



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

In Recital: Éric Le Sage, pianist

Distinguished Visitor in Music

Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 7:30pm | Walter Hall

PROGRAM

Nocturne no 6 in D flat major, Op. 63 (1894)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Dauidsbündlertänze, Op.6 (1837)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Intermission

Piano Sonata no 10 in C major, K. 330 (1783)

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Allegretto

Carnaval, Op. 9 (1834-35)

Robert Schumann

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates.

For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



Eric Le Sage is established as a famous representative of the French piano school, regularly boasted for his very subtle sound, his real sense of structure and poetic phrasing. Already when he was 20 years old, the Financial Times had described him as “an extremely cultivated disciple of the great French tradition of Schumann piano”. In 2010, die Zeit, praised his “ideal French piano aesthetics and clarity.”

Eric is invited to perform as a soloist with orchestras at the highest level such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Saint-Louis Symphony Orchestra, Berlin's Konzerthaus Orchester, SWR Symphony Orchestra, Bremer

Philharmoniker, Dresden Philharmonie, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Göteborg Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, Münchner Kammer Orchester, Dresdner Philharmonie, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, with conductors like Edo de Waart, Stéphane Denève, Pablo Gonzalez, Fabien Gabel, Sir Jeffrey Tate, François Leleux, Alexander Liebreich, Kazuki Yamada, Alondra de la Parra, Lionel Bringuier, François Leleux, Michael Stern, Leonardo Garcia Alarcon, Sir Simon Rattle and Yannick Nézet-Seguin.

Eric has performed recitals and chamber music concerts in major venues across the world such as Wigmore Hall, Suntory Hall, Carnegie Hall, Hamburg's Laeiszhalle, Paris Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Radio France, Cologne Philharmonie, Essen Philharmonie, Dresden Philharmonie, Frankfurt's Alte Oper, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Schwartzberg's Schubertiade, Salzburg Mozarteum, Ludwigsburg Festival, Prague's Rudolfinum, Taipei National Concert Hall, Konzerthaus Vienna, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Dublin's celebrity series, Edinburgh International Festival, Düsseldorf Tonhalle, la Roque d'Anthéron Festival, Potsdam Sanssouci, Brussels' Bozar, Berlin's Boulezaal, Konzerthaus Berlin, Berlin Philharmonie.

Eric Le Sage released many albums, all of which were critically acclaimed and received multiple awards. Besides his world-famous Schumann cycle in 2010 that were awarded the very prestigious Jahrespreis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik, other milestones include Francis Poulenc's complete chamber works with piano (BMG, 1998), Fauré's complete works for chamber music with piano, and Brahms complete chamber music works (B-Records, 2021). Two magnificent albums were released in 2022: A Mozart album under the baton of his longtime stage partner François Leleux and the Gävle Symphony Orchestra on Alpha (concertos n° 17&24) and a solo album on Sony Classical featuring rare French repertoire from the beginning of the 20th century. In the last few years Eric released Fauré's complete Nocturnes on Alpha (2019) and Beethoven's last 3 Sonatas (2014).

Other recent chamber music recordings include collaborations with such artists as tenor Julian Pégardien for a Schumann album (2019) or Emmanuel Pahud, Paul Meyer, Daishin Kashimoto, Aurélien Pascal and more for albums around repertoire from Vienna in the 1900s, and works by Nino Rota. A true chamber music lover, Eric regularly plays with friends like Emmanuel Pahud, Paul Meyer, Quatuor Ebène, François Leleux, Jean-Guihen Queyras, les Vents Français, François Salque, Lise Berthaud, Daishin Kashimoto, Claudio Bohorquez, Julian Prégardien, Sandrine Piau, Olivier Latry and many other musicians.

Born in Aix en Provence, Eric Le Sage was the winner of major international competitions such as Porto in 1985 and the Robert Schumann competition in Zwickau, in 1989. He was also a prize-winner at Leeds International competition the same year, which allowed him to perform under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle.

Eric Le Sage is Professor at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany.

Program Notes

Nocturne no 6 in D flat major, Op. 63 (1894)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

The *Nocturne no. 6 in D-flat major op. 63* is considered a masterpiece of the piano literature by many critics. Written in 1894, one can hear the expressive lyricism and flexible phrasing of Fauré's second period throughout the nocturne. Although it is by no means an elegiac work, it is interesting to note that its composition comes at a dire time in Fauré's life: having just lost his parents, he confessed in a letter to Winnaretta de Polignac that he was feeling overwhelmed by *spleen*.¹ Citing melodic material reminiscent of *La Bonne Chanson*, the initially tranquil first theme soon conveys a sense of languish and unrest. Jean-Michel Nectoux describes the *Nocturne*'s unique harmonic progression as follows: "In the sixth *Nocturne*'s superb descending progression, the musician seems to be crossing immense spaces and passing through foreign lands with the sovereign effortlessness of one who knows how to get to a destination known only to him."² These elegant modulations are achieved, according to scholar Robert Orledge, by Fauré's sophisticated crafting of melodies that eschew the need for traditional modulation compositional devices.³

Davidsbündlertänze, Op. 6 (1837)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Robert Schumann was, in addition to being one of the most influential composers of the Romantic era, a fierce music critic and founder of the musical journal *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Exerting his influence on the musical community of the time, he argued for the composition of music that reflected the personal life and experiences of its composer, and condemned the popular penchant for technically impressive—albeit, insignificant—works. In this campaign against the philistines of music, the composer created an imaginary leagu of allies: the *Davidbündler*, in reference to Old Testament's King David. Originally published under the title "Florestan and Eusebius", we hear the dialogue between these two facets of Schumann's personality through the eighteen movements of this work. Between the spirited Florestan and the earnest Eusebius, the composer creates a landscape of contrasting dances, from the waltz to the tarantella and Ländler. As for many of his works in the late 1830s, this music is also influenced by his infatuation with the young Clara Wieck. In fact, the opening gesture is based on a mazurka she wrote. In the first edition, Schumann sets the stage for his *Davidsbündlertänze* with the following epigraph:

Alte Spruch

In all und jeder Zeit
Verknüpft sich Lust und Leid:
Bleibt fromm in Lust und seid
Dem Leid mit Mut bereit

Old Saying

In each and every age
Joy and sorrow are mingled:
Remain pious in joy,
And be ready for sorrow with courage.

¹ Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: les voix du clair-obscur*, Second revised edition. (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 99.

² Nectoux, 303. (« Dans la superbe progression descendante du 6e Nocturne, le musicien semble franchir des espaces immenses et traverser des terres inconnues, avec l'aisance souveraine de qui sait aller droit au but qu'il connaît seul. »)

³ Hoi Wai Lin, "Discord, Intransigence, Ambivalence, and Ultimate Coherence: Relationships Between the Musical Surface and Its Underlying Structures in Fauré's Nocturne No. 6, Op. 63" (Master's Thesis, Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 2014).

Piano Sonata no. 10 in C major, K. 330 (1783)

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)

One of Mozart's most well-known sonatas, the *Piano Sonata no. 10, K330* was written during a time of transition in the composer's life. At the age of twenty-seven, he had left his service for the Archbishop Colloredo, distancing himself from his father's tutelage, and made the acquaintance of the woman who would become his wife, Constanze Weber. In addition to these major changes in his personal life, the early 1780s was a period when Mozart also began having access to improved fortepianos, allowing him to explore a wider range of dynamics, as is seen in this work. The first movement is an example of the quintessential classical balance, with its crystalline and elegant themes. The *Andante cantabile* creates a beautiful counterpart to the first movement by offering a simple, yet poignant, parenthesis before the lively *Allegretto finale* brings the sonata to a close.

Carnaval, Op. 9 (1835)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

With *Carnaval*, Schumann transports us to a flamboyant *mardi gras* masked ball, in which *Commedia dell'Arte* characters meet his friends, colleagues —sometimes under thinly-veiled aliases— and his own alter egos, Florestan and Eusebius. Subtitled “Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes” (Charming scenes on four notes), the twenty-one scenes have one motif in common: A, E \flat , C, B. Spelled A, Es, C, H in German, these notes can refer to three different elements: to the German word *asch* (ash), since for Christians, a carnival is celebrated on the eve of Ash Wednesday; to the city of Asch, where Schumann's fiancée Ernestine von Fricken was born; and finally, to his own name: Robert **A.** **S**chumann. These cyphers, or *Sphynxs*, as he called them are heard throughout the piece and are a testament to the composer's fondness for these types of puzzles, which were also common in the writings of Jean Paul, an author Schumann admired. The colourful portraits of *Carnaval* later inspired a production by Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, which was orchestrated by Glazounov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, and Tcherepnin.