

ARTS & LIFE

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‘Guys, I’m in – time to take over!’

Sugar Sammy wins top two Olivier prizes

BASEM BOSHRA
THE GAZETTE

In the end, Sugar Sammy had the last rire.

The multilingual Montreal comic — whose bilingual show *You’re Gonna Rire* was the live-comedy phenomenon of the year in Quebec — took home the two top prizes at Le Gala Les Olivier, Quebec’s comedy awards, which were handed out Sunday night in Montreal.

Sugar Sammy won the awards despite the fact that the runaway success of *You’re Gonna Rire* was not officially acknowledged by Les Olivier. (The awards only honour French comedy in the province.)

“I hope you don’t blame this on the ethnic vote, too,” Sugar Sammy joked after winning the evening’s top prize, the Olivier de l’année — which was voted on by the public during the gala’s broadcast on Radio-Canada — before warmly thanking the Quebec comedy community for embracing him.

Then, in English, he spoke to his anglo fans, with a grin: “Guys, I’m in — time to take over!”

Earlier, after winning the Olivier for comedy show of the year, the Côte-des-Neiges native — who has sold more

than 130,000 tickets to his performances since *You’re Gonna Rire* and *En français svp!* debuted last year — thanked “my two roommates, my mother and father.” (The fact that he lives with his parents has figured prominently in Sugar Sammy’s comedy.)

In the other Olivier category for which Sugar Sammy was nominated — best writer — he lost to Sébastien Dubé, Vincent Leonard and Sylvain Larocque for the *Comme du monde* by the comedy duo Denis Drolet.

Earlier in the evening, a dapper Sugar Sammy presented the Olivier for

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SUGAR SAMMY

best directing alongside comedy writer/director Simon-Olivier Fecteau, and the pair engaged in some barbed but good-natured roasting of their respective careers, as well as those of Quebec comedy stars, including Le Gala Les Olivier host Mario Jean.

For a complete list of Les Olivier winners, visit olivier.radio-canada.ca/fr/finalistes.

Tickets for upcoming shows of both *You’re Gonna Rire* and *En français svp!* are on sale now via Evenko at evenko.ca.



JOHN KENNEY/THE GAZETTE

Sugar Sammy took home the two top prizes at Le Gala Les Olivier Sunday night in Montreal.



PIERRE OBENDRAUF/THE GAZETTE

Genevieve Forest, standing, with Tarik Mikou, left, and Mareike Lenhart, and their scaled version of Atlantic City show.

Hot times for hip multimedia company

MONTREAL'S Moment Factory's profile growing with projects in Atlantic City, Las Vegas

As I was given a tour through Moment Factory's funky head office in a gigantic loft in a former industrial building just north of Van Horne in Outremont, it had me thinking of just how many hip multimedia/entertainment outfits there are in our town and how many folks work in that biz chez nous. When you bring together circus, special-effects, post-production, video-gaming and multimedia companies, you're probably talking about one of the bigger industries in Montreal.

And these are cool jobs, man! The 120 people at Moment Factory — average age 30, repping some 15 different countries — dress casual, with gusts up to alternative, there are long boards lying around to help you navigate around the office, and best of all, you spend your days working on really neat sound-and-light shows for everyone from Madonna to the Cirque du Soleil to the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona.

There's even a drum set right in the middle of the space — there, apparently, to allow producers, multimedia directors, illustrators, graphic designers, motion designers, engineers, interactive designers and architects to blow off a little steam when they're working late into the night.

When I was there, Armando Gomez sat behind the kit and gave us a little taste of what he can do on the skins, and it was mighty impressive. When not pounding the drums, this young man from Colombia is doing motion design and animation for Moment Factory shows.

But it's not just all drumming and skateboarding at the



BRENDAN KELLY

SHOW BIZ CHEZ NOUS

creative factory. This company founded by Dominic Audet, Sakchin Bessette and Jason Rodi in a loft near Pine Ave. and St. Laurent Blvd. in 2001 is going gangbusters. Early on, they got a boost by collaborating with the Cirque du Soleil and went on to produce a slew of sound-and-light extravaganzas, including the ongoing Mosaika show projected on the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, the permanent show in the Pointe-à-Callière Museum, and Elixir, the sound, light and water show that was in the Place des Festivals in 2010. They have also done visuals for Madonna's Super Bowl halftime show and a memorable Arcade Fire show at Coachella in 2011 (which included tossing 1,500 LED-lit beach balls into the crowd during the Montreal band's performance).

Right now, they're working once again with Cirque on their Vegas nightclub, Light Nightclub, and are headed to Europe to collaborate with Bon Jovi on the Jersey rockers' stadium tour on the other side of the Pond.

The reason a handful of journalists were at Moment Factory the other day was to talk up the company's new show in Atlantic City. Moment Factory has already done two sound-and-light spectacles on the side wall of the Boardwalk Hall down by the ocean in Atlantic City during the past year and their third show, Boardwalk Beat, is set to premiere there May 25. These are eight-minute

works, and the latest is a tribute to a slew of musical and dance genres of the past century, from swing to early rock 'n' roll to '80s electronics. Boardwalk Hall houses a 14,000-capacity arena.

We got a sneak peek at Boardwalk Beat, projected on a mini mock-up of the historic Atlantic City building. The splashy light show is accompanied by a trip down musical memory lane, which hops from Jazz Age sounds to Beach Boys-esque surf rave-ups to cheesy '80s synth-rock riffs.

Co-founder Bessette, who is Moment Factory's creative director, said that in many ways, the Atlantic City venture is a perfect fit for his company. The casinos that have dominated Atlantic City want to try to remodel the city and make it about more than just gambling, and that's why the Atlantic City Alliance, which represents the casinos, approached Moment Factory.

“It's interesting when you do a turnkey project and you can come back and do other shows,” said Bessette, whom I'd first spotted skateboarding through the office.

“So you can understand how the crowd reacts and the technical realities of doing those stories on the building and what would work better. It allows us to create a variety of different shows. We really like permanent installations because the life of the project lasts longer. There's more people that get the chance to experience it. Also their objectives were right up our alley in terms of regenerating, rejuvenating a district and we believe the world needs more of that. Our motto is, ‘We do it in

public.’ So we work in environments, not on individuals. We'll use different technologies to interact with our installations, but our goal is to bring people together physically. We find that urban spaces need that more and more today with so much of our social life now being alone at home in front of a big screen. It takes great entertainment outside people's homes to actually bring them outside and have them connect with our people. It's safe to be at home with your computer. But if you go outside, you might meet someone that you weren't expecting. Things could happen and the human being needs that.”

The funny thing is that Moment Factory seems to have a higher profile outside Montreal, though it has had big projects here, from Elixir to La Vitrine at St. Laurent and Ste. Catherine to the show at Pointe-à-Callière. But there is a big new Moment Factory thing coming, with an interactive installation called Mega-Phone that will be projected on the side of the UQAM building beside the Place des Festivals. It is to be produced with the National Film Board and the Quartier des Spectacles.

“You talk and you create magic on the side of the building,” said Julie Armstrong-Boileau, Moment Factory's head of communications.

Bessette admits they'd like to have a higher public profile on the streets of Montreal.

“We would like to do more stuff in Montreal,” Bessette said. “But we do as much as we can in Montreal.”

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Violin marathon approaches finish line with six finalists

12 hours of virtuoso music is a lot to hear

LEV BRATISHENKO
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

The six finalists of the 2013 Montreal International Music Competition are Marc Bouchkov of Belgium, Chi Li of Taiwan, Zeyu Victor Li of China, Ji Young Lim of South Korea, Fédor Roudine of France and Stephen Waarts of the United States. Some of them deserve it.

But all of them passed

through a marathon to arrive at the semifinals: 12 hours of virtuoso violin music. Much of this string-shredding repertoire is unbearable, even though it serves its merciless purpose well. It's a lot to hear. Actually, “endure” would not be far off. Still, it's much easier than being onstage.

On Friday, Nigel Armstrong opened the semis with a disastrous attempt of an absurdly difficult arrangement of Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* — and never recovered, but he's young; Roudine gave a glossy rendition of his grandfather Edison Denisov's merciless *Sonata*; Suliman Tekalli performed everything — including his own arrangement and

composition — with the same exhausting overconfidence; and Nikki Chooi showed them all up with such focus and subtlety that he almost made me like Ravel.

Chooi started quite late, around 10:30, but even at this drained hour, the contrast was immediate. That's rare in such a talented group, and his absence from the finals is a mistake. It is also unsettling to see so many young people in the Bourgie funeral complex, I mean, concert hall.

Jaroslav Nadrzycki began Saturday's concerts with a moaning and effective rendition of Enescu's *Sonata No. 3*, a torture of a piece that, like so much competition repertoire,

is subsequently impounded for public safety until the next year; Luke Hsu accomplished the medically improbable feat of curing my Schumann al-

[Stephen] Waarts gave the best performance of the semis with all the effort of a yawn.

lergy with a remarkable performance of the *Sonata No. 1* in A minor, and it was a blow not to find his warm presence in the final six; Lim was wooden and I hope her presence in the final is a typo; and Chi Li's

acrobatics developed into a feeling of immense promise. It's a delight when a performer uses their 45 minutes to change your mind.

The last semifinal started with Zeyu Victor Li playing Prokofiev's *Sonata in F minor* with absolutely no emotional effect on this listener; Waarts gave the best performance of the semis — there is a prize for that — with all the effort of a yawn, and there's little point trying to wrap words around his talent; Bouchkov made Brahms *Sonata in D minor* sound unusually athletic; and Diana Tishchenko released us into the arms of our waiting physiotherapists with her passionately uneven

performances of Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky.

All the pianists are doing a great job, but I would nominate Philippe Chiu as deserving some kind of accompanist award for his performance of Ravel's *Sonata in G major* with Waarts.

The six finalists play at the Maison on Tuesday and Wednesday, with the winners announced that night, while Monday's gala concert features Maxim Vengerov, Stéphane Tétrault, and Serhiy Salov with Jean-Marie Zeitouni conducting I Musici de Montréal.

See concoursmontreal.ca for more.