

YOUR CONCERT NIGHT

19:30 LECTURE STUDIO 2

luthier Jan Strick about the Cello (EN)

19:30 PRE-CONCERT TALK FOYER 2

Sander De Keere & Stéphane Denève (EN)

20:15 CONCERT STUDIO 4

(without intermission > 21:45)

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Cello Concerto in A minor, op. 129 (1850)

I. Nicht zu schnell

II. Langsam

III. Sehr lebhaft

soloist: Hayoung Choi

ANNA CLYNE

DANCE I. when you're broken open (2019)

soloist: Hayoung Choi

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Symphony No. 2 in D major, op. 73 (1877)

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio non troppo

III. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi Andantino)

IV. Allegro con spirito

22:00 BRUPHIL CAFÉ STUDIO 2

aftertalk with Jasper Croonen,

Stéphane Denève & Hayoung Choi (EN)

PROGRAMME NOTES

The German composer Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was an austere and sensitive man. He stood for seriousness and tradition, and cherished the legacy of the previous generations of composers. The meeting with Robert Schumann (1810-1856), another figurehead of German Romantic music, had an important influence on the career and life of Brahms. Despite differences in style and aesthetic views, a strong musical and personal affinity arose between the two composers, but also between Brahms and Schumann's wife Clara. As a matter of fact, it was Clara who urged Brahms to release his First Symphony after a struggle of about fifteen years. After the success of that first symphony, it was followed a few months later by his Second 'Pastoral' Symphony, a sunny work that evokes the splendour of Austrian nature.

Schumann, too, was encouraged by his wife to venture into the symphonic repertoire. With the exception of his 'song year' in 1840, the composer had until then written almost exclusively piano music. It took him just two weeks to compose his Cello Concerto in A minor, op. 129: on 10 October 1850 he wrote in his diary that he "felt the urge to compose" and on 24 October he noted that his concerto had been completed. Despite the original criticism of the work, Schumann's concerto is now ranked in the top three of the great Romantic concertos for cello – alongside those of Dvořák and Elgar. That said, the cello concerto DANCE by the British Grammy-nominated composer Anna Clyne (1980) may well knock one of these three works off the throne.

KONZERTSTÜCK FOR CELLO

In 1850 Schumann was appointed music director in Düsseldorf, and this new artistic drive gave him energy to compose. In three months he completed two large-scale works: his Third 'Rheinische' Symphony and his only cello concerto. His wife Clara was very enthusiastic about the latter: "I played Robert's concerto again, treating myself to a truly musical and happy hour. The romantic quality, the liveliness, the freshness and humour, as well as the very interesting interweaving of cello and orchestra are extremely delightful, and from all the melodic passages there speaks such a ringing and deep feeling!"

The composition opens with an engaging melody on the cello, which unfolds further over the first expressive part. After the second part, a tender song, there follows a playful and light finale concluding with a cadenza – accompanied unusually by the orchestra. Because Schumann abhorred applause between different movements, the three parts are played without a break. The three opening chords serve as thematic material for the bridge passages, like 'glue' between the various parts. Remarkably for that time, there are few passages in the concerto where the cellist can show their virtuosity. Schumann's rebuttal was as follows: "I can't compose for virtuosos, I need to try something different."

Schumann therefore chose the name *Konzertstück*, thus indicating that he wanted to abandon the conventions of the traditional concerto. It was precisely this atypical approach that accounted for some of the criticism of the work, as a result of which it wasn't premiered until four years after his death – soloist Ludwig Ebert played the concerto on 9 June 1860, accompanied by the Gewandhaus Orchestra in

Leipzig. Although Schumann's cello concerto remained unknown and unloved for a long time, its romantic and unique character makes it a popular concerto today.

A WARM EMBRACE

Clyne's cello concerto **DANCE** was a success right from the start. The work not only received praise in the press – NRC Music crowned it as the favourite piece of 2020 – but also the recording in 2019 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Marin Alsop yielded more than 6 million plays.

Clyne is at home in many markets: in addition to writing commissions for major orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and L'Orchestre national de l'Île-de-France, she also collaborates closely with choreographers and filmmakers and composes electro-acoustic music. She composed **DANCE** on behalf of the American-Israeli cellist Inbal Segev, who was responsible for both the premiere and the recording of the work in 2019. Clyne found her inspiration in the poem of the same name by the 13th-century Persian poet and mystic Rumi. Each verse starts with the word 'dance', and the rest of each verse was adopted by Clyne as the title for each of the five movements of the concerto. A review by Gramophone revealed how long it had been since a journalist was so intensely affected by a contemporary work.

A BLESSED SYMPHONY

After one of their first encounters, Schumann was so impressed by the talent of the young Brahms that he described him as the great successor of Beethoven. It put a great deal of pressure on Brahms: it took him fifteen years to compete with Beethoven's symphonic genius. Brahms was already in his forties when he successfully completed his First Symphony in

1876. Finally, he could throw off the crippling yoke.

Less than a year later he followed it up with his Second Symphony, op. 73 in D major. Unlike the rather tragic sound of the First Symphony, this one evokes the feeling of spring. It has a lot to do with the circumstances in which Brahms composed the work. That summer he was on holiday in Pörtlach am Wörthersee, a village in the rural south of Austria. A place where, according to the composer, “the melodies proliferate so opulently, you have to be careful not to step on them”. Brahms was a man of tradition, and so this symphony follows the usual division into four movements. In the opening part, the cellos and basses introduce a motif that will return throughout the symphony in different guises. The subsequent Adagio non troppo is slow and expressive, but after the lamentation the sky clears up, waltzing and dancing. The final movement in particular radiates optimism: the woodwind mimics the whistling of the birds, after which the brass section makes an energetic final effort.

The lyrical and exuberant character of the symphony soon earned it the nickname ‘Pastorale’ – a reference to Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony. Brahms didn’t approve of this and in a letter to his publisher, he made clear that he had “never written anything so melancholic” and that the score had to be printed “with a black border”. The success did, however, earn him a European tour.

Text by Aurélie Walschaert

STÉPHANE DENÈVE, conductor

www.stephanedeneve.com

Stéphane Denève returns to the stage with the Brussels Philharmonic and Hayoung Choi.

In 2022, his term as Music Director of the orchestra was masterfully concluded with the Queen Elisabeth Competition where the cellist finished as first laureate.

Since 2019, Maestro Denève holds the position as Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Besides this, he is the Artistic Director of the New World Symphony, and from 2023 he will be Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic. He previously served as Principal Guest Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and as Chief Conductor of the Brussels Philharmonic, Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (SWR), and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Stéphane Denève's recent and upcoming engagements include appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic and Rotterdam Philharmonic, among others.

HAYOUNG CHOI, cello

www.hayoungchoi.com

Hayoung Choi, born in 1998 in Bielefeld, ended as first laureate in the Queen Elisabeth Competition 2022. Besides this, her record includes several awards including the first prize in the International Krzysztof Penderecki Cello Competition, the International Johannes Brahms Competition and the Yewon Competition in Korea.

Choi has collaborated with, among others, Boston Philharmonic and the Camerata Salzburg, and as a chamber musician, she shared performances with renowned musicians such as Jörg Widmann, Mitsuko Uchida and Martin Helmchen.

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

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

Stéphane Denève

SOLOIST

Hayoung Choi, cello

CONCERTMASTER

Otto Derolez

VIOLIN 1

Bart Lemmens⁽²⁾, Olivia Bergeot, Annelies Broeckhoven, Cristina Constantinescu, Francisco Dourthé Orrego, Sára Kovács,

Eva Pusker, Justine Rigutto, Kristina Rimkeviciute, Sviatoslava Semchuk, Anton Skakun, Alissa Vaitsner, Gillis Veldeman

VIOLIN 2

Samuel Nemtanu ⁽¹⁾, Véronique Burstin, Alexis Delporte, Aline Janeczek, José Manuel Jiménez Garcia, Mireille Kovac, Eléonore Malaboef, Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura, Julien Poli, Stefanie Van Backlé, Bram Van Eeno

VIOLA

Béatrice Derolez ⁽¹⁾, Griet François ⁽²⁾, Philippe Allard, Eduard Ataev, Marina Barskaya, Hélène Koerver, Amalija Kokeza, Agnieszka Kosakowska, Barbara Peynsaert, Patricia Van Reusel

CELLO

Kristaps Bergs ⁽¹⁾, Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler, Inés Iglesias Walch, Sophie Jomard, Maria Palazon, Emmanuel Tondus, Elke Wynants

DOUBLE BASS

Jan Buysschaert ⁽¹⁾, Nassim Attar, Luzia Correia Rendeiro Vieira, Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo, Simon Luce

FLUTE

Lieve Schuermans ⁽¹⁾, Sarah Miller

OBOE

Joris Van den Hauwe ⁽¹⁾, Emily Ross

CLARINET

Maura Marinucci ⁽¹⁾, Midori Mori ⁽²⁾

BASSOON

Marceau Lefèvre ⁽¹⁾, Jonas Coomans ⁽²⁾

HORN

**Hans van der Zanden ⁽¹⁾, Mieke Ailliet ⁽²⁾,
Claudia Rigoni, Luc van den Hove**

TRUMPET

Steven Bossuyt ⁽¹⁾, Rik Ghesquière

TROMBONE

**David Rey ⁽¹⁾, William Foster ⁽²⁾, Tim Van
Medegael ⁽²⁾**

TUBA

Jean Xhonneux ⁽²⁾

TIMPANI

Gert François ⁽¹⁾

PERCUSSION

Titus Franken ⁽²⁾, Stijn Schoofs ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ principal

⁽²⁾ soloist