

Eyes on Bela Bartók

Ensemble Cairn



"For Bartók, the use of living folklore of the Hungarian, Romanian or Bulgarian countryside was not motivated by a form of ethnically-based nationalism. On the contrary, it aimed towards universal humanism, overthrowing racial differences. In that sense, the history of exchanges between European classical music and popular or exotic music is a lesson to all citizens of the world, at a time – the ending 20th century – when the themes of ethnical purity and exclusion were dwelled upon."¹

Philippe Albèra, The lessons of exoticism



Description of the project

Ensemble Cairn presents a portrait of the Hungarian composer **Béla Bartók** (1881-1945), choosing the angle of eastern European traditional music: Hungarian music, Romanian music or Gipsy music... A tradition that was very dear to him; that is in fact at the very core of his artistic language. In 1905, Béla Bartók initiated a series of journeys in the Hungarian, Romanian and Moldovan countryside in order to collect, with the help of a gramophone, the songs, melodies and popular dances of the Balkan culture.

"Studying folkloric music, I discovered that what we knew of folkloric Hungarian songs were only the trivial songs of popular composers, which held no particular value. I thus felt the need to further examine the matter, and in 1905, I undertook the collection and study of the yet unknown Hungarian country music. I was very lucky to find a colleague to pursue this task with, Zoltan Kodaly. Thanks to his extended experience and judgment in all matters of music, he served as a counsellor of immense worth."

Bartók and Kodaly engaged in an extensive ethnomusicological and ethnographic collecting work, which led to the second task of transcribing and recording all of these popular melodies. They comprised a large part of European traditional music, but also saw further (they travelled for instance to Anatolia and Egypt). It is

¹ Philippe Albèra, « Les Leçons de l'exotisme », *Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* 9/1996 [Online] - <http://ethnomusicologie.revues.org/1066>

estimated that between 1905 and 1918, Bartók collected as much as 10.000 Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Bulgarian and Arab, Serbian or Croatian melodies.

Ensemble Cairn's concert will include Dances, Rhapsodies and Songs that will serve as the narrative thread to this journey through time – the beginning of the 20th century – and space – Eastern Europe. This concert will also pay homage to Bartók's role as a great figure of written music, inspiring numerous composers; among which **Gyorgy Ligeti**, who also strived to include fragments of popular music in his work.

In a further appreciation of the work he inspired, Cairn will play *Caprice 2* by **Dmitri Kourliandski**. The piece requires the instrumentalists to play freely, in between repeated gestures of noised bow, musical fragments that their memory suggests... That is, extracts of Béla Bartók's music.

Eyes on Béla Bartók is a journey between traditional and written music, between past and present, and will honour the musical memory of mankind.

Jérôme Combier (Artistic director of Ensemble Cairn)



Béla Bartók dans un village de Hongrie, enregistrant la musique folklorique

Bartók's interest for Hungarian popular music, and more widely for traditional music of the Balkans, Slovakia or Arabia (which he heard for the first time during a brief stay in Tangier in 1906) appeared during his youth. At that time, political and identity claims arose in Hungary, then merely a part of the multinational and multicultural Austro-Hungarian empire – were exclusive Germanism, nevertheless, prevailed. But beyond the ideological context, which gave him the objective of identifying a Hungarian musical heritage, Bartók was seeking an alternative language, to distance himself from tonality and serialism while prolonging the German tradition (Brahms, R. Straus) and the influence of Debussy.

Programme

Sonata: Belà Bartòk (extr.)

for violin

3rd movement : *melodia*

Balkan traditional music: recording by Bartòk

Transcriptions of this song

6 popular Romanian dances BB 68 Sz.56: Belà Bartòk

violin and piano version

Viola sonata: György Ligeti

1st movement : *Hora Lungă - lento rubato, ma ritmico*

Contrastes: Belà Bartòk

2nd - *Pihenő* (repos) and 3rd - *Sebes* (vif)

for clarinet, violin and piano

Balada és tánc (Ballad and dance): György Ligeti

From Romanian popular songs

Duo: Belà Bartòk: N° 28 Sorrow and N° 33 Harvest song

for violin and viola

Jatekok: György Kurtàg

For piano

- Homage to Ligeti

- Waltz (Homage to Chostakovitch)

- Homage to Kodály

- With nonchalance

- Homage to Bartòk

- Perpetuum mobile

Caprice 2: Dmitri Kourliandski

Duo: Belà Bartòk: N° 37 Prélude et canon et N° 22 Mosquito dance

for violin and viola

Pe loc, 3rd Romanian popular dance BB 68 Sz.56

recording / piano version / violin and piano version / version for
clarinet, piano, violin, viola

Szomorú vasárnap (Gloomy sunday): Rezső Seress (1912-1984)

instrumentation for clarinet, piano, violin, viola

Janacek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8b9nqAIZB0>

Ensemble Cairn artistic team

clarinette : Ayumi Mori

violon : Naaman Sluchin

piano : Caroline Cren

alto : Cécile Brossard

L' Ensemble Cairn

Cairns are small piles of stones found in the mountains. They serve as landmarks or paths to follow for those who venture there, and each passer-by is expected to add his or her stone to the mound. This reflects what we wish to achieve: to bring about, through our concerts, the sensation of a listening path; to create cohesion between utterly diverse types of music, reflecting the bond uniting all members of the ensemble; to conceive musical programmes that are autonomous objects, artworks in themselves.

Founded in 1998, Ensemble Cairn strives to highlight and enhance the music of our time. Attentive to a precise rendering of both ensemble and chamber music, Ensemble Cairn enriches its repertoire by confronting it to other musical aesthetics (earlier classical music, jazz and improvised music, traditional music...) or art forms (circus, fine arts, dance, literature, video...).

Ensemble Cairn's artistic collaborations comprise artists and composers from various horizons: composers such as Gérard Pesson, Philippe Leroux, Tristan Murail, the jazzmen Marc Ducret, John Hollenbeck, Jozef Dumoulin, the Fado singer Cristina Branco, the videographer Pierre Nouvel, the choreographers Alban Richard and Hervé Robbe, the circus artist Sylvain Julien, the painter Raphaël Thierry...

The ensemble regularly performs in France's Scènes Nationales (Besançon, Arras-Douai, Orléans, Blois, Bourges, Quimper) and abroad. It has also been invited to numerous festivals in France and internationally : Festival Présences de Radio France, Festival Manifeste (Ircam), Festival d'Automne, Abbaye de Royaumont, Festival Musica, Ferienkurse (Germany), Tage für Neue Musik (Zurich), Villa Medici (Rome), Borealis (Norvège), Archipel (Genève), Festival Spring, Festival Sonik, Prague Quadrennial.

Comprising eleven musicians, Ensemble Cairn is directed by Jérôme Combier (artistic direction) and Guillaume Bourgogne (conductor). It is artist in residence at the Orleans Theatre (Scène nationale) and receives the support of the French Ministry of Culture and the Centre-Val de Loire Region.



Contacts

Jérôme COMBIER

Artistic director

+33 6 86 48 86 40

jerome.combier@gmail.com

Raphaël BOURDIER

Administration

+33 6 25 67 34 25

rbourdier@ensemble-cairn.com

www.ensemble-cairn.com

ensemble
cairn

