

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA

Canada's leader in new orchestral music

Alex Pauk, Music Director & Conductor

For Immediate Release March 3, 2020

Esprit Orchestra Presents: *Taiko Returns* Composers Perform as Soloists, Nagata Shachu Returns

The finale concert of Esprit's Koerner Hall series, ***Taiko Returns***, will take place on **Sunday March 22, 2020** in **Koerner Hall**. This exciting concert features a diverse and eclectic selection of music, with several works written by composers who will also be soloists performing in their own compositions: Anishinaabekwe composer and performer **Barbara Croall** will perform as vocalist and traditional flutist in her ***Mijidwewinan (Messages)***, Canadian composer and pianist **Christopher Goddard** will perform in the World Premiere of his new ***Piano Concerto***, Canadian composer **Eugene Astapov** will conduct the World Premiere of his work, ***A Still Life***. In addition, as the concert title suggests, the wildly popular taiko drumming group **Nagata Shachu** will return to the Esprit stage for another performance of **Maki Ishii's *Mono-Prism***.

In ***Mono-Prism***, the orchestra is joined by seven players of Japanese drums performing on seven drums with drum heads attached to the drum bodies with cords (*shime-daiko*), one extra-large drum with riveted heads (*Ō-daiko*), and three medium-size drums with riveted heads of the type known as *Chichibu-daiko*. The title *Mono-Prism* is a compound word consisting of the elements "Mono", which refers here to the monochromatic tonal quality of Japanese drums, and "Prism", referring to the prismatic tonal quality of the Western orchestra. This thrilling work demands physical power, delicate precision, emotional strength and willpower from both the orchestra and the guest artists, **Nagata Shachu**.

Anishinaabekwe composer and performer Barbara Croall's work ***Mijidwewinan (Messages)*** expresses a powerful plea for all humans to take care of our precious environment and listen to the messages given to us by the natural world around us. Croall herself will perform as vocalist and traditional flutist, personifying several spiritual beings as the piece takes listeners through a full day, from Morning Star to Evening Star, during a time when the earth experiences a crisis and shift. The composer writes, "just as every aspect of nature gives us 'messages' about the problems caused by human negligence and wastefulness, the shining stars in the sky above us – like the most ancient of spirit-beings – provide answers for our future".

Christopher Goddard's musical mastery extends to his performance as a pianist in what is, for the composer, a dream project that Esprit is thrilled to foster; his ***Piano Concerto*** will receive its **World Premiere** on the *Taiko Returns* program. **Eugene Astapov** will be featured as guest conductor in the **World Premiere** performance of his work ***A Still Life***. Astapov's work brings his Russian heritage to the fore, setting poetry by **Polina Barskova**, one of today's most important under-forty Russian poets. Barskova will be in attendance at the concert, and will participate in the pre-concert talk. **Mezzo-soprano Shannon Mercer** will perform as Esprit's guest artist in the World Premiere of *A Still Life*.

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA 2019/2020 CONCERT SEASON

Sunday March 22, 2020

Esprit Orchestra Presents: *Taiko Returns*

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

Pre-Concert Chat moderated by composer Alexina Louie

Programme:

Barbara Croall (Canada)

Mijidwewinan (Messages) (2008)

for Anishinaabekwe soloist and orchestra

Christopher Goddard (Canada)

Piano Concerto (2020)*

concerto for piano and orchestra

Eugene Astapov (Canada)

A Still Life (2020)**

for mezzo-soprano and orchestra (poetry by Russian poet Polina Barskova)

Maki Ishii (Japan)

Mono-Prism (1976)

for taiko drumming group and orchestra

Alex Pauk – Conductor

Barbara Croall, Anishinaabekwe Performer

Christopher Goddard, Piano

Eugene Astapov, Guest Conductor

Shannon Mercer, Mezzo-soprano

Nagata Shachu, Taiko Drumming Group

*World Premiere commissioned by Esprit Orchestra with generous support from Chantal Perrot

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KOERNER HALL SUBSCRIPTION SERIES

Royal Conservatory of Music TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning

273 Bloor Street West

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

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Program Sponsor: Japan Foundation

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, Azrieli Foundation, Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, SOCAN Foundation, Ontario Arts Foundation, The Michael and Sonja Koerner Charitable Foundation, The Mary-Margaret Webb Foundation, Timothy & Frances Price, Power Corporation of Canada, RBC Foundation, The Max Clarkson Family Foundation, The Charles H. Ivey Foundation, The Amphion Foundation, Inc., Japan Foundation, and Anonymous for their generous support.

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