

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

EN

STRAVINSKY & SCRIBABIN



The freedom to colour well outside the lines

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC PRESENTS A BUCKET LIST CONCERT

CONDUCTOR KAZUSHI ONO

VIOLIN FRANK PETER ZIMMERMANN CONCERTMASTER OTTO DEROLEZ

BELA BARTÓK RHAPSODY NO. 2 FOR VIOLIN & ORCHESTRA

IGOR STRAVINSKY VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MAJOR

ALEXANDER SCRIBABIN SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN C MINOR

SAT
17.12

FLAGEY
BRUSSELS

**FRANK PETER ZIMMERMANN
“HAS EVERYTHING THAT
MAKES A TRULY GREAT
ARTIST, AND THAT IS:
YOUR EXPECTATIONS ARE
FULFILLED, AND AT THE SAME
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THE RESULT SURPASSES
EVERYTHING EXPECTED.”**

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

PROGRAMME

Brussels Philharmonic
Kazushi Ono, conductor
Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin

Béla Bartók

Rhapsody No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra (1945)

- I. Lassu
- II. Friss

Igor Stravinsky

Violin Concerto in D major (1931)

- I. Toccata
- II. Aria I
- III. Aria II
- IV. Capriccio

— intermission —

Alexander Scriabin

Symphony No. 2 in C minor (1901)

- I. Andante; Allegro giocoso
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante; Più vivo, poco agitato
- IV. Tempestoso
- V. Maestoso

MUSICIANS
BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

Conductor
Kazushi Ono

Concertmaster
Otto Derolez

Soloist
Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin

Violin 1
Bart Lemmens ⁽¹⁾
Olivia Bergeot, Annelies Broeckhoven,
Stefan Claeys, Cristina Constantinescu,
Justine Rigutto, Kristina Rimkeviciute,
Elizaveta Rybentseva, Anton Skakun,
Alissa Vaitsner, Gillis Veldeman,
Sára Kovács, Sviatoslava Semchuk

Violin 2
Mari Hagiwara ⁽¹⁾
Samuel Nemptanu ⁽¹⁾
Francisco Dourthé Orrego,
Aline Janeczek, Mireille Kovac,
Eléonore Malaboeuf, Sayoko Mundy,
Naoko Ogura, Eline Pauwels,
Julien Poli, Stefanie Van Backlé,
Caroline Chardonnet, Juliette Janssen

Viola
Mihai Cocea ⁽¹⁾
Griet François ⁽²⁾
Philippe Allard, Victor Guaita,
Hélène Koerver, Agnieszka Kosakowska,
Lisbeth Lannie, Barbara Peynsaert,
Stephan Uelpenich, Patricia Van Reusel

Cello
Karel Steylaerts ⁽¹⁾
Kirsten Andersen, Corentin Faure,
Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler,
Sophie Jomard, Emmanuel Tondus,
Bénédicte Legrand

Double Bass
Jan Buysschaert ⁽¹⁾
Luzia Correia Rendeiro Vieira,
Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo,
Simon Luce, Ben Faes

Flute
Lieve Schuermans ⁽¹⁾
Sarah Miller
Jill Jeschek ⁽²⁾

Oboe
Joris Van den Hauwe ⁽¹⁾
Jonas Schoups
Lode Cartrysse ⁽²⁾

Clarinet
Maura Marinucci ⁽¹⁾
Danny Corstjens
Midori Mori ⁽²⁾

Bassoon
Marceau Lefèvre ⁽¹⁾
Alexander Kuksa
Jonas Coomans ⁽²⁾

Horn
Hans van der Zanden ⁽¹⁾
Pierre Buizer ⁽³⁾
Claudia Rigoni, Luc van den Hove,
Mieke Ailliet ⁽²⁾
Pierre-Antoine Delbecque ⁽²⁾

Trumpet
Ward Hoornaert ⁽¹⁾
Diego Hernandez Torres,
Luc Sirjacques

Trombone
David Rey ⁽¹⁾
Sander Vets
Tim Van Medegael ⁽²⁾

Tuba
Jean Xhonneux ⁽²⁾

Timpani
Titus Franken ⁽¹⁾

Percussion
Gerrit Nulens, Stijn Schoofs

Harp
Eline Groslot ⁽²⁾

Piano & Celesta
Anastasia Goldberg ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ principal
⁽²⁾ soloist
⁽³⁾ assistant

WELCOME

The traditional recipes with a distinctive twist: that is what Stravinsky serves us with his Violin Concerto, and Scriabin with his Second Symphony. Both of these great Russian masters were experts at the art of writing perfectly balanced composition – and that is precisely what gave them the freedom to colour well outside the lines.

Alexander Scriabin saw himself as a messiah who would change the world with his music. Fascinated by philosophy and mysticism, he became a musical prophet that cast off the dominant traditions and created his own universe, filled with an esoteric atmosphere. His Second Symphony is a jewel: deeply rooted in the great romantic tradition, wonderfully emotional yet free of the bombastic madness that would characterise his later work, and filled with marvellous discoveries. In the maestoso finale, he shows the radiant triumph of humanity, who has vanquished the obstacles and setbacks of life.

PROGRAMME NOTES

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) sent a shockwave through the musical world with the percussive and dissonant sounds of *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*. After the First World War, he broke new ground, whereby he took models from the Baroque and Classical periods and kneaded them into modernist works. His Violin Concerto in D, for example, is an ode to J.S. Bach.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945) also explored alternative musical paths in order to breathe new life into twentieth-century art music. He found inspiration in the folk music of his native Hungary, and reworked these into new compositions. But the most distinctive composer on this programme is without any doubt Alexander Scriabin (1871–1915). He saw music as a means to express his mystical ideas and to elevate humanity to a higher level of consciousness. His Second Symphony already gives us a glimpse of his eccentric vision.

NOT A TRADITIONAL CONCERTO

In 1929, Stravinsky's publisher, Willy Strecker, asked him to write a violin concert for the young Polish violinist Samuel Dushkin. The commission came, in fact, from the American composer and diplomat Blair Fairchild, Dushkin's adoptive father. Stravinsky was not keen on the idea, as he had little affinity for the instrument. But Strecker reassured him that Dushkin

would help him with technical advice during the composition process. Paul Hindemith also encouraged him and could only see the positive side, as the work would help him to "avoid a routine technique and would give rise to ideas that would not be suggested by the familiar movement of the fingers."

After a meeting with Dushkin, Stravinsky was convinced. His fear of a virtuoso violinist who wanted a piece that would enable him to shine turned out to be unfounded. And so, Stravinsky began his first draft in 1931. He worked successively in Paris, Nice and Grenoble, and during the process, Dushkin advised the composer on how to translate his compositional ideas into the technical demands of the violin: "Whenever he accepted one of my suggestions, even a simple change such as extending the range of the violin by stretching the phrase to the octave below and the octave above, Stravinsky would insist on altering the very foundations correspondingly. He behaved like an architect who, if asked to change a room on the third floor, had to go down to the foundations to maintain the proportions of the whole structure."

BACH AS MODEL

The basis of the composition is a chord that Stravinsky described as the "passport to the concerto", and that introduces each of the four movements in a different way. At

first, Dushkin was not convinced that the chord could be played: "I had never seen a chord with such an enormous stretch, from the E to the top A, and I said: 'no.'" Stravinsky said sadly: 'quel dommage' [what a pity]. After I got home, I tried it, and to my astonishment, I found that in that register, the stretch of the eleventh was relatively easy to play, and the sound fascinated me. I telephoned Stravinsky at once to tell him that it could be done."

Stravinsky was not a fan of the traditional concertos of Mozart, Beethoven or Brahms. But he modelled his Violin Concerto in D on the example of J.S. Bach: "The titles of my movements – Toccata, Aria, Capriccio, suggest Bach, however, and so to some extent does the musical substance. My favourite Bach solo concerto is the one for two violins, as the duet with a violin from the orchestra in the last movement is meant to show. But the Violin Concerto contains other duet combinations, too, and the texture of the music is more chamber music in style than orchestral."

The collaboration between Dushkin and Stravinsky was successful and led to many joint concerts. On 23 October 1931, Dushkin premiered the work with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stravinsky himself. Dushkin also performed the work's American premiere, in January 1932, with

Serge Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and he recorded the concerto in 1935. In 1941, the choreographer George Balanchine used the violin concerto for his ballet *Balustrade*, which according to Stravinsky was one of the most satisfying visualisations of all his works.

FOLK MELODIES

Bartók was not only a composer but an avid collector and researcher of Hungarian folk music. Over the years, he expanded the range of his interests to Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Algeria. His findings had a significant influence on his compositions: they were a source of inspiration for him in terms of melodies, tonality, rhythm and structure. That can be clearly heard in his two Rhapsodies for violin and piano, written in 1928.

For both rhapsodies, Bartók drew chiefly on folk melodies from central Romania and Hungary. For example, he based the structure on the *csárdás*, a traditional dance consisting of two movements: one slow, or *Lassú*, followed by a rapid dance, the *Friss*. The story goes that Bartók presented violinist Zoltán Székely with the manuscripts of both rhapsodies one day in 1928, saying, "One is for you, the other for Szigeti. You may choose which one I dedicate to you." Székely chose the Second Rhapsody, which is slightly more whimsical and virtuoso in character. It took some time before Bartók was completely

satisfied with the composition. He reworked the Second Rhapsody in 1944, and provided various settings, including one for violin and orchestra, for both rhapsodies.

VISIONARY SOUNDS

"Is it possible to link a composer like Scriabin to any tradition at all?" That is what Stravinsky also wondered, so unique was his musical language. Scriabin initially wrote mainly for the piano. Only later did he put his hand to larger orchestral works, including five symphonies that he wrote between 1899 and 1910. An evident compositional evolution runs through these works, from a rather late Romantic to a modernistic writing style. Along the way, Scriabin also grew impassioned with the poetry of the symbolists and the philosophical writings of Nietzsche, Kant and theosophists like Madame Blavatsky. They helped him better understand his role in the world. Scriabin thus saw himself as a sort of messiah who would change the world with his music. He considered the fact that he was born Christmas Day to be the ultimate sign of this vocation.

In his Second Symphony, Scriabin took his first steps toward this radical personal vision. Like his First Symphony, which he had written barely a year earlier, this is an extensive work that, in its form, breaks down the traditional four-part scheme. The premiere, held in January 1902 in Saint Petersburg,

elicited mixed reactions. On the one hand, the public booted it, and one listener even remarked that a better name for the work would be the 'second cacophony'. Vassily Safonoff, then the conductor of the New York Philharmonic, on the other hand, called the work "the new Bible".

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert

“I DON’T UNDERSTAND HOW IT IS POSSIBLE TO ‘JUST WRITE MUSIC’ NOW. [...] YOU SEE, THAT IS SO UNINTERESTING ... AFTER ALL, MUSIC RECEIVES MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE WHEN IT IS A LINK IN A SINGLE, UNIFIED PLAN, WITHIN AN ENTIRE WORLD VIEW. [...] MUSIC IS A PATH OF REVELATION.”¹

ALEXANDER SCRIABIN

SCRIABIN, VISIONARY COMPOSER

The appraisal of Alexander Scriabin’s place in Music History has been the subject of many fluctuations since his untimely death in 1915. Considered a genius by many and a deranged megalomaniac by others, his music and its performance have seen periods of neglect as well as of revival and heightened curiosity.

Scriabin is a complex personality, the likes of which tend to be controversial. He was a visionary composer, a poet, a mystic, and a solipsist, whose musical genius did not guarantee that each and every single work would turn out to be a masterpiece. He is one of those artists in which frailties, even artistic shortcomings, do not ultimately menace their legacy, but instead form part of a “human” whole in which imperfections add to a certain uniqueness.

Born in Moscow on Christmas Day 1872, having been motherless since the age of 1 and deprived of the presence of his father due to his diplomatic duties abroad, Scriabin was given to the care of his aunt Lyubov Alexandrova. His musical talent was prematurely revealed, and by the time he was 12, Scriabin was sent to study with Nikolai Zverev, Moscow’s foremost piano pedagogue at the time, who counted Rachmaninoff, Siloti and Goldenweiser as some of his pupils.

Scriabin, who lived a very significant

part of his life outside of Russia (having also settled in Brussels between 1908 and 1909), was connected to some of the most important Russian artists and intellectuals of the time, such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Mitrofan Belaieff (his patron and owner of a music publishing house), Diaghilev, Koussevitzky, or the revolutionary Georgi Plekhanov. By the time of his passing, Scriabin was recognized in Russia as one of the country’s most distinguished artists.

Scriabin’s oeuvre eludes simple descriptions and classifications due to the very significant transformations his language undertook throughout his 28-year career. His work is traditionally divided in three periods: an early, ‘Chopinesque’, one; a middle one, with Liszt and Wagner as the main musical influences and Theosophy as a powerful philosophical inspiration; and a late period, in which his music and philosophical ideas reached a stage of assured originality. But even this classification ends up artificially segmenting what is essentially a continuum of exploration and change, a wealth of musical innovation fueled by a philosophy that posited Art as a catalyst for the refinement of mankind.

That is perhaps the most adequate way to describe Scriabin’s creative activity: as constantly striving for individualization and transcendence.

Scriabin’s affinities with Theosophy and the writings of Madame Blavatsky,

which he adapted into his own personal blend of mysticism, cannot be underestimated, as they provide an important key to understanding the philosophical meaning of his music. As Bowers (1973) points out, "Over the years, Scriabin's philosophy underwent certain changes, but it retained a curiously steadfast, almost monotonous consistency whose central ingredients were monomania, megalomania and mysticism, in the sense that the power of the mind is unlimited and all worldly manifestations are either subject to its control or even created by it."

Starting around 1903, and fueled by his contact with Theosophy, Scriabin progressively adopted a messianic attitude towards Art, believing his music was capable of pushing humanity over its existential threshold to a higher dimension.

In Scriabin's own words, "I have an idea to create some kind of a *Mysterium*. I need to construct a special temple for it, perhaps here or perhaps far from here, in India... But people aren't ready for it. I must sermonize. I must show them a new path. I have even preached from a boat, like Christ...I have a little group of people here who understand me. They will come with me."²

The *Mysterium*, a projected magnum opus of cataclysmic repercussions, would be an all-encompassing ritual which would include a multitude of artistic manifestations to arouse the

five senses of the participants through the incorporation of dance, caresses, colors and perfumes. *Mysterium* would not have an audience but rather active participants, which by entering a state of trance and ecstatic bliss would lead to the dematerialization of all things and provoke their fusion into the Universal One. Scriabin died without realizing this work, leaving us only draft of his ideas for the *L'Acte Préalable*, an initiation to the *Mysterium*.

Scriabin's symphonic works, and the same can be said for his piano sonatas, are fundamental milestones in his oeuvre, as they reflect, in their structure, instrumentation and poetic program, different stages of his creative development and distinct philosophical aspirations.

Scriabin's *Symphony No.1* in E major op.26, a colossal six-movement piece, was his first attempt at a big-scale work with a universal philosophical message. The symphony's finale, following closely Beethoven's Ninth, features a choir and soloists, but while Beethoven's masterwork delivers a radiant message of brotherhood, Scriabin's music sings the more platonic praise of Art. This detachment from worldly preoccupations and the involvement with more 'sublime', metaphysical matters would become, as described earlier, a growing concern of Scriabin.

His *Symphony No.2* op.29 in C minor, composed in 1902, is the last work of

his early period, after which Scriabin started exploring the gradual weakening of tonal functions. By comparison with his first symphony, the second is a more concentrated work, composed of 5 movements. The first two movements as well as the last two should be played uninterruptedly, and can therefore be seen as forming two bigger structures surrounding a central Andante. The symphony showcases Scriabin's craftsmanship at thematic transformation, by developing the same material throughout the different movements while changing its character and context, as for instance the transformation of the initial dark and mysterious first movement theme into the joyous hymn of the finale. This last movement, whose texture, harmony and rhythm are atypical in Scriabin's music (indeed more akin to Wagner's *Meistersinger*), disappointed even the composer, who later lamented it: "Instead of the light which I needed, I got stuck with a military parade on my hands."

Both the first and second symphonies, and even later the third, were generally not well received by the public at the time of their premieres, mostly due to their weak finales. Scriabin's recognition as an accomplished symphonic composer had to wait until *Le Poème de l'extase*, a work he composed in 1908, and which has definitely entered nowadays' standard symphonic concert repertoire.

Although an imperfect work, Scriabin's second symphony is a work filled with beautiful moments and melodies, tragic moods, and brimming with Scriabin's characteristic flight motives. It is a work well deserving of critical reassessment by the public, in a year that marks the 150th anniversary of this most fascinating composer.

Nuno Cernadas

Pianist, PhD Researcher at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel

¹ Leonid Sabaneeff, *Vospominaniye o Skryabinye (Reminiscences of Scriabin)*, Muzsektor, Moscow, 1925, p.139.

² Bowers, Faubion. *Scriabin, a Biography*. Dover Publications, 1996, Volume II, p.50.

**KAZUSHI ONO,
MUSIC DIRECTOR**

www.kazushiono.com

Kazushi Ono's musical personality was formed by the cultures of both Japan, where he was born, and Europe, where he studied, and his work has reflected both influences ever since.

He trained in Europe under Wolfgang Sawallisch and came to public attention winning first prize in the 1987 Toscanini Competition. He went on to hold appointments including Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Karlsruhe Opera, La Monnaie, Opéra National de Lyon and Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, and from this season, Brussels Philharmonic. As a keen gourmet, he has savoured the different regional foods as much as the music during his visits to renowned orchestras all over the world.

In Japan, he was principal conductor of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra early on in his career and now serves as Music Director of Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (TMSO) and Artistic Director of the New National Theatre Tokyo (NNTT).

His passion and curiosity for repertoire also takes him in different directions – the standard classics but also to new music. He has commissioned several works, such as Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Hibiki*, which won a Royal Philharmonic Society award, *Asters* by Akira Nishimura and Dai Fujikura's *A Dream of Armageddon*.

His programming at NNTT also includes Baroque, 20th-century and bel canto masterpieces. He spent much of lockdown in Tokyo at the piano singing Wagner operas.

Ono is a vocal advocate for the role of culture in all our lives. At TMSO he leads the special SaLaD Music Festival, which encourages young children and families into the concert hall. During the initial stages of the pandemic, he led groundbreaking research into the transmission of particles and the use of ventilation that meant that orchestras could get back to playing safely.

In 2017 he was awarded 'Officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres' by French cultural minister Françoise Nyssen, adding to the prestigious Asahi Prize in January 2015, for his contribution to the development and progress of Japanese society.

**FRANK PETER ZIMMERMANN,
VIOLIN**

Frank Peter Zimmermann is widely regarded as one of the foremost violinists of his generation. Praised for his selfless musicality, his brilliance and keen intelligence, this season he will be collaborating with orchestras such as Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Vienna Symphonic Orchestra and the National Orchestra of France. He received a number of special prizes and honours, among which the "Rheinischer Kulturpreis" (1994), the "Musikpreis" of the city of Duisburg (2002), the "Bundesverdienstkreuz 1. Klasse der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (2008) and the "Paul-Hindemith-Preis der Stadt Hanau" (2010).

Born in 1965 in Duisburg, Germany, Zimmermann started playing the violin when he was 5 years old, giving his first concert with orchestra at the age of 10. He studied with Valery Gradov, Saschko Gawriloff and Herman Krebbers. He is also active within the repertoire of chamber music. In 2010 he formed the Trio Zimmermann which one can find performing in major music centres and festivals in Europe.

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

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"The world needs symphonic music. And symphonic music needs the world."

That is the firm belief of the Brussels Philharmonic. As a symphony orchestra founded in 1935 under the auspices of the Belgian public broadcaster, unveiling the symphonic world as best we can is deep in our DNA. By innovating while maintaining full respect for the value of the past, we keep the symphonic music of the past, present and future relevant and inspiring – for ourselves and all of society. We do this from the historic Studio 4 at Flagey in Brussels, together with our music director Kazushi Ono: he shares our open and adventurous spirit and our rock-solid belief in the need for cross-fertilization between art, life and society.

With our activities firmly based in our home city of Brussels, the Brussels Philharmonic focuses resolutely on 4 areas, each of which is intended to bring people together around symphonic music:

> Brussels Philharmonic Bucket List: our own distinctive selection of the great symphonic repertoire, with works that we think you must hear live in a concert hall at least once in your life.

> Brussels Philharmonic Atelier: back to the source of symphonic music, the art of playing music in a smaller formation.

We work carefully and in depth, with extra attention to delicate details.

> Brussels Philharmonic Lab: a place where contemporary music is given the leading role, researched and tested, and exposed to other arts or forms of performance. A radical decision to experiment and focus on the future, with guest conductor Ilan Volkov.

> film & festival: as a former broadcast orchestra, the Brussels Philharmonic has a deeply rooted love of film music. And we love to share our enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise with partners and festivals.

In, around and throughout the many concerts we offer, the golden thread is the theme of EXPLORE: a wide range of diverse, joined-up initiatives that invite audiences to discover, explore in greater depth, admire, share, and connect. By means of meetings, podcasts, chamber music, guided walks, educational materials and workshops, discussions after concerts, customized introductions, digital initiatives and much more, the Brussels Philharmonic comes to you. Thanks to the youth orchestra programme, young musicians also receive the opportunity to get down to work themselves: from an amateur level at BOENK! Brussels Young Philharmonic (BOENK!) to the pre-professional at the Youth Orchestra Flanders.

The vision of our music director, Kazushi Ono, an experienced conductor whose reputation crosses continents, cultures and genres, overlaps in so many ways with that of the orchestra: the authenticity with which the great repertoire is kept alive, the permanent quest for innovation and evolution, the commitment to giving the music of today and tomorrow a central role, and the passion for sharing the love of symphonic music widely and generously.

That sharing takes place first and foremost in our home port at Flagey, where the orchestra rehearses, performs and throws open the doors to its activities, as well as on the major stages and at festivals in Flanders. The orchestra's international reputation comes to the fore in its specialisation in recording soundtracks (including the Oscar-winning music for 'The Artist'), the many successful recordings for labels such as Deutsche Grammophon, and the ambitious projects on prestigious stages around the world (Carnegie Hall, New York, Philharmonie de Paris, Musikverein Wien, Grosses Festspielhaus Salzburg, Cadogan Hall, London).

Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

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