

The Orchestra

Norman Nawrocki

2013

7:58 pm

in this quiet, working class
Montreal residential neighbourhood
the orchestra starts
one person
walks slowly down her stairs
sets a solitary rhythm
taps a pot with an egg beater
looks around hopefully

8 pm

half way down the block
a smiling grandfather
and his shy teen grandson
leave their apartment
join her, walk behind
beating their own rhythms
tentatively spoons on frying pans

8:02 pm

100 metres later, a mother and two girls
run out their front door pots and pans
clanging
now 6 people strong
this percussion group
walking, smiling, drumming louder

8:05 pm

on the next corner
three similar small groups
join in, now over 30
beating their own rhythms
on kitchenware
still walking on the sidewalk

8:10 pm

on the next corner 3 more groups
join swelling the group to over 50
percussionists

now officially—according to the new Law
restricting demonstrations—
an ‘illegal gathering’ with no permit
subject to immediate arrest and fines

8:15 pm

they turn the corner
hundreds of them beating pots and pans
dozens more residents contribute
rhythms from their balconies
as the marchers pass

8:30 pm

now over 1,000 strong, swelling with pride
sharing joyous, feverish urban tribal
percussion
another nightly free concert
marching 30 abreast in the street
no destination in mind
stopping cars everywhere
some drivers honking, smiling, thumbs up
bar customers stepping outside cheering
this multi-neighbourhood orchestra
supporting striking students
denouncing unjust laws
marching, protesting
and still growing
call it magic

fifth Estate

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