

Contemporary Youth Orchestra to give world and U.S. premieres

by Mike Telin



The Contemporary Youth Orchestra has a long history of performing works that have been written especially for the ensemble, as well as providing its young musicians with opportunities to collaborate with professional musicians representing diverse musical genres.

That tradition will continue on Saturday, December 17 at 7:00 pm at Tri-C's Metro Auditorium when music director Kristopher Morron will lead CYO in the world premiere of Pascal LeBoeuf's *Triple Concerto* and the U.S. premiere of Vincent Mendoza's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Soloists include Barbora Kolarova (violin), Garrett Arney and Ben Kipp (percussion), Dan Bruce (guitar), Joe Tomino (drum set), Chris Coles (tenor sax), Etienne Massicotte (trumpet), and Josiah Quarles (vocals). Tickets are available [online](#).

During a recent conference call with Morron and Ben Kipp, CYO's director of educational programming, Kipp explained that LeBoeuf's *Triple Concerto* is a pre-COVID project that, until now, "has not had the opportunity to see the light of day."

They agreed that LeBoeuf represents an intersection of musical ideologies that is well-suited for CYO's brand. His influences include jazz and fusion, and he runs a program at Vanderbilt that focuses on the creation of music for video games.

“He’s an amazing composer, and to do a commission with him has been on our bucket list for a while,” Kipp said. “And to interact with a composer who’s accomplished so much is going to be a profound experience for our students.”

When thinking about what to pair with the LeBoeuf, Morron suggested Mendoza’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, citing the fact that the piece is culturally relevant at this moment in time and addresses issues the students are acutely aware of. As Morron said, the work was influenced by the events surrounding the death of George Floyd.

For the rap section of the piece, Mendoza gave the ensemble two options: to use lyrics by rapper Black Thought, or to use something particularly relevant to the social justice movement in Cleveland. “So I reached out to Josiah [Quarles] and asked him what he would like to rap about that is relevant to his experience in Cleveland,” Morron said. “That’s something that will make the performance unique to this area.”

The conductor noted that the concert also provides his players with the opportunity to work with a number of Northeast Ohio’s professional musicians. “They are all incredible and it’s going to be an amazing showcase of Cleveland talent.”

Morron is also quite simply a fan of Mendoza’s music. “I discovered it in the early 2000s when I was in college. When Ben sent him an email asking if we could play his piece, he not only said yes, but he’s also been so willing to answer my questions and offer insights into the piece. And to me, that has been very exciting.”

Kipp noted that this concert also pushes the young players into professional circumstances. “This year we have eleven- to eighteen-year-olds who are working together and learning beyond the notes on the page — learning about collaboration, and in a larger sense, cultural responsibility.”

Still, Morron and Kipp agreed that the bottom line is that the program is fun.

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