INSULA ORCHESTRA

bien dans son époque.

SEASON 2023 I 2024

INSULA ORCHESTRA
PERIOD INSTRUMENTS
MUSICAL AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LAURENCE EQUILBEY



THE MESSIAH
LAURENCE EQUILBEY

DECEMBER 1 - 8 2023
&
DECEMBER 19 - 21 2023

insulaorchestra.fr

THE MESSIAH
LAURENCE EQUILBEY

Georg Friedrich Haendel
The Messiah

Louise Alder, soprano
Iestyn Davies, alto
Stuart Jackson, tenor
David Ireland, baryton

accentus
Insula orchestra
Laurence Equilbey, conductor

Concert with lights, 2H20 with intermission

Numbers: 4 soloists, Insula orchestra (32), accentus (26), 1 concductor

Diffusion : December 1 - 8 & 19 - 21 2023

Concerts at La Seine Musicale December 7 & 8 2023

Having moved to London where he brought **Italian opera into the spotlight**, Handel turned 56 in 1741. For several years, public taste in Britain, influenced by the church, **was slowly shifting away from opera and its ultramontanist extravaganza in favour of the more acceptable genre of the oratorio**. The composer thus abandoned his dominant position on the London opera scene and composed a number of oratorios in English.



Handel's *Messiah* **is one of the most popular oratorios of all time**. Composed in just twenty-four days, it premiered in 1742 in Dublin, as part of a benefit concert for prisoners and the sick. Nothing short of a triumph, it quickly became the composer's flagship and was performed thirty-six times during his lifetime. **More than any of his other works, the "great sacred oratorio" brought him glory.**

While working in a number of contemporary stylistic features, **the oratorio stepped outside the bounds of existing tradition**. Singular in form, the work is neither Passion, Mass, nor opera, but an original hybrid of different religious styles, **constantly featuring a succession of striking contrasts**, from the magnificence of Roman Catholicism to the austerity of Anglicanism.

Charles Jennens organised the libretto in three parts: *Nativity; Passion and Resurrection; Redemption*. **He skilfully disassembled then reassembled the scriptural texts into a new format**, dramatizing neither the roles nor the dialogues, a departure from existing oratorio practice. The subtle alternation of solo arias and choral sections has been admired ever since, and Handel's science of lyricism is present throughout in the arias and recitatives.

In this concert, Laurence Equilbey, accentus and Insula orchestra **continue to explore Handel's repertory and are joined by a prestigious international cast of singers.**

LOUISE ALDER



Louise won best Young Singer at the Crictics' Circle Music Awards 2019 and International Opera Awards 2017 and represented England in the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition 2017, winning the third round and the Dame Joan Sutherland Audience Prize.

Future engagements include Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro) at Opernhaus Zürich, Sophie (Der Rosenkavalier) at Wiener Staatsoper, Cleopatra (Giulio Cesare) at Theater an der Wien, Musetta (La Boheme) at ENO and returns to Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, COC and Wiener Staatsoper.

Recent engagements include Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro) at Wiener Staatsoper, Bayeriche Staatsoper, Oper Frankfurt and English National Opera, Sophie (Der Rosenkavalier) at Wiener Staatsoper, Glyndebourne, Oper Frankfurt and Welsh National Opera, Cordelia in King Lear at The Grange Festival, Zerlina (Don Giovanni) at Royal Opera House, Teatro Real Madrid and Glyndebourne, Gretel (Hänsel und Gretel) and Marzelline (Fidelio) at Bayerische Staatsoper, title role in La Calisto with Ivor Bolton at Teatro Real Madrid, Pamina (Die Zauberflöte) with Garsington Opera and Oper Frankfurt, Gilda (Rigoletto), Vixen Sharp Ears (Cunning Little Vixen), with Oper Frankfurt.

Concert highlights include The Messiah at the New York Philharmonic, Szenen aus Goethes Faust at The Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the title role in Semele with John Eliot Gardiner at Teatro alla Scala Milan, Philharmonie de Paris and Palau de la Música, Barcelona, Beethoven 9 with Tokyo Philharmonic, and recitals at Wigmore Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, and Foundation Privada Victoria de Los Angeles, Barcelona.

IESTYN DAVIES

Iestyn Davies is a British countertenor widely recognised as one of the world's finest singers celebrated for the beauty and technical dexterity of his voice and intelligent musicianship. Critical recognition of Iestyn's work can be seen in two Gramophone Awards, a Grammy Award, a RPS Award for Young Singer of the Year, the Critics' Circle Award and recently an Olivier Award Nomination. He was awarded the MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List 2017 for services to music.



Although blessed with a Welsh name, Iestyn hails from York, born into a musical household, his father being the founding cellist of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet.

He began his singing life as a chorister at St John's College, Cambridge under the direction of Dr.George Guest and later Christopher Robinson.

Later, after graduating in Archaeology and Anthropology from St John's College, Cambridge Iestyn studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London of which he is now a Fellow.

In 2015 he delighted London theatre audiences singing the role of Farinelli in the play, Farinelli and the King with Mark Rylance at the Globe Theatre. The hugely successful project transferred to the West End this season and was nominated for a number of Olivier Awards.

STUART JACKSON



Stuart Jackson was a choral scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, studying Biological Sciences, before completing his training at the Royal Academy of Music in 2013 where he studied with Ryland Davies.

He won prizes at both the Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition and at the International Hugo Wolf Lied Competition in Stuttgart and has since given recitals for Staatsoper Stuttgart, at Wigmore Hall, at the Oxford Lieder Festival and at the Albertina Musensaal in Vienna.

This season Stuart sings his first Evangelist Bach St Matthew Passion with Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen at the BBC Proms; Haydn The Creation at the Barbican with the Academy of Ancient Music and Laurence Cummings; Handel Samson with The English Concert and Harry Bicket at the London Handel Festival; Mozart Mitridate, re di Ponto at the Royal Danish Opera, and returns to Glyndebourne Festival for Handel Alcina. In recital he sings Mahler Das Lied von der Erde for Temple Music with Alice Coote and Julius Drake; Schubert at Oxford Lieder Festival as well a BBC/Wigmore Hall lunchtime recital. Future engagements include Jupiter in Handel Semele for Opéra de Lille as well as for Komische Oper Berlin.

Recent appearances have included Hirt/Junger Seeman in a semi-staged performance of Tristan und Isolde for Glyndebourne Festival; Prologue and Quint The Turn of the Screw for Opéra National de Lorraine, Nancy; Bach A Christmas Oratorio with the Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome with Trevor Pinnock; High Priest/Abner/Amalekite/Doeg Saul for the Châtelêt, Paris, and his role and house debut as Jupiter Semele for Komische Oper, Berlin.



LAURENCE EQUILBEY

CONDUCTOR

Conductor, musical director and founder of Insula Orchestra and accentus, Laurence Equilbey embodies the alliance of artistic excellence and innovative, inclusive projects.

Her carrier in the symphonic repertoire has led her to conduct orchestras such as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Hessischer Rundfunk, the orchestras of Lyon, Liège or Leipzig, the Brussels Philharmonic, Copenhagen, Gulbenkian, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Concerto Köln, Camerata Salzburg, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia in London, Barcelona, Bilbao, H&H Boston, etc.

With support from the Hauts-de-Seine department, she founded Insula Orchestra in 2012. The period instrument orchestra inaugurated an artistic residency at the Seine Musicale, on the Seguin Island, in April 2017. It is also in charge of part of the Auditorium's season.

On the lyric scene, Laurence Equilbey conducted Gounod's Nonne Sanglante (Paris' Opéra Comique), Weber's Der Freischütz staged by the new magic company 14:20 (Théâtre de Caen, Grand Théâtre de Provence, Bozar in Brussels, Theater an der Wien, Barbican centre, Ludwigsburg Festival, Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées).

Every season at the Seine Musicale, Laurence Equilbey creates staged performances with artists from diverse backgrounds. For example, Haydn's Die Schöpfung (performed in Aix-en-Provence, Hamburg, Vienna and New York) or Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony were created alongside with the theatre company La Fura dels Baus, Mozart's Requiem with Yoann Bourgeois, the ballet Le Jeune homme et la Mort (the Young man and Death) with choreographer Marie-Agnès Gillot, Mozart's Mass in C minor with Pascal Ferran, or the last ballads of Robert Schumann with Antonin Baudry. In 2021/2022, Laurence Equilbey joins forces with David Bobée again to perform Beethoven's opera Fidelio. She will then undertake an ambitious project around Mozart's last day of work with David Lescot.
Laurence Equilbey is associated artist at the Grand Théâtre d'Aix-en-Provence and enjoys a privileged relationship with the Paris Philharmonie.

With accentus, she continually explores the great repertoire of vocal music. Recently, she conducted the ensemble in Salzburg, in a program featuring Dusapin and Goubaïdoulina. Truly invested in education and the transmission of knowledge, she is artistic and teaching director of the Senior department for young singers / CRR de Paris.

Laurence Equilbey studied music in Paris, Vienna and London, with conductors such as Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Eric Ericson, Denise Ham, Colin Metters and Jorma Panula.



INSULA ORCHESTRA : INSTRUMENTS OF THEN, SPIRIT OF NOW

Insula orchestra's purpose is very clear: to serve music from the baroque, classical and pre-romantic eras at the best of its abilities – that is, in a historically informed way. Side-by-side with masterpieces of the repertoire, the orchestra also features rarer pieces, such as the work of Louise Farrenc or Clara Schumann. The ensemble performs on period instruments to match as closely as possible the original sound, text and writing design.

With support of the Hauts-de-Seine department, Insula orchestra was founded in 2012 by its artistic director and conductor Laurence Equilbey. In 2017, it inaugurated the Seine Musicale venue as its resident orchestra. The orchestra is in charge of part of the Auditorium's season, for which it invites numerous ensembles and artists. Insula orchestra also regularly performs in France and internationally in leading venues and festivals: Philharmonie de Paris, Grand Théâtre de Provence, Theater an der Wien, Stadtcasino in Basel, Elbphilharmonie of Hamburg, Barbican Centre in London, Louvre Abu Dhabi for its official inauguration...

The orchestra reinvents the formats and rules of classical music to reach out to all audiences. It regularly produces staged concerts to shine a new light on music, working with artists such as Yoann Bourgeois, Antonin Baudry, Pascale Ferran, David Bobée... It is particularly active on the field of digital technologies, and delved in 360° experiences and virtual reality. A diversified and innovative education program, striving towards sharing and inclusion, was developed throughout the Hauts-de-Seine department. In 2022, a new resource centre will be created to widely share its musical and scientific research, as well as the developed educational and digital resources: Insula Documenta.



ACCENTUS

accentus is a chamber choir, founded 28 years ago by Laurence Equilbey. It specializes in the a cappella repertoire, contemporary music, oratorio and opera. A point of reference in the vocal music industry, accentus has been chosen by the French Ministry of Culture to become the first National centre for vocal art (Paris Ile-de-France, Normandie) in 2018. This strengthened its artistic and educational mission in the long run, but also reaffirmed its position as a key player both on a national and international scale – a player capable of initiating and innovating, but also of bringing together and energizing the industry as a whole.

accentus regularly performs in the most prominent venues and festivals, in France and internationally: the Paris Philharmonie, the Seine Musicale, the Grand Théâtre de Provence, the Royal Opera and Royal Chapel of Versailles, the Salzburg festival, the Barbican in London, the Essen Philharmonie, Theater and den Wien, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the Lincoln Center in New York, the Parisian Théâtre des Champs-Elysées and more.

accentus is a prime partner of the Paris Philharmonie and of the Seine Musicale, and continues an artistic residency at the Rouen-Normandie Opera around the performance of both concerts and operas. accentus is also the prime choir of Insula Orchestra, resident orchestra at the Seine Musicale. Christophe Grapperon has been Associate conductor of the chamber choir since 2013.

accentus' recordings have been amply awarded by the musical press. "Transcriptions" (naïve) has been nominated for the 2004 Grammy Awards and has been awarded a gold disc in 2008. This season, two new records will be released: "Weber, the Freischütz Project" with Insula orchestra and Laurence Equilbey for Warner Classics-Erato, and "Mozart, Betulia Liberata" with the Talents Lyriques and Christophe Rousset for the label Aparté. accentus has been named Ensemble of the year by the Victoires de la Musique in 2002, 2005 and 2008.



PRESS REVIEW

About the Dixit Haendel concert at Festival de Pâques, April 16 2022:

« The conductor Laurence Equilbey leads with a crackling or gliding gesture, in coherence with Handel's particular writing. She cuts out the sequences with clarity, calibrating the silences at the different climaxes. The musicians draw from it slender phrasing with lightness, clear attacks and limpid exchanges (between desks as well as between choir and orchestra). (...)
The accentus Choir, prepared by Christophe Grapperon, unfolds like a great organ, whose multiple registers fill the sound space with its registers. Each section is singular and blends into the whole without losing its own color. Insula orchestra on period instruments produces a soft, precise sound, from the pianissimi of the strings to the granite tutti, through a continuo as effective as it is elegant.
Laurence Equilbey and her Insula orchestra resurrect once again and for the enthusiastic public of this Easter Festival of Aix-en-Provence the striking modernity of Handel's writing. »

Olyrix – April 17 2022 – Florence Lethurgez

« The Dixit Dominus then summons the accentus choir while maintaining the presence of the three soloists, thus reinforcing the quality of the interpretation, the soloist interventions being often attributed to members chosen among the choristers. Prepared by Christophe Grapperon, the accentus choir is very clear of articulation, each section keeps an excellent cohesion and the whole forms an expressive and elegant sound, in a dynamic never taken in defect. We admire in particular the excellent coordination of the very lively final number «Gloria Patri et Filio» and its conclusive fugue on «Amen». Throughout the concert, the closeness and complicity between accentus and Insula Orchestra are palpable under the passionate direction of Laurence Equilbey, the two groups often playing together and knowing how to find a subtle and pleasant balance between music and singing.

Bachtrack – April 19 2022 – Irma Foletti

«Laurence Equilbey has built her program around the fabulous Dixit Dominus, composed in Rome by a 22-year-old Handel. She therefore precedes it with a series of arias from two of these operas, Rodelinda and Ariodante, carried with brilliance by committed soloists, led by the Swiss mezzo Chiaria Skerath, Audience Award at the 2014 Queen Elisabeth Competition. We are then all set to succumb to the radiant monumentality of Dixit Dominus while more naturally perceiving its obvious theatricality.

Le Soir – April 19 2022 – Serge Martin

TO LISTEN

Oratorio de Noël de J.S Bach
concert at the auditorium of La Seine Musicale, décember 2021

DISCOGRAPHY



MOZART, REQUIEM
2014

W.A. Mozart, Requiem

Sandrine Piau / Sara Mingardo / Werner Güra / Christopher Purves / accentus / Insula orchestra / Laurence Equilbey, direction



W.A. MOZART, MESSE DU COURONNEMENT
VÊPRES SOLENNELLES
D'UN CONFESSEUR
2017

Sandrine Piau / Renata Pokupić / Benjamin Bruns / Andreas Wolf / accentus / Insula orchestra / Laurence Equilbeyaccentus, Insula orchestra



MAGIC MOZART
2020

W.A. Mozart

Sandrine Piau / Jodie Devos / Loïc Félix / Stanislas de Barbeyrac / Florian Sempey / Laurence Equilbey, direction

SUPPORTERS

hauts-de-seine LE DÉPARTEMENT

LA SEINE MUSICALE

avec le généreux soutien de Madame Aline Foriel-Destezet

CHARGEURS

Région Ile-de-France · CHAUMET · acc-io

CONTACTS

Samuel Serin, General Manager
s.serin@insulaorchestra.fr
06 03 21 13 67

David Bodou, External Relations Manager
d.bodou@insulaorchestra.fr
06 87 88 26 32