

VALLETTA  
EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE  
2018

FESTIVALS  
MALTA

12TH INTERNATIONAL  
SPRING ORCHESTRA FESTIVAL

# REVOLUTION ~ & ITS ~ COMPOSERS

Bartok - Chopin - Lutoslawski  
Shostakovich - Stravinsky

6 - 14 APRIL 2018

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## A WORD FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



More adventurous, more ambitious! Year-in year-out I get that gut feeling to push the boundaries of what I can present. I enjoy myself most plotting programmes and choosing musicians. I give a lot of thought to weaving my elements together to build a coherent, consistent musical journey. Programmes ought to have a theme, around which all these aspects can pivot. The planning was in hand over a year ago. At first I was thinking about dissidents and non-conformists - any great artist, however, might be characterized as such, and most of them, if not all, have to some extent been 'agitators', metaphorically or literally. I find 'Revolution' more apt as a label because all the composers I'm featuring this year, by and large, were, and are, revolutionaries by nature and in statement.

1968 famously escalated social conflicts against the establishment - a people's revolution targeting authoritarianism, capitalism, imperialism, racism, revisionism, sexism. 1968 was about wanting society to be free of these repressions, for people to have civil, gender and political rights, to enjoy freedom of speech and choice. 2018 marks the fiftieth anniversary of this movement. Does it fit this year's programme? Yes - and especially so at this moment in time in a close-knit society like Malta's which suddenly finds itself catapulted from patriarchal feudal thinking to 21st century technology and razzmatazz - with neither philosophies nor psychologies, or very few, to bridge the chasm in between.

Marrying pictures and texts, this year's festival traverses terrible profundity and painful beauty. But it also looks for hope among the ashes, reaching out for a better future, a finer world.

### Karl Fiorini, Paris

#### **Cover Artwork**

Louis Marcoussis (c 1878/83-1941), Polish-born Jewish-Catholic Cubist  
*The Musician*, oil on canvas, Paris 1914 (National Gallery of Art, Washington)

# CONCERT I

## Friday 6 April

Teatru Manoel, 6pm

**European Union Chamber Orchestra**  
**Hans-Peter Hofmann - Leader**  
**Stephen Bishop - Trumpet**  
**Emel Hasanoğlu - Celesta**

**Larissa Pominova - Soprano**  
**Yuri Vlasov - Bass**  
**Brian Schembri - Conductor**

This concert is a Valletta 2018 Foundation, Festivals Malta, International Spring Orchestra Festival collaboration

**KARL FIORINI** (born 1979) *Pentimenti for Strings & Percussion* (2017-18, Valletta 2018 Foundation commission) *Poco moto-crotchet 144-Poco moto-crotchet 108/12-[coda: Tempo primo-Più lento]* Born in Malta but based in Paris, Karl Fiorini studied with Charles Camilleri and Joseph Vella, and then in London with Diana Burrell at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and Michael Zev Gordon at the Royal College of Music. His early works were largely Maltese/Mediterranean in character, but on moving to France he 'detached himself from this movement' - witness his two Violin Concertos (2006-07, 2011-12) and the neo-post-Romantic Second Symphony premiered in Milan at Expo 15. He identifies his current style as 'marked with a sense of self-mockery and eclecticism, without lapsing into clichés', teasingly inviting us into a Pandora's box of paradoxes and contradictions. He's a composer with big ideas embracing intense states of being, a man who journeys volcanic storms and wild oceans, who caresses and curses sound and rhythm, who twists and tortures innocent motifs and strands of memory into climaxes and explosions of terrifying confrontation (*de dioses y de perros*, 2015-16). Along with his *Weinende Frau*, closing this year's Festival [Concert IX, 14 April], Fiorini's *Pentimenti* turns to painting for its catalyst - in this case *pentimento*, that technique - from van Eyck, Caravaggio and Zurbarán to Picasso - whereby a canvas is altered or over-painted, providing evidence of

previous or other intentions or an artist's change of mind, perspective or direction: 'a reappearance in a painting of an original drawn or painted element which was eventually painted over by the artist' (*Merriam-Webster*). From the Italian, the word translates into 'repentance' - though 'remorse' and 'regret', a 'contrition' for past actions or sins, also permeate Fiorini's understanding. *Pentimenti*, scored for *divisi* strings and two percussionists, is an essay of complex texture and sculpting, largely cyclic in organisation (the third and fourth sections or 'movements' broadly metabolizing the first two). If it has a programme, none is revealed. But, Schumann/Shostakovich-like, its melodic orbit is one of entwined ciphers and climactic cryptograms, of patterns and sighs developed out of expanding/contracting intervals, Mephistophelian tritones (two solo cellos at the start, vibraphone at the finish), glimpses of Gretchens that once were, might still be (the first *arco forte* of the second section), never that far away. Underlying the whole is a grounded tonal trajectory, with E as the bedrock - its ever-searching Eb/D# companion initially high and lonely above the void, latterly consumed in a dying aftermath of major and minor thirds.

**ARTHUR HONEGGER** (1892-1955) *Symphony No 2 for Strings & Trumpet*, H153 (1940-41) | *Molto moderato-Allegro; II Adagio mesto; III Vivace non troppo* 'The profession of composer



of music offers the peculiarity of being the activity and the preoccupation of a man who exerts himself to manufacturing a product which no one is eager to consume. I might even compare it to the manufacture of top hats, button shoes and whalebone corsets ... To write music is to raise a ladder without a wall to lean it against ... I am at once the architect and the spectator of my own work: I work and I judge' (1950). 'Born in the apocalyptic hour at the burning edge of death,' an early critic noted, the Second Symphony was commissioned by Paul Sacher for the Basle Chamber Orchestra. Its mood is variously sombre, lamenting, and troubled, its language traversing chromatic and polytonal roads, consonant and dissonant horizons, now slow, now agitated. The *ad libitum* trumpet solo at the end - 'like pulling out an organ stop,' Honegger suggested - blazes an affirming chorale finding hope in D major. The grittiness of texture, toughness of argument and pages of bleakness establish a distinctive character, at times curiously aligned with Shostakovich (who sufficiently admired Honegger's next symphony, the *Liturgique*, to arrange it for two pianos). Commentators have long speculated the programmatic/psychological basis of the work, evoking as it seems to do the German occupation of Paris. Honegger himself, however, rejected any extra-mural associations, remembering only the bitter winter 'cold' of its gestation.

Interval

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH** (1906-75) *Symphony No 14 for Soprano, Bass, Strings & Percussion*, Op 135 (1969) Setting poems by Lorca, Apollinaire, Küchelbecker (the Russian Decembrist) and Rilke, the theme of the last but one of Shostakovich's symphonies, dedicated to Britten, is Death and Mortality. 'The words of Nikolai Ostrovsky [1904-36] are very dear to me,' the composer wrote in *Pravda* (25 April 1969), prior to Barshai's Leningrad premiere: "'The most precious thing man has is life. It is given him only once, and he should live in such a way that he does not end up regretting years spent aimlessly, of being ashamed of his mean and petty past, but can say on his death-bed: all my life and all my energies I devoted to the most beautiful thing on earth - the struggle to liberate mankind". I would like the audience to think of this as they listen to my new symphony.' In three of the eleven numbers the forces are reduced. Just strings in the 8th and 9th; only violins, violas and double-basses in the 1st - throughout, the *divisi* writing is extensive, with a



part per instrument not uncommon. 'High' percussion, half of them melodic, rarefy the mix further: bells, castanets, celesta, tom-toms, vibraphone, whip, wood-block, xylophone. Vocal declamation and Russian speech-rhythms, direct and unadorned, complete the sound field.

I 'A hundred ardent lovers/fell into eternal sleep/deep beneath the dry earth'. II 'Death/entered and left/the tavern'. III 'To the blonde sorceress of the Rhine country/came hordes of men, dying of love'. IV 'Three lilies, three lilies/on my grave where no cross stands'. V 'In the trench he will die before nightfall,/my little soldier, whose exhausted gaze/from behind the shelter watched day after day/for Glory'. VI "'Madam, look!/You have lost something ...'/'Ah! It's nothing! It's only my heart'". VII 'They stripped me naked,/when they brought me into prison'. VIII 'You are a hundred times more criminal than Barabbas./Living as the neighbour of Beelzebub,/you wallow in the most foul vices'. IX 'O Delvig, Delvig! What is the reward/for lofty deeds and poetry?'. X 'The poet was dead [...] a tender fruit doomed to decay'. XI 'All-powerful is death./It keeps watch/even in the hour of happiness' (translation: Joan Pemberton Smith).

#### MEET THE ARTISTS

**YURI VLASOV** was born in Volkhov and studied with Nikolai Okhotnikov at the St Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory. Winner of the 2013 St Petersburg International Opera Competition, and recipient of the Elena Obraztsova Foundation's 2014 Best Newcomer Award, he was formerly a member of the St Petersburg Chamber Opera Company (2012-14). He joined the Mariinsky Opera as soloist in 2014. Recent foreign tours, under the direction of Valery Gergiev, have included visits to Germany and Britain.

**LARISA POMINOVA** studied with Irina Kotelnikova at the Perm State Academy of Art and Culture. A soloist of the St Petersburg Chamber Opera Company (since 2011), she won the 2013 International Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsberg Competition, the 2014 St Petersburg "Spring of Romance" Competition, and the 2014 Elena Obraztsova Competition in Memory of Conchita Badia. Following the 2013-14 season, during which she created the rôle of Varvara in Yuri Alexandrov's new production of Schedrin's *Not Love Alone*, she

was nominated for a Golden Soffit, St Petersburg's highest theatre award.

**BRIAN SCHEMBRI** studied with his father, Carmelo Schembri, before completing his training in the USSR, graduating from the Kiev Conservatory (piano with Alexander Snegiriov, conducting with Roman Kofman) and the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory (piano with Sergei Dorensky, conducting with Gennady Rozhdestvensky). While still active as a concert pianist, he worked as assistant conductor to Michel Plasson and Emmanuel Krivine. Later he was appointed Chief Conductor of the OPF Orchestra and Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa, followed by critically acclaimed tenures as Music Director of the Teatru Manoel and Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. He has appeared in concert, opera and festivals with a number of major orchestras in Europe, Russia and the Far East. His CDs include piano sonatas by Beethoven, Schubert and Rachmaninov, as well as music by Charles Camilleri with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Bournemouth Symphony. More recently he has recorded Bach's keyboard concertos with Lucia Micallef and the European Union Chamber Orchestra, and, with Diego Dini Ciacci and Fabrizio Meloni, the Tansman's wind concertos for the CPO label in Germany. Brian Schembri is recipient of the Malta Cultural Award and Malta's Medal for Services to the Republic.

Based in Britain, the **EUROPEAN UNION CHAMBER ORCHESTRA** was established in 1981, soon gaining an international reputation as a musical ambassador for the European Union. Funding from the European Commission enabled it early on to tour East Asia, Thailand and Indochina, North, South and Central America, North Africa, India and the Middle East as well as throughout Europe. Since 2014 the orchestra's schedule has included tours of Spain, Germany, Luxemburg, Turkey, Malta and Egypt alongside regular education work in the UK and CD recordings. The German violinist Hans-Peter Hofmann was appointed concert-master of the EUCCO in 2007. He studied with Yfrah Neaman at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, and in 2011 was appointed Professor of Violin at the Musikhochschule, Saarbrücken. He's additionally on the teaching staff of the Musikhochschule, Nürnberg.

# CONCERT II

## Sunday 8 April

Teatru Manoel, 6pm

### Joaquín Achúcarro - Piano

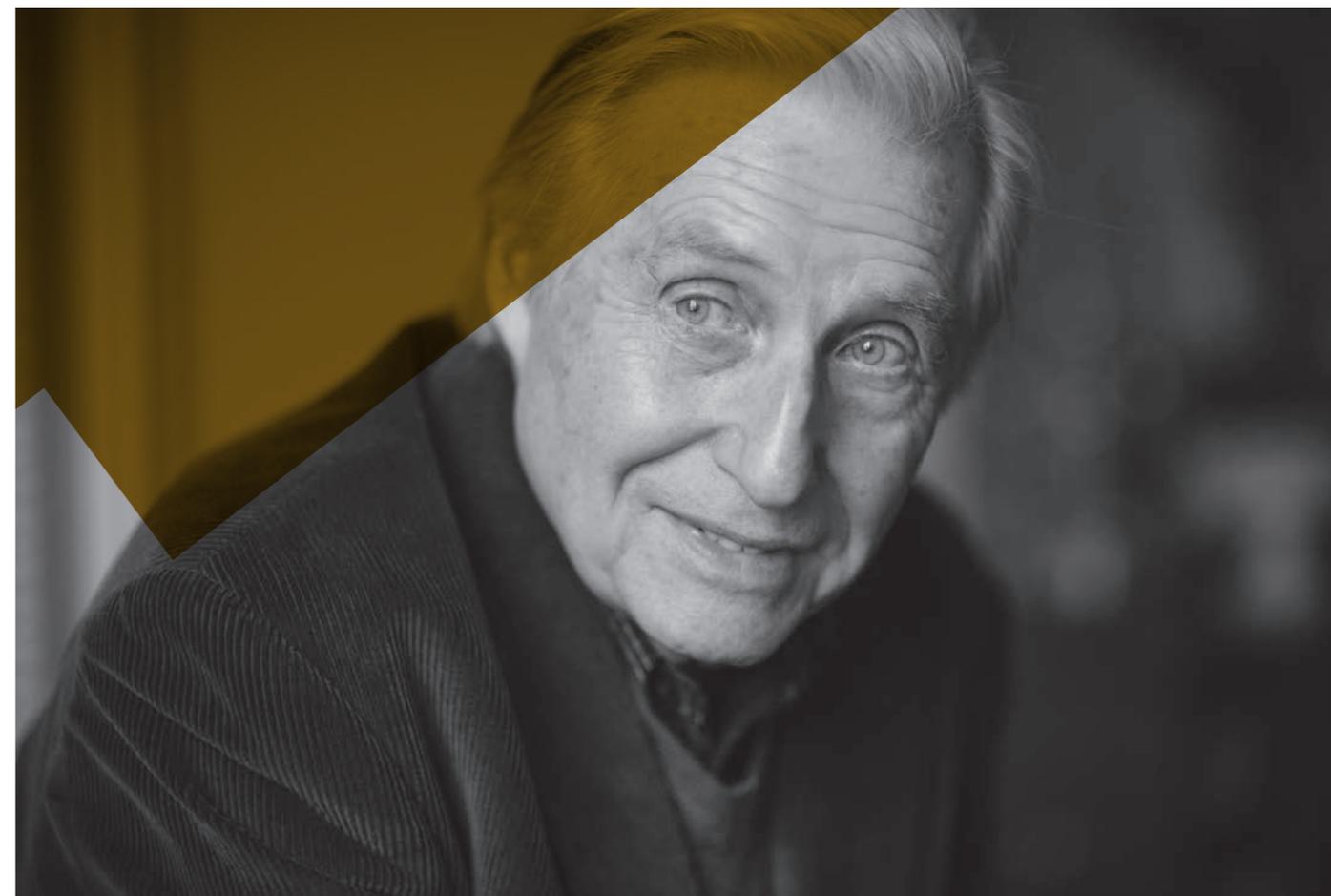
**FRYDERYK CHOPIN** (1810-49) *Twenty-Four Préludes*, Op 28 (finalised 1838-39). 'Half the attraction of a beautiful woman lies in the various dresses she wears. She may be in blue to-day, in grey to-morrow, and in pink the day after, and with every change she appears more beautiful. So it is with [Chopin's] *préludes* ...' (Vladimir de Pachmann). Impromptus, *études*, *morceaux de la nuit*, confessional epigrams contrasted in tempo and character, the collection journeys the keys through a circle of ascending fifths from C to F-sharp [G-flat] to F, each major paired with its relative minor.

I C major *Agitato* The 'passionate breathing' of Schumann's perception, the 'lovely, quiet wave' of Gide's. II A minor *Lento* Harmonically black, the home key long delayed - to be 'played in a whisper for oneself alone' (André Gide). III G major *Vivace* A study in *leggieramente* left-hand work, floating by 'like thistle-down on a summer breeze' (Ashton Jonson). IV E minor *Largo* 'My strength I've lost,/and my life too,/And all my friends, and all my joy' (Bartolomé Ferrâ, quoting du Musset). V D major *Molto allegro* 'Chopin at his happiest, spinning his finest, his most iridescent web' (James Huneker). VI B minor *Lento assai* 'Precipitating the soul into frightful depression' (Sand), this, along with No 4, was played at Chopin's funeral in the Madeleine. VII A major *Andantino* A wraith of mazurka, 'sweet recollections float like a perfume through the memory' (Alfred Cortot). VIII F-sharp minor *Molto agitato* 'A brilliant bird flying over the horrors of an abyss' (Baudelaire), cadencing in a bitter-sweet oscillation of major and minor. IX E major *Largo* Low-register dotted and double-dotted funeral rhythms. X C-sharp minor *Molto allegro* Purling descents, 'the whirling entrance of a ballerina' (Thomas Higgins). XI B major *Vivace* Lyrically lined Chopin, more vivacious in spirit than speed. XII G-sharp minor *Presto* A heavyweight, physically tricky in its repeated note patterns - like a summer storm on Lake Como (Jonson).

XIII F-sharp major *Lento* Nocturnal sighs, 'in a strange land, beneath the starlit sky, thinking of the beloved far away' (Cortot). XIV E-flat minor *Allegro* Dynamically swelling and fading triplet unisons. XV D-flat major *Sostenuto* A fantasy on one note (A-flat/G sharp). 'What melancholy raindrops falling one by one on the tiles [Valldemossa's] cell garden!' (Solange Sand-Clésinger). XVI B-flat minor *Presto con fuoco* A fiery *étude* of relentless right-hand semiquavers and infernal pedal markings. XVII A-flat major *Allegretto* An emotionally expansive *gondoliera*, its luxuriantly nostalgic 'love by Notre-Dame' coda built around 'the sound of an old clock in the castle which strikes the eleventh hour' (Chopin's Franco-Irish pupil Camille Dubois). XVIII F minor *Molto allegro* Operatic declamation, boldy unisonal, harmonically vibrant. XIX E-flat major *Vivace* Wide stretches, plucked basses, the melody like meteor trails lighting the heavens. XX C minor *Largo* 'An aspiration [...] extended into eternity' (Chopin's Scottish pupil, Jane Stirling). XXI B-flat major *Cantabile* A dialogue between contrasted registers and keys. XXII G minor *Molto agitato* Germanically-veined temper. XXIII F major *Moderato* 'Like a sun-shot spider-web oscillating in the breeze of summer' (Huneker), the E-flat of the penultimate bar leaving the music on a teasing question-mark. XXIV D minor *Allegro appassionato* An impassioned set-piece, its angst, rocketing runs, lead-shot descents, searing chromatic thirds and 'revolutionary' rhetoric abruptly silenced in 'the loud diapason of the cannonade' with which it climaxes so venomously.

Interval

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY** (1862-1918) *Reflets dans l'eau (Images)*, L110/1 (1905); *Las plus que lente (Vals)*, L121 (1910); *La soirée dans Grenade (Estampes)*, L100/2 (1903) I 'Water as a symbol of interior experience' (Paul Roberts). II 'Let's think of the numberless five-o'-clock teas where assemble the beautiful audiences I've dreamed of' (Debussy). III Arabesques of moonlight across the lakes of the Alhambra. 'There is not one bar of this music borrowed from Spanish folklore, and yet the entire composition, in its most minute details, conveys Spain admirably' (Fallá). This year marks the centenary of Debussy's death during the German bombardment of Paris - 25 March 1918, 80 Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. 'I honestly don't know if Debussy ever loved anybody really. He loved his music - and perhaps himself. I think he was wrapped up in his genius



... He was a very, very strange man' (Mary Garden, the first Mélisande).

**MANUEL DE FALLA** (1876-1946) *Hommage a Debussy* (1918) 'My idea of music is to be able to speak and paint with it ... music [is the] art of *evocación*' (Fallá). Originally for guitar.

**DEBUSSY** *Four Préludes* Canvasses from the days of the romantic/esoteric/primitive Russians, the English folksong revival and Schoenberg's 'air of other planets', Debussy's twenty-four *Préludes*, their titles consciously *following* rather than preceding each, deal in suggestion and the subliminal. Dwelling on parameters of light and mystery learnt from Monet and Turner, seeking the mysticism, the symbolism, 'the crazy dream-world' of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Poe, embracing the orientally meditative, the occidentally antique, they invite us to lose ourselves in the pagan perfumes of *Exposition Paris*, to wander the shadowlands of spirit-memory.

Book I (1910) X *La cathédrale engloutie* An old Brittany legend tells how the Cathedral of Ys was engulfed by the ocean 'because of the impiety of the inhabitants'. But from time to time at sunrise it can be seen again, towering above the water, its form coalescing through the mist, its C major bells ringing in splendid confusion. Book II (1913) VIII *Ondine* The Ondines - water nymphs - live on the beds of northern rivers and lakes, luring unwary voyagers who sail their realm to join them in their subterranean palaces. VI *Général Lavine*, *eccentric* Edward Lavine, an American who died in March 1946, 'The Man Who Has Soldiered All His Life', was a clown with the famous Médrano Circus. In the years before the Great War he was among the most famous figures in international vaudeville. XII *Feux d'artifice* High summer, July 14th, Bastille Day. A 'booming, crackling, spinning dream-world', fireworks over the Seine, dancing, celebration, languorous embrace. The *Marsellaise* from afar. A casual *au revoir* ...

## MEET THE ARTIST

*'There is something very special about Achúcarro.*

*There are very few pianists in the world who can get that sound from a piano'*

~ Sir Simon Rattle

Eighty-six this year, the legendary Basque Spanish pianist **JOAQUÍN ACHÚCARRO** was born in Bilbao. He came to prominence in 1959, winning the Liverpool International Competition (won the previous year by Zubin Mehta), leading to an acclaimed début with the London Symphony Orchestra. Since then he has pursued a distinguished concert and recording career, appearing with over two hundred orchestras in more than a quarter as many countries, working with a roll-call of conductors (nearly four hundred) from Abbado, Boult, Frühbeck de Burgos, Menuhin and Skrowaczewski to Chailly, Inbal, Mehta, Ozawa and van Zweden. Valued for its referential Iberian emphasis, his video catalogue and discography, refined and discerning, sets an elite benchmark.

In 2015 the French gramophile monthly *Diapason* selected his version of Bernard Herrmann's *Concerto Macabre (Hangover Square)* among 'The Best 100 Piano Recordings of All Time'. Critically and commercially successful recent DVD/BluRay releases include *Achúcarro plays Brahms* (the Second Concerto with Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra led by Carmine Lauri [Opus Arte]), and *Falla and Friends (Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker [Euroarts]. In 1995 he published his revision and re-write of Rodrigo's Piano Concerto, subsequently recording it [Sony Classical]. Holder since 1989 of the the Tate Chair in Piano at the Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Texas, Achúcarro has been decorated with the highest of honours, including Spain's Gold Medal of Fine Arts and National Award for Music. In 2003 King Juan Carlos bestowed upon him the Great Cross of Civil Merit. In recognition of 'extraordinary artistic achievement', he was created a UNESCO Artist of Peace in 2000. In 2008, 'to perpetuate his artistic and teaching legacy', the Joaquín Achúcarro Foundation was created by a group of Dallas individuals and institutions to help young pianists at the outset of their careers. Acknowledging his eminence as 'distinguished concert pianist, admired teacher and mentor', Minor Planet 22191, discovered in September 1960 in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, has been named after him by the International Astronomical Union.

*'I have heard this sound only from Rubinstein'*

~ Zubin Mehta

# CONCERT III Monday 9 April

## Teatru Manoel, 7pm

### Roland Conil, Véronique Muzy - Pianos Christian Bini, Pierre Quiriny - Percussion

**DOMINIQUE LIÈVRE** (born 1961) *l'Ombre bleue for Two Pianos and Percussion* (2017, ISO Festival commission, *World Premiere*) *Plutôt Clanique; Plutôt Ethéré* Dominique Lièvre studied with Antoine Duhamel and Dominique Lecerf, benefitting further from personal encounter with Messiaen. Active as a composer since the early 1980s, involved in literature, theatre and contemporary dance, he is drawn to colour and primitivism in his work. Minimal with words, his output ranges from opera and stage works to fancifully titled symphonic and ensemble pieces. 'Perception of musical time is probably the door I most love to open,' he says. 'Beyond that door my ear sees huge virgin spaces which comfort my idea that tomorrow is already here! Reckless and above all free!' 'Like a boat sailing calmly, twelve looks to the west, a last the east!' *l'Ombre bleue, The Blue Shadow*, we're told, is a journey between states of consciousness - from carbon to hydrogen, density to subtlety. It draws its inspiration from Utterance 606 of the Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* from Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis, dating from around 3000 BCE. 'Go to this boat of Ra [of the noonday sun] wherein the gods wish to ascend, wherein the gods wish to descend, wherein Ra is rowed to the horizon. Nut [mother of the stars, goddess of the sky] shall embark within it, like Ra. Sit on this throne of Ra so that you may command the gods because you are in truth Ra born of Nut, she who like him is every day reborn!' (paraphrased).

**ROLAND CONIL** (born 1950) *Moïrai for Two Pianos and Percussion* (2017) I *Clotho 'La fileuse'*; II *Lachésis 'La réparatrice'*; III *Atropos 'L'implacable'* This recent opus conjures the three Fates of Greek mythology - beldames as old as time, spinning, measuring and cutting the mother thread of life at the birth of each man, they deliverer good and evil to humans. In Plato's *Republic*, Clotho (the Spinner) sings of the things that were; Lachesis (the Repairer, Drawer of Lots) of the things which are; and Atropos (the Unturnable)

of the things that shall be. Pausanias chronicles that there were sanctuaries to the Moïrai at Corinth, Olympia, Sparta and outside the city gates of Thebes.

Interval

**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*, Sz 110 (1937) I *Assai lento-Allegro troppo*; II *Lento, ma non troppo*; III *Allegro non troppo*. 'Whoever met Bartók, thinking of the rhythmic strength of his work, was surprised by his slight, delicate figure. He had the outward appearance of a fine-nerved scholar ... His being breathed light and brightness; his eyes burned with a noble fire' (Paul Sacher, 1945). 'Let my music speak for itself; I lay no claim to any explanation of my works.' The Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, premiered at an ISCM concert in Basle in January 1938, was written for the composer and his young second wife (former student) Ditta to play, the addition of percussion harking back to earlier fascinations with the medium in the first two piano concertos. Tritones (F#/C) and *Waldstein* sonata rub shoulders in the first movement; 'night music' permeates the 'simple song' *Lento*; and a sonata-rondo of sorts ghosts the finale, a bucolic twist on a little Beethoven *Contredance* (WoO 14/1) providing the refrain. Balancing a symmetric 'acoustic' vocabulary based on the overtone series, assymetric Golden Section ratios are architectonically critical.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

**ROLAND CONIL** studied in Avignon and the Geneva Conservatoire. Predominantly a pianist, improviser and chamber-music player, he came to public composition late, in 2000, crediting the influence of Maurice Ohana and Les Percussions de Strasbourg. His tone-poem *Ariane et Dionysos* was premiered by Brian Schembri during the closing concert of the 2016 ISO Festival.

**VÉRONIQUE MUZY** completed her studies at the Nancy Conservatoire before going to the École Normale, Paris, and then Vienna where she worked with the eminent Russian-Austrian pianist Oleg Maisenberg. She has taught at the Conservatoire du Grand Avignon since 1995. Active as a soloist artist, chamber musician and contemporary specialist, she has a duo/duet partnership with the composer-pianist



Roland Conil, and is a member of the trio ArTango (piano, bandoneon, cello), focussing on the music of Piazzolla. Recording and touring widely, she appeared at the 2016 ISO Festival.

**CHRISTIAN BINI** studied with Daniel Pichon at the Institute of Rhythmic Arts, Paris, and then at the Percussion School of Strasbourg, and with Georges Van Gucht at the Toulon Conservatoire. Since 2006 he has taught at the Municipal Conservatoire, Aubagne. His interest in music of all kinds, from classical to contemporary, jazz to improvisation, led him to forming the Hop!Trio in 2014 [Concert VII]. Currently, the Ensemble Télémaque, directed by Raoul Lay, forms an important part of his work, allowing him to alternate concerts, recordings and cross-over shows taking in theatre, dance and new circus around Europe, South America and Japan.

**PIERRE QUIRINY** was born in 1983. Winning the 2001 Dexia Competition, he studied at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, graduating with distinction in 2007. His interest in modern music led him in 2008 to become percussionist with the Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles. In 2011 he joined the innovative European Contemporary Orchestra, later that year enrolling in Philippe Gérard's conducting class at the Royal Conservatoire of Brussels and shortly afterwards becoming artistic director of the Royal Harmony Society of Braine-l'Alleud. A regular member of the National Orchestra of Belgium and the La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra, he teaches at the Jette Academy of Music and the Anderlecht Academy of Music, and is orchestral coordinator and assistant in the percussion class of his former teacher Louison Renault at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels.

# CONCERT IV: Rising Stars Series I Tuesday 10 April

Palazzo De La Salle, Malta Society of Arts,  
Valletta, 7pm

Jean-Marc Fabri - Piano

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827) *Sonata No 10 in G major*, Op 14/2 (1798-99) I *Allegro*; II *Andante*; III *Scherzo: Allegro assai* Should a Martian ever chance upon our planet, Bartók's friend Louis Kentner was fond of musing, wishing 'to find the one single jewel, if possible the crowning glory of [our] civilization,' then he would have to look no further than the New Testament of the Beethoven sonatas. 'Here form and content are unfailingly in harmony - the hallmark of great art. Mozart's different, and possibly even more flawless, perfection is a little less human and a little more rooted in one particular age, while Beethoven's humanity is ageless.' The modesty of the G major Sonata, so outwardly harmless and innocent, is deceptive. The Beethoven canon of *Thirty-Two* addresses 'sonata' issues differently and uniquely. Like Bach's *Forty-Eight*, certain facets, the columns of design and load-bearing, maybe predictable, but, redolent of Mozart, what transpires within is rarely so. In this work, the first movement development, with its tussles of key and conflict of twos-against-threes, ferments. The *Andante* is a necklace of variations essaying rhythm, articulation and silence, ending with a C major *fortissimo* straight out of Haydn's 'surprise' arsenal, 'at which all the ladies will scream'. The closing scherzo, fleet and teasing, tests humour and fingerwork, the ability to smile in tight corners.

**FRYDERYK CHOPIN** (1810-49) *Nocturne in E major*, Op 62/2 (1845-46) 'And when the Chopin Nocturne ends / And the last note says: "Goodbye" ... / Where does the golden beauty go? / Does it really ever die? ... It must be there, among the stars, / In some distant galaxy, / Where beauty such as Chopin's / Lives on, forever free ...' (Daniel Mergler).

Francis James Camilleri - Piano

**ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810-56) *Kinderszenen*, Op 15 (1838) I *Of Foreign Lands and Peoples*; II *A Curious Story*; III *Blind Man's Buff*; IV *Pleading Child*; V *Quite Happy*; VI *An Important Event*; VII *Dreaming*; VIII *By the Fireside*; IX *Knight of the Hobby-Horse*; X *Almost too Serious*; XI *Frightening*; XII *Child Falling Asleep*; XIII *The Poet Speaks* In the thirteen precious stones comprising the *Kinderszenen* (Scenes from Childhood) cycle, we meet with a grown-up remembering childhood and the make-believe of children. 'Adult reminiscences for adults,' their maker called them. Most famous, 'like a perfect poem of two short stanzas by Heinrich Heine' (*The Etude Music Magazine* April 1924), is the seventh number, *Träumerei* – its part-playing and *legato* voicing so much harder to manage than the page would have us suppose. Twenty-four bars of F major magic that Horowitz was to make the late 20th century's most celebrated encore.

**JOSEPH VELLA** (1942-2018) *Rapsodija Maltija*, Op 26b (1993) Joseph Vella, who died in February, was Malta's best known senior composer, conductor and educationalist as well as a leading light in the Maltese revival movement. Studying first with his father, then in Italy with Franco Donadoni and Franco Ferrara, he was music director of the Astra Opera Theatre, Gozo, artistic director of the Victoria International Arts Festival, and musical director of the Count Roger Band Club, Rabat and La Stella Band Club, Victoria-Gozo. He wrote five symphonies, ten concertos, five oratorios, a Mass in D, and a quantity of chamber, instrumental and piano music as well as song cycles, choral settings and music for sacred use – well over a hundred works. Following Charles Camilleri's initiatives in the 1980s, Vella, along with John Galea, was instrumental in consolidating the music department at the University of Malta. *Francis James Camilleri* writes: 'The *Rapsodija Maltija*, originally for violin and piano [1978], is perhaps the only piece by Vella based entirely on traditional "Maltese" melodies. Never that enthusiastic about the Maltese folk music tradition, real or imaginary, it is interesting to note the way he treats his material in this regard. Although a folk element is unmistakably present, he does not opt for a simplistic approach, preferring instead harmonies and rhythms that are more typically his own, a fact that in the final count takes the piece beyond the customary "folk music" spectrum. In free ternary form, the work is based on four folk

tunes, each interweaved with idiosyncratic personal touches.' The first performance was given by Natascha Chircop at the Conservatorio di Milano, 10 May 1996.

**ALEXANDER Scriabin** (1871[72]-1915) *Two Études* ~ C-sharp minor, Op 2/1 (1897) *Andante*; D-sharp minor, Op 8/12 (1894) *Patetico* Scriabin's place in the annals of Russian music is special, a man whose world was increasingly 'about over-exposed senses, about a different kind of nervous chemistry, about fantasies and reflections flying in the face of opposites' (Nikolai Demidenko). 'Scriabin can have no disciples,' Prokofiev maintained, 'he must stand alone. He is a solitary genius.'

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY** (1862-1918) *Three Préludes* 'I'm trying to write "something different" - realities in a way; imbeciles call it "impressionism" which is a term used as inappropriately as possible, particularly by art critics.' Book I (1910) VIII *La fille aux cheveux de lin* Whether this celebrated G-flat jewel cameos an unidentified Scottish/Nordic beauty (a Parnassian poem of the same name by Leconte de Lisle) or remembers Mary Garden as Mélisande, isn't clear. IX *La sérénade interrompue* 'Two serenaders,' pictured Falla in 1920, 'vie with each other for the favours of a damsel who, hidden behind the flowers of her latticed window, follows every incident of their gallant contest.' Book II (1913) VII *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* Ostensibly influenced by a Hindu scene but including suggestions (at the end) of Javanese gamelan music. Debussy momentarily discovered the Orient at the 1889 Paris World Exhibition.

**FRANZ LISZT** (1811-86) *Après une lecture de Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata*, S161/7 (1839-49) Published in 1858, the *Dante Sonata* - the cyclically cross-referenced closing number of the second (Italian) book of *Années de Pèlerinage* - takes its title from Victor Hugo. Like the orchestral tone-poems to come, it's a canvas dealing in large gestures above individualised incident, in broad brush-strokes more than pen-and-ink detail, in the essence rather than cantos of *The Divine Comedy*. Satanic, tonally vacant tritones (the *diabolus in musica* of antiquity) set the mood. Hell is a fevered *Presto agitato assai* – Lisztified Mendelssohn at once dolorous, impetuous, desperate. Heaven is a song-like *Andante* – progressively tearful, improvisatory, loving, impassioned. Half way towards

the B minor Sonata, elements of introduction, exposition, 'slow movement', development, reprise and coda boldly stake the road. D major is attained by the final pages – yet with little sense of triumph or fears overcome, for all the decibels and sabre-rattling.



## MEET THE ARTISTS

Born in Pietà, **JEAN-MARC FABRI** is a composer and pianist. He studies with Gisèle Grima, and is coached in composition by Véronique Vella. He won the 2015 New Names Malta National Music Competition, his age category in the 2016 Classical Piano Competition of the Maltese Islands Festival 2016, and second prize in the senior division of last year's Scottish International Youth Piano Competition in Glasgow. He has appeared at the Three Palaces Festival, 2013-15, Notte Bianca 2014, the Valletta International Piano Festival 2015, the Classical Young Stars Concert Series 2015, and the International Spring Orchestra Festival, 2014-15. In December he gave a lunchtime recital at the Teatru Salesjan, Sliema.

**FRANCIS JAMES CAMILLERI**, from Victoria, Gozo, was born in 1997, to a musical family. Brought up in the environs of the Laudate Pueri Choir (under the direction of his uncle, Fr George J Frendo), he commenced his formal piano studies with Lucia Micallef. Currently he's taught by Karen Briscoe, and takes lessons in London with Vanessa Latache, Head of Keyboard and Professor of International Keyboard Studies at the Royal College of Music. He is now in his final year at the University of Malta, majoring in music (pianoforte performance) under Michael Laus, having previously been coached in harmony and counterpoint by the late Joseph Vella. In Europe, formerly as boy soprano, latterly as pianist, he has had the fortune to appear in such iconic venues as St-Martin-in-the-Fields, London, St Peter's Basilica, Rome, and Les Invalides, Paris. Passionate about art and literature, he spends his free time reading and travelling.



## CONCERT V: Rising Stars Series II Wednesday 11 April

Palazzo De La Salle, Malta Society of Arts,  
Valletta, 7pm

### Daphne Delicata - Piano

**FRYDERYK CHOPIN** (1810-49) *Étude in C minor*, Op 10/12 (?c 1831) *Allegro con fuoco*; *Nocturne in F minor*, Op 55/1 (1842-44); *Étude in A-flat major*, Op 25/1 (1836) *Allegro sostenuto*; *Nouvelle étude in F minor*, B130/1 (1839-40) *Andantino*; *Impromptu No 1 in A-flat major*, Op 29 (1837); *Two Études* (1836) ~ *F minor*, Op 25/2 *Presto*; *C minor*, Op 25/12 *Allegro molto con fuoco* The sunrise of modern pianism ... 'the music of a sad smile' ... fragments of ballade, flights of 'open' variation, wraiths of prelude.

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF** (1873-1943) *Élégie in E-flat minor*, Op 3/1 (*Morceaux de Fantaisie*, 1892) *Moderato*; *Étude Tableau in C-sharp minor*, Op 33/9[6] (1911) *Grave* 'A composer's music should express the country of his birth, his love affairs, his religion, the books which have influenced him, the pictures he loves. It should be the product of the sum total of [his] experiences' (*The Etude*, New York December 1941).

**ALBERTO GINASTERA** (1916-83) *Danzas Argentinas*, Op 2 (1937) I *Danza del viejo boyero*; II *Danza de la moza donosa*; III *Danza del gaucho matrero* 'Art is first perceived by our senses, it then affects our sentiments and in the end awakens our intelligence ... Without sensibility, the work of art is only a cold, mathematical study, and without intelligence or technique, it is only chaos' (1964). Though thought of as the quintessential Argentinian composer of the 20th century (he was born in Buenos Aires, growing up on its dance and street music), Ginastera was in fact a mixture of Catalan and Italian stock. He taught Piazzolla and studied with Copland. The *Danzas Argentinas* date from his self-proclaimed period of 'Objective Nationalism'. I 'Dance of the Old Herdsman' – black keys left hand, white keys right. II Dance of the Beautiful Maiden – poem and pampas. III 'Dance of the Arrogant Cowboy' – noonday heat, prancing brilliance.

### Daniel Zak Borg - Piano

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827) *Sonata No 22 in F major*, Op 54 (1804) I *In tempo d'un menuetto*; II *Allegretto-Più allegro A* neglected but mature Vienna opus from the period of the *Eroica* Symphony and *Waldstein* Sonata. To an extent the first movement pursues a 'beauty and the beast' scenario (courtly dance, rugged octaves). The second is a *perpetuum mobile* of undulating semiquavers. 'One may imagine oneself,' Edwin Fischer felt, 'on the banks of a river which passes by in changing patterns, long, calm waves alternating with eddies – but the element of water, the symbol of ever-renewed life, is always present.'

**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) *Mikrokosmos Book VI: Two Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*, Sz 107/148, 153 (1939) The 1st of Bartók's six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm closing the final volume of the iconic *Mikrokosmos* collection, dedicated to Arnold Bax's *amant* Harriet Cohen, is in the style of a *daichovo horo* or circle dance, each bar metricised in additive/*aksak* 4+2+3 rhythms. The *klezmer*-related 6th is a Wallachian/Romanian Yiddish *freylekh* or festive dance in 3+3+2 time.

**FRANZ LISZT** (1811-86) *Hungarian Rhapsody No 6 in D-flat major*, S244/6 (1847) A thunderously virtuosic *pot-pourri* on themes noted by Liszt in 1839-40, with a closing *friss* famous for its fearsomely repeated, progressively faster octaves and pulverising gypsy bass. The opening tune, *Chopitzky*, is found in a number of sometimes radical variants, from *csárdás* (still danced in Transylvanian Kalotaszeg) to Habsburg 'mocking song': 'How wily are the Germans ... When they say "Das ist gut", that's the time when they deceive you'. According to Bartók, the third of the four sections, a moody *lassú* in the minor, was based on a ballad/romance from north-eastern Hungary/western Ukraine.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

**DAPHNE DELICATA**, eleven years old, began her studies at the age of four under the guidance of her father, Marco Delicata, and is currently being taught by Irina Fedcenko-Carbonaro in Malta, Cecilia Grillo in Rome, and Elena Nesterenko in Germany. In 2014 she won her age category, *premio assoluto*, in the Mozart International Piano Competition in Rome. Two years later she won her group in the first Maltese Islands Festival, and her participation in the Ibla Grand Prize led to gaining 'Most Distinguished Musician' recognition, a Copland Special Mention, and a scholarship to Denver University, Colorado. In 2017 she gained her ABRSM Diploma, a further American scholarship, to Kent State University, Ohio, and won her category in the Valletta International Piano Competition. This season she has repeated her success in the Valletta competition, given her first solo recital at the Palace of the President of Malta in San Anton, and next month will be playing her first concerto with orchestra in Milan.

*'Daphne Delicata is certainly among the greatest talents of her age in Europe: pianistic power, sensitivity of emotions, plus an amazing maturity'*  
~ Stephan Möller  
President of the Vienna International Pianists Association.



**DANIEL ZAK BORG**, aged sixteen, is active as a pianist, accompanist, organist and music arranger. With a view to reading medicine at university, he attends St Aloysius Sixth Form College, Birkirkara, and studies the piano with Gisèle Grima. At present preparing for the ABRSM Diploma, he gained his London College of Music Associate diploma in 2015, the following year winning his age category in the first Maltese Islands Festival. He has appeared at the International Spring Orchestra Festival, The Three Palaces Festival, Notte Bianca, and the Malta International Organ Festival.

# CONCERT VI

## Thursday 12 April

Palazzo De La Salle, Malta Society of Arts,  
Valletta, 8pm

**Aquilon Trio**  
**Eulalie Charland - Violin**  
**Massimo di Trolio - Clarinet**  
**Maiko Mori - Piano**

**ARAM KHACHATURIAN** (1903-78) *Clarinet Trio in G minor* (1932) I *Andante con dolore, molt' espressione*; II *Allegro*; III *Moderato* 'The most important thing in a composer is his personality, his aura. Shostakovich once paid me a very great compliment when he said that you could recognise a piece of Khachaturian from the first two bars. If this is true, it is grand, marvellous.' The Clarinet Trio was written in Moscow under the guidance of Khachaturian's teacher Miaskovsky. Prokofiev heard it and arranged for a performance in Paris at one of the Triton Chamber Society Concerts. The composer was in 'seventh heaven'. The work afforded him the opportunity to pursue some of his favourite folk models and timbres, as well as explore the earthy body of songs, dances and sextica of Armenia, the Transcaucas and Near East with which he'd grown up as a child in Tiflis. Witness the the richly dressed violin flourishes, the *zurna*-like descants of the clarinet, the colouristic minor-seconds of the piano part ... The languorously atmospheric first movement, veiled balletic touches of *Scheherazade* behind shuttered casements never far away, hints at a primitive sonata design overcome by rhapsody; the metrically/temporally varied middle movement makes reference to the contemporaneous piano Toccata; the finale, closing in C minor, is a set of variations on a predominantly tetrachordal Uzbek folk-tune announced by clarinet.

**KARL FIORINI** (born 1979) *Trio Lamina* (2002) This was Fiorini's first attempt towards developing new dimensions of form, structure and harmony which he has continued to develop in more recent works. It co-won the 2004 Alea III International Composition Competition, University of Boston. Though in one movement it displays evident traits

of Bartókian arch form, while in the middle section – 'a nocturnal quasi-tenebrous scene' with slow moving chords on the piano offsetting a haunting clarinet theme highlighted by violin harmonic tremolos – it hints at the Hungarian's 'night music' manner. The macrostructure is defined through a fast-slow-fast scheme, the finale in the guise of a modified, temporally more dynamic, recapitulation of the first part. Pondering, juxtaposing and mutating material, braiding mosaics of emotion, contribute to the persona of the piece.

**IGOR STRAVINSKY** (1882-1971) *Histoire du Soldat*, W 36 trio version (1918/19) I *The Soldier's March*; II *The Soldier's Violin*; III *The Little Concert*; IV *Three Dances (Tango, Waltz, Ragtime)*; V *The Devil's Dance* A variant of the Faust story, *The Soldier's Tale*, a theatricalisation 'to be read, played and danced', was based by Stravinsky and the Swiss novelist and poet Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz on a folk tale associated with enforced recruitment around the time of the 1829-30 Russo-Turkish War, *The Runaway Soldier and the Devil*, the soldier trading his fiddle in return for economic fortune. The first performance, under Ernest Ansermet, took place in Lausanne in September 1918. The suite for trio – using a piano otherwise omitted from the original instrumentation – draws on five numbers from Scenes I, IV and V. We meet with the Soldier returning to his village and encountering the Devil in the shape of an old man disguised as a lepidopterist; the unravished, sick Princess whose hand is promised to anyone who can cure her; her embrace with, and love for, the Soldier; and the all too short-lived demise of the Devil, 'fiddled into contortions'.





#### Interval

**TIMOTHY SALTER** (born 1942) *Triptych* (2017, *World Premiere*)  
I *With suppressed energy*; II *Peaceful*; III *Urgent* Musical Director of The Ionian Singers and a Fellow of the Royal College of Music, where he taught composition and performance studies for a number of years, Timothy Salter read music at St John's College, Cambridge. 'The repertoire of music for violin, clarinet and piano is not large,' *he writes*, 'and it is hard to find any works for this combination written earlier than the 20th century. The combination leaves all the lower register sound to come from the piano, a rôle for which the modern instrument is well fitted, in contrast to those keyboards for which the many early violin, cello and piano trios were composed. Nevertheless, the differing timbres in a trio of a piano with a two single-line instruments create a challenge in achieving any measure of homogeneity of texture, more so when the two single-line instruments differ themselves. However, of all the familiar wind instruments, the clarinet is most suited in its range of pitch, fullness of tone and wide dynamic capability to match the string instruments. I certainly had this in mind when writing my *Triptych* for the Aquilon Trio. This factor underlies the pairing of violin and clarinet in the first movement - they work in tandem for much of it, against the foil of the piano's interjections. In the second violin and

piano initially provide the backdrop for the clarinet's musings. All three instruments convey the unsettled nature of the third, its restless motion is checked momentarily by a brief reference to the opening of the work.'

**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) *Contrasts*, Sz 111 (1938) I *Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)*; II *Pihenő (Relaxation)*; III *Sebes (Fast Dance)* Suggested by Joseph Szigeti but commissioned by Benny Goodman, Bartók's *Contrasts* cycle, originally in two movements, draws on Hungarian and Rumanian folk material, fragments of which, along with allusory references in the middle number to the 'Blues' from Ravel's *Violin Sonata*, permeate the fabric, superficially deflecting attention from an otherwise complex tonal and constructional underlay in which the tritone is a significant presence. Instrumentally, the focus is more on clarinet and violin (with cadenzas each in the first and third movements), less on piano (despite its evidently critical supporting rôle and occasionally gamelan-like commentary). The closing dance, essentially virtuosic but with a darkly embered heart, calls for thirty bars of violin *scordatura* at the start, the first and fourth strings tuned respectively up and down a semitone - a mephistophelian take on the Appalachian hoedown style coming curiously to mind. Szigeti, Goodman and Bartók gave the first complete performance in Carnegie Hall, New York, in April 1940.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

The **AQUILON TRIO**, formed in 2002 by violinist Eulalie Charland and pianist Maiko Mori, specialises in predominantly 20th century repertory. It takes its name from the Gallicised Roman god of the Arctic highs: 'interea magnum sol circumvolvitur annum, et glacialis hiemps aquilonibus asperat undas' – 'Meanwhile the sun moves round the great year, and icy winter roughens the waters with north-east winds' (Virgil).

Passionate and curious about exploring the diverse and individual soundscapes of the artists she works with – leading to projects headlining events from film festivals to dance and music collaborations - **EULALIE CHARLAND** is professor of violin at the Junior Guildhall School of Music and Drama and University of Chichester. Following an exotic childhood and adolescence spent in part in Canada and Finland, her musical education took her initially to Paris and Catherine Courtois, then later across the Atlantic to work in Indiana with the renowned Uruguayan pedagogue Mauricio Fuks, of Fuchs-Galamian-Heifetz pedigree. She completed her postgraduate studies with Stefan Gheorghiu in Bucharest and Yossi Zivoni at the Royal College of Music. With a repertory ranging from the classics to a variety of moderns including Philip Cashian, Karl Fiorini, Graham Fitkin, Thea Musgrave, Timothy Salter, Judith Weir and Hugh Wood, she plays a violin made in 2015 by Stefan von Baehr of Paris.

**MASSIMO DI TROLIO** was formerly principal clarinet of the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, having previously been a member of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester and the Verbier Festival Orchestra. Massimo is in high demand as both an orchestral and chamber musician and is currently on trial for the position of Principal Clarinet with the BBC Concert Orchestra. He made his Purcell Room début with the Aquilon Trio in January 2007 as part of the Park Lane Group Series. Studies were primarily with Michael Collins, Timothy Lines and Robert Hill at the Royal College of Music and subsequently with Joan Enric Lluna and Michael Whight at Trinity College of Music, winning the Wilfred Hambleton Clarinet Prize and the Isabelle Bond Gold Medal (*premier prix*). Massimo is a D'Addario Woodwind Artist.

Born in Okayama, Japan, **MAIKO MORI** gave her first recital at the age of six, playing some of her own piano compositions. She studied with Chikako Shibata and Benjamin Kaplan, and with Dmitri Alexeev and Andrew Ball at the Royal College of Music. Whilst at the RCM she received the Myra Hess Award and Hopkinson Gold Medal, having earlier already won the 2002 Robert William and Florence Amy Brant International Piano Competition in Birmingham. She is currently professor of piano at the University of Chichester, as well as an official accompanist at Goldsmiths, University of London.



# CONCERT VII

## Friday 13 April

Pjazza Teatru Rjal, 12.30pm

### Percussion Festa

**RitmiKA**  
children from St Margherita College Middle School, Cospicua

**Hop!Trio**  
Christian Bini André Groen Pierre Quiriny

In collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment and the French Embassy

*'The world of sound, noise, rhythm, and beauty that lies at the heart of human expression'*

~Evelyn Glennie

*'Life is about rhythm.'*

*'We vibrate, our hearts are pumping blood, we are a rhythm machine, that's what we are'*

~Mickey Hart

*'My dad was playing percussion. My mom was a hula dancer'*

~Bruno Mars

This is the third consecutive year that the ISO Festival has teamed up with Education+ to bring to Valletta the Hop!Trio from Marseille, three highly-regarded international percussionists whose mission is to work and create a performance spectacle directly involving young students – fifty of them this year, from St Margherita College Middle School, Cospicua. *Karl Fiorini* writes: 'RitmiKA is about empowering children through music. The scope of RitmiKA is to focus on students with social difficulties without the need to have any musical background. These children, unfortunately, are often labelled "low academic achievers". What we offer is an opportunity to engage themselves in extracurricular activity, which in turn boosts their creativity through personal and

social development. The personal aspect is about having a goal to achieve - learning different, difficult rhythms, performing them correctly. The social is about interaction and performing with their schoolmates. These workshops help develop skills and improve self-esteem.'

### MEET THE ARTISTS

**THE HOP!TRIO**, dedicated to original new music for percussion, much of it drawing on non-Western techniques, was formed in 2014, the brainchild of two musicians who'd met three years previously at the inaugural concert of the European Contemporary Orchestra - Pierre Quiriny (Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles, Belgium) and André Groen (Ensemble De Erepijs, Netherlands). Christian Bini (Ensemble Télémaque, France) completed the line-up. The establishment of the group caught the attention of a number of leading new-generation composers - initially Pierre-Adrien Charpy (France), Jean-Luc Fafchamps (Belgium), Karl Fiorini (Malta), Luca Macchi (Italy), François Narboni (France), and Martijn Padding (Netherlands), followed by Michel Lysight (Belgium) and Yangzhi Ma (China), each of whom wrote special new pieces to be played. The aesthetic of the ensemble is to explore a rich, eclectic variety of styles crossing all borders, cultures and fashions. Group experience, energy, the power of creativity, melody, the freedom and interaction of improvisation, harmony, the exploration of sound and timbre, rhythm in all its manifestations, joy is central to the adventure.



# CONCERT VIII

## Friday 13 April

Grand Salon, National Museum of Archeology, 8pm

### Somogyi String Quartet

Péter Somogyi - Violin György Lendvai - Violin  
Balázs Tóth - Viola László Pólus - Cello

**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) *String Quartet No 2, Sz 67* (1915-17) | *Moderato*; II *Allegro molto capriccioso*; III *Lento* Bartók's six quartets are to the 20th century what Beethoven's were to the 19th. Intensely private statements, infinitely imagined dreams, defyingly crafted expressions, they take the quartet medium to its very extreme, they inhabit new plains of experience and sensation, they glimpse strangely distant, magically coloured horizons, they pioneer bold forms, textures and playing techniques. Emotive and abundantly contrasted, the creative freedom of the Second Quartet owes not a little to its author's willingness to turn for stimuli to the songs, dances and laments of worlds essentially east of Vienna: 'it is no sign of "barrenness" or "incompetence";' he believed, 'if a composer bases his work on folk music instead of taking Brahms or Schumann as his models'. The first movement is a lyrically thoughtful sonata-based structure; the second a barbaresque scherzo-rondo of Hungarian/Arab/Turkish veining; the finale a bleak, sunless, *sordino* scena. Third and fourth colour much of the linear, vertical and convergent motion.

**IGOR STRAVINSKY** (1882-1971) *Three Pieces for String Quartet, W 20* (1914) | *crotchet 126 [Danse]*; II *crotchet 76 [Eccentrique]*; III *minim 40 [Cantique]* Less an attempt to write a 'classical' quartet, more a trilogy of 'Grotesques', dedicated to Ansermet, contrasting 'popular, fantastic and liturgical moods' (Eric Walter White). The American imagist Amy Lowell (1874-1925) fancied to describe them in a poem published in 1916. I 'Delirium flapping its thigh-bones ... Drunkenness steaming in colours ... In and out with the dance, Coarse stuffs and hot flesh weaving together'. II 'A pale smoke of violin music blows over the moon'. III 'An organ growls in the heavy roof-groins of a church ... The nave is blue with incense'. Critics were unamused.

Interval

**BARTÓK** *String Quartet No 6, Sz 114* (1939) | *Mesto-Più mosso, pesante-Vivace*; II *Mesto-Marcia*; III *Mesto-Burletta: Moderato-Andantino-Tempo I*; IV *Mesto* 'Of the three musicians who dominated the musical scene during the first half of the 20th century - Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Bartók - it is the Hungarian master who, despite his intellectual control, remained the nearest to the instinctual, the irrational in music, and thus to the Dionysian spirit in art' (Mosco Carner). Written in the wake of the vibrant Divertimento for Strings [Concert IX, 14 April], the Sixth Quartet is a document of very different character, its genesis coinciding with the outbreak of the Second World War and the impending death of the composer's mother. Following its premiere in January 1941, the *New York Times* - their critic taking his cue from the cyclically unifying 'grief-laden' 6/8 *Mesto* material introduced by viola at the start of the first movement - wondered if there was an underlying extra-musical intention, 'grief-laden', behind the composition, while acknowledging that 'Mr Bartók, of course, provides no clue to programmatic intentions'. Bartók's troubled 'state of mind' admitted in contemporaneous letters is a tempting scenario to journey, and many have - but notions that the music might somehow have been autobiographical, a tale of 'pessimism', 'lament' and 'Greek tragedy', an 'acrid', tortured filmscape of gulags, concentration camps, displacement and annihilation, were never in his vocabulary. There's a lesson to be learnt from his silence. Conceptually, the Sixth is an essay of late-Beethoven homage: the *Grosse Fuge* lies behind the opening sonata-principled *Vivace*; the *alla marcia* of the A minor Quartet Op 132 behind the malignant, bizarre façade of the second movement. Of transient Magyar/Romanian nuances and shaftings. Of radical timbral effects, extended playing techniques, and layers of yielding yet uncompromised *conversazione* variously beautiful and broken.



### MEET THE ARTISTS

Twenty-one years together, the **SOMOGYI STRING QUARTET** was formed by former students of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. In 1998 it was invited to the Ravinia Festival, Illinois, working with the Tokyo, La Salle, Cleveland and Emerson Quartets. It is widely recognised as an outstanding champion of contemporary music, appearing annually at the Budapest Mini-Festival, and winning the Hungarian Artisjus Award in 1999, 2004 and 2006. Attila Bozay dedicated his Third Quartet to the ensemble. But,

witness its début concert in 1997, programming Beethoven alongside Bartok, it also nurtures a focussed classical profile. In addition to educational and outreach initiatives, the Quartet tours widely, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe but occasionally also further afield - to Mexico, for example, in 2001 and 2002. It is additionally active in the broadcasting and recording studio, its Hungaroton discography reflecting its members' challenging modernist aesthetic.

# CONCERT IX

## Saturday 14 April

Manoel Theatre, 8pm

**Tyresias Ensemble**  
**Baltic Neopolis Virtuosi**  
**Dimitri Scarlato - Conductor**



This concert is generously co-financed by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute [culture.pl](http://culture.pl)

**WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI** (1913-94) *Musique funèbre* for strings (1954-58) *Prologue-Metamorphoses-Apogeu-Épilogue* Both censored and celebrated during his lifetime, Lutosławski's career spanned Poland's post-Tsarist independence years, through Nazi occupation and totalitarian communism, to Solidarity, Lech Walesa and the new-look Nineties. Not finding international recognition until his mid-forties, he was a composer of perennial freshness, self-renewal, and perpetuating refinement. 'Most people as they grow older,' Messiaen once said of him, 'are merely confirmed in the traits of their youth, but Lutosławski grows more and more modern ... What could reflect greater credit on a composer than that he prove himself so youthful in his later years?' In one movement divided into four *divisi* textured sections, the *Musique funèbre* in memory of Bartók was commissioned by the conductor Jan Krenz. In its dodecaphonic course we meet with a number of baroque-associated procedures as well as palindromic and *quasi* 'chain' techniques. Reflecting the liberated voice of the Warsaw Autumn years (young Penderecki was just around the corner), it won the 1959 Polish Composers' Union and UNESCO Prizes.

**KARL FIORINI** (born 1979) *Weinende Frau* (2017-18, *World Premiere*) In his work Fiorini loves and dreams but there is also rejection and revolution, angst and violence, defeat, doubt and defiance. The result, rich in overtones harmonic and

extra-musical, is visceral and sensuous, lean yet generous, a *nuît blanche* ride where the outpouring of emotional goes hand-in-hand with raw savagery and snarling cynicism, troubled desires and high-wire risk-taking. On the one hand *Weinende Frau* draws its title, associations and subtext from Picasso's *The Weeping Woman* (26 October 1937, Tate Modern). On the other from the resonance and blacker moods of his Parisian lover and muse at the time, 'Dora Maar' (Henriette Theodora Markovitch, 1907-97) - *La Femme qui pleure*. 'Dora, for me, was always a weeping woman ... And it's important, because women are suffering machines' ... 'For years I've painted her in tortured forms, not through sadism, and not with pleasure, either; just obeying a vision that forced itself on me. It was the deep reality, not the superficial one.' A man whose infidelity and reputation for ravaging the lives of the women who loved him was second only to his creative genius, he was eventually to discard her, a pretty girl forty years younger, slightly taller, having caught his eye one evening across a café table. 1943. Operation Rügen was among the worst horrors of the Spanish Civil War - the bombing and aerial rape of the Basque town of Guernica by the German Luftwaffe and Italian Aviazione Legionaria, lending their support to Franco's Nationalist forces. 26 April 1937. Picasso responded to the atrocity by painting the physically vast anti-war mural *Guernica*, completed in June 1937 and exhibited in Paris at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne. 'Did you do this?' an occupying German officer was to later ask, seeing a photograph in Picasso's Paris studio. 'No, you did' came back the riposte, as defiant as Beethoven taking on Napoleon. An obsession with one of the figures in the mural, a crying mother holding her dead child, led to *The Weeping Woman*, the last and most elaborate of a series of subsidiary canvasses on the subject.

**DIMITRI SCARLATO** (born 1977) *In Limbo* (2018, *World Premiere*) 'Midway upon the journey of life, I found myself in a dark forest, for the straightforward path had been lost' (Dante). *In Limbo* draws its inspiration from the 2017 book of the same title by the Italian translator Elena Remigi. This gathers stories of European citizens in the UK following the June 2016 Brexit vote. 'Our limbo,' the author says, 'is not only about having the right documents or not. There is a psychological limbo too, in which we all feel we have plunged. My hope is that we can all return to behold the stars, content and settled as we were before this referendum.' 'This is



how we felt and we feel,' writes the composer, 'suspended in between what our lives were and will be. My piece tries to depict the anxieties, uncertainties, anger and betrayal described in the book'.

**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) *Divertimento for strings*, Sz 113 (1939) | *Allegro non troppo*; II *Molto adagio*; III *Allegro assai* This late (*concerto grosso* related) masterpiece was a commission from Paul Sacher – 'surely,' it's been said, 'the most bountiful and discriminating patron of music in the 20th century' – for the Basel Chamber Orchestra. 'A forceful and compelling work, full of incident ... The first movement begins picturesquely – as also does the third, which for a moment seems to suggest a fairground in Eastern Europe. The slow movement is mysterious and astringent in flavour to the point of bitterness. The finale freakishly exploits most of the devices of string writing, and ends on a note of good humour' (London *Times*, 24 May 1941, reviewing the wartime British premiere in Cambridge). Written in Switzerland in just over a fortnight, the *Divertimento* was among Bartók's last completed works before he fled Hungary and the Third Reich for the United States in October 1940, neither opportunity nor position having been forthcoming in post-Atatürk Turkey, his psycho-environmentally preferred country of asylum.

#### MEET THE ARTISTS

Winner of the 2015 ISOF Composition Prize, the Italian composer, sound designer, conductor, arranger, pianist and keyboard player **DIMITRI SCARLATO** studied in Rome at the Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia and the Università La

Sapienza (graduating with a dissertation on Wittgenstein and Webern); and in London at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music (working with Kenneth Hesketh and Mark-Anthony Turnage). Pursuing a range of interests and passions, he works extensively in theatre and film, beginning in 2009 with the score for Giacomo Cimini's *La città nel cielo*, screened at the 66th Venice Film Festival.

The **TYRESIAS ENSEMBLE** from London was founded last autumn by Dimitri Scarlato. 'An authentic, immediate, and thought-provoking experience. Even more so when Scarlato introduced a composition project he'd recently been working on ... A funny thing happens when the composer of a piece of music is in the room: it suddenly becomes something infinitely more human' – Jon Jacob, [thoroughlygood.me](http://thoroughlygood.me).

Based in Szczecin, the capital of Poland's West Pomeranian Voivodeship, the **BALTIC NEOPOLIS VIRTUOSI** draw on members of the award-winning Baltic Neopolis Orchestra, established by Emilia Goch Salvador in 2008, as well as a pool of renowned international soloists. They tour mainly around northern Europe and the Baltic basin. This is their first visit to Malta.

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