

NAXOS

LEVANON · MARTIN  
POULENC · SHOSTAKOVICH

Works for Pianos and Orchestra



*MultiPiano* Ensemble  
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Dmitry Yablonsky

**Frank Martin** (1890–1974)

**Petite symphonie concertante** (1944–45)

(arr. Tomer Lev for three pianos and two string orchestras, 2015) **20:50**

- |          |                              |       |
|----------|------------------------------|-------|
| <b>1</b> | I. Adagio – Allegro con moto | 12:39 |
| <b>2</b> | II. Adagio –                 | 4:08  |
| <b>3</b> | Allegretto alla marcia       | 4:03  |

**Francis Poulenc** (1899–1963)

**Concerto for Two Pianos in D minor, FP 61** (1932) **19:17**

- |          |                            |      |
|----------|----------------------------|------|
| <b>4</b> | I. Allegro ma non troppo   | 8:09 |
| <b>5</b> | II. Larghetto              | 5:12 |
| <b>6</b> | III. Finale: Allegro molto | 5:53 |

**Dmitry Shostakovich** (1906–1975)

**Concertino for Two Pianos, Op. 94** (1953)

(arr. Tomer Lev for two pianos and string orchestra, 2016) **9:29**

- |          |                     |  |
|----------|---------------------|--|
| <b>7</b> | Adagio – Allegretto |  |
|----------|---------------------|--|

**Aryeh Levanon** (b. 1932)

**Land of Four Languages** (2012–13)

for two pianos eight hands and string orchestra **11:00**

- |           |   |      |
|-----------|---|------|
| <b>8</b>  | I. Im Ha-Shachar ('At Dawn') (Jewish-Yemenite)      | 2:22 |
| <b>9</b>  | II. Oyfen Weg ('On a Road Stands a Tree') (Yiddish) | 2:54 |
| <b>10</b> | III. Povereta Muchachica ('Poor Girl') (Ladino)     | 2:57 |
| <b>11</b> | IV. Debka Rafiah (Bedouin-Arabic)                   | 2:33 |

Publishers: Universal Edition (Vienna) **1**–**3**; Éditions Salabert **4**–**6**;  
International Music/Sikorski (original version for two pianos);  
Unpublished arrangement for two pianos and string orchestra by T. Lev  
with the permission of the Shostakovich Estate **7**; Composer's manuscript **8**–**11**

# LEVANON • MARTIN • POULENC • SHOSTAKOVICH

## Works for Pianos and Orchestra

Composing concertante works for a number of solo keyboard instruments and orchestra was a common practice during the 18th century and the early 19th century. The six concertos composed by J.S. Bach for two, three and even four solo keyboards and orchestra; the double and triple concertos composed by W.A. Mozart; and the two juvenilia double concertos composed by the young Felix Mendelssohn all testify to the interest and demand for multi-hand keyboard concertos until the early Romantic period.

All these works stem from the Baroque *concerto grosso* and the Classical *sinfonia concertante* idioms, in which the soloists are regarded as a cohesive group of equal partners, conversing with a surrounding orchestral ensemble.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century the group keyboard concerto almost completely disappeared, as the virtuoso individual with the 'transcendental' abilities was unequivocally preferred over the unified team of soloists, in which the whole was more than the sum of its parts.

The neo-Baroque trends that flooded Europe after the First World War led to the revival of many obsolete traditions, in an attempt to give them new life and new relevance. And so, a considerable number of works revisited and reinterpreted the neglected tradition of the group concerto. Among them is the *Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos* (1932) by Frenchman Francis Poulenc, and the *Petite symphonie concertante* (1944–45) by Swiss composer Frank Martin. These two mid-20th-century masterpieces comprise the main compositions on this album.

Although the 1953 *Concertino, Op. 94* by Dmitry Shostakovich was originally written for two solo pianos, without orchestral accompaniment, there is no doubt that it is based on, and inspired by, the Baroque *concerto grosso*. In this spirit, the work was given a new orchestration that brought it one step further towards the format of a 'real' *concerto grosso*, in an arrangement for two pianos and a string ensemble specially created for this recording.

The last piece on the album, *Land of the Four Languages* by Israeli composer Aryeh Levanon, was written especially for the *MultiPiano* Ensemble for the rare formation of two pianos in eight hands accompanied by a string orchestra. The piece takes this unusual instrumental combination of four pianists to create a multi-layered amalgamation of the eight hands and forty fingers. It blends and blurs the individuality of each soloist to create an ever-changing kaleidoscope of sonic textures.

### Frank Martin (1890–1974): *Petite symphonie concertante*

Frank Martin's *Petite symphonie concertante* was originally composed for the highly unusual combination of piano solo, harp solo and modern ('revival') harpsichord solo, accompanied by a double string orchestra. The work was met with considerable logistical and acoustical challenges in its performances: the highly unbalanced group of soloists and the choice of a 'modern' harpsichord, nowadays almost out of use, made it quite tricky to gain proper and effective presentation in live performances and eventually led it to be pushed aside from mainstream live concert repertoire.

Martin was aware of the difficulties and in 1950 re-wrote the piece as a purely orchestral composition, without any soloists, explaining his decision with the following argumentation:

'After writing this score ... I was convinced that this sonorous work, owing to its experimental nature and its unusual combination of instruments, would be restricted in its performance.... I feared that it would remain an instrumental curiosity... I thought this task [of rewriting the work in a more conventional version], apart from having the interest of solving a complicated instrumental problem, would also allow the work to be more widely performed.'

With this in mind, in 2015, with the blessing of Universal Edition and the Frank Martin family and estate, I rearranged the three solo parts for three solo pianos, while strictly maintaining the orchestral part in its original form.

The *Symphonie concertante* was written towards the end of the Second World War and the dramatic echoes of the period are well reflected in the tense and extreme nature of this work. Despair, psychedelia and harsh conflicts are presented against prayer, hope and heroism.

Martin was asked to write the piece in 1944 at the commission of the renowned conductor and patron of the arts Paul Sacher for his chamber orchestra in Basel. The work brilliantly combines Renaissance-like sophisticated polyphony with elements of the Second Viennese School. The opening of the work, for example, is a dense ten-part *ricercar* using a twelve-tone row. Later on in the piece, elements of jazzy rhythms (in the middle *Allegro*), free improvisation (in the *Adagio* section) and military *March* (in the finale) are incorporated to create a fascinating array of styles and techniques masterfully fused.

The work is performed in one long breath, creating a monumental arc of 21 unbroken minutes. Nevertheless, formally speaking, Martin divided it in two big 'movements', each of which is further subdivided into two contrasting 'sections' of slow-fast, thus creating an overall scheme of slow-fast-slow-fast, so typical of many Baroque works.

The opening slow section is a prayer-like introduction to the whole work, starting as an intimate whisper and building to an overwhelming powerful climax. The following *Allegro con moto* is a nervous, agitated sonata-like movement. The opening fast theme is later balanced by a more relaxed second theme, using elements of the archaic chaconne. After a dramatic development and a stormy apotheosis of the chaconne theme the movement calms, preparing for the emotional heart of the composition – a contemplative *Adagio*, serving as a cadenza for the three solo instruments, with minimum intervention from the orchestra. This improvisatory psychedelic section becomes ever more stormy, until a fatal *Marcia* emerges. The latter presents one of the most impressive unbroken crescendos in the repertoire, one which grows throughout the entire movement up to a tantalising ending.

### **Francis Poulenc (1899–1963): Concerto for Two Pianos in D minor, FP 61**

Francis Poulenc wrote his *Concerto for Two Pianos* in 1932 and in a short time it became one of the most beloved and oft performed multi-hand piano concertos, second only to Mozart's iconic double concerto, with which it obviously corresponds.

The Mozartian spirit culminates in the concerto's second movement, which can easily be regarded as a homage to Mozart. Poulenc testified to this as follows: 'In the *Larghetto* of this concerto I permitted myself, for the first theme, to return to Mozart, because I have a fondness for the melodic line and I prefer Mozart to all other musicians.'

During this movement, Poulenc presents an explicit quote of one of Mozart's most beloved themes, taken from the second movement of the *Concerto No. 21 in C major* – a theme that became popular when selected for the soundtrack of the film *Elvira Madigan*.

But the link to Mozart is not limited to direct verbal or musical references: a closer look points to much deeper levels.

As with Mozart's own concertos, this concerto is also, *avant toute chose*, a piece of entertainment, albeit in the highest sense of the word. Poulenc manages to peel from the concerto the pomp and pathos that characterised it in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and re-introduces the joy and playfulness so typical to the genre in 18th-century Vienna.

Additionally, the orchestra is back to Mozartian dimensions, as Poulenc replaces the full symphony orchestra with a much thinner ensemble, limiting the number of strings to 28 players only, and reducing the rest of the orchestra to a small group of winds. As in Mozart's mature concertos, the winds are often given solo parts and create an intimate, chamber-like relationship with the solo pianists.

But perhaps the deepest link to Mozart can be found in Poulenc's own eclectic style, constantly 'zapping' from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the serious to the humorous, associatively juxtaposing styles and cultural registers – in all these respects, Poulenc can be considered a legitimate modern heir to Mozart's own eclecticism. In other words: what Mozart managed to do by creating a perfect blend of all the styles prevalent in late 18th-century Vienna, Poulenc follows by effectively mixing the styles prevalent in mid-20th-century Paris.

Poulenc's polystylism is indeed staggering in its richness: banal street melodies of a circus and carousel, refined and sophisticated Parisian *chansons*, modern episodes with prickly Stravinsky-style rhythms mixed with exotic and mysterious Asian gamelan bells. All of this spectacular 'mish-mash' is wrapped with Poulenc's captivating Gallic wit, and the spectacular polystylistic result can be considered as one of the first pioneering steps towards Postmodernism in the concert hall.

## **Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–1975): Concertino for Two Pianos, Op. 94**

In addition to being an accomplished composer, Shostakovich was also an excellent pianist and wrote some of his piano works for his own use. The *Concertino, Op. 94* was written for him and his son, Maxim Shostakovich, who later became a well-known conductor.

The piece was written with a marked imbalance between the two piano parts: the first was virtuosic and brilliant in nature, while the second was massive and 'orchestral' in character. In the new version featured for this recording, many of these orchestral-like passages were given to an actual orchestra, resulting in the creation of a short and compact concerto movement for two pianos and strings.

The work is written in the Baroque scheme of French overture – a slow and glorious opening, followed by a quicker *Allegretto* section. The *Allegretto* is interrupted twice – in the middle and towards the end – when echoes of the slow opening reappear, creating a sharp contrast to the reckless nature of the *Allegretto*.

Of the many gems hidden in the score, it is worth pointing at the dramatic dialogue between the soloists and the orchestra throughout the slow introduction, and, no less, at the sharp contrasts in mood and character throughout the following *Allegretto* – between simple, banal writing, as demanded by the Soviet ideology, and more dramatic and serious episodes, in which the composer speaks from the bottom of his heart. This constant swing presents the inherent conflict faced by many composers in Soviet Russia – the authorities brutally forced them to provide shallow entertainment for the masses, while their own professional credo wouldn't let them give up on a more serious and authentic expression.

## **Aryeh Levanon (b. 1932): Land of Four Languages**

Aryeh Levanon is one of the most popular composers in Israel, creating on the seam between art music and popular music. Born in Romania, he immigrated to Israel in 1951.

*Land of the Four Languages* binds together four folk songs in Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish and Ladino – languages traditionally used in Israel by the country's Jewish and Arab communities.

The first song is *Im Ha-Shachar* ('At Dawn'), which is based on a Jewish-Yemenite tune, to which Hebrew words were traditionally added. The second song is *Oyfen Weg* ('On a Road Stands a Tree') – a melancholy ballade about life and its complexity, originally sung in Yiddish. The third song is a Romance in Ladino – *Povereta Muchachica* ('Poor Girl'), a kind of soft and tender lullaby. The fourth song is based on a Bedouin-Arabic melody in the rhythm of a *debka* (Levantine folk dance). In its most popular version it was given Hebrew words and became known as *Debka Rafiah*.

By using traditional songs from four different communities co-existing in Israel, the music symbolises the hope for peace and harmony in this conflict-torn part of the world. The work was commissioned by the *MultiPiano Ensemble* and received its debut performance in 2012 during the ensemble's tour to South America.

**Tomer Lev**



## Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales



The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's (RPO) mission to enrich lives by offering orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal places it at the forefront of music making in the UK. Performing approximately two hundred concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half a million people, the RPO embraces a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. While artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire. The RPO aims to place orchestral music at the heart of contemporary society, collaborating with creative partners to foster a deeper engagement with communities to ensure that live orchestral music is accessible to as many people as possible. To achieve this, in 1993 the Orchestra launched RPO Resound, which has grown to become the most innovative and respected orchestral community and education programme in the UK and internationally. [www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Born in Moscow, GRAMMY Award-nominated cellist and conductor Dmitry Yablonsky's career has taken him to Carnegie Hall, Teatro alla Scala and Théâtre Mogador, among other such celebrated venues. As a conductor he has worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Mexico. In 2010 he received the Diploma of Honorary Academician at the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has transcribed and edited works for cello which have been published by the International Music Company and Dover Publications. In 2008 Naxos released his recording of Popper's *Forty Études* for solo cello (8.557718-19) to critical acclaim. He is a professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University and has served as artistic director of the Wandering Stars Music Festival in Israel since 2019. He made his debut conducting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in May 2022. He plays two cellos, a Joseph Guarnerius, filius Andrea and a Matteo Goffriller. [www.dmitryablonsky.com](http://www.dmitryablonsky.com)

## **Tomer Lev**

Tomer Lev (b. 1967) enjoys a versatile career as a soloist, chamber musician, arranger and pedagogue. He has performed internationally at venues such as Lincoln Center, the Berliner Philharmonie, Teatro Colón and Beijing Concert Hall, and has collaborated with numerous prestigious orchestras around the world, enjoying a long relationship with the Israel Philharmonic. A frequent guest at international festivals, he has recorded for Naxos, Hyperion, ASV, Centaur and Champs Hill. In 2004, together with Zubin Mehta and philanthropist Josef Buchmann, he co-founded the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University.

## **Berenika Glixman**

Born in the former USSR in 1984, Berenika Glixman immigrated to Israel aged seven, subsequently winning national and international awards. Early in her career she was chosen by Zubin Mehta to perform under his conductorship in Tel Aviv, and has since appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras in Israel, Europe and the US. She studied with Tomer Lev at Tel Aviv University, and recently joined the faculty of the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music. [www.berenika.synthasite.com](http://www.berenika.synthasite.com)

## **Daniel Borovitzky**

Daniel Borovitzky (b. 1991, Russia) immigrated to Israel aged three. By eleven, he had won the Grand Prix at the Athens Young Pianists Competition, followed by First Prize at the Isidor Bajic Piano Memorial Competition in Serbia and the Grand Prix Animato in Paris. He has toured internationally, appearing with the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta. He completed his Bachelor's degree with Tomer Lev at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music and subsequently studied at Yale University, the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln and Musik-Akademie Basel. [www.borovitzky.com](http://www.borovitzky.com)

## **Almog Segal**

Almog Segal (b. 1995, Israel) is a laureate of numerous international competitions and regularly performs around the world, having appeared with all the major Israeli orchestras, including the Israel Philharmonic, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. Segal studied with Luisa Yoffe at the Hassadna Jerusalem Music Conservatory and Tomer Lev at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music. He undertook graduate studies at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, Weimar and the Kunstuniversität Graz. [www.almogsegal.com](http://www.almogsegal.com)

## **Nimrod Meiry-Haftel**

Nimrod Meiry-Haftel (b. 1994, Israel) is a graduate of the Israel Conservatory of Music and the Thelma Yellin High School of the Arts, and a member of the Jerusalem Music Centre's Young Musicians Unit. Meiry-Haftel has performed in numerous broadcasts for Israel Radio and in some of the country's most prestigious venues, and has notably appeared alongside Emanuel Ax. He studied at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music with Tomer Lev and Arnon Erez.

## MultiPiano Ensemble



The *MultiPiano* project was launched in 2011 by the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, a joint institution of Tel Aviv University and the Israel Philharmonic, in order to explore the rich literature composed for multi-hand piano combinations, from Bach to contemporary music. Under artistic director Tomer Lev, the ensemble has undertaken 14 international tours across North and South America, Europe and the Far East, and collaborated with orchestras such as the Israel Philharmonic, English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 2015 *MultiPiano* received the 'Best Israeli Chamber Ensemble' award from the Israeli Ministry of Culture. In April 2021 the ensemble released its debut recording, *Mozart: The Complete MultiPiano Concertos* (Hyperion) with the English Chamber Orchestra, which included the world premiere of Mozart's *Larghetto and Allegro* in Lev's concertante completion. The album was named as one of the finest classical releases of 2021 by Scala Radio (UK), and reached number six in the UK Specialist Classical Chart. [www.multipiano.net](http://www.multipiano.net)



Concertante orchestral works for more than one keyboard instrument saw a revival after the First World War with the neo-Baroque trends of the time helping to revitalise the neglected *concerto grosso* genre. Recorded here in a new version with three pianos, Martin's *Petite symphonie concertante* reflects the dark tensions of the Second World War, while Poulenc's delightful *Concerto for Two Pianos* is infused with the spirit of Mozart in its rich and eclectic stylistic tapestry. Shostakovich's *Concertino*, in a new orchestral version, shifts between superficial Soviet entertainment and heartfelt expressiveness, and the songs quoted in Aryeh Levanon's *Land of Four Languages* symbolise a hope for peace and harmony in Israel.



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

## WORKS FOR PIANOS AND ORCHESTRA



Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

- |             |  |              |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| <b>1–3</b>  | <b>Frank Martin</b> (1890–1974)<br><b>Petite symphonie concertante</b> (1944–45) (arr. Tomer Lev<br>for three pianos and two string orchestras, 2015)*   | <b>20:50</b> |
| <b>4–6</b>  | <b>Francis Poulenc</b> (1899–1963)<br><b>Concerto for Two Pianos in D minor, FP 61</b> (1932)  | <b>19:17</b> |
| <b>7</b>    | <b>Dmitry Shostakovich</b> (1906–1975)<br><b>Concertino for Two Pianos, Op. 94</b> (1953)<br>(arr. Tomer Lev for two pianos and string orchestra, 2016)* | <b>9:29</b>  |
| <b>8–11</b> | <b>Aryeh Levanon</b> (b. 1932)<br><b>Land of Four Languages</b> (2012–13)<br>for two pianos eight hands and string orchestra**                           | <b>11:00</b> |

\*FIRST RECORDING OF ARRANGEMENT \*\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

### *MultiPiano Ensemble*

**Tomer Lev** **1–6** **8–11**, **Berenika Glixman** **1–3** **7–11**, **Daniel Borovitzky** **1–6**,  
**Almog Segal** **7–11**, **Nimrod Meiry-Haftel** **8–11**, **Piano**

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Dmitry Yablonsky**

A detailed track list and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet  
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Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd) • Engineer: Mike Clements • Editor: Rafi Eshel

Booklet notes: Tomer Lev • A co-production with Tel Aviv University, Buchmann-Mehta School of Music  
(in cooperation with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra)

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