



BEN SHIRINIAN

DIRECTOR, IN TANDEM

Ben Shirinian has built a career out of pushing the boundaries of visual storytelling in his pursuit to create compelling content. Ben began his professional career in advertising, heading the broadcast department at one of Canada's leading advertising agencies. There he was able to hone his stylistic vision directing and creating both traditional and digital content for global brands. He also served as Creative Lead for Sony PlayStation and led the campaign for the highly anticipated launch of PlayStation 3 in Canada.

Some of Ben's other career highlights include writing and directing *Lost in Motion* an award-winning branded content film series in collaboration with The National Ballet of Canada and world-renowned ballet dancer and choreographer Guillaume Côté. The film made its debut at the Toronto International Film Festival and garnered international media attention. Following the success of the first film, Ben completed a striking follow up, *Lost in Motion II*, which won Best Cinematography at the Canadian Society of Cinematography (CSC) Awards and Best Editing at the AICE Awards.

Ben is also set to direct *Land of Decoration*, the upcoming feature from Oscar nominated producer Gil Netter (*Life of Pi*), *Neverafter* from producers Sentient and Endurance, and *American Drifter*, the upcoming feature film from Oscar nominated producer Robbie Brenner (*Dallas Buyers Club*).

Ben is currently co-owner of a Toronto-based commercial production company, Lookout, specializing in motion graphics, design, animation and live action for a wide range of global clients.

Ben is represented by CAA and Lighthouse Management & Media for feature films and television.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



DANIEL TAYLOR

COUNTERTENOR

Daniel John Taylor, O.C. is praised by the critics and audience alike as 'Canada's star countertenor'. Since his early career debuts at New York's Metropolitan Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, and the Rome Opera, his voice has been hailed as an "unwavering spirit carried aloft above the tumult of earthly existence" (*The Toronto Star*). The *Times* says the "beauty of his voice will stop you in your tracks," while *The Guardian* calls him "part angel, part man."

Additional operatic engagements have included the San Francisco Opera, the Welsh Opera, Opéra de Montréal, and the Canadian Opera Company. Taylor has performed with the Edinburgh Festival, the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, the symphonies of Madrid, Dallas and Toronto, with Tafelmusik and Les Violons du Roy. He has been heard in recital at the BBC Proms and at Wigmore Hall in London; at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Zürich's Tonhalle; in China's Forbidden City; at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris; and at Carnegie Hall. Additional performances include a world tour with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir for the *Bach Cantata Pilgrimage*; projects with actors Ralph Fiennes, Jeremy Irons, Megan Follows, Martha Henry, and Chris Noth; and Ryuichi Sakamoto's opera, *Life*, which was narrated by the Dalai Lama.

Canada's most prolific recording artist, Taylor may be heard on over 120 albums and in films on labels including DG Archiv, Warner, DECCA and SONY. Taylor's productions have been recognized with numerous awards including a GRAMMY Award, Diapason d'Or, BBC Music Awards, JUNO Award, and Quebec's ADISQ, among many others. He also appears on Cirque du Soleil recordings of *Totem* and *Avatar*.

Taylor is Founder and Artistic Director of two ensembles: The Theatre of Early Music and The Trinity Choir and a gifted choral conductor and sought-after teacher. In recent years, Taylor traveled to Africa as well as to Brazil, Cuba and to China to offer workshops, masterclasses and recitals. Daniel Taylor is Director of the Historical Performance Area of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto.

Taylor completed his undergraduate study at McGill University, graduate work at the Université de Montréal with advanced studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London and with leading exponents in the area of early music. He is the recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal for Music.



ANDREA PEÑA

DANCE ARTIST

Originally from Bogota, Colombia, Andrea Peña is a multidisciplinary artist whose creative practice transverses the fields of art installation, choreography and design. Founded in 2014, Andrea Peña & Artists is recognized within Canada and internationally for their creation of critical, alternative and spatial universes that rupture our notions of a rational humanity and engage in deep encounters between the physical body and the self. Peña's highly intricate, vulnerable and raw choreography is established at a national and international scale presenting works in Hong Kong, Spain, India, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Canada. Peña's works have been performed by Danse Danse, Attakalari India Biennale, Arsenal Art Contemporain, Festival Quartiers Danses, Maison de la culture Maisonneuve, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canadian Center for Architecture, Hong Kong International Choreography Festival, Festival International de Danza de la Ciudad de Mexico, AADK Spain, IONION Arts Center Greece, Laval Symphony Orchestra and SpringBoard, amongst others. Peña has been recognized with numerous awards for her conceptual and highly demanding creations, recently including the 2018 Banff Arts Center's Clifford E. Lee Canadian Choreography award and the 2018 Hong Kong International Choreography Award.

PHOTO: BOBBY LEON



GUILLAUME CÔTÉ

DANCE ARTIST

Guillaume Côté is a native of Lac-Saint-Jean, Québec. He studied at Canada's National Ballet School and joined The National Ballet of Canada in 1999. He quickly rose through the ranks and was promoted to Principal Dancer in 2004.

Since then, Mr. Côté has danced all the leading roles in The National Ballet of Canada repertoire and has been the leading male figure of the company. He has had numerous roles created for him notably Romeo in Alexei Ratmansky's *Romeo and Juliet*, the Prince in James Kudelka's *Cinderella* and Gene Kelly in Derek Deane's *Strictly Gershwin*. He has also worked closely with such icons as Roland Petit, John Neumeier, William Forsythe, Christopher Wheeldon and Crystal Pite.

As a guest artist, Mr. Côté has danced with the Royal Ballet, Bolshoi Theatre, American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, Teatro alla Scala, English National Ballet, the Mikhailosky Theater of St-Petersburg, Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, Berlin's Staatsoper, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Stuttgart Ballet, Hamburg Ballet, the Alberta Ballet, Verona Opera and the South African Ballet Theater. Mr. Côté has also performed in numerous international galas.

In 2013, in addition to his position as a Principal Dancer, Mr. Côté assumed the role of Choreographic Associate with the National Ballet of Canada and eight of his pieces are now part of the company's repertoire. Mr. Côté's work *No. 24* won third prize at Ballet Society Hanover's 25th International Competition in 2011 and entered the National Ballet's repertoire in 2013. In 2012, his work *Enkeli* won the Audience Choice Award for Best Choreography at The Tenth International Competition for the Erik Bruhn Prize. That same year, his work for ProArteDanza, *Fractals: a pattern of chaos*, was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Choreography. In 2013, his work *Being and Nothingness* entered the National Ballet of Canada's repertoire and after its initial success, the piece was extended and presented in 2015 and again in 2019 for an international tour that finished in Russia. Mr. Côté's first full-length ballet, *Le Petit Prince*, was presented during the National Ballet's 2016 season in front of sold-out houses. Mr. Côté was chosen to participate in the landmark National Arts Centre Commission *Encount3rs* in 2017, pairing three of Canada's outstanding choreographic talents with three of the country's most exciting composers performing together with the National Arts Centre Orchestra. In June of 2018, Mr. Côté creates in collaboration with the fame Director Robert Lepage, *Frame by Frame*, a new full-length evening presented at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto. More recently, Mr. Côté created the full-length *Crypto*, an independent project scheduled to tour across the country with over 20 performances.

In 2011, Mr. Côté was awarded the Medal of the National Assembly of Quebec for his work in the arts. In September 2014, he was named the Artistic Director of the Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur, the largest summer dance festival in the country.



YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

DIRECTEUR ARTISTIQUE
ET CHEF PRINCIPAL

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000, Yannick Nézet-Séguin became, in September 2018, the third Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera (MET), New York, adding this to his Music Directorship of the Philadelphia Orchestra where he has served since 2012. In 2016-2017, he became a lifetime Honorary Member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. After his ten-year tenure with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, he was named Honorary Conductor.

He has worked regularly with many leading European ensembles and has enjoyed many close collaborations with the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Wiener Philharmoniker, Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunk and Chamber Orchestra of Europe as well as with London Philharmonic Orchestra, of which he was Principal Guest Conductor from 2008 to 2014. His opera interpretations have been acclaimed in many of the world's most famous houses, such as the Metropolitan Opera (New York), La Scala (Milan), and the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden, London), in the Salzburg Festival, as well as in such renowned concert halls as the Musikverein (Vienna), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam) and Carnegie Hall (New York).

Yannick Nézet-Séguin records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon label while continuing his role in the collaborative partnership between ATMA Classique and the OM. His honours include Artist of the Year by the prestigious magazine *Musical America*, a Royal Philharmonic Society Award (RPS, London), Canada's National Arts Centre Award (Ottawa), the Prix Denise-Pelletier, awarded by the Quebec government, the Medal of Honor of the National Assembly of Quebec, the Oskar Morawetz Award and Orchestras Canada's Betty Webster Award.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin holds six honorary doctorates (Université du Québec à Montréal, 2011; Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, 2014; Rider University, Princeton, 2015; McGill University, Montreal, 2017, Université de Montréal, 2017; Pennsylvania University, 2018), and has been made a Companion of the Order of Canada (2012), Companion of the Quebec Order for the Arts and Literature (2015), Officer of the National Order of Quebec (2015) and Officer of the Ordre de Montréal (2017).

ORCHESTRE MÉTROPOLITAIN

One of Quebec's key cultural ambassadors, the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal (OM) is celebrating its 40th anniversary this season. At its inception in 1981, the OM set the bar high: to build a unique relationship with the community through high-impact initiatives. Over the last 20 years, the OM has grown alongside its artistic director and principal conductor, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, whose career continues to reach new heights. In September 2019, the OM announced that Nézet-Séguin had signed on for an exceptional lifetime contract.

This special relationship resonates throughout the community, with 50 concerts performed annually at the Maison symphonique and across the city, thanks to the Conseil des arts de Montréal Touring Program. The OM also puts on webcast and open-air concerts. Driven by excellence, the ensemble is known for its bold presence, authenticity and community engagement.

Proud to have expanded its educational initiatives, including The OM for Schools and The OM for Future Talent, the Orchestre strives to cultivate a passion for music among young people.

The OM also regularly collaborates with other high-calibre cultural organizations in Quebec, serving as the Opéra de Montréal's orchestra.

Following the success of its 2017 European tour, the OM and Yannick Nézet-Séguin travelled to the US in November 2019 with soprano Joyce DiDonato, winning over audiences in Chicago, Ann Arbor, New York and Philadelphia.

The winner of multiple national awards, the OM has recorded some 20 performances with the Canadian ATMA Classique label, including Bruckner's symphonies, which were released in spring 2018. The Orchestre has also collaborated with Deutsche Grammophon to release two albums with renowned singers Rolando Villazón and Ildar Abdrazakov (*Duets* in 2017 and *Verdi* in 2019).

More recently, the OM performed all nine Beethoven symphonies for its Summer of Beethoven webcast series available exclusively on DG Stage. This initiative made the OM one of the first orchestras to come together again after the COVID-19 crisis forced ensembles across the globe to go on hiatus.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the OM has rolled out numerous digital initiatives, which has helped it stay connected with audience members during this unprecedented time.



FRÉDÉRIK GRAVEL

DANCE ARTIST

Frédéric Gravel graduated in 2009 from UQAM's (Université du Québec à Montréal) dance faculty with a thesis on "The role of the dance artist in a democratic society". As a choreographer, dancer, musician and lighting designer Frédéric Gravel has been active on the Montreal scene for the past fifteen years. He turns the structures of choreography upside down, merging into his work various elements from rock and performance art. He joined DLD as an associate creator in 2010 and was appointed artistic director of the company in 2018.

His productions—*Gravel Works* (2009), *All Hell is Breaking Loose*, *Honey* (2010), *Usually Beauty Fails* (2012) and *This Duet That We've Already Done (so many times)* (2015), *Some Hope for the Bastards* (2017) and *Fear and Greed* (2019)—have received great national and international reviews. He co-created with the author Étienne Lepage *Ainsi parlait...* (2013) and *Logique du pire* (2016). In February 2015, he revisited the cabaret style at Usine C, presenting *Cabaret Gravel* with 20 guest artists, including Dear Criminals and the Molinari Quartet. Always present where least expected, he collaborated with Pierre Lapointe on *Mutantès* and *Amours, délices et orgues* (2008).

The works of Frédéric Gravel are created in close collaboration with all members of Grouped'ArtGravelArtGroup/GAG, a shifting collective of dancers and musicians actively involved in the creation process. More and more active as a teacher, Frédéric Gravel regularly gives creative workshops as well as teaching at CÉGEP Saint-Hyacinthe's theater department, at Université du Québec à Montréal and at l'École de danse contemporaine de Montréal.



JIREH GOSPEL CHOIR

GOSPEL CHOIR

JIREH Gospel Choir, based in Montreal and directed by Carol Bernard, has carved out quite a name for itself in the music industry in Canada and Europe. Composed of about fifteen singers plus musicians, JIREH members have travelled throughout the province of Quebec, to the rest of Canada, to the United States, and all the way to France and Italy to share their love for gospel music and spread its contagious energy. Whether performing outdoors or in an intimate setting, the choir delivers a powerful punch that leaves no one unmoved. From timeless classics to original compositions, JIREH perfectly combines traditional and contemporary gospel sounds.

A testament to the choir's dedication and unique brand of gospel music, JIREH Gospel Choir won the prestigious Gospel Album of the Year award in 2015 from the Gospel Music Association of Canada for their album "Get Up". In 2012, the group won Gospel Song of the Year for their song "Quoi qu'il arrive".

Dedicated to delivering authentic yet creative music, JIREH's singers and artists push the musical boundaries of gospel by infusing their sound with their unique brand of joyful and reflective music all the while respecting the heart and soul, and traditions, of the music they love.

JIREH Gospel Choir's foot-stomping beats will transform even bystanders into active participants while the music's uplifting message will raise your spirit for days to come!



NATASHA KANAPÉ FONTAINE

WRITER AND POET

Natasha Kanapé Fontaine is an Innu poet from Pessamit, now living in Montreal. She is the author of *N'entre pas dans mon âme avec tes chaussures* (Don't enter my soul with your shoes) published by Mémoire d'encrier 2012 (which won the Prix des Écrivains francophones d'Amérique 2013), and also author of *Manifeste Assi* (Published by: Éditions Mémoire d'encrier 2014 (Finalist of Prix Émile-Nelligan 2015)). She wrote poetry books praised by the critics and more recently *Bleuets et abricots* (Blueberries and apricots) published by Mémoire d'encrier. A proud representative of the Canadian wide Aboriginal movement Idle No More, she travels throughout Quebec, Canada and other countries as a poet and public speaker. The message she carries is the meeting of peoples and cultures, respect, exchange and dialogue, under the auspices of dignity and humanity.



JERA WOLFE

DANCE ARTIST

Born in Toronto, Canada, Dora winner Jera Wolfe is a choreographer and performer of Métis heritage and is an Associate Artist with Red Sky Performance.

Jera was the official Canadian choreographer for NBS's Sharing Dance Day 2020 and co-choreographer for 2021. He was also the Ontario Ambassador for International Dance Day 2020.

His captivating choreography has awarded him the 2019 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Original Choreography for *Trace*. He has demonstrated an impressive repertoire of works presented by Canadian Stage, Fall For Dance North, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Festival des arts de Saint-Sauveur, Danse Danse, and Jacob's Pillow.

His recent works include *Bare*, choreographed for Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, *Trace* by Red Sky Performance, *FLOW* by Red Sky Performance, *Arise* for Canada's National Ballet School, *Embers* for Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, *Reliance* for Ryerson University's School of Performance, and *Begin Again* for Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.

His latest work *Soul* makes its world premiere as part of The National Ballet of Canada's 2020/21 virtual season, Spotlight Series.

Aside from choreography, Jera performs primarily for Red Sky Performance and has also performed with many other companies including Peggy Baker Dance Projects.

Jera graduated from Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School and, since 2016, returned to the company to create new works each year.