

# ORCHESTRE CLASSIQUE DE MONTRÉAL



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## “LA FLAMBEAU”

### A NEW OPERA AT ORCHESTRE CLASSIQUE DE MONTRÉAL A PREMIERE FOR HAITIAN-CANADIAN COMPOSER DAVID BONTEMPS

**Montréal, September 22, 2021** – The Orchestre classique de Montréal (OCM) is proud to announce a new collaboration with Haitian-Canadian composer **David Bontemps**, with the creation of a **new chamber opera, *La Flambeau***. The **world premiere** will take place in **February 2023** during Black History Month and will be premiered in Montreal and Hamilton, as part of the BrottOpera under the direction of **Boris Brott**.

Composed at the onset of the pandemic, this is David Bontemps’ first opera. The music combines a string orchestra with percussion and vocals to present a story rooted in powerful, topical themes: women’s rights, respect of values, the importance of denouncing human objectification and manipulation, and the need for social justice and compassion.

Scored for four singers and string orchestra with maracas, *La Flambeau* is based on the play of the same name by Haitian poet and playwright Faubert Bolivar. Bolivar’s play won the Paulette Poujol-Oriol and Georges Corvington Special Prize from Éditions Henri Deschamps in 2013.

The cast will feature Cameroonian-born soprano **Suzanne Taffot**, Canadian mezzo-soprano **Catherine Daniel**, Jamaican-Canadian tenor **Paul Williamson**, and Canadian bass **Korin Thomas-Smith**. The director will be **Mariah Inger**, a Montréal actress whose career spans three decades.

*“I’m very pleased, first of all, to have had the chance to set my friend Faubert’s powerful play to music,”* says David Bontemps. *“It’s a work that invites audiences to re-examine their convictions. I’m also thrilled that my opera is being premiered in my adopted city by such a renowned orchestra,”* he says.

David Bontemps, who is both a pianist and composer, was born in Port-au-Prince, a city where Western music mixes freely with urban and traditional Haitian idioms. In 2002, he moved to Montréal and was dubbed part of “the next generation of Haitian composers” by musicologist Claude Dauphin, who included Bontemps among the Haitian classical composers of the new era in his 2014 book, “Histoire du style musical d’Haïti.”

*Le Devoir* journalist Yves Bernard has described Bontemps as “a true vanguard for Creole music. He breaks down walls, easily navigating between folk tunes, voodoo songs, jazz, Western

classical and Haitian art music.” Bontemps has received grants from the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec and the Canada Council for the Arts and has written and recorded several albums.

#### **About the OCM**

The **Orchestre Classique de Montréal** (OCM) was founded in 1939 by violinist, conductor, and composer Alexander Brott and cellist and manager Lotte Brott. The OCM quickly became one of Canada’s most established chamber orchestras, touring five continents, recording extensively, and appearing regularly on radio and television. Now led by **Boris Brott**, OC, OQ, the elder son of Alexander and one of Canada’s most internationally renowned conductors, the OCM is a vibrant, innovative, and flexible ensemble consisting of the city’s best professional musicians. The OCM presents concerts throughout the year and is now in residence at the Salle Pierre-Mercure. Fulfilling its mission of celebrating diversity and inclusivity, the OCM has created the program ***Music for Everyone*** which enables collaborations with numerous new immigrant communities and Montreal organizations in making OCM's performances accessible to all. The OCM proudly acknowledges **BMO Bank of Montreal** as its 2021-22 Season Presenter.

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