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For Immediate Release

History-Making Canadian National Jazz Orchestra Unites Players from Across Canada to Debut the Best in Live Jazz in Calgary

April 7, 2022 - CALGARY – It's time to make history! Often dreamt about but never accomplished, this spring Arts Commons and JazzYYC are collaborating to form Canada's first Canadian National Jazz Orchestra, welcoming members from across our beautiful country to represent the best in live jazz orchestral performance. Under the artistic director of JUNO Award-winning and world-renowned big band leader Christine Jensen, this concert will begin a new era for Canadian jazz music, and you're invited! Join Arts Commons Presents's TD Jazz series for a historic evening with the **Canadian National Jazz Orchestra: *Premiere Performance***, live and in-person at the **Jack Singer Concert Hall on Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.**



Jaelem Bhate, Derrick Gardiner, Christine Jensen, Phillippe Côté, Darcy James Argue, Marianne Trudel, and Brian Dickinson.

Years in the making, the Canadian National Jazz Orchestra was conceived and produced by Calgary's jazz collaborative JazzYYC and Arts Commons Presents to set a national standard for orchestral jazz performance in our country. The orchestra will perform a repertoire entirely of Canadian works, including nine original compositions, by a roster of top Canadian jazz composers including **Marianne Trudel**, **Philippe Côté**, and **Christine Jensen** from Quebec; **Brian Dickinson** from Ontario; Canadian ex-pat **Darcy James Argue** in New York; **Derrick Gardner** from Manitoba; and **Jaelem Bhate** – the inaugural winner of the project's Hugh Fraser Emerging Composer Award recipient – from British Columbia. These world premiere pieces will reflect a spectrum of jazz styles inspired by life in Canada, fusing local styles into a uniquely Canadian jazz sound.

"It's far too seldom that the various jazz communities in our huge country can come together and make music; any time we can do that, it's an opportunity to move things forward in a collaborative manner that is special and unique from working exclusively within one's own scene at home," says Canadian National Jazz Orchestra trumpeter Brad Turner.

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The performers, selected to embody Canada's established record of developing elite jazz talents, include saxophonist **Chet Doxas** and trumpeter **Rachel Therrien** from Québec, pianist **Chris Gestrin** and trumpeter **Brad Turner** from British Columbia, GRAMMY-nominated guitarist **Matthew Stevens** and two-time JUNO-nominated saxophonist **Shirantha Beddage** from Ontario, and Calgary's own premiere trumpet player André Wickenheiser (the full roster of orchestra musicians and their bios are included below). Many of these performers know each other by reputation only and have never played on the same stage.

"The Canadian National Jazz Orchestra is composed of a diverse group of incredibly talented musicians from all across the country. I am honoured to join the band, not only with the ambition to make amazing music, but also with the hopes of inspiring other young women to express themselves through music," says orchestra alto saxophonist Allison Au. "With a mandate to spotlight Canadian composers, I also feel that the ensemble is poised to be a wonderful platform for furthering the cultivation of the contemporary jazz voice in Canada."

"The opportunity to create something new and create something that's world-class – that's the dream," says Kodi Hutchinson, Artistic Director of JazzYYC. "Much of the Canadian jazz scene is very siloed within their own urban centres. This project creates the opportunity for artistic cross-pollination on a national scale. Every scene in the country has a different sound. Bringing them all together, there is something powerful in musicians sharing their stories musically. We have some of the best talent in the world, and we want to put Canadian jazz on the map."

"Canada has a wealth of jazz talent to be proud of," says Jennifer Johnson, VP of programming at Arts Commons. "Bringing the accomplished composers and performers together is a powerful expression of what our creative community is capable of when we dream big and combine our collective resources."

The TD Jazz series celebrates a Canadian love for jazz music, as well as fosters the jazz musicians of tomorrow through education outreach with jazz students on the cusp of launching into careers of their own. Notable artists have included Jon Batiste, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and this past March, the Jazz at Lincoln Center touring ensemble. Continuing this important tradition, through JazzYYC, The Canadian National Jazz Orchestra will invite high school jazz students for an exclusive education initiative to inspire their future careers, sharing the highest level of Canadian jazz performance.

Arts Commons Presents's TD Jazz series has welcomed the best jazz performers from around the world and after last season's virtual presentations, we are excited to be returning to live, in-person performances, concluding our season with Pink Martini featuring China Forbes on Thursday, May 19, 2022, and *SuperBlue*: Kurt Elling featuring Charlie Hunter on Thursday, June 23, 2022. For more information on TD Jazz, please visit artscommons.ca/tjazz.

What: TD Jazz – Canadian National Jazz Orchestra: *Premiere Performance*
When: Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Jack Singer Concert Hall, Arts Commons
Preshow: Musicians from JazzYYC's Youth Lab Band
Who: Arts Commons Presents
Tickets: 403-294-9494 or visit artscommons.ca/cnjo

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Arts Commons Presents invites you to discover the transformative power of the Arts. As the programming arm of Arts Commons, the third largest performing arts centre in Canada, Arts Commons Presents is one manifestation of this mandate, achieved through the programming and presenting of our in-house series: BD&P World Stage, National Geographic Live, PCL Blues, TD Amplify Cabarets, and TD Jazz, as well as the work that we do in the community. Through this work, we are able to do our part to further enrich our city, as well as create opportunities for Calgary-based artists on a multitude of levels.

Montreal-based saxophonist, composer and conductor **Christine Jensen** is regarded as one of Canada's most compelling bandleaders. As a Downbeat Critic's Poll winner for Rising Star Big Band, Arranger, and Soprano Saxophonist, she is constantly in motion leading her own jazz orchestra as well other diverse large and small ensemble projects around the world. Jensen has won two JUNO Awards for her recordings with her jazz orchestra, including Habitat (2014) and Treelines (2011), along with being a two-time recipient of the SOCAN Hagood Hardy Jazz Composer Award. Habitat received the coveted 5 stars in Downbeat, and was included at the top of several international critic's polls, including Jazz Album of the Year in 2014.

Tara Davidson is a JUNO Award-winning alto and soprano saxophonist who has performed around the world at such prestigious venues as New York City's Carnegie Hall, the acclaimed North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, the JZ Jazz Club in Shanghai, China, and The Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C. As a bandleader, Davidson has produced seven recordings since 2004 and performed on approximately forty recordings as a side person. Four of her recordings as a leader have been nominated by the JUNO Awards for "Album of the Year" in the "Traditional", "Solo" and "Group" jazz categories. Davidson is an active educator presently on faculty at the University of Toronto and York University.

Toronto-based alto saxophonist **Allison Au** (pronounced "ow") is a rising force as an improviser, composer and bandleader. Since assembling her quartet a decade ago she's steadily gained recognition with a welcoming, interactive group sound inspired by post-bop idioms, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, pop music forms and R&B cadences.

Born and raised in Montréal, Canada into a musical family, **Chet Doxas'** love of music was fostered by his father, a musician, music teacher and recording engineer; and his older brother and drummer, Jim, with whom he regularly performs. Now based in Brooklyn, NY since 2014, Chet leads and co-leads several projects including The Chet Doxas Trio, Doxas Brothers Quartet, Landline, and Rich in Symbols.

Claire Devlin is a Montreal-based saxophonist and composer. Since 2016 Claire has led her own group, the Claire Devlin Quartet, and in 2020 she released her debut album, "Anyone". Claire is a member of several ensembles, including the Sarah Rossy Chamber Ensemble, the Plastic Waste Band, Acorn Hat, and Jean-Michel Leblanc's Variétés Narratives, and she performs regularly with the Orchestre national de jazz de Montréal, Rommel Ribeiro, Thus Owls, and the Equal Jazz Orchestra.

Two-time JUNO-nominated musician **Shirantha Beddage** ("Shurr-ANN-tha BED-da-gay") is a baritone saxophonist, composer and educator from Toronto. His original music combines hard bop and modern jazz to create a sound that is both accessible and sophisticated. He has released three critically-acclaimed albums as a leader: Roots and Branches, Identity (2013 JUNO nominee) and Momentum (2017 JUNO nominee). As a sideman, he has been featured on recordings with the Order of Canada Band, Suzie Arioli, Laila Biali, Nancy Walker, Mike Downes and many others.

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Jocelyn Couture is one of the best known and sought-after lead trumpeters in Canada. He has gained international recognition and respect within the music industry for his well-rounded technical abilities and musicality. He is one of the few lead players that makes other trumpeters shake their heads in disbelief. Not only does he possess tremendous power and range, he can also swing! Born in Victoriaville, Quebec, Canada, he started playing the trumpet at the early age of 10. It didn't take much time for his raw talent to be noticed from his peers. He was only 12 years old when destiny knocked on his door as he stood out from the crowd for his ability and ease to hit the incredible high notes that only few can attain.

Born in Chicago and inspired by the finest hard-blowing funky bop bands of the 1960s, jazz trumpeter **Derrick E. Gardner** quickly made his mark on the New York City jazz scene after arriving in the Big Apple in 1991. Derrick was a member of the Count Basie Orch. for five years (1991 to 1996 plus occasional guest appearances that have continued into the present day) and has traveled the world playing top-flight jazz with a tremendous litany of artists that includes Dizzy Gillespie, George Benson, Frank Foster, Joe Williams, Benny Golson, Rufus Reid, Kenny Baron, Stefon Harris, James Moody, The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and Clark Terry to name a few.

From Montreal to New York City, French-Canadian trumpeter, composer and producer **Rachel Therrien** boasts an enviable CV. She is considered one of the most promising jazz musicians, playing a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. Winner of the 2015 TD Grand Prize Jazz Award at the renowned Montreal International Jazz Festival, the 2016 Stingray Jazz Rising Star Award and nominated as Best Jazz Producer at the Independent Music Awards 2018, she has shared stages with many world-class musicians in clubs, festivals and on television throughout the Americas and the Caribbean.

Brad Turner (M.Mus., University of North Texas, 1992) is a trumpeter, pianist, drummer and composer who is one of Canada's most in-demand and highly esteemed jazz musicians. After receiving his Master's degree in Jazz Performance from the University of North Texas in 1992, Turner returned to Vancouver, and was hired as an instructor of trumpet at Capilano University (then Capilano College).

Trombonist, composer and arranger **Kelsley Grant** received his Bachelor of Music from McGill University and completed his graduate studies at the Manhattan School of Music. Shortly after leaving New York, he joined Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau and toured the United States, Germany, Switzerland and England. Kelsley has performed with Aretha Franklin, Jackie Richardson, Frank Sinatra Jr., Michael Buble, Maria Schneider, Michel Legrand, Nicholas Payton, Sophie Milman, Ranee Lee, and Nikki Yanofsky.

Trombonist **William Carn** has emerged as one of Canada's leading contemporary jazz trombonists and composers. He has performed and taught internationally as well as throughout Canada. Most recently, he won a 2020 Juno award for Best Jazz Group for his work in the ensemble Turboprop. Other nominations include a Down Beat Magazine Rising Star award in 2015 as well as Juno nominations for "best traditional jazz recording" for his debut CD, Other Stories and most recently, for his work with co-leader, saxophonist Tara Davidson and the debut recording of the Carn Davidson NINE as well as their follow-up recording MURPHY.

Andrew Jackson is an acclaimed trombonist and composer based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. His versatility and unique sound have made him one of the Maritimes first-call players. He is an artist constantly exploring new sounds and not afraid to blend genres.

Isabelle Lavoie is an active bass trombonist and educator based in Winnipeg. She has performed with many orchestras in Canada and abroad, including the Canadian Opera Company, National Ballet of Canada, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Macao Orchestra, and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

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Since graduating with a Film Scoring degree from the prestigious Berklee College of Music in 1995, Vancouver native **Chris Gestrin** has become an integral part of the Canadian music scene. As a versatile pianist and multi-keyboardist, composer, engineer and producer he has worked on over 350 albums covering a wide range of musical styles. From avant garde electronic improvisations to greasy soul organ music, introspective piano jazz to top of the charts pop, rock and hip-hop, Gestrin is in high demand for his eclectic talents and ability to bring a high level of musical inspiration to any situation. 11 Juno awards, 4 Western Canadian Music awards, 2 Eastern Canadian Music awards, Aboriginal music awards and a Canadian Folk Music award are just some of the accolades from the numerous projects he has been involved with.

A leading artist of his generation, GRAMMY Nominated **“Matthew Stevens’** singular style dissolves the demarcation lines between jazz, rock and ambient music.” (Mojo****) Stevens’ music is “honest and soulful” (Pitchfork) and is described as “music (that) advances the ideals of modern jazz”. (NPR)

Montréal-based **Rémi-Jean LeBlanc** has been active on the Canadian music scene since 2005 and has collaborated with an array of musicians in Montréal and in Canada including Yannick Rieu, Jean-Michel Pilc, Marianne Trudel, Steve Amirault, Carol Welsman, and Elizabeth Shepherd. R-J has also toured with different projects in Europe, China, Japan, Mexico, the US, and Canada and has performed with international artists such as David Binney, Jeff Ballard, Seamus Blake, Greg Osby, Terri Lyne Carrington, Ari Hoenig, Gilad Hekselman, Ben Wendel, and Billy Hart.

Montreal drummer **Rich Irwin** has spent his career playing jazz, pop, rock, and many other styles all over the world with artists such as Nikki Yanofsky, Elizabeth Shepherd, Mark Kingswood, Vic Vogel, Dawn Tyler Watson, the Directors, Jessica Vigneault, the McDades, Remi Bolduc, Julie Lamontagne, Jean-Pierre Zanella, Jeff Johnston, Joel Miller, Florence K, Hadrian’s Wall, Matt Herskowitz, Christine Jensen, and Bruno Pelletier. He has performed at hundreds of events and venues such as Ronnie Scotts, Blue Note, Birdland, L’Olympia, the Bell Centre, the North Sea Jazz Fest, the Montreal International Jazz Fest, Montreal Drumfest, Ralph Angelilo Drumfest, the NAMM show and has played with international artists such as Dave Liebman, Dave Kikoski, Ingrid Jensen, Donny McCaslin, Enrico Pieranunzi, Aaron Parks, Dave Binney, Jean-Michel Pilc, Freddie Hubbard, Celine Dion, Dave Young, Randy Bachman, Gary Smulyan, Chucho Valdez, and Yotam Silberstein. He has appeared on over 60 albums, including Jennifer Gasoi’s 2014 GRAMMY winning Throw a Penny in the Wishing Well.

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