INSULA ORCHESTRA
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2022 I 2023 SEASON

INSULA ORCHESTRA
PERIOD INSTRUMENTS
MUSICAL AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LAURENCE EQUILBEY



FAURÉ REQUIEM / SKY BURIAL

STAGED OR CONCERT VERSION

DIFFUSION

FEBRUARY 18 - 24 2023
AUGUST 20-30 2023
NOVEMBER 15 - 23 2023

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FAURÉ REQUIEM
STAGED OR CONCERT VERSION

Charles Gounod (1818-1893)
Saint François d'Assise

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Requiem

Amitai Pati, *tenor*
Samuel Hasselhorn, *baryton*
Child soloist from la Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine
Mat Collishaw, *plastic artist*
accentus
Insula orchestra
Laurence Equilbey, conductor

Numbers: 50 musicians, 33 singers, 3 soloists

Concerts 2023: February 15 and 16 at La Seine Musicale, Februray 17 at Grand Théâtre de Provence

Diffusion: February 18 - 24 2023 & August 20-30 2023 & November 15 - 23 2023





Though a generation apart, Charles Gounod and Gabriel Fauré have much in common, not the least a deep sense of religion (Gounod even envisaged taking the cloth!). Above all, both would make major contributions to the creation of a typically **French aesthetic characterized by limpid harmony and orchestration.**

Thus, Saint François d'Assise is paired down to the essentials, as exemplified in the work's central figure. Even in the throes of mystical ecstasy, Gounod sheds **all superfluous dramatic tension**, preferring supple development and luminous texture. Premiered two years before the composer's death by the Société des Concerts, the work then went unheard for a hundred years before being rediscovered, **dusted down and performed again in 1996 by the accentus choir conducted by Pascal Escande.**

At the same time, Fauré was signing a Requiem, the mellowness of which broke with his predecessors: **gone the divine terror**, Fauré preferring the reassuring perspective of Paradise. The particularly uncluttered original orchestration has been enriched over the course of subsequent revisions, while retaining all its ethereal quality. The vocal lines, now familiar territory for accentus, are remarkably uncomplicated.

For this programme, **Insula orchestra teams up with the accentus choir.** Staged by the acknowledged British installation artist Mat Collishaw, **the production underscores the serene approach to death and the afterlife that characterises these two masterpieces.**

MATT COLLISHAW

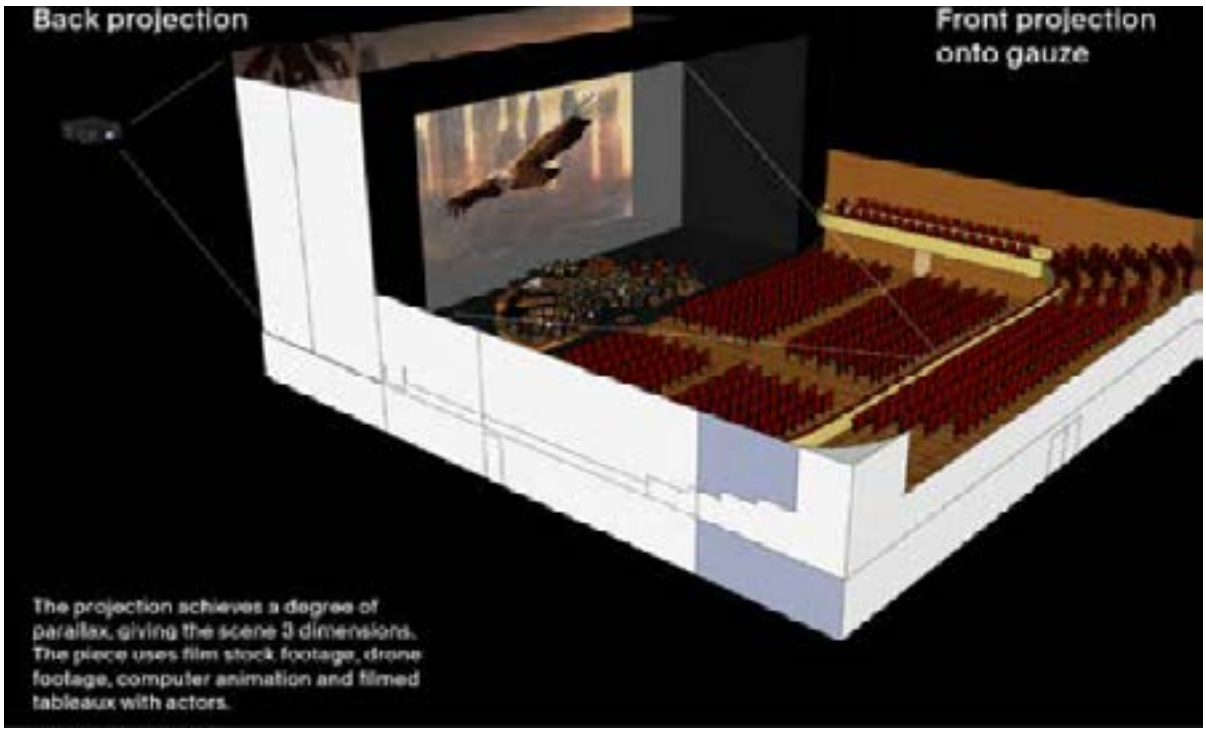


Mat Collishaw makes work that envelops the viewer in a twilight world poised between the alluring and the revolting, the familiar and the shocking, the poetic and the morbid. With a visual language that embraces diverse media, the beauty of Collishaw's work is compelling – seductive, captivating, hypnotic – yet repelling as we perceive the darker fantasies within. A repulsion triggered not by what we see, but by our innate response to it. Something between beautiful and abject.

Pornography, the crucifixion, gleaming fairies, syphilitic child prostitutes, bestiality, bondage, addiction, religion, exaltation and despair, even the final hours of a death-row inmate. There is seemingly no taboo left unbroken, no dark corner Collishaw is unwilling to explore – and yet, the work is utterly romantic, exquisitely beautiful, an expression of Collishaw's wish to "create images that are awe-inspiring". The forbidden has always fascinated Collishaw: "I am fuelled by things in my past which were suppressed or held at a distance, which have generated some form of hunger to make my work." Hardly surprising then, that themes such as stifled sexual desire, brutal and perverse lust, the power of media imagery and the concept of divinity recur throughout his oeuvre.

What is surprising, startling even, is the tenderness and ecstasy – the almost sublime – embodied within the work. "There are mechanisms within us that are primed to respond to all kinds of visual material, leaving us with no real say over what we happen to find stimulating." Collishaw is interested in imagery's effect on the subliminal, and explores this by making the vile desirable, the repulsive inviting, whilst discretely positioning himself within art-history through his reference to old masters and contemporary dialogues, as in his work The End of Innocence (a digital recreation of Francis Bacon's painting of Velasquez's Pope Innocent X) or his questioning of Victorian morals and ideals, executed with 21st century technology.

Collishaw's interest in the Victorians is no coincidence: 19th century Britain viewed itself in the light of scientific progress and empirical sobriety. An age inhabited by educated and prosaic people. In retrospect however, child prostitution, poverty, perversion and a collective blood-lust ran parallel to what was deemed an enlightened age. Collishaw references the Victorian period by simulating its elaborately decorative, romantic style, but he indirectly conjures up that society's dark side, the corrupt underbelly so pertinent to the present day. He drags our darkest urges into the light – illustrating that humans will never overcome their baser instincts, regardless of aesthetic or scientific advancement. Collishaw has evinced a fascination with the early Victorian machinery used to achieve illusions. Through spectral projections, pioneering modes of photography and zoetropes (which were invented early in the Victorian age as a form of pre-film animation), Collishaw's work conjures up an awe-inducing ruse.



THE SKY BURIAL

The Sky Burial is a filmic statement by renowned British artist Mat Collishaw on death, ritual, humankind and nature, set to a live performance of Gabriel Fauré's Requiem

"At the time of conception COVID-19 was unheard of, and it was only in the final stages of producing the film that the parallels between what was happening in the real world and what I was constructing in the editing suite had certain resonances.
However, I don't believe these events diminish the pertinence of the project, contrarily I think the issue of our uneasy relationship with the natural world has been pushed to the forefront by these harrowing developments. The origins of this virus in the wet markets in Wuhan are a stark example of the price paid for vigorous and inhumane exploitation of wildlife. The rapid spread of the disease exacerbated by relentless international travel has emphasized the pitfalls of fast-paced modern life. That one of the prices paid for this accelerated global migration has become a rigorously policed policy of isolation gives us all pause for real reflection.

While the act of vultures feasting on human flesh appears barbaric, it is not unnatural. I would argue that attuning ourselves more sensitively to the natural world and not becoming blinded by the civilised prisons we have built for ourselves is imperative for our psychological and physical survival."

"My intention for Faure's Requiem is to present a large video projection that echoes the themes evoked in the music and resonates with broader issues and concerns in the contemporary world.

I decided to create an ambiguous environment with a dystopian feel in which existing death rites have been placed in uncommon settings.

My starting point was 'sky burials', a practice carried out in countries such as Tibet; where the ground is too hard to dig a grave and the altitude too high for trees to grow and burn on a pyre, leading people to use what resources they have; native vultures, in the 'burial' of their dead.

I located my film in an inner city tower block, suggesting that some form of catastrophe had taken place, preventing normal burial procedures from taking place. My decision to create an ominous atmosphere was an attempt to suggest that human relationships with nature were not altogether harmonious and that sublime meditations on death and dying in the form of a Requiem had become difficult for dealing with the inconvenience of death in a highly mechanical, post industrial landscape."



SYNOPSIS

Introit:
The Requiem film opens ominously with vultures circling in the sky, moving swiftly to a decaying tower block in an indeterminate city. The camera weaves its way up and around the block, occasionally passing through windows and into rooms where groups of mourners sit around the beds of dying friends or relatives.

Offertoire, Sanctus, Pie Jesu, Agnus Dei:
The film intermittently dissolves into drone footage from a vulture's eye view, flying down rivulets which become streams then rivers, tracing the evolution of the water from its origins to its eventual dissolution into the sea.

Libera Me:
Friends and relatives are seen carrying dead bodies up the stairs of the tower block, the camera emerging onto the roof and revealing the bodies laid out on the concrete. As the Requiem reaches its climax the vultures swoop onto the bodies.

There is approximately 40 seconds of frenzied feasting before the mourners slowly descend the staircase.

In Paradisum:
The vultures rise and circle once more, flying off into the sunset over the sea and into the unknown. Thus they complete a natural circle of life; the dead ascending heavenward, not in the arms of Angels but in the glutted bellies of winged scavengers.



AMITAI PATI

Samoan tenor Amitai Pati recently made a spectacular European debut as Nadir (Les pêcheurs de perles) at the Philharmonie de Paris. The French critics commented "Amitai Pati performs a moving Nadir, endowed with a superb tenor voice, ideal in the role" (Toute la culture, March 2020) and "The young singer makes a sensational debut in Paris" (Forum Opéra, March 2020).



In the current season Amitai Pati makes several notable international appearances. He makes his British operatic debut with English National Opera as Ferrando in Così fan tutte under Kerem Hasan. As a former Adler Fellow, he returns to San Francisco Opera as Don Ottavio in a new production of Don Giovanni, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, and returns to the role in concert to mark his Tanglewood debut, under Andris Nelsons. Amitai Pati's current season also includes his Seattle Opera debut as Nemorino in L'elisir d'amore, led by Giampaolo Bisanti.

Amitai Pati's commitments with San Francisco Opera in the 2018/19 season included Beppe in I pagliacci conducted by Daniele Callegari, Lord Cecil in Roberto Devereux under Riccardo Frizza, and Angel Quartet in Jake Heggie's It's a Wonderful Life conducted by Patrick Summers. Elsewhere in the same season he recorded La fanciulla del West and Madama Butterfly with the Gulbenkian Orchestra under Lawrence Foster, due for release by Pentatone.

SAMUEL HASSELHORN



Following his First Prize triumph at the 2018 Queen Elisabeth Competition, Samuel Hasselhorn is quickly establishing himself as a multifaceted artist, on the international level, who is at home equally in the genres of opera, Lied, and oratorio. His season 2021/22 includes many important house- and role debuts: Conte Almaviva (Le nozze di Figaro) with Staatsoper Berlin under the direction of Daniel Barenboim, Pelléas (Pelléas et Mélisande) with Staatstheater Nürnberg, where he is an ensemble member, under the direction of Joana Mallwitz, Harlekin (Ariadne auf Naxos) with La Scala Milano, and Guglielmo (Cosí fan tutte) with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon.
On recital stage he will appear at Wigmore Hall in London, at Boulez Saal in Berlin, in Sankt Peterburg, Bayreuth, Padova, and Cambridge. Hasselhorn will also make his debut with the Wiener Symphoniker at the Musikverein Wien with Britten's War Requiem under the direction of Ivor Bolton and will tour Bach's Christmas Oratorio with Laurence Equilbey in Paris, Aix en Provence, Budapest, and Antwerp. His second CD „Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe" with Lieder by Franz Schubert will be released in 2022 with the label Harmonia Mundi.

Highlights of the 2020/21 season for German baritone Samuel Hasselhorn were his role debut as Wolfram von Eschenbach (Tannhäuser) with Opéra de Rouen, the title role in Viktor Ullmann's opera Der Kaiser von Atlantis with the Swedish Radio Orchestra, a tour of St. Matthew Passion with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and recitals with Helmut Deutsch, Malcolm Martineau, and Graham Johnson. He released his album „Stille Liebe" with pianist Joseph Middleton under the record label Harmonia Mundi in September 2020.

LAURENCE EQUILBEY

CONDUCTOR



Conductor and musical director of Insula orchestra and accentus, Laurence Equilbey is acknowledged for her demanding, yet open-minded approach to her art. Her exploration of the symphonic repertory has seen her conducting the orchestras of BBC of Wales, Hessischer Rundfunk, Lyon, Bucarest, Liège, Leipzig, Brussels Philharmonic, Café Zimmermann, Akademie für alte Musik Berlin, Concerto Köln, Camerata Salzburg, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg…

In 2012, with support from the Département des Hauts-de- Seine, she founded Insula orchestra, an ensemble devoted to the classical and pre-Romantic repertory, using period instruments. With accentus, Laurence Equilbey continues to interpret the great vocal music repertoire.

Laurence Equilbey supports contemporary creation and she's also Artistic Director and Director of Education at the Department for Young Singers at the Paris Conservatory. The extensive recorded work of accentus has received wide critical acclaim. In 2014, she recorded with Insula orchestra Mozart's Requiem on the naïve label; then Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice with Franco Fagioli, released in September 2015 on the Deutsche Grammophon label (Archiv Produktion). With Warner Classics –Erato, Laurence Equilbey has released Mozart's Coronation Mass and Schubert's orchestrated lieder (2017).

INSULA ORCHESTRA : INSTRUMENTS OF THEN, SPIRIT OF TODAY

Insula orchestra's artistic project is built around a repertoire ranging mainly from the Classical to the Romantic eras. Mozart, Schubert or Weber form naturally the core of this repertoire with symphonic programmes as well as programmes with choir and soloists. The orchestra performs on period instruments.

Founded in 2012 by Laurence Equilbey with local government support from the Département des Hauts-de-Seine, Insula orchestra is in residence in a
new artistic venue, La Seine Musicale, designed by architects Shigeru Ban and Jean de Gastines on Ile Seguin, an island in the River Seine just a few miles downstream from Paris.

The orchestra is in charge of selecting part of the programme for the 1,100-seater auditorium. It also performs at other major French and international venues and leading festivals. Since its foundation, the orchestra has been invited to play at Philharmonie de Paris, Vienna's Theater an der Wien, Salzburg Mozart Week, Basel Stadtcasino, Elbphilharmonie, Ludwigsburg Festival and London Barbican Centre.



Insula orchestra has also developed a comprehensive, innovative programme of cultural and educational initiatives across its home base in the Hauts-de-Seine department, notably to foster awareness among potential audiences who have never had the opportunity to approach classical music, as well as participatory classes for young people and schools.

ACCENTUS

accentus is a reference in the world of vocal music. The chamber choir, founded by Laurence Equilbey over twenty six years ago, is deeply committed to the a cappella repertory, original contemporary music, oratorio and opera. accentus performs in leading French and international concert venues and festivals, including the La Seine Musicale, Salzburg Mozart Week, the London Barbican, the Philharmonie Essen, the Grand Théâtre de Provence in Aix-en-Provence, the Royal Opera and Royal Chapel in Versailles, Vienna's Theater an der Wien, the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele, the Elbphilharmonie of Hamburg, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Lincoln Center in New York.

accentus enjoys a close partnership with the Philharmonie de Paris and La Seine Musicale and is returning as resident choir to the Opéra de Rouen Normandie, where it will be performing a concert and operatic programme. Christophe Grapperon has been associate main conductor of the ensemble since 2013.
In 2017, accentus inaugurated a Paris-based resources centre with physical media and digital content, designed to promote choral art and share the working documents and expertise gathered since the choir's foundation. In 2018, accentus becomes the first Vocal Art National Center (Paris Île-de-France, Normandie), and reinforces its artistic and pedagogic missions.

TO SEE

accentus, Laurence Equilbey
Fauré - Requiem

orchestre de chambre de Paris, accentus, Laurence Equilbey
Gounod - Saint François d'Assise



IN THE PRESS

About Fauré's Requiem:

« *What cathedral acoustics! Laurence Equilbey imposes an opulent decorum, at the risk of a few overemphasized effects. One is subjugated by the technique and the radiant tone of Sandrine Piau, but above all, by the noble baritone of Stéphane Degout, whose Libera Me, full of humanity, is of a of a rare height of vision.* »
Sophie Bourdais, Emmanuelle Giuliani et Richard Martet, La tribune des critiques de disque, France musique, february 2019

« *Let us therefore thank Laurence Equilbey for having been able to find an almost perfect balance between all these aspirations, and to have from one end to the other of these eight moments kept with rigor but without stiffness his way on this crest line. Here, the austerity of these pages is never dry, Laurence Laurence Equilbey always keeps in mind to let voices and instrumentalists vibrate - avoiding romantic pathos (Giulini at DGG, Celibidache at EMI for example!) as well as the temptation of the «recto tono» baroque (Gardiner, Philips).* »
David Fournier, Forum Opéra, june 2018

DISCOGRAPHY



GOUNOD
SAINT FRANÇOIS D'ASSISE

Stanislas de Barbeyrac / Florian Sempey / Deborah Nemtanu / Karine Deshayes /Insula orchestra, accentus, Laurence Equilbey,

Naïve
March 2018



FAURE
REQUIEM

Sandrine Piau / Stéphane Degout/Membres de l'Orchestre National de France, accentus, Laurence Equilbey

Warner Classics – Erato
April 2017

SUPPORTERS

hauts-de-seine LE DÉPARTEMENT

LA SEINE MUSICALE

avec le généreux soutien de Madame Aline Foriel-Destezet

CHARGEURS

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