

Montreal Chamber Orchestra celebrates 40 years of discovery with première concert of both music and talent.

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I rediscovered two of Montreal's more dynamic best kept secrets recently at the Montreal Chamber Orchestra's 40 Years of Discovery fall concert held in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' magnificent Bourgie Concert Hall. Formerly a church that was converted into a first rate concert hall, Bourgie Hall is known for its exceptional acoustics and has maintained that peaceful spirit that was the American Erskine United Church and those gorgeous authentic Tiffany stained glass windows.



In addition to its outstanding orchestra itself that has earned an international reputation for excellence, three facets of the professionalism of the Montreal Chamber Orchestra stand out. Established in 1974, one of founder/conductor/musical director Wanda Kaluzny's goals has been for 40 years to discover and introduce her audiences to up and coming soloists and to be the first to present the future superstars. That evening she introduced cello virtuoso Cicely Parnas who, if I can compare her in the vernacular of the Baby Boomer generation, brings the same passion and expertise to the cello that Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton bring to the electric guitar.

Cicely has been playing the cello since she was only four years old and at 20 she is already recognized for her individualized sound, her exquisite tone and spontaneous creativity delivered with an easy going fearlessness. Visually her countenance is calm and quiet as her fingers literally fly up and down the frets and her bow seems to guide itself.



Wanda's second goal is to discover and première original scores. The MCO has provided a forum for Canadian composers and has presented the world premières of two dozen

works. Cicely performed the première of Concertino for Cello, an 18 minute piece composed by award winning Toronto based Jim McGrath specifically to celebrate the MCO's 40th season.



And finally it is conductor Wanda Kaluzny herself who leads and conducts her orchestra, her soloist and even her audience with not only the professionalism that comes from literally a lifetime of doing her calling. but also with the pride and respect a mother has watching over her brood. Each swing of her baton is both a direction and an encouragement, while her left hand deftly and silently expresses appreciation.

In addition to paid concerts, the MCO also performs concerts pro bono to schools to continue its mission in developing a new audience for classical music in the younger generation. Generous corporate sponsorship such as Domtar's makes the MCO concert season happen. But it is the smaller, individual donations that allow for the free in-school concerts.

The 40 years of discovery concert series at Bourgie Hall continues into 2014 with Concerto for Piano scheduled for March 4 and Concerto for Bassoon scheduled for April 15. The series concludes on June 3 with the concert Celebrating 40 Years of Discovery. For more information about reservations or for how you can participate in the school program call 514.871.1223 or go to www.mco-ocm.qc.ca