MSO's top bassoon player is no slouch with the baton

By CARL URQUHART
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A night off from the regular schedule at Place des Arts isn't necessarily a relaxed evening at home for members of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

On Monday, for instance, the entire orchestra, kit and kaboodle, was trucked over to Notre-Dame-de-Grace Church (on N.D.G. Avenue) for a full-scale concert presented free by the Service des Activités Culturelles of the City of Montreal.

The church is practically around the corner from the city's newly renovated Centre de la Culture N.D.G, but the auditorium there is barely large enough to seat the string players of the MSO, let alone the rest of the orchestra plus an audience.

One of the unusual aspects of the concert was the way it called on musicians from the orchestra's own ranks to fill the various solo — and even conducting — roles.

Ordinarily, you will find Richard Hoenich at the head of the bassoon section, but it was he who was on the podium for Monday evening's performance. Hoenich, who also finds time to direct the Symphony Orchestra of McGill's Faculty of Music, is a conductor of high potential.

Most importantly, he is a fine musician, and his baton technique seems to be an extension of the fact. His movements are forceful, though economical and therefore never distracting; his beat is clear, and he has that unusual ability to extract an enthusiastic response from the players.

Unfortunately, the important orchestral music that opened his program (Schubert's *Second Symphony*) and closed it (three of Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*) was plagued by the acoustics.

This auditorium has the peculiarity of not letting the sounds of the various instruments blend while keeping their distinctive timbres. The result was a narrow range of sound, despite Hoenich's best efforts, and a real mumbo-jumbo in the *fortissimo* passages of the *Slavonic Dances*.

The highlight of the evening was Nadina Mackie's commendable solo in Mozart's *Bassoon Concerto in B Flat*, a performance full of clean, articulately expressed phrases, well-focused notes and appropriately projected moods.

The *Adagio for Clarinet and Strings*, though just a bit too quick in tempo to wring full value out of its phrases, was nonetheless beautifully conveyed by MSO principal clarinetist Emilio Iacurto.

In both cases, Hoenich and the musicians were thoughtful accompanists.

***Montreal Symphony Orchestra**, under the direction of Richard Hoenich, in a concert at Eglise Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Soloists: Nadina Mackie, bassoonist; Emilio Iacurto, clarinetist.*

Symphony No. 2 in B Flat, D. 125 (1815) — *Schubert*

Adagio for Clarinet and Strings — *Baermann*

Bassoon Concert in B Flat, K. 191 (1774) — *Mozart*

Slavonic Dances: in C, opus 72, no. 7; in F, opus 46, no. 4; and in G minor, opus 46, no. 8 (1878, 1886) — *Dvorak*