



# Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

## QUASAR SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

8:00 p.m., von Kuster Hall

Marie-Chantal Leclair, *soprano saxophone*

Mathieu Leclair, *alto saxophone*

André Leroux, *tenor saxophone*

Jean-Marc Bouchard, *baritone saxophone*

Guillaume Barrette, *electronics*

### Territoires Sonores

Quasar is enthusiastically presenting its "Territoires sonores" project, for which remarkable composers were selected from among 115 applicants from across the country. A true sonic portrait of Canadian new music, this project has enabled the creation of inspiring works that reflect the world in which we live. A current and vibrant anthology of the diversity, creativity and richness of artists from across the country. More than a series of commissions, this project is a gathering, sharing and exchange space for the music community and for the public.

This project was made possible by the New Chapter program of the Canada Council for the Arts.



Conseil des arts  
et des lettres du Québec  
Québec



Conseil des arts  
du Canada  
Canada Council  
for the Arts

### Program

Faux Pas de Deux

Aaron Lee  
(b. 1991)

*saxophone quartet*

Music for Saxophone Quartet

Jim O'Leary  
(b. 1971)

*saxophone quartet*

Bestiaire

Émilie Girard-Charest  
(b. 1987)

*saxophone quartet*

God keep our land glorious and rich

Alec Hall  
(b. 1985)

*saxophone quartet and electronic devices*

Lux Operon

Ana Dall'Ara-Majek  
(b. 1980)

*saxophone quartet, lights and live electronic devices*

## QUASAR SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Fascinated by the music of our times, the **Quasar saxophone quartet** is dedicated to the creation and promotion of contemporary music. The group's ventures include instrumental music, improvisation, and electronics. Alone or accompanied by a symphony orchestra, acoustic or plugged, Quasar offers its audience a unique and deeply original programming. The ensemble has won six OPUS prizes awarded by the Conseil québécois de la musique, including the "Artist of the Year" prize. Quasar is also the winner of the 2019 Friends of Canadian Music Award presented by the Canadian League of Composers and the Canadian Music Centre for its exceptional commitment, on a national scale, to Canadian composers and their music.

Quasar presents a series of concerts in Montreal and performs regularly in Canada and abroad. Since its founding in 1994, Quasar has premiered over 150 works, spanning multiple areas of musical creation. A real driving force of creative music, the quartet works closely with composers favouring research, experimentation and the emergence of new ideas. Quasar thus contributes in an exceptional way to the development of Canada's music while also being credited several premieres of works by foreign composers.

Member of Le Vivier, Quasar is supported by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, the SOCAN Foundation and Vandoren.

### COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES AND PROGRAM NOTES

**Aaron Lee | Ontario | b.1991**

**Faux Pas de Deux**

**For saxophone quartet**

**Aaron Lee** is a composer interested in reinterpreting familiar sound-worlds and who seeks to find new ground along the well-trodden paths. His music encompasses both acoustic and electro-acoustic mediums, with instrumentations varying in scope and scale from orchestra and wind ensemble down to a solo metronome. Allusion, quotation, and pastiche are techniques of particular interest to Aaron and are often blended with minimalist and post-minimalist orchestrational techniques to cast old musical material in a new light. Rhythmic and metric dissonance often created through the use of polymeter or metric modulation is a recurring motif in Aaron's music. His music attempts to create layers of rhythmic complexity while maintaining consistent forward motion.

All of these goals, however, are offset by Aaron's desire to incorporate humour into contemporary music. Music holds such potential for comedy and humour, and Aaron attempts to use the techniques described above to incorporate comedy into compelling concert music.

Aaron Lee is a doctoral candidate in music composition at The University of Western Ontario, and as a performer, he has sung with Primus: Amabile Men's Choir since 2010.

#### PROGRAM NOTE

"Faux Pas de Deux", or "The Two-Step with a Misstep", is an elaborate re-composition and re-orchestration of the second prelude from the second book of J. S. Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier". It is a complex dance where the dancers are not all sure of the steps. The music, however, dances along with a confidence unshaken by the hiccups and stumbles in its footing. While individual dancers may occasionally falter, the troupe as a whole never fails to pull things back together.

The source material is, at certain times, quite apparent and yet is thickly veiled at others. It is always, however, rigorously faithful to its 18th century source. Book two, prelude two provides this quirky two-step dance with the entirety of its harmonic material.

**Jim O'Leary | PEI | b.1971**  
**Music for Saxophone Quartet**

**Jim O'Leary** is a composer from Windsor, Newfoundland. After completing undergraduate studies in percussion performance, Jim turned his focus to composition; studying in Sweden with composer Jan Sandström. After several years working in Stockholm, he returned to academia, obtaining an MPhil at Cambridge, followed by a Ph. D from Queens University, Belfast.

Jim was Composer-in-Residence with the PEI Symphony Orchestra 2011–2013. His current artistic project concerns the Beothuk, the extinct indigenous people of Newfoundland. Jim lives in Charlottetown, PEI.

**PROGRAM NOTE**

1. Sorbet #1
2. Variation
3. Chorale
4. Scherzo
5. Sorbet #2
6. Senza Misura

**Émilie Girard-Charest | Québec | b. 1987**  
**Bestiaire**  
**For saxophone quartet**

**Émilie Girard-Charest** is a cellist, composer and improviser.

She has numerous recordings to her credit, including *Émilie préfère le chant* (2016, Ambiances Magnétiques), *Race with time* (duo with Mart Soo, 2016, Improtest Records), *avec* (2016, Kohlenstoff Records), *Musica in camera* (Quatuor d'occasion, 2014, &records) and *Bruit court-circuit* (Ensemble SuperMusique, 2012, Ambiances Magnétiques).

Émilie has taken part in festivals in Canada, the United States (Avant-Music Festival), Belgium (Ars Musica), Austria (Klangspuren Schwaz and Impuls), Germany (Darmstadt Ferienkurse for Neue Musik and Donaueschingen Musiktage), Chili (Encuentro Internacional de Compositores), Argentina (Sonido Presente), Estonia (Autumn Festival), Finland (MuTe Fest), Spain (Mixtur) as well as Macedonia (Journées de la Musique Macédonienne). She has also given concerts in France, Russia and Uruguay.

Émilie regularly collaborates with theater, dance and performance productions. Her stage appearances include, notably, performances in *Couloir et Chambres* by Philippe Minyana and *La fête à Jean* by Pierre-Luc Lasalle (théâtre l'Instant, Director : André-Marie Coudou), *ADN* by Dennis Kelly (Director: Sylvain Bélanger), *The Sticks* (Andrew Tay) as well as *Le frottement du monde* (Sarah Bronsard).

Émilie is a graduate of the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal in cello (under Denis Brott) and in composition (under Michel Gonneville). She also holds a Master CoPeCo (Contemporary Performance and Composition) degree from the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg and is currently pursuing studies under the direction of Philippe Hurel and Laurent Pottier at Conservatoire national supérieur musique et danse de Lyon, where she began doctoral studies in September 2016 on the development of an ergonomic notation of microtonality for the cello.

She was the recipient of the Career Development Award from the Fondation du Conservatoire de musique de Montréal in 2014 and in 2015, she was awarded the Prix d'Europe de Composition Fernand-Lindsay.

## PROGRAM NOTE (French available only)

« Ce qui est beau dans le monde, c'est qu'il y ait des murs et des bêtes. Ailleurs, c'est la guerre, la famine, Internet, et ici, et partout, une guêpe, un lézard se glissent entre deux pierres, et aussi bien il en jaillit un cheval blanc. »

Pierre Peuchmaurd, *Fatigues*

### Alec Hall | Ontario | b.1985 God keep our land glorious and rich For saxophone quartet and electronic devices

**Alec Hall** is a Toronto-born composer living in New York City, where he is currently a 2017 Guggenheim Fellow. His compositions have been performed by such notable groups as the Ensemble SurPlus, Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, JACK Quartet, ICE, Talea Ensemble, Either/OR, Wet Ink, Continuum, Ensemble Pamplemousse, Ekmeles, the Cecilia String Quartet, and soloists Séverine Ballon, Stéphane Ginsburgh and David Broome. Upcoming projects include commissions for the TAK Ensemble, Ensemble Proton, Ensemble Dal Niente and violinist Marco Fusi. Installation work is a major component of his artistic practice, with major exhibitions in New York City since 2014, and also at the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music, in 2016.

Hall has won six prizes in the SOCAN competition for young composers, and was a finalist for the Jules Leger Prize in 2011. He was a guest composer at the 2015 Beijing Modern Music Festival and the Ensemble Contemporain de Montreal toured his violin concerto to nine cities across Canada as part of the project Generation 2014. His string quartet 28 Hours was selected to represent the Canadian section of the 2016 ISCM World Music Days. His work has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, the New York State Council on the Arts, the French-American Cultural Exchange and New Music USA. Hall is a co-founder of Qubit, a New York-based collective dedicated to producing events that highlight new and experimental works with technology, for which he presently serves as co-artistic director.

Principal teachers include George Lewis, Fred Lerdahl, Tristan Murail and Philippe Manoury. He has also worked closely with Chaya Czernowin and Steven Takasugi. Hall was educated at McGill University (B. Mus), the University of California, San Diego (M.A.), and at Columbia University, where he earned a doctorate of musical arts.

## PROGRAM NOTE

Sampling and field recording play an important role in my works, enabling a blurring of the frame between musical intention and noise-based sounds, as well as an anthropological quality that stems from the source materials. With the prompt of the New Chapter commission, my mind turned toward some of the lesser-told stories in Canada. The Athabasca Oil Sands, outside a part of the economy as they may be, are simultaneously a commonly discussed aspect of Canadian society, yet, due to the remote location and the incomprehensible enormity of their physical scale, a totally unknown quantity. The particularities of the Oil Sands are cognitively invisible. A Focus Canada study from 2014 led by David Suzuki showed that 86% of Canadians express some level of concern about global warming, yet Canadians have one of the largest individual carbon footprints in the world.

I travelled to Fort McMurray and the surrounding area in October of 2017. Despite the difficulties in accessing various sites, I recorded the sounds of the environment as much as I could, while making notes on a daily basis about my experience.

Travelling 500 miles in only two days, moving from one oilfield to the next, with very obvious sound equipment, I met a variety of people intrigued by my work who were open to talking to me about their relationship to the tar sands.

"The work is a series of successive images that bear witness to the different sites I visited".

Alec Hall

Ana Dall'Ara-Majek | Québec | 1980  
Lux Operon  
For saxophone quartet, lights and live electronic devices

PHOTO CREDIT: André Parmentier anadallaramakek.jpg

**Ana Dall'Ara-Majek** is a composer, sound artist and researcher living in Montreal (Quebec). She is devoted to the studying of interaction between instrumental, electroacoustic and computing concepts in musical composition. In 2016, she obtained a doctorate in composition from the Université de Montréal, where she has also taught several courses in the area of digital music.

Her works have been performed at numerous international festivals, some of which are commissions from Musiques & Recherches (Belgium), SeaM (Germany), Taller Sonoro (Spain), Densité 93 (France), Musicalta (France), Distractfold (UK), Société des arts technologiques (Quebec) and Quasar (Quebec).

Her artistic collaborations have been many in number as a composer, a performer and a Director in digital music. She plays regularly with the saxophonist Ida Toninato as part of the duo Jane/KIN founded in 2015, and has also collaborated in theatre, dance and film projects with the choreographer Tedi Tafel (Crying in Public), dancer Jason Shipley-Holmes (Inside\_Dream), choreographer François Raffinot (Laborintus), Director Patrick Lapierre (Cosmos Will Save the World) and Productions Totem contemporain (Hectore Navigatore and les Géants du Saint-Laurent). She has also composed for chamber ensembles such as Quasar, Les Percussions de Strasbourg, Sixtrum, Trio Hoboken, Lunatics at Large, and TM+, among others.

Avidly interested in electroacoustic analysis, she has realized numerous graphic scores with the Acousmographe and prepared analyses which have been published in the journal eOrema and in the François Bayle's publication Son Vitesse-lumière (Magison, 2016). In 2014, she put out Air, her first solo album of mixed works with Kohlenstoff Records and in 2018, she released Nano-Cosmos, her first solo album of acousmatic works, with Empreintes DIGITALes.

#### PROGRAM NOTE

In the obscurity of the sea's abysses, bioluminescent creatures shimmer to attract their prey, illuminate to guide themselves, adjust their own luminosity to camouflage themselves in the seascape, or create prodigious symphonies of colors to attract members of their species. All this is made possible through chemical reactions, most notably those created by the subtle combinations of genes in the DNA that produce luminescent proteins.

I was inspired by this idea of combination to write the piece Lux Operon in the form of a game which allows the musicians to create their own series of luminous colors, in microscopic as well as macroscopic scale. As such, the piece is an "open" environment within which the musicians play to gain the opportunity to express their personal colored melodies, or to decide upon the direction of the work according to a choice from four "color notations."

This piece is also a study of the manner of articulating a language of sound and a language of light as a coherent whole. Composing with a luminous system allowed me to create a variety of interactions where sound reacts to light and and, inversely, where sound and light evolve in counterpoint, and where the playing of each musician on their "luminescent" instrument creates reflections conveying in themselves their own motifs.

Thanks to the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology, the saxophonist Alfredo Mendoza from Aurealis project and the photographer André Parmentier for the inspiration and for the logistical and human support throughout in the realization of this project.

Join the **Quasar Saxophone Quartet** tomorrow (Thursday, January 30) as the group works with students for a masterclass (10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) and composition readings (1:30 – 3:30 p.m.) in Studio 242, Music Building.

*This visit is generously supported by the Don Wright Faculty of Music Undergraduate Gift Fund.*