

20  
— Brussels Philharmonic —  
21  
FALL/WINTER

# POULENC BY JUSSEN

LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN, PIANO

JUN MÄRKL, DIR.

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

20.05.2021

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# WELCOME

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Sibling piano duo Arthur and Lucas Jussen and Poulenc's colorful Concerto for Two Pianos: a unique love story. The work, full of surprises and nostalgia, demands that the soloists play almost continuously, often without orchestral accompaniment, with several sections of a call-and-response-like dialogue that requires precise coordination between the two pianists.

# PRE-SHOW

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Up, Close & Personal: a new video series featuring chamber music by musicians of the Brussels Philharmonic. Tonight: Tonight: Jolien De Gendt (soprano), Danny Corstjens (clarinet) and Jelle Vastershaeghe (piano) play *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (D. 965)* by Franz Schubert.

# PROGRAMME

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Brussels Philharmonic · Lucas & Arthur Jussen, piano  
Jun Märkl, conductor

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Francis Poulenc

*Concerto en ré mineur pour deux pianos et  
orchestre, FP 61*

- I. Allegro ma non troppo*
- II. Larghetto*
- III. Allegro molto*

Claude Debussy

*Suite bergamasque (arr. Caplet/Cloëz)*

- I. Prélude*
- II. Menuet*
- III. Clair de lune*
- IV. Passepied*

Maurice Ravel

*Le Tombeau de Couperin*

- I. Prélude*
- II. Forlane*
- III. Menuet*
- IV. Rigaudon*

## PROGRAMME NOTES

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Francis Poulenc

The influence of Ravel and Debussy (buttressed by fatigue with the Germans who had dominated music for so long) nourished a continuing cultivation of the French aesthetic into mid-century. Francis Poulenc was the best-known member of Les Six, an informal group of composers with a bent toward the engaging. (Poulenc's Les Six colleagues were Georges

Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, and Germaine Tailleferre.) Critic J.B. Trend in 1929 dismissed them as “momentarily amusing,” but Poulenc’s Double Piano Concerto is perhaps the best defense against that accusation. It was commissioned by the Princess Edmonde de Polignac (born Winaretta Singer), who brought her American background and fortune to the vibrant cultural scene of postwar Paris. The savvy, well-traveled quality of Poulenc’s score is a fitting tribute to his patroness.

The composer drops us right into the action. In other hands, the obsessive repeated motive and dissonant harmonies would be savage; instead they seem bright and animated, placing the pianos at home in the percussion section with a call-and-response series of short motives. Later, cartoon-like percussion gestures give way to a lyrical section; Poulenc’s deft handling of the two pianos against spare orchestral texture creates a luster that recalls Ravel’s own piano concerto.

Then it's back to the busy urban ambiance just long enough to create surprise when we drift into a mesmerizing and exotic soundscape inspired by the gamelan, which Poulenc had heard the year before at the Colonial Exposition of Paris. At the last minute a couple of quick gestures dispel the shadows.

Before we have time to adjust our expectations, the second movement whisks us away with an elegant Mozartean theme (Mozart with a touch of art deco, that is), first stated straightforwardly, then overlaid with sustained harmonies whose touches of dissonance add wistfulness rather than modern anxiety. A carefully modulated increase in tempo and dynamics gives shape to the movement, then gently leads back into the first section. A snare drum announces the sparkling third movement. Cascading piano passages and touches of flute color punctuate a musical evocation of modern life – whose nervous pace

and incongruous juxtapositions are handled in a manner at once urban and urbane.

## Maurice Ravel

For Ravel, craftsmanship did not imply sameness: "I have never limited myself to a 'Ravel' style," he once quipped. His music thus abounds with idiosyncratic effects and divergent impulses, its overflowing inventiveness shaped by a natural expressive economy and its meticulously crafted phrases awash in sensuous instrumental color. He was open to the myriad sounds of the early 20th-century environment; as he expressed to an American journalist, "The world is changing and contradicting itself as never before. I am happy to be living through all this and to have the good fortune of being a composer." This ability to retain a sense of balance while surrounded by the artistic and social chaos of early modernism allowed Ravel to find stimulation in an eclectic mix of sources without boxing himself into any

particular “ism.” Thus his music retains a freshness that sounds more forward-looking the older it gets.

In the 1917 *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, originally composed for piano, Ravel expressed his modern sensibility in the accents of the 18th century. He described it as an homage “directed less in fact to Couperin himself than to French music of the 18th century.” Disregarding the philosopher (and would-be composer) Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1753 pronouncement that “there is neither rhythm nor melody in French music,” Ravel fused both rhythmic and melodic forms and cadences of Couperin’s time with those of his own. The work conveys a sense of the present as a perennially open dialogue with the past.

The 1919 orchestration stands out even among Ravel’s invariably superb orchestrations. Crisp tone colors, incisive rhythms, and precise melodic contours are given a modern harmonic twist, but



the listener finds no incongruity – only an occasional felicitous surprise. A restless oboe solo begins the Prélude, returning at intervals amidst fanciful orchestral passages. Ravel's wide-ranging melody and subtle rhythmic inflections impart a lithe grace to the Italian Forlane. The graceful Menuet sparkles with woodwind solos, while the bustling Rigaudon captures the peculiar vivacity of French society in any century.

— *written by Susan Key, musicologist specializing in 20th-century American music © Los Angeles Philharmonic*

## Claude Debussy

The Suite bergamasque, its title suggesting the images conjured up by Verlaine in his Fêtes galantes and a fin-de-siècle nostalgia for the world of Watteau, includes piano pieces written between 1890 and the work's date of publication,

1905. The suite opens with a prelude in the immediately identifiable harmonic language of Debussy, orchestrated by Gustave Cloez, who also arranged the 'Menuet' and 'Passepied'. The 'Menuet' travels far from the original dance and explores remoter harmonic regions. 'Clair de lune', orchestrated by Debussy's friend André Caplet, has enjoyed such popularity that it is difficult to hear it with new ears. It suggests Verlaine's 'paysage choisi / Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques / Jouant du luth et dansant' (chosen landscape / Where charming masqueraders and bergamasquers go / Playing the lute and dancing) in its delicate and evocative textures. The 'Passepied' dance that ends the work is impelled forward throughout by the rhythm of its accompanying figuration.

— *written by Keith Anderson © Chandos*

# LUCAS & ARTHUR JUSSEN PIANO

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*'You realise that this is not usual. This is not just two good pianists playing together. They sense each other's most small, individual a little bit of interpretation.'* – Sir Neville Marriner

'It is like driving a pair of BMWs', remarked conductor Michael Schönwandt, after directing the Dutch brothers Lucas (27) and Arthur Jussen (24). Despite their young age, they have been part of the international concert world for years and are praised vigorously by both press and audience.

The Jussen brothers have performed with orchestras such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Concertgebouworkest, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham

Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields as well as Montréal, Sydney, Shanghai and Hong Kong Symphony Orchestras, WDR Symphony Orchestra, SWR Symphony Orchestra and Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg. They collaborated with conductors such as Stéphane Denève, Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, Sir Neville Marriner, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Jaap van Zweden. Concert tours in Asia have taken them to China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore. In recitals, they performed at the Ruhr Piano Festival and the Rheingau Music Festival, Prinzregententheater Munich, Philharmonie Essen, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall London, Tonhalle Zurich, Konzerthaus in Vienna, Mozarteum Foundation Salzburg, Palau de la Música Catalana Barcelona and Zaryadye Hall Moscow. They have performed at the Konzerthaus Dortmund several times as part of the 'Junge Wilde' series.

Lucas and Arthur received their first piano lessons in their native town of Hilversum. It became quickly clear that they were great talents. As children, they were already invited to perform for the Dutch Queen Beatrix. First awards at competitions followed shortly. In 2005, the brothers studied in Portugal and Brazil for nearly a year at the invitation of Portuguese master pianist Maria João Pires. During the following years they took lessons from both Pires and two renowned Dutch teachers. Lucas completed his studies with Menahem Pressler in the US and Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid. Arthur graduated from the Amsterdam Conservatory where he studied with Jan Wijn.

Recording exclusively with Deutsche Grammophon since 2010, their debut CD with works by Beethoven received platinum status and was awarded the Edison Klassiek audience award. A Schubert recording and *Jeux*, a CD dedicated to French piano music, were

subsequently released. Their recording of Mozart's piano concertos KV 365 and KV 242 together with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Sir Neville Marriner reached gold status. Their discography also includes a recording of Poulenc's double piano concerto and Saint-Saëns' 'The Carnival of the Animals' with the Concertgebouworkest and Stéphane Denève. In September 2019 they released a recording of concertos and chorales by Johann Sebastian Bach, made in collaboration with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta. The new CD "The Russian album" – their first recording with works for two pianos only – was released in March 2021.

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

# JUN MÄRKL CONDUCTOR

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Jun Märkl is a highly-respected interpreter of both symphonic and operatic Germanic repertoire, and also for his idiomatic explorations of the French impressionists. His long-standing relationships at the state operas of Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Semperoper Dresden have been complemented by his directorships of the Nationaltheater Mannheim (1994-2000), Orchestre National de Lyon (2005-11), MDR Symphony Orchestra Leipzig (2007-2012) and the Basque National Orchestra (2014-17).

He appeared with many of the world's leading orchestras, among others the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Munich, Hamburg, Oslo philharmonics, the Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Montreal, Melbourne orchestras, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Orchestre de Paris.

Jun Märkl has an extensive discography - among the more than 50 CDs, he has recorded the complete Schumann symphonies with the NHK Symphony, Mendelssohn and Wagner with the MDR, Ravel, Messiaen and a 9 CD recording of Debussy with Lyon which lead to honoration by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012 with the "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres." In 2019, Märkl released two albums on Naxos: the opera overtures of Albert Lortzing with the Malmö Opera Orchestra and the Saint-Saëns ballet, Ascanio with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Munich, Märkl's father was a distinguished concertmaster and his mother a solo pianist. Jun Märkl studied at the Musikhochschule in Hannover, with Sergiu Celibidache in Munich and Gustav Meier in Michigan. In 1986, he won the conducting competition of the Deutsche Musikrat and a year later won a scholarship from the Boston



Symphony Orchestra to study at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa.

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

## BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

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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. This commitment finds expression not only in the concert programmes and recordings, but also in the CffOR platform (Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire). This online database seeks to collect core information about symphonic compositions since the year 2000, and thus to initiate a broad international dialogue about compositions that will withstand the test of time.

At the international level, the Brussels Philharmonic has made a name for itself, with regular appearances in the major European venues and festivals, such as 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). In March 2019, the Brussels Philharmonic made its debut in Carnegie Hall, New York. 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.

The various CD series recorded by the Brussels Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon, Palazzetto Bru Zane, Warner/Erato Classics, Film Fest Gent, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings) have received international acclaim, with awards such as the ECHO Klassik, the Caecilia prize, the CHOC of the Year by Classica and a Diapason d'Or of the Year. Deutsche Grammophon released 4 CDs

under the baton of Stéphane Denève: one with music by Prokofiev, two CDs dedicated to the 21st-century repertoire of Guillaume Connesson (including the double CD titled Lost Horizon with soloists Renaud Capuçon and Timothy McAllister) and most recently an album featuring the cello concerto of Fazil Say with soloist Camille Thomas.

The Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

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

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MUSICIANS

# BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

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concertmaster

Otto Derolez

first violin

Nadja Nevolovitsch (1), Olivia Bergeot, Annelies Broeckhoven, Cristina Constantinescu, Justine Rigutto, Alissa Vaitsner, Gillis Veldeman

second violin

Mari Hagiwara (1), Eva Bobrowska, Véronique Burstin, Caroline Chardonnet, Aline Janeczek, Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura, Eline Pauwels, Bram Van Eenoo

viola

Mihai Cocea (1), Philippe Allard, Phung Ha, Stephan Uelpenich

cello

Karel Steylaerts (1), Kirsten Andersen, Sophie Jomard, Elke Wynants

double bass

Jan Buyschaert (1), Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo, Simon Luce

flute

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

oboe

Joris Van den Hauwe (1), Lode Cartrysse (2)

klarinet

Anne Boeykens (1), Midori Mori (2)

fagot

Marceau Lefèvre (1), Alexander Kuksa

french horn

Andrea Mancini (1), Mieke Ailliet (2)

trumpet

Ward Hoornaert (1), Rik Ghesquière

trombone

David Rey (1), Søren Brassært

tuba

Jean Xhonneux (2)

timpani

Gert François (1)

percussion

Titus Franken (2)

harp

Eline Groslot (2)

piano

Koenraad Sterckx (2)

(1) principal / (2) soloist