

# Marie-Josée Simard

Percussionist

PRESS KIT



# ABOUT ME

A remarkable percussionist, **Marie-Josée Simard** was the first woman to be awarded a First Prize in percussion at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal in 1979. She went on to perfect her skills in London under the direction of **James Blades** of the *Royal Academy of Music*, and then in New York with eminent marimbist **Leigh Howard Stevens**.

During her forty-year career, she has performed extensively in Canada, Mexico, Korea, China, Poland and France.

In her home country, she has consistently promoted the creation of Canadian works, both for symphony orchestra and chamber music, as well as solo works in percussion.

In September 2015, she was awarded the CALQ Studio/Residency grant at the *Tokyo Wonder Site Residency*. She lived there for three months and worked with the internationally renowned marimbist **Keiko Abe**, professor at the *Toho Gague School*.

In 2016, Marie-Josée Simard undertook a seventeen-concert tour of China, followed in 2019 by nine concerts with the **Trio En Trois Couleurs**, an ensemble created at her initiative with the artistic complicity of pianists **François Bourassa** and **Yves Léveillé**.

A YAMAHA (marimba) and SABIAN (cymbals) artist, in 2017 she formed a duet with renowned contemporary pianist **Louise Bessette** dedicated to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries.

She recently premiered a 14th Concerto for marimba and vibraphone with the **Orchestre National de Jazz**, composed by **Christine Jensen**, **Marianne Trudel** and **Jean-Nicolas Trottier**, at the *Cinquième salle de la Place des Arts de Montréal* in December 2021.

**Marie-Josée Simard's** discography includes nine CDs with ten premieres, four original compositions, and 27 adaptations of classical and world music works. She is collaborating with **Effendi Records** for the release of a new album featuring jazz pianist **François Bourassa**, scheduled for December 2024. Recently awarded a CALQ grant for the *Quebec Studio/Residence in New York*, she will immerse herself in the vibrant artistic scene of Soho starting in January 2025, for a period of six months. This studio undoubtedly represents one of the most prestigious opportunities for Marie Josée Simard, who has built a solid international reputation, inspiring admiration among music lovers and respect from her peers.

After more than forty-five years of activity in the artistic field, **Ms. Simard** has built a sterling international reputation that is admired by both the music-loving audience and her peers.



# COLLABORATION



[La fabrique culturelle - China Tour - 2016](#)



## trio En trois Couleurs

### PIANOS & PERCUSSION: CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES

Three of the most respected artists on the Quebec music scene meet on the same stage. Three musicians and composers whose music has the power to feed the soul. Highly-regarded soloist and percussionist **Marie-Josée Simard** has partnered with two eminent jazz composers and pianists. Together, **François Bourassa**, **Yves Léveill ** and **Marie-Jos e Simard** take us on a journey through the ever-changing landscape of contemporary jazz and free improvisation. A unique encounter that explores a broad range of tonal colors, in which gongs, marimbas, tubular bells and vibraphones resonate in tune with free-flowing pianos.

*Winner of an Opus Award 2012/13 for  
Jazz Concert of the Year*

**Marie-Jos e Simard** - Marimba,  
Vibraphone and Percussions  
**Fran ois Bourassa** - Piano  
**Yves L veill ** - Piano

## Marie-Jos e Simard and Fran ois Bourassa, in concert and in connivance

**Marie Jos e Simard** and **Fran ois Bourassa** galvanize us in this exhilarating duo that offers original arrangements of concert works composed by four leading figures of Canadian jazz: **Christine Jensen**, **Marianne Trudel**, **Jean-Nicolas Trottier** and **Fran ois Bourassa**.

Piano, marimba, vibraphone, crotales, cymbals and bows with captivating sounds propel us into an unsuspected dimension of chamber music for percussion and piano.



Photo Credit: Caroline Clou tre

# INTERVIEWS

**2021** : Capsules OSCN with Marie-Josée Simard

<https://www.facebook.com/OSCN.official/videos/365201445468755>

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**2020** : Composer John Plant explaining *Three Echoes of the Odyssey*, a musical work written for Marie Josée Simard and Louise Bessette

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9mxTYsz0vl&list=PL0qGZcBi3akoq2MM5ZOqCiDMT1b3okOQd&ab\\_channel=MarieJos%C3%A9eSimard](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9mxTYsz0vl&list=PL0qGZcBi3akoq2MM5ZOqCiDMT1b3okOQd&ab_channel=MarieJos%C3%A9eSimard)

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**2019** : Marie Josée Simard - BANFF Centre for arts and creativity

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe7yLCWur5o&list=PL0qGZcBi3akoq2MM5ZOqCiDMT1b3okOQd&index=3&ab\\_channel=MarieJos%C3%A9eSimard](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe7yLCWur5o&list=PL0qGZcBi3akoq2MM5ZOqCiDMT1b3okOQd&index=3&ab_channel=MarieJos%C3%A9eSimard)

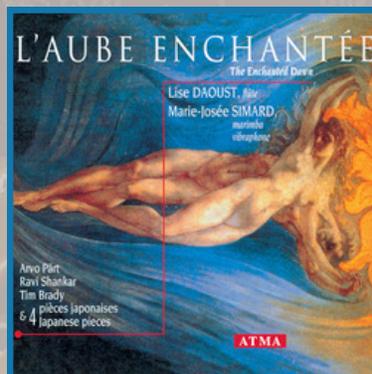
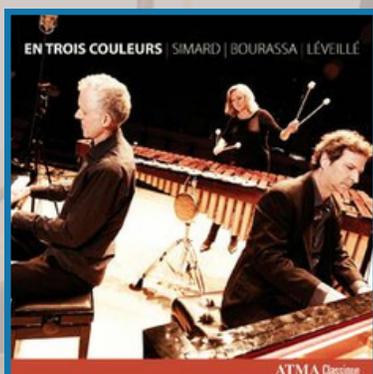
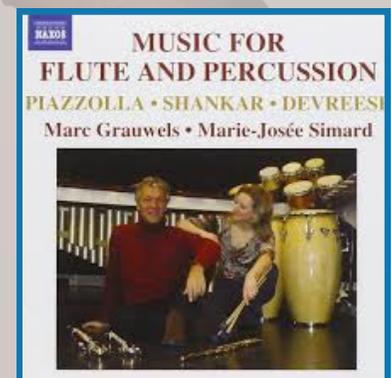
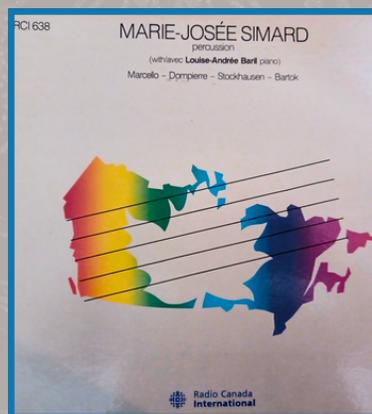
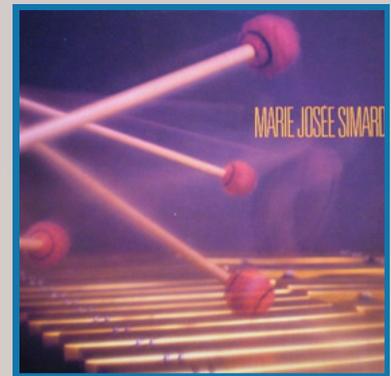
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**2015** : Fabrique Culturelle Accro-du-mois

<https://www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/3293/l-accro-du-mois-de-janvier-marie-josee-simard>

**[YouTube Channel : 67 videos](#)**

# DISCOGRAPHIC SELECTION



# PRESS REVIEW

*"With obvious mastery and disarming confidence, she delivered Boucourechliev's work with a dazzling virtuosity."*

**Le Devoir, Montréal**

*"Marie Josée Simard's stunning velocity and unfailing accuracy made her the star in Tremblay's Triojubilus."*

**The Gazette, Montréal**

*"Finally came the point of the afternoon, Marimba spirituel, a clear, vigorous and linear composition by Japan's Minoru Miki. It seemed to move from Western art-rock clarity to oriental savagery. Simard play the solo marimba part like a woman possessed, and with virtuosity that took the breath away."*

**The Gazette, Montréal**

*"The dazzling Marie Josée Simard, wielding her drumsticks with extreme speed, with nuance as well, never faltering rhythmically and never missing a note."*

**La Presse, Montréal**

*"Equally explosive mallet player, Marie Josée Simard took off slowly with mystical tremolos, then burst into additive chord progressions and ripped out hectic lines in virtuosic unison."*

**Village Voice, New York**

*"The closing concert of Fernelmont allowed us to discover the charming Canadian musician Marie Josée Simard, an extraordinary percussionist."*

**Fernelmont, Belgium**

**May 10th, 2012 - *La Presse* - Alain Brunet**

**3 Jazettes concertantes by François Bourassa**

The Metropolitan Orchestra performed *Trois Jazettes Concertantes* for vibraphone and marimba by the afore-mentioned composer, featuring the virtuoso Marie-Josée Simard. Beautiful dynamics between Bourassa's orchestral writing and that of the soloist; a lot of impressive creativeness in the composition itself.

**May 12th, 2012 - *Plein Jour de Baie-Comeau* - Raphaël Hovington**

**L'Orchestre à cordes fait un tabac**

"Then, two moments of pure ecstasy were offered to the audience, thanks to the presence of Marie-Josée Simard. The girl from Baie-Comeau, who has graced the world's greatest stages and contributed to the remarkable growth of her favorite instruments—the vibraphone, xylophone, and marimba—by inspiring composers to write concertos for her, lived up to her reputation as a prodigious musician. Marie-Josée was breathtaking in her interpretation of *L'Estro Armonico* by Antonio Vivaldi. Radiant in the second movement before her vibraphone! Known for her extraordinary, even sublime, mallet technique, she led the orchestra to rarely reached heights. This great percussionist also dazzled the audience with her xylophone rendition of *Sabre Dance* by Aram Khachaturian. In perfect harmony, the musicians and Baie-Comeau's first international star revealed an astonishing intensity."

**April 6th, 2009 - *Le Soleil* - Richard Boisvert**

**The Singing Vibraphone | On Stage**

Marie-Josée Simard has just released her first album entirely dedicated to the classical vibraphone. (Quebec) While the vibraphone is more commonly associated with jazz music, Marie-Josée Simard seeks to highlight its highly melodic qualities through classical repertoire. Listening to her new album, released under the XXI label, is utterly convincing in this regard. The velvety contact of the mallet on the metal keys gives the instrument a unique, golden quality, almost vocal. 'That's the goal,' confirms the virtuoso percussionist in an interview with *Le Soleil* during her recent visit to Quebec. 'The challenge isn't to play very fast, but to play legato, as smoothly as possible.'

In fact, the virtuoso percussionist Marie-Josée Simard had been planning this album, fully dedicated to the classical vibraphone, for a long time. Accompanied by pianist Marie Fabi, she performs Poulenc's *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, Dvorak's *Sonatina for Violin, Op. 100*, and Grieg's *Violin Sonata in F Major, Op. 8*.

Marie-Josée Simard, who has numerous creations to her credit, will soon add a new one with the jazz concerto that pianist François Bourassa is writing for her. The premiere is scheduled for the upcoming season of the *Trois-Rivières Symphony Orchestra*."

**May 17th, 2010 - Le Nouvelliste**  
**"The OSTR Dares the 'Less Known'"**

...The evening continued with the premiere of the concerto for marimba and vibraphone *Trois Jazettes concertantes*, written for percussionist Marie-Josée Simard. Known for his jazz compositions, pianist François Bourassa rose to the challenge of composing an orchestral piece for the first time. The three movements (*En émoi*, *Réflexive*, and *En exil*) illustrate, on the one hand, the chemistry between François Bourassa's jazz and contemporary classical influences, and on the other hand, Marie-Josée Simard's mastery of the vibraphone and marimba. She is the first woman in Canada to graduate from the Conservatory in percussion. One of the interesting aspects of presenting this concerto is the highlighting of instruments that are less frequently featured in symphonic concerts. The concerto, showcasing the marimba and vibraphone, allowed the audience to discover these instruments and to see and hear how an artist of Marie-Josée Simard's caliber makes them resonate.

As for the music itself, it could be said that while the first movement of the concerto bore more of the marks of modern jazz, the other two were somewhat more melodic. It was as if in the first movement, the improvisational aspect inherent to jazz was transposed into the (written) marimba solos, like a carefully crafted abstraction.

One could assume that the meaning of each movement might be found more in the realm of emotion and evocative power than in the retention of a clear melody. Notably, the composer also allowed other instruments, such as the harp, flute, and additional percussion, to take the spotlight."



La percussionniste Marie-Josée Simard a interprété le concerto *Trois Jazettes concertantes* en création mondiale avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières samedi. (Photo: Ève Guillemette)

# LES CHEMINS DU CONCERTO

MARIE-JOSÉE SIMARD  
FRANÇOIS BOURASSA



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- 1 DELTA VARIATION** 10:41  
CHRISTINE JENSEN
- 2 EN EMOI** 8:15  
FRANÇOIS BOURASSA
- 3 RÉFLEXIVE** 8:39  
FRANÇOIS BOURASSA
- 4 EN EXIL** 6:56  
FRANÇOIS BOURASSA
- 5 DE RÉSONANCES** 9:48  
**ET D'ÉCHOS**  
MARIANNE TRUDEL
- 6 SPIRALES** 8:05  
JEAN-NICOLAS TROTTIER

## MARIE JOSÉE SIMARD

vibraphone, marimba, crotales,  
cymbales, bâton de pluie, archets,  
bol de cristal, xylophone de Cristal  
(Cristal musique)

## FRANÇOIS BOURASSA

piano/compositeur

 EFFENDI

 NAXOS

 PROPAGANDÉ

 musicaction

 Canada



Conseil des arts  
du Canada    Canada Council  
for the Arts

 SODEC  
Québec

 CALO  
Conseil  
des arts  
du Québec

 SABIAN

 YAMAHA

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**Mathieu Bourassa**

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**Mathieu Bourassa**

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Copiste/numérisation - 3 jzettes concertantes  
**Michael Johancsik**

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Maquillage  
**Sabrina Blouin**

Réalisé par / Produced by  
**Alain Bédard / Marie Josée Simard**

Production  
**Effendi**

Édition/ Edition  
**Effendi 2024**

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## REMERCIEMENTS

Merci à ma mère, Geneviève Desbiens, celle qui m'a transmis son héritage musical. Merci à Donald Gagnon, qui m'a donné deux merveilleux fils, Alexis et Jonathan Gagnon. Ces personnes, souvent dans l'ombre de nos carrières, nous apportent un soutien indispensable à la réussite de notre parcours, et je tenais à leur faire savoir que je les aime de tout mon cœur.

*Thank you to my mother, Geneviève Desbiens, who passed on her musical legacy to me. Thank you to Donald Gagnon, who gave me two wonderful sons, Alexis and Jonathan Gagnon. These people, often in the shadow of our careers, provide us with essential support for the success of our journey, and I wanted them to know that I love them with all my heart. Marie Josée*

Je tiens à remercier chaleureusement les compositeurs jazz, Christine Jensen, Marianne Trudel, Jean-Nicolas Trottier et François Bourassa, d'avoir accepté de composer, à mon intention, des œuvres pour marimba, vibraphone et orchestre.

## LES CHEMINS DU CONCERTO

Tous les chemins ne sont pas faits pour se croiser. Il y a des parallèles à faire avec les rails de chemin de fer. Les trains se méfient autant des intersections que des collisions. À l'inverse, sans intersections, les musiciens vont droit dans le mur. La musique ne peut exister qu'à la croisée de chemins où l'on prend le temps de regarder, d'écouter puis de traverser pour se rejoindre. C'est ce qu'a fait Marie-Josée Simard en croisant le fer et le bois de son talent avec celui d'artistes qu'elle a séduits aux intersections de sa trajectoire. La musique est un site de rencontres constellé d'étoiles.

Celle de Marie-Josée Simard et François Bourassa était écrite dans le ciel. Avancer de concert sur une route pavée d'émotions, mus par l'envie commune d'aborder le concerto pour lui redonner des couleurs, notamment celles des percussions.

### **Trois Jazettes concertantes** **François Bourassa**

#### **En émoi**

L'introduction au piano, posée comme une interrogation qui devient presque un chuchotement, présage de l'émoi à venir. Roulements de cymbales puis, le piano et le marimba se prennent en chasse, et finalement d'affection complice. Dialogue intime, ponctué d'ostinatos au piano auxquels répondent les interventions du marimba, puis au vibraphone. Quatre mains en émoi.

#### **Réflexive**

Le mouvement s'amorce par une cadence au marimba. Marie-Josée y démontre tant sa sensibilité que sa virtuosité et nous emmènerait presque dans la matière même du bois de rose des lames du marimba qu'elle frappe dans un déferlement narratif qui nous garde en haleine jusqu'à l'entrée du piano dont les sonorités cristallines dans l'aigu se fondent dans la tessiture du vibraphone avant que les sonorités des deux instruments se livrent à un doux entrelacs.

#### **En exil**

Ce troisième mouvement des Jazettes est le plus véloce, propulsé à 144 à la noire. L'orchestration remarquable de François Bourassa se devine dans tous les registres et les timbres du piano, notamment les pizzicatos des cordes dans l'introduction. Le marimba, puis le vibraphone se lancent alors dans une course-poursuite, ponctuée par les tuttis des cuivres et des bois que la réduction pour piano rend distinctement. Une œuvre à écouter avec orchestre, dès qu'il sera rentré d'exil.

## Concerto Intersection

### Christine Jensen 1<sup>er</sup> mouvement

De ces *Variations Delta* se dégagent une grande sensibilité, une fluidité rythmique et une intelligibilité mélodique qui ramènent inévitablement à ses improvisations au saxophone.

### Marianne Trudel 2<sup>e</sup> mouvement

*De Résonances et d'échos*, des impressions surgissent, délicates à traduire en mots, tant l'abstraction l'emporte. Textures, affleurements, connivence fugale, comme si le piano s'inventait un écho, se réfléchissait dans un miroir, musique de chambre intimiste dans un immense espace où deux êtres, deux matières se frôlent avec une infinie délicatesse dans un dialogue perpétuellement renouvelé.

### Jean-Nicolas Trottier 3<sup>e</sup> mouvement

Ses *Spirales* se déclenchent par une déferlante de croches accentuées au marimba, tel un code morse qui envoie un message pour nous mettre en état d'alerte. Fermez les yeux, c'est une musique de film sans images, truffée de suspense et d'embuscades, qui dessine une spirale, ascendante, irrésistible, avant de se métamorphoser en circonvolutions célestes, propices à nous faire rêver.

- Martin Fournier

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## LES CHEMINS DU CONCERTO

*Not all paths are meant to intersect. There are parallels to draw with railway tracks. Trains are as wary of intersections as they are of collisions. Conversely, without intersections, musicians head straight for a wall. Music can only exist at the crossroads where there is time to look, to listen, and then to cross in order to come together. This is what Marie-Josée Simard accomplished by merging the steel and wood of her talent with that of the artists she captivated at the intersections of her journey. Music is a meeting place, dotted with stars.*

*The partnership between Marie-Josée Simard and François Bourassa was written in the sky. They move in concert along a road paved with emotions, driven by a shared desire to reimagine the concerto, particularly by accentuating the colors of percussion.*

**Trois Jazettes concertantes**  
**François Bourassa**

**En émoi**

*The piano introduction, posed like a question that becomes almost a whisper, foreshadows the emotional journey to come. There are rolls of cymbals, followed by the piano and marimba chasing each other, eventually embracing in a kind of affectionate play. This intimate dialogue is punctuated by piano ostinatos that are responded to by the marimba and then by the vibraphone. Four hands in emotion.*

**Reflective**

*The movement begins with a marimba cadence. Marie-Josée demonstrates both her sensitivity and virtuosity, nearly pulling us into the very essence of the rosewood of the marimba's keys as she strikes them in a narrative surge that holds us in suspense until the entry of the piano, whose crystalline high notes blend into the timbre of the vibraphone before the sonorities of both instruments intertwine sweetly.*

**En exil**

*This third movement of the Jazettes is the swiftest, propelled at 144 beats per minute. François Bourassa's remarkable orchestration is discernible through all registers and timbres of the piano, particularly in the pizzicatos of the strings during the introduction. The marimba and then the vibraphone embark on a chase, punctuated by the brass and woodwind tutti that the piano reduction distinctively renders. This is a work to be experienced with the orchestra, as soon as it returns from exile.*

**Concerto Intersection**

**Christine Jensen** 1<sup>st</sup> Movement

*From these Delta Variations emerges great sensitivity, rhythmic fluidity, and melodic clarity that inevitably recall her saxophone improvisations.*

**Marianne Trudel** 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement

*From Resonances and Echoes, impressions arise that are delicate to translate into words, as abstraction prevails. Textures, effluxes, fleeting alliances, as if the piano invents an echo, reflecting on a mirror—intimate chamber music within a vast space where two beings, two materials brush against each other with infinite delicacy in a perpetually renewed dialogue.*

**Jean-Nicolas Trottier** 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement

*His Spirals are triggered by a surge of accented eighth notes on the marimba, akin to Morse code sending a message to put us on high alert. Close your eyes; it's a film score without images, filled with suspense and ambushes, that draws an upward, irresistible spiral before transforming into celestial convolutions, inviting us to dream.*

- Martin Fournier