alternative focus on the whole piano literature and has given me a close relationship with the works written for the left hand by Ravel and others." The title of the work, *Left, alone*, contains several references left up to the listener's interpretation – not solely to do with the obvious fact that the left hand is playing alone. The work is divided into two large parts, each containing three smaller movements. The performance of this work will showcase **guest artist Avan Yu** as one of Canada's hottest young pianists. Yu has been praised for his "glittering virtuosity" (West Australian) and his "astonishing sensitivity" (La Presse); he has performed over twenty-five different piano concertos with orchestras around the world.

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA 2019/2020 CONCERT SEASON

All Pre-Concert Chats moderated by composer Alexina Louie

Sunday October 6, 2019

Esprit Orchestra Presents: *I Hit My Head and Everything Changed*

8:00pm Concert | 7:15pm Pre-Concert Chat

Programme:

Thomas Adès (England)

Overture to "The Tempest" op.22a (2004)

for orchestra

Brian Harman (Canada)

I Hit My Head and Everything Changed (2019)**

for orchestra with video art projections by Moira Ness

Alexina Louie (Canada)

Love Songs for a Small Planet (1989)

for chamber choir, harp, percussion and string orchestra

Hans Abrahamsen (Denmark)

Left, alone (2015)*

for piano (left hand) and orchestra

Presentation of 2019 Canada Council Molson Prize in the Arts to Alexina Louie

Alex Pauk – conductor

Moira Ness – artist

The Elmer Iseler Singers – chamber choir

Avan Yu – piano

*Canadian Premiere

**World Premiere commissioned by Esprit Orchestra with generous support from the Ontario Arts Council

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Individual concert tickets start at: Adult \$45; Senior 65+ \$45; Under 30 \$27; Student \$25

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Season Sponsor:



Esprit Orchestra is Canada's only full-sized orchestra devoted exclusively to performing and promoting new orchestral music. Esprit Orchestra gratefully acknowledges Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Foundation, TELUS, SOCAN Foundation, The Michael and Sonja Koerner Charitable Foundation, The Mary-Margaret Webb Foundation, Timothy & Frances Price, The Charles H. Ivey Foundation, The Amphion Foundation, Inc., and Anonymous for their generous support.

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