

# Programme Notes

## Italian Symphony

Thu 20 April 2023 • 20.15

Fri 21 April 2023 • 20.15

Sun 23 April 2023 • 14.15

## PROGRAMME

conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev**  
harpsichord **Jean Rondeau**

**Claude Debussy** 1862-1918  
*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894)

**Francis Poulenc** 1899-1963  
**Concert champêtre** (1927/28)  
• Allegro molto: Adagio – Allegro molto  
• Andante: Mouvement de Sicilienne  
• Finale: Presto très gai

*intermission*

**Gioacchino Rossini** 1792-1868  
*Overture Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816)

**Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy** 1809-1847  
**Symphony No. 4 in A major Op. 90 'Italian'** (1833)  
• Allegro vivace  
• Andante con moto  
• Con moto moderato  
• Saltarello: Presto

*Concert ends at around 22.10/16.10*

**Most recent performances by our orchestra:**

**Debussy** *Prélude*: Apr 2021, conductor *Lahav Shani*

**Poulenc** *Concert champêtre*: Dec 1995, harpsichord *Jory Vinikour*, conductor *Marc Minkowski*

**Rossini** *Overture Il barbiere di Siviglia*: Nov 2015, conductor *Hans Leenders*

**Mendelssohn** *Symphony No. 4*: Nov 2012, conductor *Philippe Herreweghe*

*On Thursday 20 and Friday 21 April from 19.15, Sam Wamper will give an introduction (in Dutch) to the program. Sunday 23 April there will be a different introduction because of Igor Gruppman's farewell (see back).*

*Cover: Val d'Orcia, Tuscany. Photo Peter Zelei*



*Francis Poulenc on the terrace of Palazzo Pecci Blunt, Rome (1954).*



# Southern warmth

At its premiere in 1894 the audience demanded an immediate encore of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Poulenc's Concert champêtre also became an instant favourite: 'May this concerto always remind you of the sweet evenings at St-Leu', wrote Poulenc to his new lover Richard Chanlaire. And with his *Italian*, Mendelssohn had composed his best-loved symphony.

'I have just come out of the concert, deeply moved. The marvel! Your illustration of the *Afternoon of a Faun*, which presents no dissonance with my text, but goes much further, really, into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness. I press your hand admiringly, Debussy.' Praise indeed, following Mallarmé's initial response to the sounds put to his poem: 'Even with the best intentions in the world, it was a veritable crime.' For Debussy had not kept to the literal text of the poem, but had been more guided by a general feel for the picture created by Mallarmé's pastoral poem. As he himself wrote: 'The music of this *Prélude* is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of

nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature.' The principal role of the faun is interpreted by the solo flute. In the first few bars it plays entirely alone. But Debussy also colours this main motif in different ways: with oboe, clarinet, two flutes in unison (a very different effect than with just one flute), and so forth. We hear whole-tone scales, harmonic fluidity without extended modulations, and tritones (the distance of an augmented fourth). It was all very daring and new for the time; Debussy's *Prélude* is recognised as the start of modern music, or, as Pierre Boulez observed: 'The flute of the faun brought new breath to the art of music.'

## Sensual pleasure

An oddity in the midst of 20th century music: the harpsichord. It enjoyed its heyday in the 17th and 18th centuries – with composers Bach, Handel,

Rameau, and Scarlatti – before it succumbed to the ‘stronger’ sounds of the pianoforte and piano. In modern times it can quickly sound archaic; it is not an instrument you compose without ulterior motive, in the way you would compose for a violin, flute, or trumpet. A sound from the past. But Francis Poulenc thought otherwise. Impressed by the effervescent, dynamic, even thunderous playing of Polish harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, in 1927-28 he composed his *Concert champêtre*, a ‘pastoral’ concerto for harpsichord and orchestra. The still young Poulenc recognised in the elegant instrument a source of sensual pleasure.

He elicits sounds not immediately associated with the harpsichord. For example, he specifies sustained notes (even though the harpsichord note is short), legato passages, and regularly uses the instrument as percussion – a little in the style of Stravinsky. Admittedly, Wanda Landowska played a more heavily-built instrument with a metal frame and pedals; certainly no historically-accurate 18th century version. The harpsichordist, who had commissioned the concerto, was very happy with Poulenc’s notes, even though she had to keep chasing him with an iron resolve: ‘My God! My God! Whatever shall I do? Why are you so late?’ She adored the new work; she said it made her feel ‘insouciant and gay.’ Not only her.

### Lost overture

Does it actually exist, Rossini’s overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia*? It’s on the programme, so the likelihood should be great. But in the nineteenth century there was a rumour circulating that the opera’s overture had been

lost. For his most famous opera, Rossini is supposed to have originally written an overture that incorporated Spanish themes. Entirely appropriate, given that the opera is set in Seville. But not a trace of this overture has ever been found. In any event, at the 1816 premiere of the opera in Rome, Rossini resorted to an overture that he had already used not once, but twice, for his operas *Aureliano in Palmira* and *Elisabetta, regina d’Inghilterra*. It smacks of laziness and indifference on the composer’s part – as if it hardly mattered to him whether the opera was set in Syria, England, or Spain. Until you learn that Rossini had to commit his

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completed opera to paper in under three weeks! Then you judge him more leniently.

### Greatest happiness

‘This is Italy!’ For Mendelssohn there was good reason for ending such comment with an exclamation mark. He had finally arrived in the country: ‘And what for as long as I can remember I envisaged as my greatest happiness has now come to pass, and I am loving it! The entire country has something jubilant about it, so that I feel like a young prince making his big entrance.’ And he was young, still only 21, an age for enthusiasm. On 8 May 1830 he had packed his cases with clothing, sketch books, pens and pencils, and letters of recommendation, and headed south. It was a continuation of his ‘Grand Tour’, having

previously spent time in England and Scotland. Now Italy! It was Venice that first elicited his cries of praise. But Florence was also beautiful and oh, that *Madonna del cardellino* by Rafael! And all those other paintings and statues. On 1 November he arrived in Rome. The beautiful apartment on the Piazza di Spagna no 5 had already been prepared for him. He would stay there five months, enjoying Rome’s artistic treasures, getting to know the city, making new friends. And – working: ‘Immediately following breakfast I set to work, playing, and singing and composing until midday...’. He first worked on his Scottish

*Symphony*, then he turned to Italy. And how: ‘This will be the nicest piece I have written so far, especially the last movement’, he wrote to his parents in Berlin when a new symphony, the *Italian*, totally absorbed him. It would be another year and a half, on his return to Berlin, before he completed the work. He premiered the symphony in London in May 1833, to great acclaim. And here’s the strange thing: as far as Mendelssohn was concerned it would be its last performance... He withdrew the symphony for it never to be performed again during his lifetime - but why? - and it was only published after his death.

**Stephen Westra**

## Maxim Emelyanychev - conductor

**Born:** Nizhny Novgorod

Current position: principal conductor Scottish Chamber Orchestra, chief conductor baroque ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro

**Education:** piano and conducting in Nizhny Novgorod, conducting in Moscow with Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, fortepiano and harpsichord with Maria Uspanskaya

**Awards:** International Competition Musica Antiqua Bruges (2010), Hans von Bülow Competition Meiningen (2012)

**Breakthrough:** 2014 with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in the Teatro de la Maestranza, Seville

**Subsequently:** guest appearances with the Berliner Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; opera in London (Covent Garden), Geneva (Grand Théâtre), Toulouse (Théâtre du Capitole) and at the Glyndebourne Festival; tours and recordings with Il Pomo d'Oro and Joyce DiDonato

**Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic:** 2023



Photo: SCO

## Jean Rondeau - Harpsichord

**Born:** Paris, France

**Education:** harpsichord lessons with Blandine Verlet; Conservatory of Boulogne-Billancourt (continuo and organ), Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, Paris (organ, piano, jazz, improvisation), Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London

**Awards:** first prize International Harpsichord Competition, Bruges (2012), EUBO Development Trust Prize (2012), Prix des Radios Francophone Publiques (2014)

**Breakthrough:** 2015: debut album *Imagine*, debut recital in Washington

**Subsequently:** solo appearances with Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, The English Concert, Freiburger Barockorchester, solo recitals in Berlin (Philharmonie), Amsterdam (Concertgebouw), London (Wigmore Hall), Paris (Philharmonie), Geneva (Victoria Hall), Budapest (Liszt Academy)

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Photo: Parlophone

## Farewell Igor Gruppman



Concertmaster Igor Gruppman retires; after nineteen years in Rotterdam he will play his last concert with our orchestra on Sunday 23 April. In order to let this farewell not pass unnoticed, we are organizing a special programme this afternoon, free of charge for all visitors to this Sunday Matinee. Prior to the concert, our artistic manager Floris Don will interview Igor Gruppman. This talk will take place in the Grand Hall from 13.15 to 14.00 and replaces the regular concert introduction. After the concert, all visitors are welcome in the Foyer of the Grand Hall, where together we will raise a glass to Igor.

# Musicians

## Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

## Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

## Principal Assistant Conductor

Bertie Baigent

## First Violin

Igor Gruppman, leader  
Marieke Blankestijn, leader  
Quirine Scheffers  
Hed Yaron Meyerson  
Saskia Otto  
Arno Bons  
Mireille van der Wart  
Cor van der Linden  
Rachel Browne  
Maria Dingjan  
Marie-José Schrijner  
Noëmi Bodden  
Petra Visser  
Sophia Torrenga  
Hadewijch Hofland  
Annerien Stuker  
Alexandra van Beveren  
Koen Stapert

## Second Violin

Charlotte Potgieter  
Cecilia Ziano  
Frank de Groot  
Laurens van Vliet  
Tomoko Hara  
Elina Staphorsius  
Jun Yi Dou  
Bob Bruyn  
Letizia Sciarone  
Eefje Habraken  
Majja Reinikainen  
Wim Ruitenbeek  
Babette van den Berg  
Melanie Broers

## Viola

Anne Huser  
Roman Spitzer  
Galahad Samson  
Kerstin Bonk  
Lex Prummel  
Janine Baller  
Francis Saunders  
Veronika Lénártová  
Rosalinde Kluck  
León van den Berg  
Olffe van der Klein

## Cello

Emanuele Silvestri  
Eugene Lifschitz  
Joanna Pachucka  
Daniel Petrovitsch  
Mario Rio  
Gé van Leeuwen  
Eelco Beinema  
Carla Schrijner  
Pepijn Meeuws  
Yi-Ting Fang

## Double Bass

Matthew Midgley  
Ying Lai Green  
Jonathan Focquaert  
Robert Franenberg  
Harke Wiersma  
Arjen Leendertz  
Ricardo Neto

## Flute

Juliette Hurel  
Joséphine Olech  
Désirée Woudenberg

## Flute/Piccolo

Beatriz Da Baião

## Oboe

Remco de Vries  
Karel Schoofs  
Anja van der Maten

## Oboe/Cor Anglais

Ron Tjhuis

## Clarinet

Julien Hervé  
Bruno Bonansea

## Clarinet/ Bass Clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

## Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten  
Lola Descours  
Marianne Prommel

## Bassoon/ Contrabassoon

Hans Wisse

## Horn

David Fernández  
Alonso  
Wendy Leliveld  
Richard Speetjens  
Laurens Otto  
Pierre Buizer

## Trumpet

Alex Elia  
Simon Wierenga  
Jos Verspagen

## Trombone

Pierre Volders  
Alexander Verbeek  
Remko de Jager

## Bass Trombone

Rommert Groenhof

## Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

## Timpani

Danny van de Wal

## Percussion

Ronald Ent  
Martijn Boom  
Adriaan Feyaerts

## Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels