

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 20 January 2023
7.30pm

Labyrinth

David Greilsammer piano

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)

Leoš Janáček

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

George Crumb (1929-2022)

Ludwig van Beethoven

György Ligeti (1923-2006)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

György Ligeti

Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

Erik Satie (1866-1925)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)

Erik Satie

Ofer Pelz (b.1978)

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Ofer Pelz

Aleksandr Skryabin (1872-1915)

Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747)

Aleksandr Skryabin

Chapter I

The owl has not flown away! from *On an Overgrown Path* (1900-11)

Les Sourdines from *Armide* (1686) *arranged by Jean-Henry D'Anglebert*

Words fail! from *On an Overgrown Path*

Chapter II

Bagatelle in B minor Op. 126 No. 4 (1824)

The Magic Circle of Infinity from *Makrokosmos* (1972)

Bagatelle in G Op. 126 No. 5 (1824)

Chapter III

Musica ricercata No. 8 (1951-3)

Contrapunctus 1 from *Art of Fugue* BWV1080 (by 1742, rev. 1745-9)

Musica ricercata No. 7 (1951-3)

Centre of the Labyrinth – Chapter IV

El Amor y la muerte from *Goyescas* (1909-12)

Chapter V

Danse de travers No. 2 from *Pièces froides* (1897)

Fantasia in D minor Wq. 117/15

Danse de travers No. 3 from *Pièces froides*

Chapter VI

Repetition Blindness, chapter I (2017)

Chaconne from *Le Labyrinthe* (pub. 1717) *arranged by David Greilsammer*


Repetition Blindness, chapter II (2017)

Chapter VII

Nuances Op. 56 No. 3 (1908)

Le chaos from *Les éléments* (1737) *arranged by Jonathan Keren*

Vers la flamme Op. 72 (1914)

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A Personal Note

I was about 15 years old when it happened. It was a peaceful spring evening, filled with nocturnal bird songs that seemed to come from afar. The barking of a stray dog resonated like a mysterious call, a strange premonition of things to come. Did the animal wish to tell me something? To this day, I can still hear the dog's restless, intense voice. But little by little, sleep was taking over me. Everything felt harmonious and peaceful at first, but eventually, that very night would become a decisive moment – one that would change me and push me to become the person I am today. Suddenly, the dream appeared. There had been no sign in advance, no preface, no initiation, no prelude. There I was, standing, surrounded by the walls of this immense and infinite labyrinth. I had never seen such a remarkable edifice – it was both terrifying and miraculous. An inevitable, relentless energy was forcing me to advance, like a desperate need to search for something. To discover what, exactly? A way out? An escape path? A revelatory sign? I ran frenetically in this interminable maze, opening doors, walking back, starting again, getting lost, feeling scared. Time was stopping, then accelerating, and everything around me seemed so unreal, dense, and fierce. I kept walking, for many hours, perhaps weeks, perhaps years. Had I definitely drifted away? I stopped, breathless, only to begin once more, rushing, falling, losing my mind. Suddenly, I heard sounds - they were bizarre, abstract, attractive, and so I let them guide me and take me by the hand. No, it was not a melody, but rather fragments of numerous sonorities that were staring at each other, like stars in a galaxy, quietly gazing at one another. They seemed to be illuminating my way, accompanying me to the centre of the labyrinth.

Here we are. The moment of encounter has arrived. It was inevitable. I knew it would come.

This dream, or this nightmare, has returned to haunt me, continuously, for many years. So, one day, I started searching for this labyrinth, in order to reconstruct it, and make it exist. Yes, this need was now burning inside of me. And the only way to move forward and find peace was to recreate this maze with music, trying to reinvent the many pieces of this infinite puzzle, with the help of the sounds I had heard during my voyage, night after night. It had become a visceral necessity. This is how, following several years of intense exploration, this programme was born. Like every personal journey, it was not the truth that I was looking for. Rather, I was hoping to make this labyrinth my own, revealing its patterns, its secrets, and its colours, like the discovery of an ancient fresco that had been hidden in the dust, for thousands of years. I will never know if I truly found the sounds that have appeared in my dream, nor the order in which they have emerged. But one thing I do know: little by little, the dream started disappearing from my life, like a distant memory, fading away, evaporating into the horizon of memory.

About the Programme

How do you express such a personal and intimate journey with music? How do you bring together different pieces to recreate an odd dream that has occurred in the heart of a labyrinth?

Thanks to its captivating, singular, and troubling architecture, a labyrinth gives us the opportunity to undertake an extreme *initiatory voyage*, allowing us to completely lose our usual landmarks, to question ourselves intensely, and to search for bold new paths. Starting in the age of antiquity, and throughout numerous ancestral mythologies, the labyrinth has always been a symbol of individual quest – a magical territory that pushes humans to explore the most distant depths of their souls. This is why works by **Janáček** and **Skryabin** – two visionary, daring, and mystical composers – were selected to represent the entry and exit gates of this maze.

Despite its hypnotic appearance, the labyrinth is a structure that demands of its visitor to act immediately: once inside, you must move forward, go back, start again, observe, decide, change direction, run, stop abruptly, reflect, imagine, dream, hope, and reinvent yourself entirely. When I decided to initiate this voyage with sounds, it seemed vital to present it with a series of chapters, like a novel, comprised of several short stories. This labyrinth is therefore made of seven musical chapters, intensely connected to one another – each one representing a new segment of the trip.

At the centre of the maze, when the crucial moment of the encounter finally arrives, we hear **Granados's** *Love and death*, one of the most poignant pieces of the piano repertoire. Unlike the six other chapters of the voyage – each one comprised of three parts – this chapter stands by itself in one segment, like a solitary and luminous lighthouse, at the edge of a cliff, facing the immensity of the ocean.

Frequently, in our dreams, past and present merge with one another, erasing any sense of time, space, or chronology. In this odyssey, music from the past comes together with sounds of our present days, while complete pieces unite with brief fragments. In other moments, works that had been originally composed for orchestra, or for different kinds of instruments, transform themselves into pieces for solo piano. This is how **Jean-Féry Rebel's** *Le chaos*, a wild and unpredictable orchestral piece written in the 18th Century, found its place in this programme, with a new arrangement by **Jonathan Keren**. Its modernity is as stupefying as the one we can find in pieces by **Ligeti** and **Crumb**, or in **Ofer Pelez's** *Repetition Blindness*, a work that has been created especially for this project.

Every labyrinth is, naturally, much more than just a personal journey. It also gives us the opportunity to question our rituals, our traditions, as well as our social, political, and civil history. Its form, so ambiguous and intense, forces us to challenge our collective memory, leaving behind our past, in order to embrace the future with more confidence and determination. By embarking on this voyage, it has also been my wish to challenge the idea of the classical concert, hoping to find alternative routes that would give birth to new ways of performing a solo recital in the 21st Century. While undertaking this mission, I felt deeply inspired by Goethe's magnificent words: 'What a man does not know, or has not thought of, wanders in the night through the labyrinth of the mind'.

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