



InSpirations Ensemble

Organ and Jazz

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Founded in 2015 by renowned clarinetist and conductor André Moisan, the InSpirations Ensemble presents an original concept and stands out for its incomparable sonority and its interpretations combining classical, jazz and world music with contemporary musical techniques. At the heart of this ensemble, the pipe organ becomes a unifying and versatile instrument, capable of unusual sound textures in synergy with the quartet's interventions. The huge variety of organ tones provides an ideal canvas for improvisations by saxophones, clarinets, trombone, percussions, and double bass.

InSpirations is the result of a stylistic research initiated by each member of the quartet, and a true ambassador of musical traditions revisited through the spectrum of modernity. The "Impressions" concert presents original compositions and adaptations of works from all walks of life, and thus testifies to our time rich in cultural convergences and artistic interweaving. "In-Spirit / Impressions", the eponymous piece of the quintet and its first album, juxtaposes a composition by Frédéric Alarie with a jazz standard by John Coltrane, while highlighting the double bass and its qualities as an instrument both melodic and rhythmic. In "Grana od bora", the soprano saxophone imitates the tarogato – a traditional Romanian instrument – in wild melodies to transport us to the Balkan countries. The "Variations on a Paganini theme" show that the instruments of the quintet can complete with the violin of the famous composer of the "Caprices", and transcend the centuries from the classical era to jazz.

The very warm welcome of the InSpirations Ensemble in Canada, the United States, and more recently in China, confirms the quality and originality of this ensemble. Upon its release in 2017 under the label ATMA, the album "Impressions" received praise from critics: "Assertive and intelligent musical instinct" (Frédéric Cardin, *ICI Musique*, June 2017). "More than just a beautiful record, it is an ode to music at all times" (Christophe Rodriguez, *Le Journal de Montréal*, July 2017). "We are at [...] a crossroads where jazz and classical cultures speak the same language" (Alain Brunet, *La Presse*, July 2017).

The group moves forward with performances on Canadian and international stages. Their concert at the Merrill Auditorium in Portland, Maine, was applauded: "The Kotschmar Organ, that venerable hundred-rank Austin donned a proverbial beret, and let loose in a brilliant, sophisticated, improvisational evening that included new music, jazz standards, and a lengthy set of variations on 'A Theme of Paganini' that made Franz Liszt look like a beginner." (John Bishop, *The New York City Chapter of the AGO*, October 2018).

The InSpirations Ensemble stands out because of the breathtaking performances of its five virtuoso musicians whose reputations extend beyond the borders:

André Moisan, clarinetist and saxophonist of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, is internationally renowned for his mastery of all clarinets, as well as for his refined musicality and the clarity of his playing. Since 1977, he has performed regularly in concert, on radio and television, both as a soloist and as a chamber musician. His numerous concerts abroad, including at Carnegie Hall, at the Royal Concertgebouw and at Radio-Berlin, have led him to become a leading performer. He is also an Associate Professor at the Université de Montréal where he has been teaching since

1989. Renowned for his eclecticism, André Moisan likes to break up musical boundaries and is keen to explore different musical styles, from classical to jazz, from Klezmer to world music.

Jean-Willy Kunz studied jazz piano in France before earning a Doctorate in organ performance at McGill University. Passionate about different styles of music, he can be heard equally in a duet with saxophonist Branford Marsalis, in a concerto for organ and symphony orchestra, or in a concert by Rufus Wainwright. As the organist-in-residence of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and artistic director of the Canadian International Organ Competition, Jean-Willy Kunz is keen to show the public the many facets of the pipe organ.

Frédéric Alarie, an internationally renowned double bassist, also has a reputation as a skillful builder, loving to deconstruct the fixed scaffolding of jazz to build new ones; a true composer in action. His playing is described as fluid, sensitive and one of the most daring in the world of contemporary jazz. It should be noted that he played with the greatest artists of the international Jazz scene. As a composer, he has six albums praised by international critics.

Michel Berthiaume, a renowned drummer and composer, holds a master's degree in jazz performance from McGill University, and continued his training with John Hollenbeck and John Riley. He has two albums as a composer and leader: "Departure" by Michel Berthiaume Quintet (XX1-21 productions) and the new "Uncompromised". His past performances include several Canadian and European tours, as well as various recordings.

Hélène Lemay, a jazz trombonist and an experienced artistic director, regularly performs on the Québec scene with many contemporary artists from the jazz, pop and classical worlds. She holds a Bachelor degree from Université de Sherbrooke and is recognized for her versatility in music, which led her to be a recipient of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec on several occasions for major creations using an interdisciplinary approach. Founder and president of Productions Tuxedo Swing, Hélène has an impeccable reputation and creates large-scale cultural events with the greatest artists of the national and international scene. She also instigates tours that showcase diverse artistic productions.

The InSpirations Ensemble is represented in the United States exclusively by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists, LLC.

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