Prussels Philharmonic -

LE JARDIN FÉERIQUE

STÉPHANE DENÈVE, DIR.
BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC
LORENZO GATTO, VIOOL/VIOLON

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WELCOME

J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été — Arthur Rimbaud

The setting: an enchanted garden, a summer breeze, the sun high in the sky. The symphonic poem *Pastorale d'Été* by Arthur Honegger sets the tone: full of atmosphere, somewhat subdued, with languid influences of jazz and dreamy strings.

Meanwhile, the sun is shining high in the sky, a twinkling star at the zenith. Piet Swerts takes us along, with his *Zodiac* violin concerto, to the moment where the sun, in the middle of the day, reaches its high point. And it continues, into space – the sun is, after all, a start, and Swerts translates the constellations stars into music.

Fortunately, sunset soon beckons, bringing with it a fresh breeze and lush greenery in *Le Jardin féerique*: the final movement of Ravel's *Ma mère l'oye* (a ballet suite based on various familiar nursery rhymes) brings peace and rest in an enchanted garden, a dreamy and serene spot where it is lovely to relax after a long day.

PROGRAMME

Stéphane Denève, conductor · Lorenzo Gatto, violin · Brussels Philharmonic ·

Arthur Honegger Pastorale d'été, H. 31

Piet Swerts

Zodiac (Ephemeris for violin and orchestra)

- I. Prologue NADIR
- II. Toccatina ARIES
- III. Corale TAURUS
- IV. Cantus Gemellus GEMINI
 - V. Chante-fable CANCER
- VI. Talea LEO
- VII. Jeu-parti VIRGO
- VIII. Cando LIBRA
 - IX. Planctus SCORPIO
 - X. Trope I SAGITTARIUS
 - XI. Tango CAPRICORNUS
- XII. Trope 2 AQUARIUS

XIII. Quasi recitativo - PISCES XIV. Alba (Epilogue) - ZENITH

Maurice Ravel

Ma Mère l'Oye (Mother Goose)

- Prélude (Prelude)
- Danse du Rouet et scène (Spinning Wheel Dance and Scene)
- Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant (Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty)
- Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (Conversations Between Beauty and the Beast)
- Petit Poucet (Tom Thumb)
- Laideronnette, Impératrice des Pagodes (Little Ugly One (Laideronette), Empress of the Pagodas)
- Le jardin féerique (The Fairy Garden)

PROGRAMME NOTES

After the past eighteen months, everyone can use a bit of a break. Honegger's Pastorale d'Eté puts us in the right the musical illustration of a carefree summer morning in the Swiss Alps. "I embraced the summer dawn", he wrote at the top of the score, alluding to a poem by Rimbaud. The scenic atmosphere is reminiscent of Debussy, who along with Ravel was among the most important composers of French impressionism. In Ravel's orchestral suite Ma Mère l'Oye, a number of fairy tales are evoked. The work ends with a romantic scene in a dream-like enchanted garden: the prince and princess lived happily ever after. Piet Swerts, with his Zodiac violin concerto, provides added sparkle.

A summer morning in the mountains

Arthur Honegger (1892-1955) was born in Le Havre. His parents were of Swiss origin, and so he initially studied at the Zürich conservatory and only later in Paris. There, he got to know the composers of a group referred to by Erik Satie as 'Les Nouveaux Jeunes' ('the new youth'). Their ideal was simple music, accessible to everyone and incorporating elements of everyday life. Thanks to a passing reference by a French music critic in the magazine Comoedia, the six members of the group - Honegger, Auric, Durey, Milhaud, Tailleferre and Poulenc – they went down in the history of music as the 'Groupe des Six'.

Honegger lived and worked for most of his life in Montmartre, the artistic centre of Paris. He loved the bustling life in the French capital, but to compose he opted for a calmer environment. So, during the summer of 1920, he went to the Swiss Alps to visit family. He stayed in Wengen, a village at the foot of the Jungfrau mountain with

a breath-taking view. There he found the inspiration for his *Pastorale d'Eté*, a musical painting depicting the awakening of nature. At the top of the score, Honegger wrote the first lines of the poem *Aube* (Dawn), a poem by Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1886): "I embraced the summer dawn. Nothing stirred on the face of the palaces. The water is dead. The shadows still camped in the woodland road. I walked, waking warm quick breaths, and gems looked on, and wings rose without a sound."

The work opens with the deep notes in the cellos and double basses. In the distance, an (Alp) horn is heard and birds seem to awaken. Lingering, longing melodies move into a lively middle section, after which the work ends as peacefully as it began. The writer Jonathan Coe – a big fan of Honegger's work – aptly described the symphonic poem in his novel *Expo 58*: " ...the main theme was by now beginning to take on the character of an old friend: once again, it rose and

fell, rose and fell, a soft, endlessly renewable conversation between the different sections of the orchestra; until it, too, faded into nothingness, amid the dying flourishes of gossamer-bowed violins, the last twilit birdcalls of flute and clarinet."

A dazzling starry sky

The Belgian composer, pianist and conductor Piet Swerts (1960) found inspiration in a natural phenomenon for his violin concerto titled *Zodiac* (*Ephemeris for violin and orchestra*), namely, the heavenly bodies. At the basis of this work lies the circle of twelve signs of the zodiac. Swerts illustrated them in twelve miniatures, each with its own form, orchestration and atmosphere, and forged them into a single work.

Swerts considers himself primarily as an autodidact, but he did take some lessons with Witold Lutosławski, among others. He does not

come from a musical family, but he felt a kind of vocation early in life, as he confided to De Standaard in 2020: "When I was eight, I wanted to become a writer, but while on holiday in Spain I began to try playing some songs on my father's melodica. I was immediately able to pick out some thirty songs by hear. After that, I went to the music academy in Tongeren, where I first wanted to learn the bassoon. That was not possible then, so I took piano instead. I was increasingly bitten by the musical bug. In the 1970s, I rode by bike, in short trousers, to the concerts in the Basilica. When I was fifteen, I wrote my first orchestral work. And I became obsessed with composing."

Swerts mostly writes on commission, and so in 1993 he submitted his *Zodiac* violin concerto for the finales of the International Queen Elisabeth Competition. His composition was not only selected as the compulsory work from 154 submissions from some 30 countries, but he also

won the International Grand Prize for Composition. The jury included none other than Henryk Górecki. Swerts was the first Belgian to win this prize, and describes that moment as one of the high points of his career, along with the premiere of his opera *Les liaisons dangereuses* in 1996 and *A Symphony of Trees*, a large-scale work that he composed in 2017 in memory of the battle of Passendale.

Garden of fairy tales

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) composed only two 'real' orchestral works – the *Schéhérazade* overture and the *Rapsodie Espagnole*. His other works for orchestra are arrangements of chamber works, or originate as ballets. The orchestral suite *Ma Mère l'Oye* was first written as a suite for piano four hands. Ravel composed it for Jean and Mimie Godebski, two young children of friends. They played the simple Pavane from the suite for a limited circle, and on 20 April 1910

two professional pianists performed the premiere at the Salle Gaveau in Paris.

In 1911, Ravel composed the orchestral version of Ma Mère l'Oye, and a year later made an arrangement for ballet upon the request of Jacques Rouché, director of the Théâtre des Arts. For the ballet, he also wrote an extra prelude and interludes, changed the order and even wrote the script. Today, Ma Mère l'Oye is best known as an orchestral suite. Ravel deliberately kept the orchestra small in order to depict the tonal colours very precisely and remain close to the intimate character of a chamber music work. The theme was also well suited to this, according to Ravel: "The idea of evoking in these pieces the poetry of childhood naturally led me to simplify my style and refine my means of expression".

Ravel drew his inspiration from the book of fairy tales of the same name, by the French writer Charles Perrault (1628-1703), as well as from the

folk talks of the Countess d'Aulnoy and Madame Leprince de Beaumont. The story is as follows: During a birthday party for Princess Florine, she accidentally pricks her finger on a spinning wheel. As a result of a curse by the evil fairy, she is doomed to die. But the good fairy transforms her death into a hundred-year-long sleep, of which she can only be awakened by the kiss of someone who loves her. In order to entertain Princess Florine during her long sleep, the good fairy decides to give her dreams filled with marvellous tales, ranging from Tom Thumb to Beauty and the Beast. During the final movement, the princess' dreams are interrupted by the arrival of a prince. He breaks the spell and marries the princess in the presence of the happy court and the dream figures.

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert

LORENZO GATTO VIOLIN

'Above all, I want to sound honest. There is fragility in my tone, it is a reflection of who I am as a person. That is what music is to me: an expression of human fragility'.

Lorenzo Gatto was born in Brussels in December 1986. He started playing the violin at the age of five with Dirk van de Moortel. At eleven years old, he entered the Brussels Royal Conservatoire of Music in the class of Veronique Bogaerts, where he graduated at seventeen only with the highest honour. He then studied with Herman Krebbers in the Netherlands, Augustin Dumay at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Belgium and he finished his academic journey by studying four years with Boris Kuschnir in Vienna. His work and determination are brilliantly rewarded as he

won both the Second Prize and the Public's Prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2009.

His nomination as a 'Rising Star' in 2010 allows Lorenzo to make his recital debut on major European stages including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Musikverein, the Cité de la Musique in Paris and many others. It further expanded the possibilities of collaboration with orchestras and conductors such as Philippe Herreweghe, Vladimir Spivakov, Walter Weller, Jan Willem de Vriend, Jaap van Zweden, Martin Sieghart, Andrey Boreyko and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

In chamber music, Lorenzo shared the stage with, amongst others, Maria João Pires, Mischa Maisky, Martha Argerich, Menahem Pressler, Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, Frank Braley and Gérard Caussé. Lorenzo started collaborating with the talented young Belgian pianist Julien Libeer in 2015. Together, they recorded all Beethoven sonatas

and released a disc that was awarded with a Diapason d'Or of the year.

Lorenzo Gatto plays the 'Joachim' Stradivari from 1698.

In his spare time, Lorenzo enjoys a lifelong passion for everything that flies. Look up and see if you can spot him high in the sky, arriving at a concert flying a small plane or even a paraglider.

www.lorenzogattoviolin.com

STÉPHANE DENÈVE CONDUCTOR & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

Stéphane Denève is Music Director of the Brussels Philharmonic. With the orchestra he is at the same time launching CffOR (Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire): an extensive online database dedicated to 21st-century compositions for orchestra with chances at attaining 'repertoire status'. Stéphane Denève is so passionate about this new adventure and enthusiastic about the orchestra's potential that he and his family have settled in Brussels.

Meanwhile, Stéphane Denève is Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and Director of the Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire (CffOR). He has previously served as Chief Conductor of Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (SWR) and Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Recognised internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, he regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. He has a special affinity for the music of his native France, and is a passionate advocate for music of the 21st century.

Recent engagements in Europe and Asia have included appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Vienna Symphony, DSO Berlin, NHK Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, and Rotterdam Philharmonic.

In North America he made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2012 with the Boston Symphony

Orchestra, with whom he has appeared several times both in Boston and at Tanglewood, and he regularly conducts The Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and Toronto Symphony. He is also a popular guest at many of the US summer music festivals, including Bravo! Vail, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Hollywood Bowl, Blossom Music Festival, and Festival Napa Valley. Summer 2018 saw his debuts at the Grand Teton Music Festival and Music Academy of the West, and in 2019 he lead a major US tour with the Brussels Philharmonic. In December 2020 he conducted the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and pianist Igor Levit at the 2020 Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm.

He enjoys close relationships with many of the world's leading solo artists, including Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Yo-Yo Ma, Nikolaj Znaider, James Ehnes, Leif Ove Andsnes, Leonidas Kavakos,

Nicholas Angelich, Lang Lang, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Gil Shaham, Emanuel Ax, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Lars Vogt, Nikolai Lugansky, Paul Lewis, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, and Augustin Hadelich.

In the field of opera, Stéphane Denève has led productions at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Glyndebourne Festival, La Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Saito Kinen Festival, Gran Teatro de Liceu, Dutch National Opera, La Monnaie, Deutsche Oper Am Rhein, and at the Opéra National de Paris.

As a recording artist, he has won critical acclaim for his recordings of the works of Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Franck and Connesson. He is a triple winner of the Diapason d'Or of the Year, has been shortlisted for Gramophone's Artist of the Year Award, and has been awarded an International Classical Music Awards twice. His most recent releases include a live recording of

Honegger's Jeanne d'arc au bûcher with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and two discs of the works of Guillaume Connesson with the Brussels Philharmonic (the first of which was awarded the Diapason d'Or de l'année, Caecilia Award, and Classica Magazine's CHOC of the Year).

A graduate and prize-winner of the Paris Conservatoire, Stéphane Denève worked closely in his early career with Sir Georg Solti, Georges Prêtre and Seiji Ozawa. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners, and has worked regularly with young people in programmes such as those of the Tanglewood Music Center, New World Symphony, the Colburn School, and the Music Academy of the West.

www.stephanedeneve.com

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

The Brussels Philharmonic was founded in 1935 by the Belgian public broadcaster (National Broadcasting Institute (NIR/INR)). Since its creation, it has worked with top international conductors and soloists. The orchestra was and is known to be a pioneer in performing contemporary music – a reputation that brought world-renowned composers such as Bartók, Stravinsky and Messiaen to Brussels. To this day, the Brussels Philharmonic is continuing this tradition, including a 21st-century work in almost every concert programme. The orchestra's historic home port is the Flagey building in Brussels, the heart of Europe, where it rehearses and performs in Studio 4 – in acoustic terms one of the top concert halls in the world – and which serves as its home base for concerts in Belgium and the rest of the world.

The French top conductor Stéphane Denève is the music director of the Brussels Philharmonic. His passion for 21st-century music and personal mission to create dialogue between the repertoire of the past and the future is fully in keeping with the orchestra's DNA. This commitment finds expression not only in the concert programmes and recordings, but also in the CffOR platform (Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire). This online database seeks to collect core information about symphonic compositions since the year 2000, and thus to initiate a broad international dialogue about compositions that will withstand the test of time.

At the international level, the Brussels
Philharmonic has made a name for itself, with
regular appearances in the major European
venues and festivals, such as the Philharmonie de
Paris, Wiener Musikverein, Grosses Festspielhaus
Salzburg, Usher Hall in Edinburgh and Cadogan

Hall in London. The international representation by IMG Touring brings further tours and concerts on new stages both in Europe and beyond (e.g. Japan in 2017, North America in 2019). In March 2019, the Brussels Philharmonic made its debut in Carnegie Hall, New York. Another speciality for which the Brussels Philharmonic has gained an international reputation is the recording of soundtracks for series, games and films, including the Oscar-winning score for 'The Artist' (music by Ludovic Bource). In Belgium, the orchestra is a regular partner of the Film Fest Gent and of MotorMusic, and participates each year in concerts with iconic films (both blockbusters with award-winning scores and black-and-white classics with a new soundtrack).

Meanwhile, the orchestra has proven to be a pioneer in other respects as well. Besides its ground-breaking initiatives under way, including the Tax Shelter, the establishment of a foundation for the purchase of string instruments, and more

recently the partnership with Brussels Airlines, the orchestra embraces innovation in every area and all levels of its activities. The gentlemen of the orchestra are dressed by Café Costume in the custom designed Symphonic Sporting Jacket, with technical innovations in the field of fabric and cut.

The various CD series recorded by the Brussels Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon, Palazzetto Bru Zane, Warner/Erato Classics, Film Fest Gent, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings) have received international acclaim, with awards such as the ECHO Klassik, the Caecilia prize, the CHOC of the Year by Classica and a Diapason d'Or of the Year. Deutsche Grammophon released 4 CDs under the baton of Stéphane Denève: one with music by Prokofiev, two CDs dedicated to the 21st-century repertoire of Guillaume Connesson (including the double CD titled Lost Horizon with soloists Renaud Capuçon and Timothy McAllister) and most recently an album featuring the cello

concerto of Fazil Say with soloist Camille Thomas.

The Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

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BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

(1) principal / (2) soloist

first violin

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second violin

Samuel Nemtanu (1), Aline Janeczek, Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura, Eline Pauwels, Julien Poli, Stefanie Van Backlé, Bram Van Eenoo

viola

Mihai Cocea (1), Griet François (2), Philippe Allard, Agnieszka Kosakowska, Stephan Uelpenich, Patricia Van Reusel

cello

Karel Steylaerts (1), Barbara Gerarts, Sophie Jomard, Emmanuel Tondus, Elke Wynants

double bass

Jan Buysschaert (1), Thomas Fiorini, Simon Luce

flute

Lieve Schuermans (1), Jill Jeschek (2)

oboe

Joris Van den Hauwe(1), Maarten Wijnen

clarinet

Maura Marinucci (1), Midori Mori (2)

bassoon

Karsten Przybyl (1), Kensuke Taira (2)

french horn

Hans van der Zanden (1), Mieke Ailliet (2), Marlies Callebert, Quinten De Gelaen (2)

trumpet Ward Hoornaert (1)

trombone

Tim Van Medegael (2)

tuba

Jean Xhonneux (2)

timpani

Gert François (1)

percussion

Gert D'haese (2), Tom De Cock (2),

Titus Franken (2), Stijn Schoofs (2)

harp

Eline Groslot (2)

celesta

Anastasia Goldberg (2)

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