

European Encore for Montreal Symphony

The arrival of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (MSO) at Barcelona's Palau de la Musica, November 2, will be the beginning of an important, eight-nation tour for one of Canada's most celebrated performing arts institutions.

Led by its internationally acclaimed music director, Charles Dutoit, the MSO has earned rave reviews over the past 10 years for its performances in North America, Europe, and the Orient. In 1984, the Hamburg *Morning Post* heralded an MSO appearance as a "triumph of technical refinement," while the *Morning Tribune* in Lausanne, Switzerland, profiled Maestro Dutoit as "the man with whom triumph travels."

International tours have always been an important part of the symphony's mission. "You can be as good as you want," explains the MSO's Claudette Dionne.

"But it's only when you're matched up beside the very best, and getting the attention of prestigious reviewers and sophisticated audiences, that your name starts to circulate."

Not that the MSO or Mr. Dutoit have been unaccustomed to fame. Since its formation in 1934, the MSO has worked with the greatest international soloists — including Ashkenazy, Menuhin, Oistrakh, Pollini, Rubinstein, Perlman, Rampal, and Zukerman, among many others. In the 1960s, the MSO became the first Canadian orchestra to visit Europe.

Mr. Dutoit, meanwhile, had appeared with most of the world's top orchestras by the time he arrived in Montreal in 1977. Considered the world's leading interpreter of French impressionist music, he still conducts an average of 150 concerts per year with the Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, Paris, and London orchestras, as well as the Israel Philharmonic and several major North American ensembles.

The 1987 tour will take the MSO to over a dozen cities in just under a month. The program is based largely on the works of Strauss, Bartok, Rachmaninoff, Moussorgsky-Ravel, Stravinsky, and Canadian

composers Morel and Schafer, with occasional performances of Brahms, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, and Berlioz. The orchestra will perform in Barcelona, Madrid and Lisbon the first week of November, before moving on to Belfast, London, Zurich, Munich, Berlin, Hamburg, Hanover, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Paris, East Berlin and Leipzig.

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Ms. Dionne sees the tour as an opportunity to maintain the MSO's warm relationship with some of Europe's leading cultural centres, while building a rapport with newer, emerging audiences. "There are places you go for prospecting," she explains, "then the rest of the tour is concentrated on solid, well-established, very important musical cities." She is especially pleased that the orchestra will be visiting Spain and East Germany, and performing for a BBC recording in Belfast.

But despite the rigorous touring schedule, the MSO's

biggest claim to international fame is its records — and no wonder. Since bursting onto the recording scene in 1982, the orchestra has received a total of 18 awards and honours for its efforts. Its first album, the complete ballet of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe*, sold over 30 000 copies and received five major international awards, including two from the prestigious Grand Prix du Disque in Paris.

The secret to the MSO's success might be summed up in Dutoit's own approach to his art. Well known as a stern taskmaster in rehearsal, he strives for a unique stylistic approach to each composition in a performance.

"I hate the brown, international sound," explains Dutoit. "It's what we call in French *passe-partout* — something that fits everything. I am much more concerned about the specific colour of every piece I play." At the age of 51, with this approach, Mr. Dutoit has become one of the world's best-loved conductors, and one of Montreal's most popular public figures.

A "triumph of technical refinement": the Montreal Symphony Orchestra with resident conductor, Charles Dutoit.

