

REVIEWS

OSQ welcomes international stars for exotic concert

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On Jan. 25, the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec (OSQ) welcomed Colombian conductor Lina González-Granados and New York mezzo-soprano rising star Isabel Leonard onstage. The concert was an ode to travel and friendship with selected pieces from Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Maurice Ravel's *Shéhérazade* and Edward Elgar's *Enigma*.

Grieg's *Peer Gynt* is a fool-proof pick to entertain and cheer an audience. By the time the orchestra's bassoons started resounding with the

grotesque thumping of "The Hall of the Mountain King," the audience was already warmed up, humming, bouncing and bobbing their heads.

After a first gleeful ovation, the tone changed abruptly when Leonard made her entrance, clad in white and gold, reminiscent of an Egyptian queen. In awe, the audience fell silent for a second before exploding in an excited welcome.

Shéhérazade is not a new piece for Leonard; she has performed it before and has sung Ravel's works several times – including at decisive moments early in her career. The ease with which she performed these difficult poems was captivating. She

said she was transported by the music's magic whenever she performed the piece. "The music paints such vivid images that I can't help losing myself in the journey of the story." She also mentioned her love for the French repertoire, saying French is one of her favourite languages to sing in. Her enthusiasm transpired through to the audience as she received a prompt standing ovation.

The concert ended with Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, a series of 14 intimate pieces where the composer salutes his friends and loved ones. Fittingly, conductor González-Granados introduced the audience to what would be her own tribute to her mentor, the late former OSQ director Bramwell

Tovey, who conducted *Enigma* at the Grand Théâtre several years ago. She also thanked – in French – the volunteers who accompanied her and her team during their days in Quebec City, keeping them company and helping out while they were far from their families.

González-Granados conducts with fervour and emotion. She seems to have an intimate connection with the orchestra and to be able to communicate with a lot of subtlety. Her precise handling of the orchestra seemed to be welcomed by the musicians as smiles were visible on many faces. Where some conductors guide their musicians, she invites them, shares the spotlight and thanks them profusely.



Photo by Myriam Labbé

Mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard and conductor Lina González-Granados both expressed their gratitude and pleasure to have been invited by the OSQ for this concert celebrating travels and friendship.

Their connection was truly a delight to see – and to hear!

Although the general theme of the concert could have been better highlighted, the result-

ing performances were still a success. Once again, the OSQ seems to have charmed its international guests.