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**For Immediate Release**

**Technical team for orchestral Harmonium album, including sound consultant Rick Winquest, found innovative ways to collaborate remotely during pandemic**

— *Histoires sans paroles – Harmonium Symphonique* was a large undertaking, especially due to the extra precautions necessary during the COVID pandemic, but Winquest and others used a number of online tools to conference, trade mix notes, monitor progress and see the project to fruition while maintaining distance —

Los Angeles, CA, June 28, 2021 – *Histoires sans paroles – Harmonium Symphonique*, a symphonic re-interpretation of the music of influential 1970s Montreal-based progressive folk-rock band Harmonium, was certified Platinum by Music Canada in February 2021, after just two months of sales. The project, released by Canadian record company GSI Musique, was recorded and mixed during the pandemic through a long-distance collaboration between engineers in Montreal and Los Angeles.

Veteran L.A.-based film and television scoring engineer Rick Winquest was initially tapped as recording engineer and sound consultant for the project, which was performed by the 68-piece Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) and choir at Montreal’s 1,900-seat Maison symphonique (Symphony House). “I was to partner up with ace engineer Charles-Émile Beaudin from Studios Piccolo in Montreal,” says Winquest. “A big part of my engineering background is working in large orchestral rooms and recording large orchestras, and Charles is a master of Pro Tools, on top of having a great pair of ears. So Charles and I together fulfilled what was technically needed for the project.”

During his career Winquest has amassed hundreds of scoring credits working with some of Hollywood’s greatest composers at many of L.A.’s major studios. His recording projects include releases by the likes of Sheena Easton, Diana Krall, Dave Grusin, Natalie Cole and Barry Manilow.

But as the scheduled *Harmonium Symphonique* dates approached, COVID-19 precautions made traveling to Montreal impossible, says Winquest. “We changed course and started to deal with everything via Zoom, phone calls, Google Docs and Audiomovers, our preferred plug-in, which was designed to stream audio from one digital audio workstation to another.”

Winquest switched to working virtually with arranger and orchestral conductor Simon Leclerc, orchestral scores transcriptionist François Pilon (who serves as assistant to Leclerc), GSI Musique President and producer Nicolas Lemieux, and recording/mix engineer Beaudin. Collaborating with the venue’s stage manager, Luc Berthiaume, to implement pandemic precautions for the orchestra, says Winquest, “I came up with a plan to extend the stage by 20 feet into the audience seating,” in order to have enough room to safely distance the musicians at two meters apart.

Winquest’s 3D renderings of the stage layout also included microphone placements and sound control details. “Charles and I threw ideas for microphones back and forth,” he says. Together they compiled a list of 64 mics, including three Neumann M50bs on the Decca tree with M150s on left and right wide room. “Because of the unprecedented social distancing that was implemented between musicians, we ended up with more than the usual amount of Sennheiser and Neumann microphones on the strings; high strings were small diaphragm condensers and low strings had large diaphragm condenser mics. Woodwinds were Sennheiser, Schoeps, Microtech Gefell and Neumann small and large diaphragm mics, depending on tone. We had AKG C12s on French horns, and the brass was a mixture of ribbon microphones: Extinct Audio BM9, Royer R121s and Cole 4038s. We used a Brauner VM1 along with a Sanken CU55 for the guitar and Schoeps for the harp. Percussion was a mix of large and small Neumann, AKG and Sennheiser condenser mics with Sennheiser dynamic mics for close-proximity miking.”

The Montreal team, following Winquest’s recommendations, used gobos to contain leakage between orchestra sections, especially the percussion and brass. “The guitar needed to be acoustically protected with gobos,” says Winquest. “The symphony hall has such astounding acoustics that of course we needed to work with the natural ambience of the room to make the instruments sound bigger than life. The hall truly sounds magnificent.”

Beaudin recorded to Pro Tools in the Piccolo Mobile truck parked at the venue. Winquest monitored the orchestral sessions — two days of setup and a week of recording — streaming in real time via Audiomovers through a Focusrite D-to-A converter into Bryston amps and a pair of PMC IB1S speakers at his office in Santa Clarita, just north of L.A. “Charles used PMC speakers for monitoring also,” he says, “so we had fairly equal listening environments.” Winquest says that he, Beaudin, Leclerc and Pilon were in constant communication via Zoom during the process.

Lemieux and Harmonium founding member Serge Fiori, co-producer of the project, joined the team as mixing began at Studios Piccolo. “Charles and I used shared spreadsheets on Google Docs to make notes,” says Winquest, who would critically evaluate the mixes as they were posted to Dropbox. “Each tab was a different song. We fine-tuned this process so that Charles could look at all of my comments with song timing locations. As he went from song to song, he referred to my notes and updated the mix.”

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Winquest played in a variety of bands during his teens and twenties, traveling throughout North America, before setting up his own recording studio. Relocating to Los Angeles, he found work at the famed Record Plant Recording Studios, where he began specializing in orchestral recording at the facility’s Stage M on the Paramount Pictures lot in Hollywood. There, he was mentored by legendary scoring engineer Danny Wallin and would eventually work with Simon Leclerc for the first time, on a score for *Star Trek*. “Simon later had me come up to Montreal and work on some projects with him,” says Winquest, “so this Harmonium record is a continuation of our relationship.”

All formats can be purchased exclusively from <https://www.harmoniumsymphonic.com/>.

Photo file 1: RickWinquest.jpg

Photo caption 1: Recording engineer Rick Winquest, a key member of the technical team that contributed to the album *Histoires sans paroles – Harmonium Symphonique*

Photo file 2: HarmoniumSymphonique\_Orchestra.jpg

Photo caption 2: Orchestra recording at Montreal’s Maison symphonique during sessions for *Histoires sans paroles – Harmonium Symphonique*, conducted by Simon Leclerc. Photo credit: Zablit Photo.

Photo file 3: HarmoniumSymphonique\_Choir.jpg

Photo caption 3: Choir recording at Montreal’s Maison symphonique during sessions for *Histoires sans paroles – Harmonium Symphonique*, conducted by Simon Leclerc. Photo credit: Zablit Photo.

**About Harmonium:**

Harmonium is one of the most influential bands in Quebec's and Canada's music history, and their success reached across North America as the sound of progressive rock came to characterize the 1970s music scene. The success of Harmonium’s three albums and the single *Pour Un Instant* resulted in an invitation to Los Angeles, where the National Film Board of Canada filmed the documentary *Harmonium en Californie*. In 2015, *Rolling Stone* magazine listed *Si On Avait Besoin d’Une Cinquième Saison* at number 36 of the Best 50 Progressive Rock Albums of all time and declared it the pinnacle of the whole Folk-Prog movement. In 2007, all three of Harmonium's studio albums were named among the 100 greatest Canadian albums of all time in Bob Mersereau's book *The Top 100* *Canadian Albums*. Serge Fiori’s songs became timeless, while most of them have reached the status of what could be seen as National Anthem. The influence these songs had on the sound of Quebec music was immense and still resonates.