

## **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir Announces Five-Year Contract Renewal for Artistic Director Jean-Sébastien Vallée**

**Toronto, October 3, 2025** — The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) is thrilled to announce the upcoming renewal of Jean-Sébastien Vallée's contract as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor for an additional five years, beginning with the 2026-27 Season and continuing through the 2030-31 Season. This renewal marks a pivotal moment for Canada's premier symphonic choir, affirming Vallée's transformative leadership and setting the stage for an ambitious new chapter in the organization's storied 131-year history.

Since joining TMChoir in June 2021, Vallée—only the eighth Artistic Director in the choir's history—has led a remarkable organizational renaissance. Under his visionary direction, TMChoir has successfully navigated post-pandemic recovery while modernizing the organization and establishing itself as a pioneer in Canadian choral music. His leadership has resulted in groundbreaking programming, landmark recordings, prestigious collaborations, and innovative community engagement initiatives that have elevated both the artistic standards and cultural impact of the ensemble.

### **Transformative Leadership and Artistic Excellence**

Under Vallée's direction, TMChoir has tackled major works including Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* at Roy Thomson Hall. The choir recently opened the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's season with three sold-out concerts, strengthening an artistic partnership that has become a hallmark of Toronto's musical landscape.

In December 2024, Vallée made his Toronto Symphony Orchestra conducting debut leading the TSO and Toronto Mendelssohn Choir in Handel's *Messiah*. This December, he makes his National Arts Centre debut with the NAC Orchestra's presentation of *Messiah*, bringing his signature interpretive style—what *Ludwig Van Toronto* calls "Vallée-isms"—and fresh vitality to this beloved masterwork.

Vallée's tenure with TMChoir has been marked by exceptional artistic achievements and organizational innovation. He created TMSingers in the 2022-23 Season, a professional chamber choir that has expanded the organization's programming versatility with acclaimed productions including *In Time: At the Intersection of Music & Dance* with Compagnie de la Citadelle, Schubert's *Winterreise*, and the multimedia production of *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* featuring state-of-the-art video technology.

TMChoir's landmark 2024 recording *Remember: 130 Years of Canadian Choral Music* (ATMA) showcases the ensemble's commitment to Canadian repertoire, spanning from Mendelssohn's "Richte mich, Gott" performed at the choir's 1895 inaugural concert to contemporary works. The double CD demonstrates Canada's musical diversity and has been broadcast internationally.

### **Building Communities and Developing Artists**

Vallée has established comprehensive artist development programs that are reshaping Canada's choral landscape. He launched the Composer-in-Residence program with rotating appointments, commissioning works that reflect diverse musical traditions and contemporary voices from Canadian composers including Tracy Wong, Aaron Manswell, Shireen Abu Khader, and Stephanie Martin. He revitalized the "Take the Podium" Choral Conducting Symposium and created the Conducting Mentoring Program and the upcoming Composition Mentoring Program, "Pathways: Choral Creation."

Under Vallée's leadership, TMChoir established the annual Exchange event, bringing together TMChoir and Toronto's broader choral community for workshops, masterclasses, and lectures that foster connection and knowledge-sharing across the region's vibrant musical ecosystem.

### **International Recognition and Prestigious Collaborations**

Vallée's growing international profile has brought heightened recognition to TMChoir. In a historic milestone, the choir returned to the National Arts Centre in 2024 for the first time in nearly three decades, performing Jacques Hétu's *Symphony No. 5, Op. 81* with Alexander Shelley and a combined ensemble of the National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec. TMChoir will return to the National Arts Centre in June 2026 for Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony, marking Shelley's final performance as NACO Music Director.

"Working with Jean-Sébastien Vallée and his terrific ensemble is always a privilege," says Alexander Shelley, Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra. "They are one of the most refined and technically precise groups I've had the pleasure of collaborating with—always prepared and consistently stunning with the quality and depth of their sound."

Jean-Sébastien Vallée also holds the position of Director of Choral Studies at McGill University's Schulich School of Music. His upcoming engagements include guest conducting with the National Arts Centre Orchestra (December 2025), the Orchestre symphonique de Québec (February 2026), and future appearances with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has recently

served as chorusmaster for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and will lead the Alberta Youth Choir in 2026, having previously directed the National Youth Choir of Canada in 2022.

### **Looking Ahead: 2026-2031**

The five-year contract renewal positions TMChoir for ambitious growth and continued excellence. Vallée's vision for the coming years includes building TMSingers into Canada's leading professional chamber choir and expanding TMChoir's international profile through recording projects, tours, and commissioned works. The goal is clear: to establish TMChoir as the Canadian leader in performing large choral works and set new international standards for symphonic choral performance.

"Over the past four years, I have been profoundly moved by the artistry, resilience, and generosity of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir community," says Jean-Sébastien Vallée. "Together, we have reimagined what this historic ensemble can be, while honouring the legacy of those who came before us. Looking ahead, I am inspired by the possibilities that lie before us—creating new music, deepening our ties with audiences, and sharing the power of choral artistry on an international stage. At the heart of this vision is my unwavering trust in the power of the human voice—individual voices joining together to create something greater than themselves. This is the essence of choral music, and I am thrilled to continue this journey with TMChoir, shaping the next chapter of its history with boldness, imagination, and joy."

"Jean-Sébastien has brought an extraordinary renaissance to TMChoir, elevating our artistic standards to unprecedented levels while creating an inspiring culture that energizes everyone—from our choristers to our staff," says David Raju, Board Chair of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. "His passion, meticulous preparation, and profound understanding of the choral art have transformed rehearsals into thrilling experiences and performances into unforgettable moments. Most importantly, JS has built a vibrant community where members are challenged, supported, and inspired to reach new heights together. The Board is thrilled to continue this remarkable journey with him."

The 2025-26 Season, which opens in November 2025, marks the final year of Vallée's current contract before the renewal takes effect.

For more information about TMChoir's 2025-26 Season and upcoming programs, visit [www.tmchoir.org](http://www.tmchoir.org).

### [Link to Photos](#)

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#### **About Jean-Sébastien Vallée**

Jean-Sébastien Vallée is a renowned Canadian-American conductor, scholar, and pedagogue acclaimed for his work in choral, vocal, and orchestral music. He is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, as well as Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of Conducting & Ensembles at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. Vallée has led ensembles across North America, Europe, and Asia, and has prepared choruses for major orchestras including the Chicago, Montreal, and Toronto Symphony Orchestras. His acclaimed recordings, including *Distance* (2021) and *Remember* (2024), have been broadcast internationally. Upcoming engagements include performances with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Orchestre symphonique de Québec, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He is the recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Prize from Université Laval and was recently named conductor of the 2026 Alberta Youth Choir.

#### **About the TMChoir**

The Juno Award-winning and Grammy-nominated Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) is one of Canada's oldest, largest, and most acclaimed choral organizations. The choir presented its first concert on January 15, 1895, as part of Massey Hall's inaugural season, and has been a leader in choral music in Canada ever since, commissioning works by Canadian composers, and presenting world and Canadian premières. The choir also regularly performs and records with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In May 2021, Jean-Sébastien Vallée was named as Artistic Director, only the eighth conductor in TMChoir's history. Through performances, educational programs, and community engagement, TMChoir aspires to introduce audiences to choral masterworks from the past and

present—and make both renowned and lesser-known pieces available, accessible, and inspirational to all.

TMChoir includes a core of professional singers and more than 130 auditioned and experienced volunteer choristers. The smaller professional ensemble, the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers (TMSingers), was created to deliver more intimate repertoire in a variety of non-traditional venues. TMChoir's recent 130th-anniversary season was marked by two major recording projects: *Remember: 130 Years of Canadian Choral Music*; and *Two Orchestras, One Symphony*, a recording with Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec celebrating the late composer Jacques Hétu.