Janine Jansen, Martin Fröst, Torleif Thedéen, and Lucas Debargue

Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 8:00pm
Pre-concert Talk at 7:00pm
This is the 871st concert in Koerner Hall

Janine Jansen, violin
Martin Fröst, clarinet
Torleif Thedéen, cello
Lucas Debargue, piano

PROGRAM

Béla Bartók: Contrasts, for clarinet, violin, and piano, BB 116
   Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance). Moderato ben ritmato
   Pihenő (Relaxation). Lento
   Sebes (Fast Dance). Allegro vivace

Karol Szymanowski: Mity (Myths), op. 30
   Zrodło Aretuzy (The Fountain of Arethusa)
   Narcyz (Narcissus)
   Driady i Pan (Dryads and Pan)

INTERMISSION

Olivier Messiaen: Quartet for the End of Time
   1. Liturgie de cristal (Crystal Liturgy) – quartet
   2. Vocalise, pour l’Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Vocalise, for the Angel who Announces the End of Time) – quartet
   3. Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of the Birds) – clarinet
   4. Intermède (Interlude) – violin, clarinet, cello
   5. Louange à l’Éternité de Jésus (Praise to the Eternity of Jesus) – cello, piano
   6. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes (Dance of the Fury, for the Seven Trumpets) – quartet
   7. Fouillis d’arcs-en-ciel, pour l’Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Tangle of Rainbows, for the Angel who Announces the End of Time) – quartet
   8. Louange à l’Immortalité de Jésus (Praise to the Immortality of Jesus) – violin, piano

Béla Bartók
Born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Sânnicolau Mare, Romania), March 25, 1881; died in New York, New York, September 26, 1945.
Contrasts, for clarinet, violin, and piano, BB 116 (1938)
This is a little acorn that grew into a three-movement classic of the repertoire. Its origins lie in an idea that the great Hungarian violinist József Szigeti bounced off Benny Goodman, the ‘King of Swing,’ in 1938. He was looking for a two-movement piece ‘for clarinet and violin with piano accompaniment,’ with brilliant clarinet and violin cadenzas,
lasting six to seven minutes in total. Goodman wanted to be sure that it would fit onto two sides of a 78-rpm disc. Although not comfortable with the improvisatory nature of jazz, Bartók was able to draw ideas from Goodman’s technique and sent him a two-movement version of the commission (titled *Rhapsody*) within the month. This is how the work was first performed by Goodman, Szigeti, and pianist Endre Petri at Carnegie Hall, January 9, 1939. At this stage, the *Rhapsody* exceeded the limitations of the ‘78’ by three minutes or so. Bartók had, moreover, already written a third movement, most likely as part of his original conception of the piece.

Benny Goodman accepted the ‘additional’ movement and the three-movement, by now 17-minute work was given the title *Contrasts*. The new title is particularly appropriate since the tone colour of the three instruments remains complementary and Bartók seldom strives to blend them into a whole. After an initial, stealthy, march-like opening, the first movement opens up to real virtuosity and swirling roulades, with just a hint of jazz, which Bartók arrived at by way of the *Blues* movement from Ravel’s Violin Sonata. It concludes with a brilliant cadenza from the clarinet. The slow movement is one of the most beautiful of Bartók’s night pieces and the heart of the piece. It leads into a wild finale in which the violin comes to the fore, with mistuned open fifths. A second instrument helps achieve this and the player switches back to regular tuning after the first 30 bars. The clarinet, too, switches between instruments in B flat and in A. Throughout, the piano complements both clarinet and violin, with clear, transparent writing. It contrasts with the other two instruments, never seeking to dominate the texture with the percussive weight frequently found in Bartók’s music. *Contrasts* is the only chamber music Bartók wrote to include a wind instrument.

**Karol Szymanowski**

Born in Tymoszówka, nr. Kiev, Ukraine, October 3, 1882; died in Lausanne, Switzerland, March 29, 1937

*Mity (Myths),* op. 30 (1915)

Much of Polish composer Karol Szymanowski’s earlier, more impressionist and frequently ‘oriental’ music was composed in a retreat in a wooden gardener’s hut by a lake on the family estate. Isolated from the dark years of World War One, Szymanowski composed such works as the first of his two string quartets, his mystical and passionate Third Symphony, the ecstatic First Violin Concerto, *Metopy* and *Maski* for piano solo, and *Mity* for violin and piano. The sound world of this period, which lasted until the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, is impassioned, often over-ripe and heady after the manner of Scriabin and the late romantics. While it clearly follows on from Ravel and Debussy and frequently anticipates Messiaen, the language is tempered by a foreshadowing of the severity that was to characterise Szymanowski’s later music.

The first of the three *Myths* draws from classical antiquity and the myth of the nymph Arethusa who transforms into a spring when pursued by the river god Alpheus. In Szymanowski’s miniature tone-poem, violin and piano together sensuously and delicately evoke the mood in a rhapsodic *jeux d’eau*, securely underpinned by a carefully structured foundation. In the slow central movement, Narcissus angers the gods by rejecting the love of the nymph Echo and is condemned to fall in love with his own reflection. As he gazes, he pines away until transformed into a flower. The final myth is a dance between the forest god Pan and beautiful nature spirits known as Dryads, each of whom lives for as long as the oak tree she inhabits. Their cavorting results in a chase between Pan and the nymph Syrinx, all of which is vividly portrayed in Szymanowski’s quixotic music, and in a long solo from Pan on a flute he fashions from a reed. As the music increases in intensity, Szymanowski draws on an arsenal of violin techniques developed with the help of Polish violinist Paweł Kochański. These serve an expressive rather than virtuosic end as the music climaxes and its characters fall exhausted to the ground. The Pan-pipes recede into the distance.

**Olivier Messiaen**

Born in Avignon, France, December 10, 1908; died in Paris, France, April 28, 1992
**Quartet for the End of Time (1940-41)**

A series of extraordinary coincidences led to the creation of Messiaen’s powerful *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, one of the most seminal chamber works of the 20th century. Remarkably, Messiaen, a prisoner-of-war in Stalag VIII-A, Görlitz since the summer of 1940, was not only allowed, but encouraged to compose music. A German officer named Karl-Albert Brüll, gave him a regular supply of manuscript paper, pencils, erasers … and bread. In the camp, Messiaen met Henri Akoka, a clarinetist with the Orchestre National, and Etienne Pasquier, a professional cellist, whom he had already encountered in Verdun, where the French composer had been earlier sent as a medical orderly. Messiaen and Pasquier would listen to the dawn chorus of birds on their morning watch. Messiaen would note down individual bird songs with a precision that would soon blossom into a skill unmatched by any composer. Using these notated birdsongs as inspiration, he began to write a piece for solo clarinet, calling it *Abyss of the Birds*. Then, the concept grew when the trio met up with violinist Jean Le Boulaire in the Görlitz camp. The work’s instrumentation was now for violin, clarinet, cello, and piano and it was ground-breaking. Messiaen was to deal with the challenges of blend and balance throughout by subdividing the quartet and using the full potential of all four instruments sparingly.

Messiaen’s devout religious beliefs underpinned his work on the *Quartet*. He found hope in the vision of St. John, the angel, wrapped in cloud and crowned with a rainbow [Revelation 10.1–7]. “I finally wrote this quartet, dedicating it to this angel who declared the end of Time,” Messiaen said in one of many interviews after his liberation. As the details of the story evolved and became the stuff of legend over the years, the constant element remained Messiaen’s faith. “I love Time,” he wrote, “because it’s the starting point of all creation.” Temporal freedom defines Messiaen’s relationship with the divine and, in a preface to the quartet, he writes: “The special rhythms, independent of the metre, powerfully contribute to the effect of banishing the temporal.” The eight-movement substantial structure of the piece also contributes to its feeling of endlessness and to a lack of traditional sequential development. Its emotional trajectory is enormous, from the opening dawn chorus, with fragments of birdsong on violin and clarinet woven with revolving sequences on piano and cello, to the terrifying *Dance of the Fury*, with all four instruments pounding out a repeated melody devoid of harmony, for more than six minutes. The *Quartet* is anchored by two ecstatic paeans of great ethereal beauty, the first for cello, and the second for violin, both with piano accompaniment. Their slow tempo and feeling of finality disorient our expectations of how a piece of chamber music should unfold. “This is the subject of the Quartet,” Messiaen’s second wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod said after his death. “At the end of Time, when the universe is no more, it will drift into Eternity. And this is the riddle that fascinated my husband.”

**Janine Jansen**

**Violin**

With an enviable international reputation, violinist Janine Jansen works regularly with the world’s most eminent orchestras and conductors. This season, she is Perspectives Artist at Carnegie Hall while tours are planned with Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Gatti), London Symphony Orchestra (with Michael Tilson Thomas as well as Semyon Bychkov), and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie (Paavo Järvi).

Other highlights this season include engagements with the Berlin Philharmonic (Paavo Järvi), Munich Philharmonic (Zubin Mehta), Staatskapelle Dresden (Antonio Pappano), Philadelphia Orchestra and Rotterdam Philharmonic (Yannick Nézet-Séguin), Czech Philharmonic (Jakob Jrūša), Oslo Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony (David Afkham), Royal Stockholm Philharmonic (Karina Canellakis), and Iceland Symphony (Daniel Blendulf). She will also travel to the Far East and Australia performing with Singapore, Sydney, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras.

*Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner*
A devoted chamber musician, Ms. Jansen joins Mischa Maisky, Martha Argerich, Itamar Golan, and Lily Maisky for a major European Chamber Music Tour. She also performs a number of recitals throughout Europe with pianists Alexander Gavrylyuk, Elisabeth Leonskaja, and Kathryn Stott.

She records exclusively for Decca Classics and since recording Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* in 2003, she has been extremely successful in the digital music charts. She studied with Coosje Wijzenbeek, Philipp Hirshhorn, and Boris Belkin.

In 2003, Ms. Jansen founded the enormously successful International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht. After 13 years, she stepped down from her position as Artistic Director in June 2016 and named cellist Harriet Krijgh as her successor.

Janine Jansen plays the 1707 Stradivarius “Rivaz - Baron Gutmann” violin kindly on loan from Dextra Musica.

**Martin Fröst**

*Clarinet*

Clarinetist, conductor, and Sony Classical recording artist, Martin Fröst is known for pushing musical boundaries. He has appeared with orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Israel Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, and Orchestre National de France. In 2017-18, he returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and makes his debut with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. He also appears with the NDR Radiophilharmonie, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and Residentie Orkest, and is the Artist-in-Residence at L’Auditori, Barcelona, appearing with the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona I Nacional de Catalunya and performing a number of chamber concerts.

In May 2017, it was announced that Fröst will be Chief Conductor of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra from the 2019-20 season. Known for artistic collaborations worldwide, this season he continues as Artistic Partner with both The Saint Paul Chamber and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic orchestras, at which he launches a new project, *Retrotopia*, including a new commission by Jesper Nordin. This project follows his critically acclaimed *Genesis*, which he also performs this season with the Gothenburg Symphony.

This autumn, Fröst is joined by Janine Jansen, Lucas Debargue, and Torleif Thedéen to release Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, and together they give performances of the work worldwide, including at New York’s Carnegie Hall, as well as in Barcelona, Toronto, and Quebec City. Some of his awards include the 2016 ECHO Klassik Instrumentalist of the Year Award for clarinet and the 2014 Léonie Sonning Music Prize.

**Torleif Thedéen**

*Cello*

With an international career spanning more than 30 years, Swedish cellist Torleif Thedéen (b. 1962) regularly tours in Europe, Australia/New Zealand, and the US. He has performed with numerous important orchestras, including Royal Philharmonic, Rotterdam, Czech, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, London Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio, Gothenburg Symphony, as well as Dresden Staatskapelle, BBC Philharmonic, and the Hallé Orchestra.

As a chamber musician, he has appeared at international music festivals including Verbier, Prague Spring, Saltzburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Bath, Kuhmo, and Stavanger with the likes of Janine Jansen, Julian Rachlin, and Roland Pöntinen, among others.
His vast discography includes releases for BIS, CPO, DECCA, EMI, and Deutsche Grammophon. His release of J.S. Bach Suites for Solo Cello received tremendous reviews with the BBC Music magazine, making it the Editor’s Choice.

A professor at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm since 1996, he is in demand to give master classes all over the world.

He plays on a cello by David Tecchler from 1711 (ex-Lynn Harrel).

Lucas Debargue

Piano

Born in 1990, French pianist Lucas Debargue began piano at 11 and was quickly fascinated by the virtuoso repertoire, but it was not until 10 years later, after he had obtained a Bachelor’s Art Degree at the Paris Diderot University, that he returned to studying piano at the professional level. In 2011, he was put in touch with his current mentor, professor Rena Shereshevskaya. His studies with her at the famous l’Ecole Normale de Music de Paris Alfred Cortot led him to the 1st Prize at the 9th Gaillard International Piano Competition (France, 2014) and to the 4th Prize at the 15th International Tchaikovsky Competition (Moscow, 2015), where he became the only musician who was awarded the coveted Moscow Music Critics’ Prize as a pianist “whose incredible gift, artistic vision, and creative freedom have impressed the critics as well as the audience.” After the competition, he was invited to play solo and with orchestras in the most prestigious concert halls in Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, the US, and the UK with such famous conductors and musicians as Valery Gergiev, Mikhail Pletnev, Vladimir Jurowski, Andrey Boreyko, Gidon Kremer, and others. He has already released three CDs, all on the Sony Classical label. In April 2016, he obtained his Diploma and a special Prize Cortot at the Paris Cortot Music School where he continues to do post-graduate work with Rena Shereshevskaya. He also composes his own music and some of his works have already been premiered in Russia as well as in France.

Lucas Debargue made his Koerner Hall debut on April 30, 2016 and all of the other artists are making their Royal Conservatory debuts tonight.