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DEBUSSY
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LA MER

L'ISLE JOYEUSE

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Geoffrey Simon

ENGULFED CATHEDRAL

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

1	La cathédrale engloutie L.125 No.10 (arr. Stokowski)	[7.52]
2	L'isle joyeuse L.109 (arr. Molinari)	[6.16]
	Deux arabesques L.74 (arr. Mouton)	
3	I. Andantino con moto	[4.19]
4	II. Allegretto scherzando	[3.08]
	La mer L.111	
5	I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer	[8.24]
6	II. Jeux de vagues	[6.16]
7	III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer	[7.36]
8	Bruyères L.131 No.5 (arr. Grainger)	[2.50]
9	Danse L.77 (Tarantelle styrienne) (arr. Ravel)	[5.01]
	Children's Corner L.119 (arr. Caplet)	
10	I. Dr Gradus ad Parnassum	[2.22]
11	II. Jimbo's Lullaby	[3.45]
12	III. Serenade for the Doll	[2.33]
13	IV. The Snow is Dancing	[2.38]
14	V. The Little Shepherd	[2.17]
15	VI. Golliwogg's Cake-Walk	[2.54]
	Total timings:	[69.18]

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
GEOFFREY SIMON CONDUCTOR

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CLAUDE DEBUSSY

(St. Germain-en-Laye, 1872 – Paris, 1918)

Claude Debussy initially came under the spell of Germanic musical tradition, but soon rejected its sonata-forms, Teutonic philosophies and myth-laden Wagnerian music dramas. Instead, he found inspiration in colour, light and shade, subtle harmonies and rhythms, and his own fantasy and imagination. Although the largest part of his output lies in his compositions for the piano, he was also a master of orchestral sonorities. Under his supervision, he would often let colleagues orchestrate his piano compositions for him. Later, arrangers from further afield followed suit, making orchestral transcriptions which brought Debussy's music out of the living room and recital hall to a wider concert-going public. Our programme thus contains orchestral versions of some of Debussy's most evocative piano works, with, at their centre, his own masterful impression of the turbulent, constantly shifting sea.

1 **La cathédrale engloutie** L.125 No.10
Orchestrated by Leopold Stokowski

"With Debussy all begins and ends with the chord," wrote Oscar Thompson. "The key to

everything he accomplished is in his harmony." A striking illustration of this is to be found in *La cathédrale engloutie* from Debussy's First Book of Twelve Preludes for Piano, published in 1910. Hollow, sideways-moving chords eerily evoke the ancient Breton legend: "...on clear mornings," David Ewen writes, "when the sea is transparent, the Cathedral of Ys rises into view; clearly audible are its tolling bells and chanting priests. Slowly the vision is dissipated. The cathedral returns to its sleep in the depths of the sea." Such graphic music cries out for orchestral realisation, and has inspired several musicians to make symphonic transcriptions, including Henri Büsser, Sir Henry Wood and that magician of orchestral sound, Leopold Stokowski. His version, for very large orchestra, fully realises both the atmosphere and the majesty of the music. Its first performance took place in Philadelphia on 5 February 1926.

2 **L'isle joyeuse** L.109
Orchestrated by Bernardino Molinari

Debussy wrote this exuberant piano rhapsody in 1904 while on Jersey, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of France. Its principal source of inspiration was a painting by Watteau entitled *Embarquement pour Cythère* "Embarkation for the Island of Cythera". The sparkling sensuality

of the music, especially as orchestrated by Debussy's friend Bernardino Molinari to the composer's indications, brings it into the same sound world as *La mer*, in which it could almost occupy a place as an extra movement.

Deux arabesques L.74

Orchestrated by Henri Mouton

- 3 I. Andantino con moto
- 4 II. Allegretto scherzando

These two early piano pieces, published in 1891, are the musical equivalents of designs in Arabian art of interlacing patterns in graceful curves. Charming and rhapsodic, their “delicate tracery” and “twining counterpoints”, to quote Debussy's own words, find extra colourings and subtleties in the orchestral forms presented here.

La mer L.111

- 5 I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer
- 6 II. Jeux de vagues
- 7 III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer

When Debussy did choose to write directly for the orchestra, it was with consummate artistry. His early tone-poem of 1894, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, enchanted the music world and to this day is revered for its gossamer textures

and effortlessly flowing lines. A decade later *La mer* sprang into being, destined to become one the 20th century's musical masterpieces.

The sea had a life-long fascination for Debussy – he had originally been intended for “the noble career of a sailor” – and his passion for all its aspects was often reflected in his music, most notably *The Engulfed Cathedral*, *Sirènes* from *Nocturnes* and the sea music in the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Debussy began work on *La mer* in Paris in 1903 and completed it the following year in Eastbourne, a fashionable seaside resort on the south-eastern coast of England. In this music he drew on a number of influences and memories, particularly the work of the Japanese artist Hokusai, whose fascinating print *The Deep Sea Wave off Kanagawa* he requested to be reproduced on the cover of the score. Caught up in the music too was the memory of a frightening storm which Debussy had experienced while in a fishing boat off the coast of Brittany. “Now here is a type of passionate feeling I have not experienced before,” he wrote. “Danger! It is not unpleasant – one is alive.” *La mer*'s broad, three-movement form allies it to other French works of similar dimensions: the symphonies of Franck, Chausson and Dukas, the



The Deep Sea Wave off Kanagawa by Hokusai (1760-1849)
Stipulated by Debussy as the cover design for the first edition of *La mer*

Symphony on a French Mountain Air by Vincent D'Indy and the *Three Dances for Orchestra* of Maurice Duruflé. Throughout the three 'sketches', as Debussy termed them, there is music of extraordinary sensitivity, rhythmic complexity and variety of timbre, highlighted by stunning orchestral effects and shattering climaxes shaped with superb mastery into perhaps the most powerful and imaginative musical response to the wave-tossed sea ever penned.

In the original score's final movement – eight bars before figure 60 – Debussy wrote a brief sequence of striking 'fanfares' for brass which, as music critic Noel Goodwin once wrote, "shine out like a sudden shaft of sunlight above the rest of the orchestra". The reason for their deletion from subsequent printed editions remains mysterious, so Geoffrey Simon joins that select band of conductors who prefer their inclusion, heightening as they do the musical and dramatic build-up to the climax of the work.

8 **Bruyères** L.131 No.5
Orchestrated by Percy Grainger

Upon seeing the score of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902, the Australian-born piano virtuoso and composer Percy Grainger was inspired to become an early exponent of Debussy's solo piano music. *Bruyères* comes from the Second Book of Twelve Preludes (published in 1913) where it is the fifth of the set. The music's inspiration lay in what seems to have been Debussy's purely imaginary vision of the Scottish heathlands. In this arrangement, the composer's subtle evocation of bagpipes is delicately captured by Grainger's inventive instrumental combination of woodwinds, horn, alto saxophone and harmonium.

9 **Danse** L.77 (*Tarantelle styrienne*)
Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel

Another early piano piece, written in 1890, takes within its title the Austrian province of Styria, just north of the Italo-Yugoslavian border. A *tarantella* is a fast Neapolitan dance that can be found in the works of many other composers besides Debussy. Ravel's orchestration, first conducted by Paul Paray in 1923, has all the instrumental glitter and panache of Ravel's own *Alborado del Gracioso*, to which it becomes almost a kind of companion piece.

Children's Corner L.119
Orchestrated by André Caplet

- 10 I. Dr Gradus ad Parnassum
- 11 II. Jimbo's Lullaby
- 12 III. Serenade for the Doll
- 13 IV. The Snow is Dancing
- 14 V. The Little Shepherd
- 15 VI. Golliwogg's Cake-Walk

This charming suite for piano was dedicated by Debussy to "my dear little Chouchou, with her father's affectionate apologies for what follows." Apologies for his English rather than the music perhaps; "Jimbo" and "Golliwogg" were affectionately retained by his publishers for posterity.

Debussy's daughter was nearly four years old when *Children's Corner* was published in 1908, and two years later André Caplet, a close friend of Debussy's, conducted his own orchestral arrangement of the suite in New York. Debussy praised the orchestration as "gorgeously apparelled" but asked Caplet in some concern for a report on the performance: "I should be sorry if it looked pretentious."

The first piece suggests a small child struggling at the piano keyboard with fingering exercises.

Then come depictions of two of Chouchou's dolls, the first her favourite stuffed elephant being lullabyed to sleep. *The Snow is Dancing* finds Chouchou sitting at her nursery window, while the plaintive piping tones in the number which follows shows Debussy at his most pastoral.

Golliwogg's Cake-Walk – the best-known item in the set – mixes jazz and Wagner, whose Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* is briefly satirised. Debussy's former reverence towards the German master had by now turned into something akin to total opposition.

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GEOFFREY SIMON

Australian conductor Geoffrey Simon is resident in London and has appeared there with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players and English Chamber Orchestra.

Internationally, he has appeared with the Adelaide, Atlanta, Bournemouth, Canberra, City of Birmingham, Fort Worth, Melbourne, Milwaukee, Queensland, Sapporo, Shanghai, St Louis, Sydney, Tasmanian, Vermont and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, the Israel, Moscow, Munich and New Japan Philharmonic Orchestras, the American Symphony, the Residentie Orchestra of The Hague, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and the Australian Opera.

His music directorships have included the Albany Symphony Orchestra (New York), the Australian Sinfonia (London), the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra (Indiana), the Orquestra Simfónica de Balears “Ciutat de Palma” (Majorca) and the Sacramento Symphony (California). With the Palma Orchestra he conducted Paul Patterson’s

Te Deum for the King and Queen of Spain, and with the Sacramento Symphony he created the *World View* series of concerts, attracting audiences from twenty non-European cultures.

Geoffrey Simon is Music Director Emeritus of the Northwest Mahler Orchestra in Seattle, with which he has conducted the Mahler symphonic cycle and Messiaen’s *Turangalila Symphony*. He is Consultant for Classical Special Projects for Arts Global (a foundation for emerging artists, London, Montreux and New York) and has served as a jury member for Young Concert Artists, PianoTexas, Australian Cello Awards and Royal Over-Seas League.

Geoffrey Simon was a student of Herbert von Karajan, Rudolf Kempe, Hans Swarowsky and Igor Markevich, and a major prize-winner at the first John Player International Conductors’ Award. He has made forty six recordings for a number of labels, combining discoveries with familiar works by Tchaikovsky, Respighi, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Smetana, Bloch, Grainger, Debussy, Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Les Six. Amongst the contemporary composers he has recorded are Barry Conyngham, John Downey, Paul Patterson and Zhou Long.

For Cala Signum, Geoffrey Simon has brought together large ensembles of single instruments

– violins, violas, cellos, double basses, horns, trumpets, trombones and harps – drawn from London’s leading solo, orchestral and chamber musicians. Known as *The London Sound Series*, the recordings have attracted interest amongst instrumentalists worldwide. Geoffrey Simon’s virtuoso 20-cello ensemble, The London Cello Orchestra, has performed for H.M. The Queen and H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, and appeared in New York, Switzerland and South Korea.

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia is a world-class symphony orchestra for the 21st century. The Orchestra’s home is Southbank Centre’s Royal Festival Hall, in the heart of London, where the Philharmonia has been resident since 1995 and presents a season of around 50 performances each year. Under Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia has created a series of critically-acclaimed, visionary projects, distinctive for both their artistic scope and supporting live and digital content. Recent series include *Stravinsky: Myths & Rituals* (2016), which won a South Bank Sky Arts Award. In 2019, Salonen presented the series *Weimar Berlin: Bittersweet Metropolis*.

The Philharmonia is resident orchestra at Bedford Corn Exchange, De Montfort Hall in Leicester, The Marlowe in Canterbury, The Anvil in Basingstoke, the Three Choirs Festival in the West of England, and Garsington Opera. At the heart of these residencies is an education programme that empowers people in every community to engage with, and participate in, orchestral music.

Internationally, the Philharmonia is active across Europe, Asia and the USA. In 2018/19, the Orchestra performed extensively in Europe and undertook three major international tours, to China and South Korea (October 2018); to Cartagena in Colombia, in a joint digital installation-live concert tour (January 2019); and to the USA (March 2019).

The Philharmonia’s international reputation in part derives from its extraordinary recording legacy, which in the last 10 years has been built on by its pioneering work with digital technology, most recently blazing a trail for classical music in Virtual Reality. VR experiences featuring music by Sibelius, Mahler and Beethoven, placing the viewer at the heart of the orchestra, have been presented at Southbank Centre and internationally.

The Philharmonia records and releases music across multiple channels and media. An app for iPad, *The Orchestra*, has sold tens of thousands of copies; Hollywood composers choose to record their scores for films, video games and television series with the Orchestra; the Philharmonia is Classic FM’s ‘Orchestra on Tour’ and broadcasts extensively on BBC Radio 3; with Signum Records the Philharmonia releases live recordings of signature concerts.

Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has been Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor since 2008. Jakub Hrůša and Santtu-Matias Rouvali are Principal Guest Conductors. Christoph von Dohnányi is Honorary Conductor for Life and Vladimir Ashkenazy is Conductor Laureate. Composer Unsuk Chin is Artistic Director of the Music of Today series.

Recorded in St Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead, London from 2nd to 7th January 1990

Producer – Tim Handley
Engineer – Nicholas Parker
Editing – AudioEdit Ltd., London
Remastering – Phil Rowlands

Publishers:
Engulfed Cathedral (arr. Stokowski) – Cala Music Publishing
L’isle joyeuse (arr. Molinari); Deux arabesques (arr. Mouton); La mer – Durand
Bruyères (arr. Grainger) – Bardic Edition
Danse–Tarantelle styrienne (arr. Ravel) – Jobert

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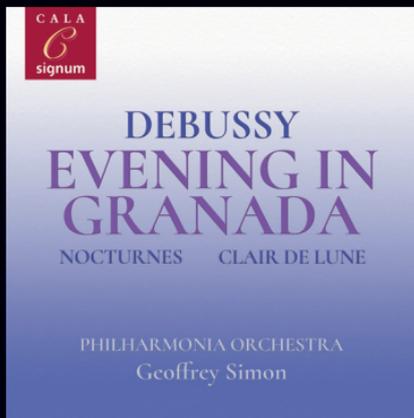
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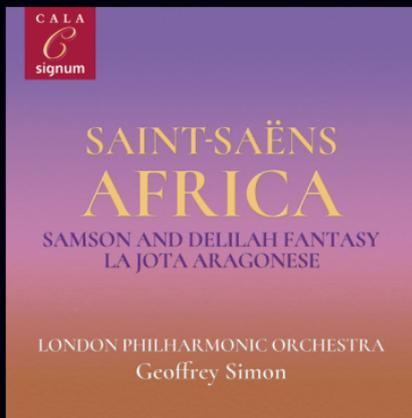
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