

Daniele Gatti

Photo: Anne Dokter

Daniele Gatti was born in Milan where he graduated in composition and conducting. He is currently chief conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Prior to this he was music director of the Orchestre National de France, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna. He has conducted at leading opera houses and festivals including the Vienna State Opera, the Bayreuth Festival, the Salzburg Festival, La Scala, Bavarian State Opera, the Royal Opera House, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Metropolitan Opera. Regular conducting engagements include the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, Bayerischer Rundfunk, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra Filarmonica della

Scala. He has undertaken tours to the United States, Europe and Asia, and in 2017 he will open the new season at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome with *La damnation de Faust*.

David Coleman

Photo: Costin Radu

David Coleman conducts worldwide on the concert platform and in the theatre. He has appeared with many major British orchestras and with leading opera houses and concert orchestras worldwide. His repertoire is extensive, ranging from the great symphonies to many new compositions. He has directed a large number of opera galas as well as appearing at international music festivals. He actively promotes new music for which he has won several prestigious awards for innovative programming and performances. As a composer, David Coleman has written works for the concert platform, theatre and TV.

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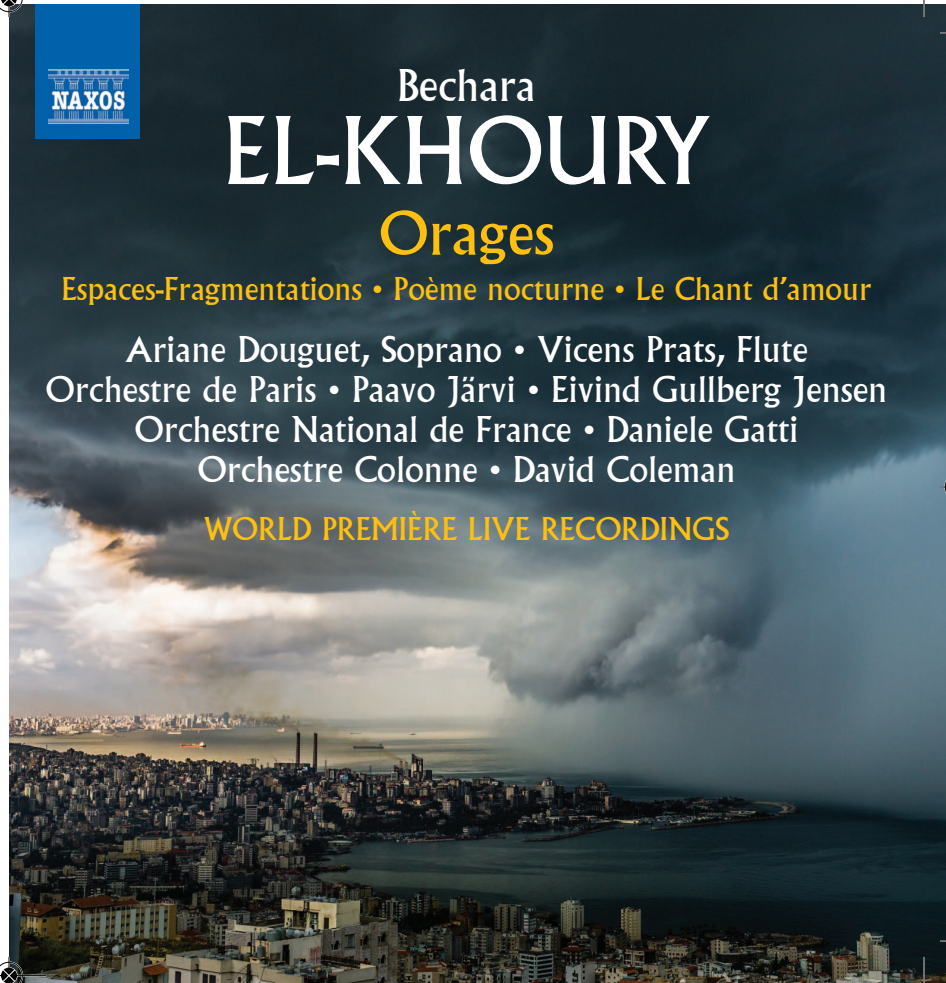
Bechara EL-KHOURY

Orages

Espaces-Fragmentations • Poème nocturne • Le Chant d'amour

Ariane Douguet, Soprano • Vicens Prats, Flute
Orchestre de Paris • Paavo Järvi • Eivind Gullberg Jensen
Orchestre National de France • Daniele Gatti
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WORLD PREMIÈRE LIVE RECORDINGS





Bechara El-Khoury (b. 1957)

Orages · Espaces-Fragmentations · Poème nocturne · Le Chant d'amour

Commissioned by the Orchestre de Paris, *Orages* (Storms) was written in 2013 and first performed at the Salle Pleyel, conducted by Paavo Järvi, on 11 September 2013, as part of the orchestra's season-opening concert.

While world events such as the First Lebanese War (*Les Ruines de Beyrouth*, *Le Liban en flammes*, *Requiem*, Naxos 8.557043 / 8.557691), 9/11 (*New York Tears and Hope*, Naxos 8.570134) and the Shoah (*War Concerto*) have in the past inspired El-Khoury to reflect and meditate on the human condition, several of his more recent works (*Autumn Pictures*, *The Dark Mountain*, Naxos 8.572773) reveal the influence on his musical inspiration of landscape and the natural world.

Recalling his youth in Lebanon, the composer has spoken of how he loved "the storms that broke at the end of the day, when the light was sinking into anarchy", so loud that he could no longer hear the piano properly as he played.

Rather than the kind of physical, programmatic descriptions we find in works by Beethoven, Berlioz or Richard Strauss, El-Khoury's music here conveys a momentary impression of the moods and atmospheres created by such chaotic natural phenomena, and of their psychological effect on people – the fear and sensory deprivation that storms can engender in us.

"The terrifying rumbling became a symphony of destruction, and the crazed flashes of lightning told the story of the earth's journey towards the unknown, towards silence... I was a non-existent being in a majestic combat pitting the elements against the darkness!"

The "anarchy" and random nature of a storm are portrayed in non-narrative fashion, using contrasting musical materials, constantly worked and distorted in subtle fashion, arranged in a pattern outside conventional formal processes of construction.

A few landmarks to listen out for... A trumpet call harmonised with clusters, then sinister tremolo chords introduce an expressive, four-note principal motif in the low strings. Its symmetrical structure (two minor seconds, rising and falling respectively, separated by a wide

interval) will thereafter be subject to multiple transformations, derivations, distortions, amplifications or condensations and inversions, particularly once the brass have made their first entry. The motif is later heard on the trombones, in a very tight canon, beneath a rhythmic ostinato on a single chord played by the trumpets. The storm briefly abates before a new atmosphere establishes itself, with alternating flashes on brass and on woodwind, and a whirling ostinato in the violins.

The only truly calm moment in the work, marked *Lumineux*, is made up of perfect chords with an Ivesian cosmic resonance (*The Unanswered Question!*). Later, a new, lyrical five-note motif, drawn from a whole-tone scale, appears eight times (like an echo of the Fifth Act of *Pelléas!*).

With a sudden, dramatic intensification – in the style of Penderecki – in the bass tones with strings polarised on F and then A flat, there begins a remarkable four-phase episode, introduced each time by a woodwind grouping, through which the brass can be heard in triadic harmony above dissonant string tremolos, ultimately leading to a huge section for brass derived from the principal motif.

Espaces-Fragmentations (2011) is the product of an unusual commission. In the context of a complete Beethoven symphony cycle given by the Orchestre National de France and Daniele Gatti, Radio France asked five composers each to write a work of about ten minutes' duration that would use the same instrumentation as one of the Beethoven symphonies on the same programme. This work was performed between the *Second* and the *Pastoral*.

Speaking about *Espaces-Fragmentations*, El-Khoury has called it "the translation of a reflection on time – past, present and future...". He sees a cosmic dimension of "fragmented spaces, lost in the night sky, like long-dead stars whose light has only just reached our eyes". The work's poetic vision is that of "a strange journey into night that crosses our world like a flash of lightning heralding a

Paavo Järvi



orchestras. As a GRAMMY® Award-winning artist, Paavo Järvi is one of the most prolific recording conductors of today with a discography of widely ranging repertoire.

Paavo Järvi is currently chief conductor of the NHK Symphony Orchestra and artistic director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie. He is the founder of the Estonian Festival Orchestra, which brings together leading Estonian musicians with soloists from Europe's top-ranking orchestras to perform at the annual Pärnu Music Festival. He is also conductor laureate of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, music director laureate of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and artistic adviser to the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his permanent positions, Järvi is much in demand as a guest conductor, appearing regularly with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Berlin Staatskapelle, the Munich Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra, London and the Staatskapelle Dresden, among other world-class

Eivind Gullberg Jensen



Equally at home on the concert platform and the opera stage, Gullberg Jensen's opera highlights include *Tosca* (Wiener Staatsoper), *The Rake's Progress* (Finnish National Opera), *Der fliegende Holländer* (Opéra de Lille), *Jenůfa* (English National Opera), *Rusalka* (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma), *Il corsaro* (Opernhaus Zürich), *Fidelio* (Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Bayerische Staatsoper, and as part of the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden) as well as *Eugene Onegin* and *La Bohème* (Den Norske Opera). Orchestral highlights include the NDR Radiophilharmonie (where he was previously music director), the Berlin Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, the Munich Philharmonic, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Collaborations with soloists include Frank Peter Zimmerman, Yefim Bronfman, Hélène Grimaud, Leif Ove Andsnes, Truls Mørk, Janine Jansen and Anne-Sophie Mutter.

www.eivindgullbergjensen.com





Orchestre National de France



The Orchestre National de France, founded in 1934, was France's first full-time professional symphony orchestra, and eighty years later, its history is embossed with unforgettable concert performances, countless French and world premières, outstanding recordings and world-class tours in collaboration with exceptional international artists who exemplify the orchestra's passion for excellence. The orchestra has a distinguished list of conductors emeriti, including Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht, Manuel Rosenthal, André Cluytens, Roger Désormière, Charles Munch, Maurice Le Roux, Jean Martinon, Sergiu Celibidache, Lorin Maazel, Jeffrey Tate, Charles Dutoit, Kurt Masur and Daniele Gatti. Emmanuel Krivine has been music director designate since September 2016. Worldwide touring success has also

established the Orchestre National de France on the international circuit far beyond its Paris home. Highlights of the 2014-2015 season have marked the orchestra's return to residency at the Maison de la Radio where a new auditorium was built for the radio orchestra. The orchestra is giving most of its concerts in Paris in this new hall. Nevertheless, the orchestra keeps its seventy-year partnership with the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées mostly for operatic repertoire. The Orchestre National de France is part of Radio France. All concerts are broadcast by France Musique.

Orchestre Colonne



The Orchestre Colonne was founded in 1873 by the violinist and conductor Edouard Colonne, becoming one of the most highly regarded Parisian orchestras. The Concerts Colonne promoted the contemporary music of the time, featuring Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Fauré, D'Indy, Charpentier, Debussy, Widor, Dukas, Ravel, Chabrier, Wagner and Richard Strauss. Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Grieg, Richard Strauss and Prokofiev all came to conduct their works at the Concerts Colonne. The orchestra has also been conducted by many distinguished artists including Gabriel Pierné, Paul Paray, Charles Munch, Pierre Dervaux, Antonello Allemandi, Lovro von Matačić, Sylvain Cambreling, Dennis Russell Davies, Michel Corboz, Kent Nagano and, since 2004, by Laurent Petitgirard, its current music director. In addition to its own concert season at venues including the Salle Pleyel, the Salle Gaveau, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and, since 2017, the historic Salle Wagram, the orchestra took part in the Opéra de Paris ballet programme. It has made a number of soundtrack recordings.

storm in a moment of precarious calm". The work is made up of very short units of sound that give this impression of flashes, with an orchestration that continually bends and shatters to fill the sound space. The opening is characteristic, unveiling the key materials that will be transformed and combined throughout the rest of the work. We then hear a mysterious passage of static harmonies, out of which burst aerial flute figures, a new harmonic construction in dynamic progression, dense brass clashes, and an urgent cry from the high strings. Shortly after this, the timpani play an obsessive nine-crochet rhythmic motif which, after a four-note melodic figure on horns and trumpet, takes on different, variously fragmented, forms before turning into an ominous motif also present in the orchestral cadenza of *Poème nocturne*.

El-Khoury's *Poème nocturne*, Op. 80 for flute and orchestra (2009), another commission from the Orchestre de Paris, was written to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of the immensely talented and internationally renowned French flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal.

Cast in a single movement divided into three sections, the work is unusual in that it reverses the traditional rôles of soloist and orchestra – the cadenza is given to the latter, rather than to the virtuoso instrumentalist. According to the composer, this dramatic orchestral cadenza "represents the image of a mountain rising in the middle of a plain, an infinite plain, on which poetic images mingle with dreams and daydreams in space, time and silence..."

The flute, which only plays in the slow outer sections, is the bearer of dreams, mystery, contemplation and meditation – this is the nocturnal aspect of the tribute. The cadenza symbolises Rampal, the admired soloist and world-class artist, its dramatic nature reflecting the grief caused by the recollection of his death. In a spirit of universalisation, El-Khoury creates a link between his tribute to Rampal, a European musician, and the cultures of the Near East, explaining that the work "takes flight beneath the clouds of Europe and ends its journey in a sunlit eastern port, the origin of so many memories and eras across the centuries..."

The contemplative first section, the longest of the three, is lyrical and restrained throughout, its smooth surface gently disturbed towards the end by music lighter and airier in feel, before a return to the initial meditative atmosphere.

The central section, for the orchestra alone, is an astonishing piece of writing, a kind of crossroads between past and future in terms of the stylistic means employed by the composer. Numerous elements clash together in a short space of time: a tormented theme on brass and low strings, horn glissandi and fanfares, violent, harrowing two-semiquaver blows for woodwind, horns and low strings (and reused in *Espaces-Fragmentations*), four-note calls for the brass.

Later we hear, among other things, the four-note symmetrical motif recycled, unchanged, in a similar construction in *Orages*, strident soaring blasts on the flutes, and polyrhythmic textures over the kind of static harmonies heard in *Lutte*, the fourth movement of *Les Fleuves engloutis* (2001; Naxos 8.570134), as well as in the much later *Orages*.

The third section marks a return to the mysterious and lyrical atmosphere of the first, borrowing its materials, from which, finally, there emanates a subtle oriental fragrance.

The text of *Le Chant d'amour*, Op. 44, a lyric poem for soprano and orchestra, is drawn from the twenty-fourth of Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques*. In setting this Romantic poem, El-Khoury employs a post-Romantic style at times reminiscent of Richard Strauss, a composer he greatly admires, as witness his recent seventh symphonic poem *Elektra 'Hommage à Richard Strauss'*. Composed in Paris in May 1987, *Le Chant d'amour* has a lyrical expressiveness akin to that of the *Méditation poétique* for violin and orchestra, Op. 41 (Naxos 8.557692).

The music is here conventionally arranged around the three strophes of the sung text, the orchestra providing a prelude, two interludes and a postlude.

The orchestral introduction opens with an impassioned, lively motif on close-knit strings, alternated twice with an expressive descending phrase on violins and flutes. Then the voice enters, at first reticent, then





blossoming into lyricism to the point of wonder; the oboe provides a brief bridge, derived from the first motif, which leads to a rhapsodic passage of static harmonies.

The first interlude explodes in a brass-dominated orchestra, then we hear a sumptuous tutti which ends, after a horn glissando, in a passage of lyrical string writing. In the second strophe the vocal line becomes more disjointed, although its unfinished, fractured nature in no way detracts from its expressiveness. A moving violin solo briefly evokes Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. A new bridge, this time for horn, eventually joined by the rest of the brass and by another lyrical moment for the

strings, introduces an ascent symbolising estrangement, flight and fragility, emphasised by chromatic writing.

The second interlude begins in the strings with parallel triadic harmonies that call to mind Sibelius; a trumpet phrase then emerges which is picked up by the clarinets, then the violins. Static or parallel harmonies continue throughout the final, recitative-like strophe. A final Sibelian touch is added by the horns to the postlude's serene, solemn writing for strings.

Gérald Hugon

English translation: Susannah Howe

Special thanks to the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Colonne, Ministère Libanais de la Culture, Bruno Hamard, Didier de Cottignies, Samuel Serin, Gilles Kasic, Sibel Demircan, Marie-Cécile Mazzoni, Solène Grégoire Marzin and Laurent Pelissier.

Bechara El-Khoury (né en 1957)

Orages · Espaces-Fragmentations · Poème nocturne · Le Chant d'amour

Commande de l'Orchestre de Paris, les *Orages* furent écrits en 2013 et créés Salle Pleyel sous la direction de Paavo Järvi le 11 septembre, au concert d'ouverture de la saison 2013 de l'orchestre.

Si la guerre au Liban (*Les Ruines de Beyrouth, Le Liban en flammes, Requiem*, Naxos 8.557043 & 8557691), l'attentat du World Trade Center (*New York Tears and Hope* Naxos 8. 570134), la mémoire de la Shoah (*War Concerto*) avaient nourri la réflexion et la méditation du compositeur sur la condition humaine, plusieurs de ses œuvres récentes (*Autumn Pictures, The Dark Mountain*, Naxos 8.572773) témoignent d'une grande sensibilité perméable à la nature et aux paysages de ce monde.

De ses jeunes années encore au Liban, le compositeur se remémore « j'aimais les orages de fin de journée, quand la lumière sombrait dans l'anarchie et que je n'arrivais plus à entendre clairement mon piano. »

Plus qu'une description physique et programmatique, comme il est possible d'en rencontrer encore chez Beethoven, Berlioz, ou Richard Strauss, l'œuvre d'El-Khoury traduit ici, dans une esthétique de l'instant, des états et des atmosphères engendrés par le chaos du phénomène naturel, et son effet psychique sur l'humain, en raison de la terreur et de la perte de sens qui en découlent.

« Le grondement terrible devenait une symphonie destructrice et les éclairs en folie racontaient le voyage de

Vicens Prats



Photo: Studio Cabrelli

Vicens Prats studied at the Barcelona Conservatory, and in Paris at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, where he was awarded the flute first prize unanimously. In 1985 he was a laureate of the Kobe National Competition in Japan. He has been principal flautist of the Orchestre de Paris since 1991, gives regular masterclasses throughout the world, and conducts courses at the Escuela Superior de Música de Catalunya in Barcelona.

Orchestre de Paris



Photo: Radio France/Christophe Abramovitz

The Orchestre de Paris gives over one hundred concerts each season and during international tours. The orchestra's first music director, Charles Munch, was succeeded by Herbert von Karajan, Sir Georg Solti, Daniel Barenboim, Semyon Bychkov, Christoph von Dohnányi, Christoph Eschenbach and Paavo Järvi. Daniel Harding has been music director of the Orchestre de Paris since 2016, the ninth person to have held this position, with Thomas Hengelbrock joining him as associate conductor. The orchestra is rooted in the French musical tradition and favours 19th- and 20th-century repertoire as well as contemporary music. The Orchestre de Paris, with its 119 musicians, has been financed by the French Ministry of Culture and the City of Paris since its creation in 1967.





Bechara El-Khoury



Bechara El-Khoury was born in Beirut in 1957 and started his musical studies in Lebanon, moving in 1979 to Paris to study with Pierre-Petit, then Director of the École Normale de Musique. The televised gala concert of his works on 9th December 1983 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris with the Orchestre Colonne conducted by Pierre Dervaux, to mark the centenary of the Lebanese-American philosopher and poet Khalil Gibran, proved ground-breaking in El-Khoury's career. In 1987 he took French nationality. His works have been played by leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France, the Orchestre de Paris, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the European Chamber Orchestra, the Basler Kammerorchester and the Hallé Orchestra, among others, with conductors including Pierre Dervaux, Daniel Harding, Martyn Brabbins, Kurt Masur, Jean-Claude Casadesu, Daniele Gatti, Paavo Järvi and Jiří Bělohlávek.

Ariane Douguet



Photo: www.leidroitperrin.com

The gifted soprano Ariane Douguet has a repertoire that ranges from opera to chamber music, oratorio to recital, and Baroque to contemporary. She has appeared in France at theatres including Opéra du Rhin, Opéra de Massy, Opéra de Besançon, the Salle Pleyel, the Salle Gaveau, Radio France, the Musée d'Orsay, Le Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, Sainte-Chapelle and L'Olympia. She has performed internationally at the SWR Schwetzingen Festival, the Festival de Vevey, the Théâtre Royal, Mons, and elsewhere. After having sung lyric soprano repertoire she now concentrates on essentially dramatic rôles.

la terre vers l'inconnu et le silence... J'étais un être inexistant dans le combat grandiose qui opposait les éléments aux ténébres ! »

L' « anarchie » et le caractère aléatoire du phénomène naturel sont rendus de manière non narrative, au moyen de matériaux musicaux contrastés, toujours subtilement travaillés et déformés, agencés dans une combinatoire qui échappe aux processus formels classiques de construction.

Quelques repères sonores... Un appel de trompette harmonisé de clusters, puis de menaçants accords en trémolos, introduisent aux cordes graves un motif principal expressif de quatre notes. Sa structure symétrique (deux secondes mineures respectivement ascendante et descendante séparées par un large intervalle) connaîtra de multiples transformations, dérivations, distorsions, amplifications ou condensations et inversions, notamment dès la première entrée des cuivres. Plus tard, ce motif est entendu aux trombones, en canon très rapproché, sous un ostinato rythmique des trompettes sur un seul accord. Après un bref apaisement, un nouvel état sonore s'installe alternant des crépitations aux cuivres et aux bois, avec un ostinato tournoyant aux violons.

Le seul moment véritablement calme de l'œuvre, indiqué *Lumineux*, est constitué d'accords parfaits à la résonance cosmique « ivesienne » (*The Unanswered Question* !). Plus tard, passe huit fois un nouveau motif lyrique de cinq sons, en gamme par tons (comme un écho du cinquième acte de *Pelléas* !).

Avec une brusque intensification dramatique, à la manière de Penderecki, sur des basses aux cordes polarisées successivement sur *fa* et *la* bémol, commence un épisode remarquable en quatre phases, chaque fois introduite par un agrégat des bois, laissant entendre les cuivres en accords parfaits sur des trémolos dissonants des cordes, qui aboutissent à une massive section aux cuivres dérivée du motif principal.

Espaces-Fragmentations résulte d'une commande inaccoutumée. À l'occasion d'une série de concerts de l'Orchestre National de France dédiée à l'intégrale des Symphonies de Beethoven et dirigée par Daniele Gatti,

Radio France avait demandé à cinq compositeurs d'écrire une œuvre d'une dizaine de minutes en relation avec la nomenclature orchestrale des symphonies jouées au cours du programme. L'œuvre fut entendue entre la *Seconde Symphonie* et la *Symphonie « Pastorale »*.

Au sujet de cette œuvre, le compositeur déclare qu'elle constitue « la traduction d'une réflexion sur le temps vécu, le temps présent et le temps à venir... ». La dimension cosmique est présentée par lui comme des « Espaces fragmentés, perdus dans le ciel de la nuit, comme des lumières et des étoiles déjà éteintes depuis longtemps, mais qui viennent d'arriver à notre rencontre. » La vision poétique serait celle d'« un voyage étrange dans la nuit qui traverse notre monde tel un éclair annonçant une tempête dans un calme précaire. » Cette composition est constituée d'unités sonores très courtes qui donnent cette impression d'éclatement avec une orchestration résolument diffractée dans la totalité de l'espace sonore. Le début est caractéristique. Il dévoile l'essentiel des matériaux qui seront transformés et combinés dans l'entièreté de l'œuvre. On entend successivement un état harmonique statique et mystérieux, d'où jaillissent des figures aériennes aux flûtes, une nouvelle construction harmonique en progression dynamique, des heurts resserrés aux cuivres, un cri pressant aux cordes aiguës. Peu après survient aux timbales un motif rythmique de neuf notes obsédantes qui, après une figure mélodique de quatre notes aux cors et trompette, prendra différentes formes fragmentées de diverses manières jusqu'à se transformer en un motif au caractère fatidique déjà présent dans la cadence orchestrale du *Poème nocturne*.

Le *Poème nocturne op. 80* pour flûte et orchestre (2009), commandé de l'Orchestre de Paris, fut écrit à l'occasion de la commémoration du 10^e anniversaire du décès de Jean-Pierre Rampal, l'immense flûtiste français qui connut une renommée internationale exceptionnelle.

Dans ce *Poème nocturne*, en un mouvement divisé en trois parties, on remarquera d'emblée l'inversion des fonctions traditionnelles dévolues respectivement à l'instrument soliste et à l'orchestre. Car ici, la cadence est confiée à l'orchestre seul et non pas au soliste virtuose. Il





s'agit selon le compositeur d'« une cadence orchestrale dramatique qui représente l'image d'une montagne au milieu de la plaine, une plaine infinie où les images poétiques se mêlent aux songes et aux rêves dans l'espace, le temps et le silence... »

La flûte, qui joue uniquement dans les parties externes lentes, est vecteur de rêve, de mystère, de recueillement, de méditation, et contribue à la part nocturne de l'hommage. La cadence symbolise le soliste admiré et l'artiste monumental ; par son caractère dramatique, elle témoigne de la douleur engendrée par le souvenir de sa perte. Dans une ouverture universaliste, El-Khoury invite à inscrire la mémoire de l'artiste européen dans la perspective de l'orient « où tant de mémoires et d'époques ont tracé la lumière à travers les siècles... »

La première partie méditative, la plus longue des trois, est continuellement lyrique et contenue, à peine rompue vers la fin par une musique plus légère et plus aérienne, avant de revenir à la méditation initiale.

La partie médiane, pour l'orchestre seulement, est un morceau étonnant, comme un carrefour entre passé et avenir quant aux moyens stylistiques mis en œuvre par le compositeur. De nombreux éléments s'entrechoquent en un cours laps de temps : un thème tourné aux cuivres et cordes graves, des fanfares et des glissandi des cors, des coups violents et angoissants assénés en deux doubles croches aux bois, cors et cordes graves (qui seront réutilisés dans *Espaces-Fragmentations*), des appels de quatre notes aux cuivres.

Plus loin apparaissent, entre autres, le motif symétrique de quatre notes qui sera réutilisé tel quel dans *Orages* dans une construction similaire, des fusées stridentes aux flûtes, et des textures polyrythmiques sur des harmonies statiques déjà rencontrées dans *Luites* extrait des *Fleuves engloutis* (Naxos 8.570134), mais perceptibles aussi ultérieurement dans *Orages*.

La troisième partie marque un retour au climat mystérieux et lyrique du premier mouvement d'où proviennent les matériaux travaillés et dont émane finalement un discret parfum d'orient.

Le Chant d'amour op. 44, poème lyrique pour soprano et orchestre, met en musique un texte provenant

de la vingt-quatrième des *Méditations poétiques* de Lamartine. Pour cette poésie romantique, le compositeur emploie un style musical post-romantique évoquant parfois Richard Strauss, compositeur idolâtré par El-Khoury, comme en témoigne son récent septième poème symphonique *Elektra* « Hommage à Richard Strauss ». Composée à Paris en mai 1987, l'œuvre se situe par le raffinement de son expression dans la proximité de la *Méditation poétique* pour violon et orchestre op. 41 (Naxos 8.557692).

La musique est ici classiquement articulée sur les trois strophes du texte littéraire chanté, avec un orchestre auquel sont dévolues les fonctions de prélude, d'interludes et de postlude.

L'introduction orchestrale s'ouvre aux cordes enlacées avec un motif passionné et allègre, alternant par deux fois avec une phrase descendante expressive aux violons et flûtes. La voix entre. La parole d'abord retenue, s'épanouit dans le lyrisme jusqu'à l'émerveillement ; un bref pont au hautbois dérivé du motif initial conduit à une période extatique, aux harmonies immobiles.

Le premier interlude éclate à l'orchestre dominé par les cuivres, puis un somptueux tutti qu'achève, après un glissando des cors, un élan lyrique aux cordes. Dans la seconde strophe, la parole se fait plus discontinue. Son inaccomplissement, sa fracturation n'altèrent en rien l'expression ressentie. Un émouvant solo de violon évoque brièvement les *Vier letzte Lieder* de Strauss. Un nouveau conduit au cor, enrichi à la fin des autres cuivres et d'une nouvelle percée lyrique des violons, introduit une montée symbolisant l'éloignement, la fuite, la fragilité, soulignés par le chromatisme.

Le second interlude commence aux cordes avec des harmonies parallèles en accords parfaits aux accents « sibéliens », d'où s'élève une phrase à la trompette, prolongée aux clarinettes puis violons. Les harmonies statiques ou parallèles se poursuivent dans toute la dernière strophe au caractère d'un récitatif lyrique. Le postlude serein et grave aux cordes, laisse émerger une dernière touche « sibélienne » aux cors.

Gérald Hugon

6 Le Chant d'amour

Parle-moi ! Que ta voix me touche !
Chaque parole sur ta bouche
Est un écho mélodieux !
Quand ta voix meurt dans mon oreille,
Mon âme résonne et s'éveille,
Comme un temple à la voix des dieux !

Un souffle, un mot, puis un silence,
C'est assez : mon âme devance
Le sens interrompu des mots,
Et comprend ta voix fugitive,
Comme le gazon de la rive
Comprend le murmure des flots.

Un son qui sur ta bouche expire,
Une plainte, un demi-sourire,
Mon cœur entend tout sans effort :
Tel, en passant par une lyre,
Le souffle même du zéphyre
Devient un ravissant accord !

Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869)

6 The Song of Love

Speak to me! Let your voice touch me!
Each word on your lips
is a melodious echo!
When your voice dies away in my ear,
My soul resounds and awakens,
like a temple to the voices of the gods!

A breath, a word, then a silence,
it's enough: my soul anticipates
the meaning of words cut short,
and understands your elusive voice
just as the grassy banks of a stream
understand the murmur of its waters.

A sound that expires on your lips,
a lament, the trace of a smile,
my heart understands it all without trying:
as when the breath of the zephyr
plays across the strings of a lyre
and becomes a beautiful chord!

English translation: Susannah Howe

