



celebrating our own

Toronto is a lucky city: it has a thriving arts community in part because of the many excellent musicians who have been attracted to settle here to perform, record, and teach.

Just such an addition to the community is the TSO's well-known Principal Clarinet Joaquin Valdepeñas. A long-standing member of the orchestra, Joaquin celebrates, during the 2009.2010 season, his 30th year as Principal Clarinet. He is considered to be one of the leading clarinetists in the world, and unquestionably one of the most well-known classical musicians in Canada.

Whenever he is featured in a solo within a symphonic work, he never puts in a perfunctory performance; Joaquin's gifts as an artist are readily apparent, and his lyricism and melodic performances are his signature. Audiences have come to recognise the "Valdepeñas" sound — warm, elegant, expressive. This year, to celebrate his 30 years with the TSO, Joaquin performs in two works that feature clarinet and orchestra; one written at the end of a composer's career, the other at the beginning; both works involve change and evolution.

The first work Joaquin performs is Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, K. 622. It is trademark Mozart: pleasing melodies, long, sustained lines (Mozart's favourite instrument was the human voice), and a back-and-forth dialogue between soloist and orchestra. Written for clarinetist Anton Stadler, the concerto was premiered in Prague on October 16, 1791. It was one of Mozart's last fully completed instrument works before he died. The Clarinet Concerto was originally written for basset clarinet, which had been developed by Stadler and had a range much wider than the modern-day clarinet. However, the only score ever published was a revised arrangement for the standard B-flat clarinet. Since the discovery of the work's origins, attempts have been made to re-create the original score, and basset clarinets were built in order to hear the work in its original form. The version heard today is the standard "modern" version, and with careful listening, some unusually low notes can be heard.

Joaquin is also featured in the Canadian première of Sid Ramin's orchestration of Leonard Bernstein's Clarinet Sonata. Published in 1942, this work was Bernstein's first published composition, and is dedicated to a Tanglewood schoolmate of Bernstein's, David Oppenheim. The Sonata features a lyrical opening and a jazzy *Andantino* which suggests Bernstein's future work in *West Side Story*. Ramin is one of the few composer/arrangers to win an *Emmy*, a *Grammy*, and an *Academy Award*. The *Oscar* was his prize for his arrangement of the music of *West Side Story*.

Both the Mozart Concerto and Bernstein Sonata are being performed by Joaquin with the TSO on October 21 (Mozart Concerto only), 22 and 24 at Roy Thomson Hall.

Joaquin Valdepeñas, the 2004 Juno Award winner for Best Classical Record (for the Jacques Hétu Concertos), was also nominated for two *Grammys* in 2008 and 2007 for Best Chamber Music Performance. He has performed with all the greats — Kathleen Battle, Joshua Bell, Glenn Gould, Yo-Yo Ma, and has collaborated with highly esteemed quartets such as the Emerson, Orford, Ying, and St. Lawrence, as well as with the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. He is active in his own group, well-known Amici Chamber Ensemble, of which he is a founding member. Joaquin also conducts, and has led the TSO on over a dozen occasions, including at its 2005 New Creations Festival; he also recently conducted at the Aspen Music Festival. He has inspired us greatly over the years, and continues to delight audiences with his musicianship, whether in the Orchestra, as a touring soloist, or a chamber musician; and he looks forward to the future, and what it will bring as an artist. And to us, the future looks bright. ■

Liz Parker is the Foundress of LIZPR and she teaches piano in Toronto. To see what she gets up to, please visit www.lizpr.com.