

Con Brio

April 2025



LES *Amis* OF
THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
DE L' **ORCHESTR**
DU CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

Honorary Patron - **Président honoraire**
Alexander Shelley



Le Grand Salon, French Embassy, Ottawa. Photo © Ülle Baum

An Exciting Evening at the French Embassy

By Kinga and Elena Petrovai, FNACO Members

It was an elegant evening hosted by His Excellency Michel Miraillet at the French Embassy—an occasion that sparkled with warmth, sophistication, and beautiful music. The night began with a reception featuring exquisite hors d'oeuvre and champagne, setting a festive and welcoming tone. Guests mingled and connected with old and new friends within the splendid surroundings of one of the city's most beautiful diplomatic residences.

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The reception hall, grand and refined, was adorned with magnificent tapestries that vividly depicted French culture and history. A majestic red-carpeted staircase led to the elegant salon overlooking the Ottawa River, where the evening's concert would occur. As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting golden hues across the water, guests made their way upstairs at the Ambassador's invitation, ready to be transported by music.



H.E. Michel Miraillet, Ambassador of France to Canada; Christine McLaughlin FNACO president; Louis-Pierre Bergeron, NACO; Julia MacLaine, NACO. Photo © Ülke Baum

Ambassador Miraillet warmly welcomed everyone and introduced the evening's featured artists: the talented Duo Moon Palace, comprised of cellist Julia MacLaine and horn player Louis-Pierre Bergeron. A couple both on and off the stage, Julia and Louis-Pierre are both members of the National Arts Centre Orchestra — Julia as assistant principal cello and Louis-Pierre as fourth horn.

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H.E. Michel Miraillet, Ambassador of France to Canada; Louis-Pierre Bergeron, NACO; Julia MacLaine NACO.
Photo © Ülke Baum

With charm and authenticity, they shared a delightful anecdote about their morning spent harvesting maple syrup on their farm, before exchanging farm tools for instruments to perform at the French Embassy. It was a personal, endearing moment that added warmth and depth to the evening.

The diverse and uplifting repertoire featured works by Jacques-François Gallay, Otto Nicolai, Camille Saint-Saëns, and J.S. Bach, alongside original compositions by the duo. The audience was also treated to the joyful sounds of French and Québécois folk music and light-hearted jazz, infusing the evening with a sense of both celebration and intimacy.

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As the final notes faded, the room erupted in enthusiastic applause, prompting two encore pieces: a tender rendition of Handel's "Ombra Mai Fu", followed by the contemplative "Sarabande" from Bach's Cello Suite No. 6.

The evening concluded just as it began—with elegance, joy, and community. Guests descended the staircase once more to savor delicious French pastries and champagne. The air was filled with conversation, as the artists joined us, sharing insights into their music and lives.

Sincere thanks to Ambassador Miraillet and the team at the French Embassy for hosting such a gracious and inspiring event that beautifully celebrated art, culture, and connection and through the sustained efforts of the FNACO Board and members contributed to funds for aspiring young musicians.

Avec un grand merci! ■



Duo Moon Palace, Musicians Louis-Pierre Bergeron, Fourth horn, NACO, and Julia MacLaine, Assistant Principal, cello, NACO.

Photo © Ülle Baum

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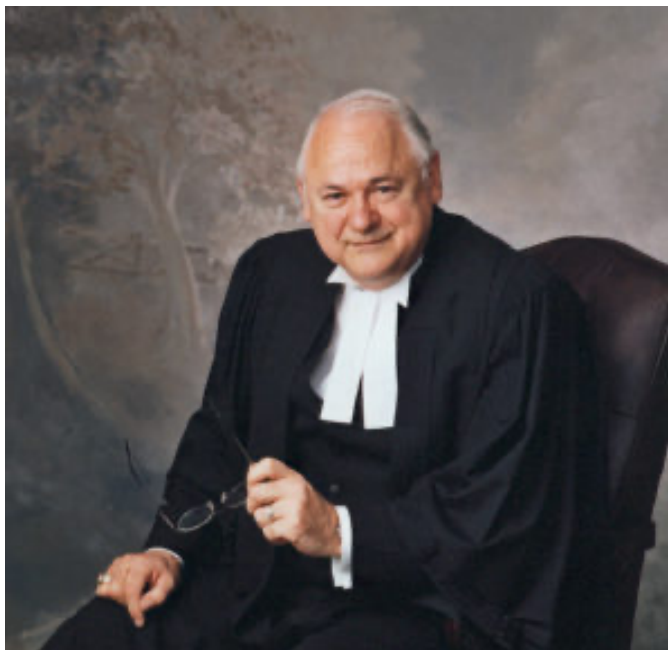
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Congratulations!

Many congratulations to Colonel-Maitre (R) Michel Drapeau for receiving the King Charles III Coronation medal for significant contribution to Canada.

We are honoured to have Michel as a FNACO member and on our Board as our legal representative.



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*M*essage from Max Cardilli, Assistant Principal, Double Bass, NAC Orchestra

Dear Friends,

During the winter of 2017, I had the opportunity to take part in a program offered by the NAC Orchestra called the Institute for Orchestral Studies. It was an annual six week intensive for a quintet of young string players, selected through an international application. Participants were implanted into the string section of the NAC Orchestra where we were to 'fit in'. We also had access to mentors who would be coaching us throughout. This program was a sort of precursor to the current NACO Mentorship Program and my experience in that program in many ways changed my life.

I grew up in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, a suburb on the Island of Montreal. My parents insisted that my two elder brothers and I all take music lessons from an early age. I "chose" the piano, they say. However, when I attended Lindsay Place High School Mr. George Doxas introduced me to the double bass and arranged for me to have some introductory lessons. I took to



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it quickly and I blushed when he told me I would one day play at Carnegie Hall. I went on to study music earning a bachelor's degree in Double Bass Performance from McGill University (2015). In October of 2016, after reassuring a concerned WestJet agent at the check-in counter that "it indeed was a cello!", I found myself on stage at the Winspear Centre for Music auditioning for a spot in the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. I was stunned when I found out I was the only one left in the running by the final round. The result: a "no-hire". In the vast world of orchestral auditions, we see this scenario play out time and time again: a young musician presents themselves with talent, enthusiasm and dedication, stands out, but is lacking the experience to fully convince a committee of seasoned professionals. I remember being both inspired and confused by the result.

As a consolation, I was offered a temporary contract with the ESO to fill the bass vacancy they still had in the section. Two short weeks after the audition, I was back to join the orchestra in a run of Puccini's Turandot followed the next week by Nielsen's Symphony no 2 - a running start for the kid who had minimal professional experience and who had never lived away from home. The weeks kept coming, the repertoire in my practice folder kept growing and it felt like I was glued to my instrument day and night. Preparing all the new repertoire for the orchestra I found to be an immense challenge. In school, youth orchestras, and summer festivals as a student, we typically spent a month or more preparing a single concert. In this new professional context, there would only be a couple of rehearsals to put together multiple different programs in a single week, every week. I was just trying to stay afloat. How these musicians, each with full lives and families, could all show up excellently prepared for the first rehearsal of whatever was on the music stand put into perspective the importance of experience.

I was able to take the required time off from the ESO season to participate in the NAC Orchestra's IOS program as mentioned above. The first rehearsal I had with the NAC Orchestra was for Beethoven's Fourth Symphony with guest conductor Christian Zacharias. Being surrounded by some of the most refined interpreters of Beethoven's music was tremendous. There is a devilish little bassoon solo in the finale and from the very first rehearsal I remember Chris Millard, NACO's former Principal Bassoonist, making it sound fun and effortless. Being witness to the highest levels of professionalism immediately impelled me to go further in personal practice. I had a wonderful six intense weeks of study with the former Principal Double Bass, Joel Quarrington. It seemed like every other day we were losing track of time in a basement practice room of the NAC, discussing the ins and outs of double bass technique, refining my fundamentals, and ultimately my approach to the repertoire. Mock auditions were organized in front of a panel of NACO principal

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musicians, getting immediate and thorough feedback about how to further refine audition excerpts to be more convincing. All this on top of the fast pace of the orchestra schedule, loaded with fabulous repertoire and illustrious conductors and soloists.

Having the chance to sit in the NACO string section solidified for me that to be part of an outstanding collective requires a perfectly unified approach. Not only unified in technique, bow strokes or intonation, but a unity of color, a thoughtfulness towards balance, the subtleties of impulse and the minutia of timing pizzicati. It can only be closely described as a mystical moment of group transcendence when a string section can place the most beautiful pizzicato so perfectly together in a tender delicate moment. I left the program having learned that in order to be an effective and contributing member of any string section, I had to adopt the hive-mind and be constantly and completely engaged with my colleagues with this newly discovered tenacity.

A few months after leaving the NACO Institute for Orchestral Studies I was fortunate enough to secure a position in 2018 with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra the next time the auditions came up. After gaining further experience for six fulfilling seasons with the ESO, I had the opportunity to audition for a position in the NAC Orchestra and had to pinch myself when I was offered the job. In fact, my trial weeks with the orchestra just so happened to coincide with NACO's long awaited return to Carnegie Hall in 2023. During those weeks, I thought of Mr. George Doxas and all the teachers and mentors who nudged me along on this wonderful path.

Thank you all so much for doing the important work of supporting education initiatives and for providing budding young professionals a chance at gaining experience. I am so thrilled to have the chance at giving back and participating in the mentorship of the next generation of musicians, here in our own community and beyond.

Sincerely,

Max Cardilli
Assistant principal, double bass
NAC Orchestra

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2025 NAC Orchestra Bursary Competition (Strings)

Semi-finals: April 22 1:00pm
FINALS: April 23 1:00pm

**Pérez Building, Freiman Hall, Ottawa
University**

All welcome to both days for this free and remarkable afternoon competition.

Come and see who wins our two FNACO awards!



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