

TAKING OFF... WITH DENIS GOUGEON!



Marie Décarv and Élisabeth Éudes-Pascal

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Commissioned by the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ) as part of its *Homage Series* to composer Denis Gougeon.

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Translation: Peggy Niloff
Design: Studio atelier
Printing: Quadriscan

Homage Series/Denis Gougeon

Artistic Director: Walter Boudreau
General Manager: Aïda Aoun

© Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ)
Legal submission, 2013
ISBN 978-2-9811517-4-2
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

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SMCQ would like to thank the following for their financial support:



*The notion of travel is
fundamental to my music.*

Denis Gougeon, 2013

Note: words attributed to Denis Gougeon
are based mostly on interviews or on his own writings.

Biography

Departure: Granby

Denis Gougeon is born in Granby (Quebec) in 1951, just a few steps away from the famous zoo. His childhood is marked by animals, merry-go-rounds and visitors from all over the world. Holidays are spent working in the amusement park, on biking escapades to the aerodrome or on train rides, thanks to his father being the station master. As a youth, music is not a major part of his life: Denis Gougeon's dreams focus on travel.

When he turns 15, a revelation occurs: he borrows a recently acquired guitar from his siblings, never to return it. After a year of persistent self-instruction he gives his first classical guitar recital. He will continue learning on his own until he turns 20, when he decides to make the "big leap": leaving his home town to study at Montreal's École de musique Vincent-d'Indy.

Destination: Montreal

Denis Gougeon is now involved with diplomas and encounters. He completes his DEC and Bachelor's degree in guitar and musicology at Vincent-d'Indy, where Sister Jacques-René introduces him to composition. Just a few months after his arrival, his path crosses with young soprano Marie-Danielle Parent. This is the start of a long love story and fertile music exchange. Side by side, they set up a small group, playing all types of genres in all types of venues. At the same time, the young guitarist decides to take private classes in music analysis with composer André Prévost, with whom he will continue his composition studies at the Université de Montréal, eventually attaining a second Bachelor's degree.


At the same institution, he commences a Master's degree in composition with composer Serge Garant, a former art director of the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ). Besides helping him perfect his music writing, Garant sensitizes him to the importance of becoming concretely involved in the cultural milieu; advice that he will follow throughout his career.

Flight

In 1980, his studies completed, Denis Gougeon accompanies Marie-Danielle Parent, now his wife, to New York, where she perfects her talent. There he composes *Voix intimes*, for his wife and her sister Yolande Parent. This work is noted for its entirely personal meaning. Recipient of first prize (Concours de la SOCAN), this opens the door to his professional career.

Upon returning to Montreal, encouraged by friends such as composers Claude Vivier and John Rea, Denis continues to compose, gains commissions and wins prizes. Among others he joins Lorraine Vaillancourt for *Événements du Neuf* and Walter Boudreau for certain SMCQ events before becoming, in 1989, the first composer-in-residence with the OSM. In 1992, having barely completed his residency, he meets Théâtre UBU director Denis Marleau, for whom he will compose music for eleven projects. He will also write for Orchestre symphonique de Québec, SMCQ, NEM, I Musici... Soon, collaborations with the dance milieu (Jean Grand-Maître and the Bayerisches Staatsballett of Munich) and shows for young audiences (SMCQ Jeunesse, Arsenal à musique) will be added to Gougeon's impressive road map, and for quite some time he will be regarded as the only Quebec composer who can earn a living relying solely on composition.

Today, with more than 100 works in his catalog and crowned with ever more prestigious prizes (in 2010 winning the first prize, grand finale in an international composition competition in Shanghai), Denis Gougeon is considered one of the most highly regarded composers, in addition to since 2001, being a devoted professor of composition at the Université de Montréal. But in spite of his accrued success, the small-town Granby boy is never very far away: a passion for life, aviation enthusiast, always ready to embark on an adventure, Gougeon continually strives to offer music that bears a message, that touches ... and that allows its listeners "to take-off". Ready? Fasten your seat belts!



LISTENING TO DENIS
GOUGEON'S MUSIC IS
LIKE EMBARKING ON
AN AMAZING
VOYAGE.

AND BACK IN THE
1960s SOMEWHERE
ON OUR PLANET
THIS VOYAGE
BEGAN...



NIGHT HAS COME AND DENIS FALLS ASLEEP
BEING ROCKED TO THE ROARING OF WOLVES,
THE HOWLING OF THE LION, THE TRUMPETING
OF THE ELEPHANTS...



YES SIREE! DENIS WAS BORN AND RAISED
IN GRANBY, RIGHT NEAR THE FAMOUS ZOO.
HE IS THE FOURTH OF SEVEN
CHILDREN.

EVERY NIGHT THE
ANIMALS' CRIES
ENCHANT HIM.
HE IMAGINES
GOING ON
AN ADVENTURE...



DENIS HAS NO IDEA THAT ONE DAY,
HE WILL BECOME A GREAT COMPOSER.
NOR THAT HIS MUSIC WILL TAKE HIM ALMOST
EVERYWHERE ON THE PLANET.



SHHH! FOR NOW, DENIS IS HAVING FUN.
HIS EXPEDITIONS CONSIST OF BICYCLING WITH
HIS FRIENDS. THEIR DIRECTION? A WOODED
AREA RIGHT NEXT TO THE ZOO.

WITH HIS FRIENDS HE PEDALS TO AN AIRPORT, WHERE THEY DISCOVER A CANADIAN ARMY CF-100 JET PLANE.



AS THE OLD AIRPLANE HAS BEEN ABANDONED, DENIS CLIMBS THE FUSELAGE AND JUMPS INTO THE COCKPIT.

Flying!
i must be
dreaming!

