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BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

THE CIRCUS

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC
DIRK BROSSÉ, DIR.

18.09.2021 & 19.09.2021

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EUROPEAN
FILM PHILHARMONIC
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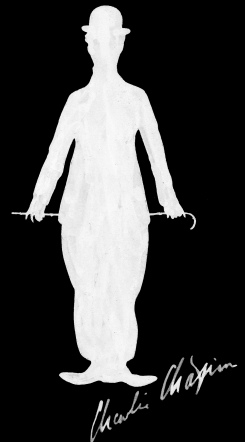
“One happy thing about sound was that I could control the music, so I composed my own. I tried to compose elegant and romantic music to frame my comedies in contrast to the tramp character, for elegant music gave my comedies an emotional dimension. Musical arrangers rarely understood this. They wanted the music to be funny. But I would explain that I wanted no competition, I wanted the music to be a counterpoint of grave and charm, to express sentiment, without which, as Hazlitt says, a work of art is incomplete. (...) Nothing is more adventurous and exciting than to hear the tunes one has composed played for the first time by a fifty piece orchestra.”

- Charles Chaplin

WELCOME

The Circus (1928) is Chaplin's most poetic and least ebulliently humorous film – and yet he manages once again to string together his comic pearls.

It was his last silent movie, with all the usual ingredients: the little tramp with a heart of gold who always ends up, willy-nilly, at the wrong place at the wrong time... but in the end goes off with both the lead actress and happiness by his side!



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ARTISTS

Brussels Philharmonic · Dirk Brossé, conductor
Henry Raudales, concertmaster

Chaplin-United Artists, production

Charles Chaplin, producer, director, scenario,
editor, music

Timothy Brock, restoration score

Roland Totheroh, photography

Jack Wilson, Mark Marlatt, cameramen

Harry Crocker, assistant director

Charles D Hall, art director

Charles Chaplin

The Tramp

Merna Kennedy

Rider

Allan Garcia

Circus Proprietor

Harry Crocker

Rex, King of the Air

Henry Bergman

Old clown

Stanley ("Tiny") Sandford Chief property man

George Davis	Magician
Betty Morrissey	Vanishing lady
John Rand	Ass. property man
Armand Triller	Clown
Steve Murphy	Pickpocket
Bill Knight	Cop
Jack Pierce	Man operating ropes
Other Roles	H. L. Kyle, Eugene Barry, L. J. O'Connor, Hugh Saxon, Jack Bernard, Max Tyron, A. Bachman, William Blystone
Numi	Lion
Bobby	Monkey
Josephine	Monkey
Jimmy	Monkey

FILMPHILHARMONIC EDITION

Film by courtesy of Roy Export Company S.A.S.

Music by courtesy of Bourne Co. Music Publishers

PROGRAMME NOTES

"Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot." (Charlie Chaplin)

Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) is internationally renowned as a slapstick actor and director of many (silent) movies. But most people do not realise that in addition to acting and directing, he provided the soundtracks for almost all his films. Yet Chaplin composed some 500 melodies, including the famous song *Smile* and the score for the Oscar-winning film *Limelight*.

The Circus, made in 1928, is one of Chaplin's most personal films. It is a tribute to the acrobats and mimes who inspired his comedies and sketches over the years. Because of a few personal crises and countless catastrophes that overshadowed the production of the film, *The*

Circus was long ignored – first and foremost by Chaplin himself. Only in 1969 did Chaplin reissue the film, this time accompanied by a soundtrack he composed himself.

Musical tramp

Charlie Chaplin was born in London on 16 April 1889. After his parents separated, he lived first with his mother, and later – once his mother could no longer look after him – in an orphanage. Chaplin found an outlet in vaudeville theatre. His talent was noticed, and in 1912 he was able to join a theatre company's tour through the United States, where the Keystone Studios immediately offered him a contract as a film actor. The turning point of his career was his role in *The Tramp*. Chaplin played a tramp with a black bowler hat, walking stick and a humorous gait. An iconic figure that would take on an iconic role that he continued to play in countless other films and that earned him the status of an

international star.

Chaplin's success gave him the financial means necessary to direct the films in which he played. He was a very versatile artist and handled every aspect of film production himself, down to the tiniest detail. He considered music an essential component, both of his silent movies and his 'talkies'. In fact, in silent films music played an even more important role, since there was no dialogue. Chaplin seemed to have an unfailing sense of the emotional power of music: "I tried to compose elegant and romantic music to frame my comedies in contrast to the tramp character, for elegant music gave my comedies an emotional dimension. Musical arrangers wanted the music to be funny. But I wanted the music to be a counterpoint of grave and charm, to express sentiment."

In his memoir *My Trip Abroad*, Chaplin wrote that his passion for music began when he was a child

and heard a tune played on a harmonica and a clarinet in a pub in Kennington: "Its beauty was like some sweet mystery ... I only knew I loved it and I became reverent as the sounds carried themselves through my brain via my heart." Chaplin himself learned to play the violin and the cello, but he did not read music. He therefore had to turn to professional composers to write down his melodies and musical ideas. David Raksin, who worked with Chaplin on the score of *Modern Times*, described this process: "Very little escaped his eye or ear, and he had suggestions not only about themes and their appropriateness but also about the way in which the music should develop". In this regard as well, Chaplin was a perfectionist – often to the point of annoying and exhausting the artists with whom he worked.

The Circus: a veritable tour de force

For someone who liked to run the whole show, the production process of *The Circus* must have been true agony. Even before the filming began, a thunderstorm destroyed the circus tent where a large part of the shoot was to take place. A few weeks later, it turned out that the negatives of the earlier shots were damaged, and after several months of filming, a fire reduced Chaplin's studio and all the props to ashes. As if that were not enough, Chaplin found himself in a media storm during his divorce from his second wife, Lita Grey. Because of the legal battle, filming of *The Circus* was stalled for eight months. Even at the end of production, things almost went awry again: for the final scene, two train carriages were brought to the location of the shoot. When the team returned the following day, they had disappeared. Students had stolen them, but fortunately they were recovered.

No wonder that Chaplin preferred initially to forget about *The Circus*. He did not even mention it in his 1964 autobiography. Only in 1969, some forty years after its première in the Strand Theatre in New York, did Chaplin revive the film, this time with a soundtrack he composed himself. Despite the lack of attention to the film, *The Circus* is a model of a perfect balance between comedy and tragedy. In addition, the film includes some of the most impressive scenes of his career, including an encounter with a lion in his cage, and a daring tightrope scene – the literal and figurative high point of the film. The final scene needed more than 700 takes. Chaplin rightfully earned a 'Special Award' for his 'versatility and genius in writing, acting, directing and producing *The Circus*."

Tragicomic

The Circus tells the story of a tramp who, while

being chased by the police, stumbles into the ring of a travelling circus. Charmed by his attempts to escape, the ringmaster hires him on the spot as a clown. But it soon turns out that he is unable to be funny on command. Meanwhile, the tramp falls in love with the circus' star equestrienne. But he is not the only one to have his eye on her: the athletic tightrope dancer also longs for a romance with the ringmaster's beautiful daughter.

For the original score of *The Circus*, Chaplin called on the services of Arthur Kay, conductor among others of The Boston Symphony Orchestra. Together, they collected a series of existing musical works for use in the film score: from fragments of operas to dance tunes and popular songs. Thus, one can hear the Toreador song from *Carmen* during the scene in the lion's cage, and a Charleston when the tramp is balancing on the tightrope high above the circus ring. Chaplin deliberately chose music that was

familiar to the audience at the time, to ensure that the emotions of a particular scene or the personality of a character would be correctly interpreted. For the soundtrack of the reissue in 1969, Chaplin took an entirely different approach. This time, no familiar numbers but all his own compositions. Thus, Chaplin wrote the title song *Swing, Little Girl*, and sang it himself. This time, it was William Lambert Williamson who provided the arrangements of Chaplin's musical ideas. In 2003, a fresh update was made by Timothy Brock, who had been revising the filmmaker's soundtracks for many years.

In the closing scene of *The Circus*, a fanfare and a ballad in a minor key underscore the tragedy of the end: the tramp sees the circus wagons depart and is left behind alone in the spot where he had once achieved his successes. The circus travels on to new venues, while the tramp stays behind, going off in the opposite direction. It could be a metaphor for Chaplin, who often went against

the current and initially even opposed the arrival of talking pictures.

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

The Brussels Philharmonic was founded in 1935 by the Belgian public broadcaster (National Broadcasting Institute (NIR/INR)). Since its creation, it has worked with top international conductors and soloists. The orchestra was and is known to be a pioneer in performing contemporary music – a reputation that brought world-renowned composers such as Bartók, Stravinsky and Messiaen to Brussels. To this day, the Brussels Philharmonic is continuing this

tradition, including a 21st-century work in almost every concert programme.

The orchestra's historic home port is the Flagey building in Brussels, the heart of Europe, where it rehearses and performs in Studio 4 – in acoustic terms one of the top concert halls in the world – and which serves as its home base for concerts in Belgium and the rest of the world.

The French top conductor Stéphane Denève is the music director of the Brussels Philharmonic. His passion for 21st-century music and personal mission to create dialogue between the repertoire of the past and the future is fully in keeping with the orchestra's DNA.

At the international level, the Brussels Philharmonic has made a name for itself, with regular appearances in the major -venues and festivals, such as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Philharmonie de Paris, Wiener Musikverein,

Grosses Festspielhaus Salzburg, Usher Hall in Edinburgh and Cadogan Hall in London. The international representation by IMG Touring brings further tours and concerts on new stages both in Europe and beyond (e.g. Japan in 2017, North America in 2019).

Another speciality for which the Brussels Philharmonic has gained an international reputation is the recording of soundtracks for series, games and films, including the Oscar-winning score for 'The Artist' (music by Ludovic Bource). In Belgium, the orchestra is a regular partner of the Film Fest Gent and of MotorMusic, and participates each year in concerts with iconic films (both blockbusters with award-winning scores and black-and-white classics with a new soundtrack).

Meanwhile, the orchestra has proven to be a pioneer in other respects as well. Besides its ground-breaking initiatives under way, including

the Tax Shelter, the establishment of a foundation for the purchase of string instruments, and more recently the partnership with Brussels Airlines, the orchestra embraces innovation in every area and all levels of its activities. The gentlemen of the orchestra are dressed by Café Costume in the custom designed Symphonic Sporting Jacket, with technical innovations in the field of fabric and cut, and 2021 saw the release of the orchestra's own smartphone app.

The various recordings of Brussels Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon, Palazzetto Bru Zane, Klara/Warner Classics, Film Fest Gent, Naxos, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings) have been warmly received by the international press and awarded an ECHO Klassik, Choc de Classica de l'année and Diapason d'Or de l'année, amongst others.

The Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

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DIRK BROSSÉ CONDUCTOR

Dirk Brossé, an internationally acclaimed conductor and award winning composer, is currently Music Director of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and Music Director of the Ghent Film Festival. He is also professor of composition and conducting at the School of Arts / Royal Conservatory of Music in his hometown Ghent, Belgium.

Dirk Brossé has guest-conducted many top orchestras, all over the world, among them, the

London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Vancouver Opera, Opéra de Lyon, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Philharmonic Orchestras of Brussels, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Basel, Madrid, Birmingham, Ulster, Liverpool, Glasgow, Stavanger, Goteborg, Prague, Copenhagen, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Queensland, St Petersburg, Caracas, Hiroshima, Osaka, Munich, Dublin, Krakow, Budapest, Vancouver, and Los Angeles. In 2008 he made his first appearance at the Royal Albert Hall in London, conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2016 he made his debut at the Carnegie Hall, New York.

Maestro Brossé is also a highly-regarded, award-winning composer, whose body of some 400 works includes concerti, oratorios, lieder, chamber music and symphonic pieces, as well as scores for cinema, television and stage, such as the Emmy-nominated score for the BBC/HBO

series, Parade's End. Other scores include Prince of Africa, Daens, Sacco & Vanzetti, Tintin, Rembrandt, Ben X, Pauline & Paulette, 14-18 and Scrooge.

Maestro Brossé's versatility is evident in the works he has composed for age-old instruments from around the world, an enthusiasm that has led him to champion variety in repertoire and to integrate broad cultural traditions in his programmes for the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. His *Pictures at an Exhibition*, inspired by a series of paintings on display in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was commissioned by the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia in 2015 and had its world premiere in Perelman Hall, followed by a performance in New York City's Carnegie Hall.

Maestro Brossé is a versatile and creative performer with a keen interest in cinematic music; he is an early advocate of bringing movie scores to orchestral venues. He was chosen by John

Williams to conduct the Star Wars in Concert World Tour in 2009, the first world tour of its kind. He is also director of The World Soundtrack Academy at the prestigious Ghent Film Festival.

He has made more than 100 CD recordings and has collaborated with world-class artists such as José Van Dam, Barbara Hendricks, Julia Migenes, Claron McFadden, Julian Lloyd Webber, Sabine Meyer, Alison Balsom, Salvatore Accardo, John Williams, Toots Thielemans, Gabriel Yared, Hans Zimmer, Elmer Bernstein, Emma Thompson, Kenneth Branagh, Randy Crawford, Lisa Gerrard, Mel Brooks, Sinead O' Connor, Maurice Jarre, Michel Legrand, Youssou N'Dour, Marcel Khalifé, John Malkovich. He has worked with directors Stijn Coninx, Frank Van Laecke, Susanna White and Roland Joffé, and with writers Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Seth Gaaikema and Didier Van Cauwelaert.

Dirk Brossé has been awarded the title Cultural Ambassador of Flanders, the Flemish Parliament's Gold Medal for Merit, the Achille Van Acker Prize, the Joseph Plateau Honorary Award and the Global Thinkers Forum Award for Excellence in Cultural Creativity.

In 2013 he was elevated to Belgium's hereditary nobility, with the personal title of Ridder (Sir). He is a member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts and, since 2018, also a Fellow in Arts & Humanities at the Brussels University VUB. His Majesty King Filip of Belgium recently awarded Dirk Brossé the Belgian Monarchy's highest honour: Commander in the Order of Leopold.

www.dirkbrosse.be

MUSICIANS

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

(1) principal / (2) soloist

concertmaster

Henry Raudales

violin I

Bart Lemmens (2), Sylvie Bagara, Olivia Bergeot, Stefan Claeys, Cristina Constantinescu, Frédéric Preusser, Justine Rigutto, Anton Skakun, Gillis Veldeman

violin II

Mari Hagiwara (1), Naoko Ogura (2), Anne Balu, Véronique Burstin, Eléonore Malaboeuf, Eline Pauwels, Julien Poli, Stefanie Van Backlé

viola

Paul De Clerck (1), Griet François (2), Philippe Allard, Phung Ha, Hélène Koerver, Stephan Uelpenich

cello

Kristaps Bergs (1), Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler, Sophie Jomard, Emmanuel Tondus, Elke Wynants

double bass

Jan Buysschaert (1), Daniele Giampaolo, Simon Luce, Martin Rosso

flute

Wouter Van den Eynde (1), Jill Jeschek (2)

oboe

Joris Van den Hauwe (1)

clarinet

Anne Boeykens (1), Midori Mori (2), Noelia Rodriguez

bassoon

Karsten Przybyl (1)

horn

Hans van der Zanden (1)

trumpet

Steven Bossuyt (1), Luc Sirjacques

trombone

David Rey (2), Mika Kamei

percussion

Gert D'haese (2), Titus Franken (2)

piano

Anastasia Goldberg (2)

guitar / mandoline

Inti De Maet (2)

saxophone

Asagi Ito (2), Hendrik Pellens (2), Pieter Pellens (2)

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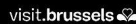
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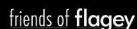
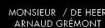
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