



**Boris Brott**, Artistic Director  
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## ***INDIGENOUS VISIONS & VOICES***

A multimedia project honouring St Kateri & indigenous artists.

This project pays homage to Saint Kateri combining forces with the **McGill Chamber Orchestra**, Odawa composer **Barbara Croall**, Mohawk writer **Darren Bonaparte**, Indigenous Columbian Stage Director **Alejandro Ronceria**, visual artist **Isaac Rayment** of MRSV.io who will oversee all the video projections, and the **community of Kahnawake**. Already supported by the Canada Council for the Arts' New Chapter program, the project will feature a the creation of new multimedia orchestral theatre work honouring the life and legacy of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (b. 1656, d. 1680, Kahnawake), the first indigenous woman to become a Saint.

### **WHO WAS SAINT KATERI?**

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks, lived more than three centuries ago, but continues to inspire people all over the world today.



She was born in the Mohawk river valley of today's New York State in 1656, when the colonization of the New World was in full swing. The Mohawk and the other nations of the Iroquois Confederacy were allied to the Dutch of New Netherland. In one of their frequent raids on New France, an Algonquin woman was taken captive and adopted by the Mohawk. She married a Mohawk chief and gave birth to two children. Tragically, smallpox struck their village in 1661, claiming the life of this young couple and their younger child. Only their daughter Tekakwitha (De-gah-GWEE-ta) survived, and she was then taken in and raised by another Mohawk leader. The sickness disfigured her face and damaged her eyes, forcing her to cover her head with a blanket when she went outdoors.

In 1666, the French colony sent an army to destroy the Mohawk villages. The Mohawk were able to escape, and rebuilt their villages the following summer after making peace with New France. Jesuit priests were allowed to establish missions among the Iroquois. On Easter Sunday in 1676, Tekakwitha was baptized with the name Catherine, the Mohawk form of which is Kateri (Ga-dehREE or Ga-deh-LEE.) Her conversion went against the wishes of her adopted father.

In 1677, she left the Mohawk river valley for New France and settled at Kahnawake, a new mission village established across the St. Lawrence river from Montréal. It was at this new village that Kateri devoted her life to Christ and resolved never to marry. She started a sisterhood with two other native women at the mission. Many of the new converts engaged in extreme mortification to share in the cross of Christ, and Kateri was no exception. Her self-inflicted suffering eventually caused her health to collapse, and she died in the odour of sanctity in the spring of 1680.

Her story was not to end there, as her survivors began to report apparitions of her. These prophetic visions, as well as the virtues she embodied throughout her life, convinced the priests who knew her that she was a saint. They put her to the test by using her relics to heal people of various illnesses, and by documenting not only the healing, but her life story. Eventually word of this miracle worker of the New World spread around the world. A campaign to have her declared a saint of the Roman Catholic Church began in the late 19th century. Pope John



Paul II presided over her Beatification in 1980, and Pope Benedict XVI presided over her Canonization in 2012. Hundreds of Mohawks and other native people made the journey to the Vatican to witness both of these events.

### **THE PROJECT**

This new work will feature an original orchestral score to be composed by well-known Odawa and Canadian composer, **Barbara Croall** ([www.barbaracroall.ca](http://www.barbaracroall.ca)) to the libretto of Mohawk writer **Darren Bonaparte** in close consultation with Kahnawake Elders and community advisors. The libretto will be created in the Mohawk language with consultations from Elders and linguists of the Kahnawake community.

Indigenous Colombian-Canadian theatre director/dramaturge/choreographer **Alejandro Ronceria** will serve as a central leading role in bringing all music (orchestral and traditional Mohawk components), theatrical elements (direction, dramaturgy, choreography, staging, stage design, outfits design), and the video and projections mapping and lighting design into a powerfully expressive unity that he is known for with large scale projects.

The title role of Kateri will be portrayed by a rising star Indigenous actress, **Kennedy Bomberly**. Indigenous performer, **Julianne Blackbird** will be the featured dancer in this creation.

Key involvement of Mohawk traditional choral singers, outfit designers will also be emphasized in this monumental community-based project.

The featured soloist will be acclaimed Mohawk violin soloist, **Tara-Louise Montour**, originally from Kahnawake who will perform works which were written for her. The first is a piece by Malcolm Forsyth ***Trickster Coyote - Lighting Elk*** and the second is a piece by Réjean Levasseur, ***Farewell to the Warriors***.

This orchestral theatre project will especially serve as an inter-generational and inter-disciplinary engagement and involvement for the Kahnawake community and the Kanien'kehá:ka everywhere, inspiring children, youth, adults, parents, grandparents, and Elders alike—to venerate the memory of Saint Kateri as a guiding example of humility, kindness and strength braided together into one human embodiment of purity, light, and spirit.

Honouring St. Kateri while celebrating Canada's 150th year of confederation also likewise acknowledges the previously ignored roles of Indigenous women of this land (and our murdered and missing Indigenous girls and women) who set an example of courage and peace for all Canadians.

MCO's ***Indigenous Voices & Visions*** is one of the two hundred exceptional projects funded through the Canada Council for the Arts' New Chapter program. With this \$35M investment, the Council supports the creation and sharing of the arts in communities across Canada.

The culmination of this project will be two grand performances. The first will be at the **Kahnawake Catholic Church** (1 River Rd, Kahnawake, QC J0L 1B0) on **October 19, 2018** with



tickets ranging \$22-\$35, and the second performance will be on **October 20, 2018** at the **Église St-Jean Baptiste** (4237 Henri Julien Ave, Montreal, QC H2W 1E5) with tickets ranging \$20-\$75.

For more information please visit the MCO website: [www.orchestre.ca](http://www.orchestre.ca) or call 514-487-5190

### **About the McGill Chamber Orchestra**

The McGill Chamber Orchestra is celebrating its 79th year as a professional ensemble. Today, the MCO is one of the most established chamber ensembles in Canada and presents a yearly series of eight concerts in prestigious halls, an education series as well as several out-of-series events and performances throughout Montreal and surrounding areas.

The Orchestra has toured widely presenting concerts in 17 countries on five continents to great critical acclaim. The MCO also recorded extensively for CBC Records and Analekta, and appeared regularly on radio and television for CBC and Radio-Canada. Maestro Boris Brott is the orchestra's Artistic Director and conductor since 2000.