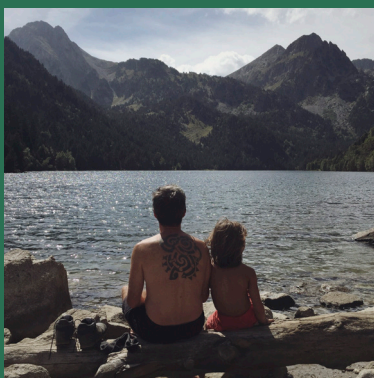


BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

# GRIEG STRAUSS



astonishingly impressive  
and virtuoso mastery

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC PRESENTS

A BUCKET LIST PRODUCTION

CONDUCTOR NIKOLAJ SZEPS-ZNAIDER

PIANO SALEEM ASHKAR

GRIEG PIANO CONCERTO IN A MINOR STRAUSS EINE ALPENSINFONIE

WITH THE SUPPORT OF BESIDE TAX SHELTER AND THE BELGIAN TAX SHELTER



Vlaanderen  
verbeelding werkt



flagey

V.J. GUNTHER BROUCKE - ONTWERP LIESBET LUTIN - FOTO © LIESBET PEREMANS

# YOUR CONCERT DAY

**19:30 PRE-CONCERT TALK FOYER 2**

Sander de Keere (EN)

**20:15 CONCERT STUDIO 4** (+/- 22:15 end)

**EDVARD GRIEG**

PIANOCONCERTO IN A, OP. 16 (1868)

I. Allegro molto moderato

II. Adagio

III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

soloist: **Saleem Abboud Ashkar**

- intermission -

**RICHARD STRAUSS**

Eine Alpensinfonie, op. 64 (1911-1915)

Nacht

Sonnenaufgang

Der Anstieg

Eintritt in den Wald

Wanderung neben dem Bache

Am Wasserfall

Erscheinung

Auf blumige Wiesen

Auf der Alm

Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen

Auf dem Gletscher

Gefahrvolle Augenblicke

Auf dem Gipfel

Vision

Nebel steigen auf

Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich

Elegie

Stille vor dem Sturm

Gewitter und Sturm, Abstieg

Sonnenuntergang

Ausklang

Nacht

# PROGRAMME NOTES

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) as a synonym of Norway and Norwegian folk music, and Richard Strauss (1864-1949) as the ambassador for the Bavarian Alps: the two composers had not only their musical talent in common, but also an enormous love for their homeland.

The Piano Concerto in A Minor of Edvard Grieg has come to be a synonym for Norway, and is now a beloved standard in the piano repertoire. Richard Strauss also depicted the beauty of nature in his last major orchestral work. In his Alpine Symphony (Eine Alpensinfonie), the impressive mountain range serves as the backdrop for what is almost a work of film music: rich tonal combinations evoke a walk on a mountain slope in seventeen snapshots, from the glistening dew at dawn through a powerful storm to nightfall. Sure to guarantee 45 minutes of fascinating music.

## VIEWS OF DISTANT PASTURES

In 1862, Grieg returned to his birthplace of Bergen, and the following year settled in Copenhagen. There, he met the Danish composer, conductor and violinist Niels Gade, who in turn introduced him to the composer of the Norwegian national anthem: Richard Nordraak. These meetings were an important turning point in Grieg's career. Via Nordraak, he plunged into Norwegian folk music, and his longing to create typical Norwegian folk music grew. Compositions that would evoke the vast landscapes and the typical lifestyle of his homeland among listeners. Or, as he himself put it: "Artists like Bach and Beethoven erected churches and temples on ethereal heights. [...] I want to build homes for people in which they can be happy and contented."

Grieg dedicated the first version of his Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 16, to Nordraak. It was the first work which earned him any renown, and with which he also established his personal musical language. The concerto blends the traditional formal principle of the romantic piano concerto with influences from Norwegian folk music. The concerto begins with a drum roll and the well-known descending theme in the piano. Throughout the three movements, lyrical, virtuoso and sometimes dramatic passages alternate, all coloured with a Norwegian feeling. The audience at the première in 1869 was very enthusiastic, yet Grieg long remained unsatisfied with the work: he thought it sounded too German and he kept on making changes to the score up to a few weeks before his death in 1906.

## **ENLIGHTENMENT AT THE SUMMIT**

In 1900, Richard Strauss (1864-1949) wrote his parents that he had found new inspiration for a symphonic poem that would start “with a sunrise. Beyond that, I had just one idea (a tragic love story of an artist) and a few themes.” For many years, the work remained unfinished, until in 1911 the composer was drawn back to the score. “I want to call my Alpine Symphony *The Antichrist*”, he confided in his diary, “for it comprises moral purification through one’s own power, liberation through work, and the worship of eternal and glorious nature.” The composer took the term ‘Antichrist’ from the book of the same name by Friedrich Nietzsche. Strauss had read it in 1895, shortly after its publication, and could identify fully with Nietzsche’s theory of and criticism of Christendom. In addition to a controversial attack on Christendom, the work also contained a positive message in the idea that illumination could be achieved by a physical ascent in, or rising to physical challenges in the physical world.

From 1908 until the end of his life, Strauss lived in the Bavarian Alps, and there, in 1915, *Eine Alpensinfonie* comes to its final form: a score of the masterpiece with 22 headings, and set for 123 instruments (including an organ, a wind machine and cowbells), each of which has a considerably virtuoso part to play. At the première, there were mixed reactions. “Film music”, some murmured contemptuously. Richard Strauss’ reputation suffered for many years from his supposed ties with the Nazi regime as well as from a rigid view of music history: for decades, his work was dismissed as one of the conservative neo-Romantic tone painters. But the generation of composers born after 1935 did, fortunately, admire Strauss’ oeuvre. His tonal style was no longer regarded as a less progressive side track, but as a playful, unpredictable and sometimes even sardonic manipulation and continuation that was treated with respect and attention. Even the German avant-garde composer Helmut Lachenmann called for a new reading of Strauss. When the work is listened to with intelligence and perceptive effort, said Lachenmann, one discovers that it is a psychological and risky adventure, a wilderness of sound in which tonality serves as the guardrail. *Eine Alpensinfonie* is, in his view not only a lively description of nature with some theatrical thunder, but a tragic, instructive and enlightening work.

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert (Grieg) and Judith Van Eeckhout (Strauss)

## **NIKOLAJ SZEPS-ZNAIDER, conductor**

Since 2020, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaiders holds the Music Directorship of the Orchestre National de Lyon. Besides this, he cherishes a close

relationship with the London Symphony Orchestra, and he is also a regular guest conductor, with upcoming returns to the podiums of Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and Montreal Symphony Orchestra. This season, the conductor anticipates his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Szepeš-Znaider's career began as a violinist. His artistry was awarded by, among others, the Jaroslav Kocian Competition and the International Carl Nielsen Violin Competition, and in 1997, he won the prestigious first prize in the Queen Elisabeth Competition. The 2022/23 season foresees appearances with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

## **SALEEM ABBOUD ASHKAR, piano**

[www.saleemashkar.com](http://www.saleemashkar.com)

Saleem Abboud Ashkar made his Carnegie Hall debut at the age of 22 and has since gone on to establish an exciting international career. Recent and future highlights include the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, among others. In previous seasons, he performed with orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Ashkar has a number of close relationships with leading conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Riccardo Chailly, Kazushi Ono, and with Nikolaj Szepes-Znaider.

# BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

[www.brusselsphilharmonic.be](http://www.brusselsphilharmonic.be)

“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.

Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

## MUSICIANS

### CONDUCTOR

**Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider**

### CONCERTMASTER

**Otto Derolez**

### VIOLIN 1

**Bart Lemmens** <sup>(2)</sup>, **Camille Aubrée**, **Olivia Bergeot**, **Annelies Broeckhoven**, **Dante Cáceres**, **Cristina Constantinescu**, **Veerle Houbraken**, **Christophe Pochet**, **Justine Rigutto**, **Kristina Rimkeviciute**, **Anton Skakun**, **Alissa Vaitsner**, **Gillis Veldeman**

## **VIOLIN 2**

**Mari Hagiwara <sup>(1)</sup>, Samuel Nemtanu <sup>(1)</sup>, Alexis Delporte, Francisco Dourthé Orrego, Aline Janeczek, Eléonore Malaboeuf, Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura, Eline Pauwels, Julien Poli, Stefanie Van Backlé**

## **VIOLA**

**Mihai Cocea <sup>(1)</sup>, Griet François <sup>(2)</sup>, Philippe Allard, José-Miguel Almeida Freitas, Marina Barskaya, Hélène Koerver, Agnieszka Kosakowska, Barbara Peynsaert, Patricia Van Reusel**

## **CELLO**

**Karel Steylaerts <sup>(1)</sup>, Aude Dubois, Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler, Sophie Jomard, Bénédicte Legrand, Emmanuel Tondus, Elke Wynants**

## **DOUBLE BASS**

**Jan Buysschaert <sup>(1)</sup>, Elias Bartholomeus, Luzia Correia Rendeiro Vieira, Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo, Simon Luce**

## **FLUTE**

**Jill Jeschek <sup>(1)</sup>, Nil Tena Poyu <sup>(2)</sup>, Elise Tossens, Eva Vennekens**

## **OBOE**

**Maarten Wijnen <sup>(1)</sup>, Lode Cartrysse <sup>(2)</sup>, Antoine Metivier <sup>(2)</sup>, Emily Ross**

## **CLARINET**

**Anne Boeykens <sup>(1)</sup>, Maura Marinucci <sup>(1)</sup>, Danny Corstjens <sup>(2)</sup>, Midori Mori <sup>(2)</sup>**

## **BASSOON**

**Marceau Lefèvre <sup>(1)</sup>, Karsten Przybyl <sup>(1)</sup>, Jonas Coomans <sup>(2)</sup>, Alexander Kuksa**



## HORN

Hans van der Zanden <sup>(1)</sup>, Robin van Gemert <sup>(1\*)</sup>,  
Mieke Ailliet <sup>(2)</sup>, Suheyl Barkin Sonmezer <sup>(2)</sup>,  
David Barreda Tena <sup>(2)</sup>, Marlies Callebert <sup>(3)</sup>,  
Jason Enuset <sup>(3)</sup>, David Escolá Quiles <sup>(3)</sup>,  
Marta Sofia Freixo Moreira <sup>(3)</sup>, Kristina  
Mascher-Turner <sup>(2)</sup>, Lies Molenaar <sup>(2)</sup>,  
Urmin Nes Majstorovic <sup>(3)</sup>, Ivo Pereira <sup>(3)</sup>,  
Claudia Rigoni, Lynn Tijssen <sup>(3)</sup>, Luc van den  
Hove, Jonathan van der Beek <sup>(3)</sup>

## TRUMPET

Ward Hoornaert <sup>(1)</sup>, Rik Ghesquière,  
Serge Rigauumont, Luc Sirjacques

## TROMBONE

David Rey <sup>(1)</sup>, Søren Brasssaert <sup>(3)</sup>, Reinaldo  
Andrés Donoso Pizarro <sup>(2)</sup>, William Foster <sup>(2)</sup>,  
Tim Van Medegael <sup>(2)</sup>

## TUBA

Ries Schellekens <sup>(2)</sup>, Jean Xhonneux <sup>(2)</sup>

## TIMPANI

Gert François <sup>(1)</sup>, Gert D'haese <sup>(2)</sup>

## PERCUSSION

Titus Franken <sup>(2)</sup>, Gerrit Nulens, Stijn Schoofs,  
Gideon Van Canneyt

## HARP

Eline Groslot <sup>(2)</sup>, Emma Wauters <sup>(2)</sup>

## CELESTA

Anastasia Goldberg <sup>(2)</sup>

## ORGAN

Dieter Van Handenhoven <sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> principal

<sup>(1\*)</sup> assistant

<sup>(2)</sup> soloist

<sup>(3)</sup> banda