



Newsletter

No. 24 – OCTOBER 2011

Forthcoming

12th Servais Concert on November 25, 2011

Alexander Hülshoff is a cello professor at the *Folkwang Hochschule* in Essen and violinist Friedemann Eichhorn teaches at the *Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt* in Weimar. They regularly perform as soloists in Europe, Asia and the US and their performances can be enjoyed on numerous CDs. As recently as 2010 American Naxos issued their complete recording of the duets for cello and violin by the Halle cello player Servais. And four years after their highly appreciated recital on the occasion of the *Festival Servais 2007* they are coming to Halle again, this time with a selection from the romantic repertoire as well as from their Servais CD.



Practical information:

Friday November 25

Council Chamber of the Halle New Town Hall, at 8 p.m.

Tickets are available at the cc 't Vondel, Possozplein 40, 1500 Halle, (+32)(0)2 365 94 05 or online: www.vondel.be.

Members of the Servais Society can buy two tickets at the special subscribers' rate via the Servais Society.

Any questions and queries should be addressed to the Servais Society.

Looking back

Extra Servais Concert on September 11

Last September cellist Didier Poskin travelled to Seoul for a cd recording with compositions by Servais. He played four of Servais' works as a soloist accompanied by the orchestra of the Seoul Broadcast System, an important Korean radio station. Didier Poskin has already made some 20 cd recordings. So another cd will shortly be added featuring work by Servais.

On Sunday September 11, 2011 music lovers were given an opportunity to listen to these works. Didier Poskin per-

Content:

Forthcoming

> *Servais Concert on November 25, 2011*

Looking back

> *Extra Servais Concert*

Servais in the French Alps

Maurice Gendron and Servais

Miscellaneous News

In the Showcase

> *Wen-Sinn Yang plays Servais*

> *'Reflets de Misia'. Misia in the literature.*

Concert Calendar

formed them together with pianist Pierre Brunello in the Servais Room of the Halle Servais Academy. Members and sympathizers of the Servais Society were the privileged listeners to listen to Servais' first and second cello concerto, both of which had not been performed in Halle for decades.



Servais in the French Alps

Looking back at the Villard-Saint-Pancrace Cello Festival (July 9-17, 2011)

Peter François

The parish hall, the little church, the old fire station, a bus shelter or just a garden, it is cello sounds all over the place. This is the village of Villard-Saint-Pancrace during the 'Violoncelles en folie' festival. And it is already the sixth time that this small rural district of Briançon in the French Alps is transformed into a real cello village. What started as a humble undertaking has now developed into a full-fledged festival: several master classes given by seven music teachers and attended by some sixty students, as well as a series of eleven concerts. The driving force behind all this is Fernando Lima de Albuquerque, a Brazilian cello player, who studied in the Hague (with Anner Bijlsma) and Leuven (Roel Dieltiens) and then emigrated to France years ago. He teaches cello and

chamber music at the Briançon Academy, where he is now the key figure of cultural life together with the other directors of the 'Cello au Sommet' Society. During the festival his house in Villard-Saint-Pancrace is a hive of activity. A Czeck harpsichordist, an Argentinian cello player from Mexico, arrived after a forty-hour long journey, a few young participants, all of them are enjoying the pleasant hospitality of Fernando himself and his wife Aude Vanackere.



Cello cases in the alpine landscape

On Saturday July 9 the festival opened with a baroque programme, while on Sunday evening the occasional ensemble 'Octuor de violoncelles Bachianas' could be heard in the Eglise des Cordeliers, which is a medieval church in 'la ville haute' – uptown Briançon, also called 'Cité Vauban', after the military engineer of Louis XIV Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, who had that fortified part of the city built at the beginning of the 18th century. The main item of the programme was the *Bachianas Brasileiros*, no. 5 and 1 by Heitor Villa-Lobos, who in these compositions merged two of his favourite interests: Bach's counterpoint and the Brazilian folk melodies. The Canadian soprano Heather Newhouse saw to the vocal part of the programme in no. 5. In the middle of the 'Fugue' of no. 1 – actually the last item of the programme – panic broke out: the lighting system of the stage fell out and so the artists had to interrupt their performance after a few beats. However, some seconds later the performers recovered in spite of the darkness that had suddenly overcome them and spurred on by Didier Poskin they began Bach's third suite unisono – a piece of music which every cellist knows by heart. A totally unexpected but grand finale.



Didier Poskin, Marinela Doko, Geneviève Teulières-Sommer, Diego Coutinho, Karel Steylaerts, Elise Bailly-Basin, Marine Rodallec and Fernando Lima on July 10

The next day people had to overcome a good climb of a few hundred meters to get to the little church of Puy-Saint-André, where they were treated to a performance given by five students of the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris. The programme was very varied with works such as F. Dressler's *Holländer Polka*, the *Gavotte* of David Popper, the *Ave Maria* and the *Konzertwalzer* by Wilhelm Fitzenhagen and *The Easy Winners* by Scott Joplin.

The concert on Tuesday evening was entirely devoted to 'La violoncelle virtuose' and took place in the chapel of Villard-Saint-Pancrace, which is situated so high it can only be reached on foot. The programme not only featured compositions by Popper, Offenbach and Saint-Saëns, but also Servais' *Fantaisie Burlesque ou le Carnaval de Venise*, played by Didier Poskin, Karel Steylaerts and Marinela Doko, who had arranged the piano accompaniment into one for two cellos. Two hundred pairs of eyes were literally focused on the daredevil feats carried out by the soloist on his instrument. Peter François had first given a short introduction about Servais and his *Fantaisie Burlesque*.



Didier Poskin, Karel Steylaerts and Marinela Doko played Servais

On Wednesday evening there was another performance by the music teachers, this time in 'La grande église' of Villard-Saint-Pancrace with a programme focusing on 'Le violoncelle à l'opéra'. Together with her five colleagues Geneviève Teulières-Sommer executed the overture of Rossini's opera *Wilhelm Tell*, which has a wonderful cello part, also repeatedly played by Servais. Thursday's concert was completely devoted to Brazilian music, performed by Fernando Lima and some of his compatriots, among whom was Diego Coutinho who is studying at the Brussels Conservatory. The guests of honour of this edition of the festival were the Gli Otto Violoncelli di Torino – a cello octet from Turin. The theme of their concert on Friday was film music, with amongst others a much appreciated version of *La vita è bella*. Who does not know that the cello can perfectly assume the guitar part learned something new. Afterwards the Italians were offered dinner to fraternize with their French colleagues.

Servais was manifestly present not only on Tuesday but also on Friday: in the afternoon Peter François gave a lecture on Servais' career as a travelling cello virtuoso, his contribution to the development of the cello technique and his oeuvre. Several sound extracts and some eighty slides were used to illustrate this talk. Many listeners did not know that Servais' improvement of the cello technique had been so far-reaching and that his statue has adorned the Market Square of his native town for the last 140 years.

During the day the young and adult cello players were given individual master classes and group sessions conducted by Fernando Lima, Aude Vanackere, Karel Steylaerts, Didier

Poskin, Marinela Doko, Marine Rodallec and Geneviève Teulières-Sommer. No doubt, the fresh air of the Alps – Briançon is the second highest city in Europe and a favorite skiing resort – promoted the friendly atmosphere during the festival. Also the lunches together – with a chef who did justice to the delights of the French cuisine – contributed to the pleasant ambience. The fruits of this unremitting labour could be heard during four concerts on Friday and Saturday. Cellists of all ages – ranging from 7 to ...77 years – and all levels – absolute beginners and very advanced players – were given a chance of playing. The grand finale was the final concert: the village church of Villard-Saint-Pierre was full to bursting for the performance of an extract from Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the waltz of Shostakovich by an ensemble of over fifty cello players and one double bass player.



Young cellists at work

Meanwhile preparations are already in progress for the organization of the seventh edition of 'Violoncelles en folie', which will take place between July 7 and 15, 2012.

For more information see www.cello-au-sommet.org.

Maurice Gendron and Servais

Peter François

Royaumont Abbey in Asnière sur Oise, at a distance of a mere fifty kilometers from the French capital, is an incredibly peaceful place. And yet numerous cultural activities take place in the abbey buildings; witness a recently established music library. On April 3, 2011 a surprisingly great number of cello cases passed by the entrance gate. However, it was not only the instruments; the cello players themselves shared a



Maurice Gendron

common experience: indeed, all of them had followed classes taught by the French cellist Maurice Gendron (1920-1990) or one of his disciples. For one thing, he taught at the Paris Conservatory, but apart from this he built up a career as a concert cello player, with several prestigious performances and CD recordings.

To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Gendron's death his widow and children had a major memorial concert organized. The musicians came from remote places: so Yu Bing Chu had come over specially from Peking, where he is now a music teacher at the Conservatory, while Paolo Rivaroli came from Genoa. Our compatriot Didier Poskin, a cello teacher at the Brussels Conservatory, also joined in to pay tribute to his former mentor. Among the participants were also Walter Grimmer, nestor of the former students (he followed classes by Gendron as early as the 1950's), Philippe Bary, Gendron's successor at the Paris Conservatory, Edouard Sapey Triomphe from Lyon, Hélène Marie Foulquier from Caen and Elisabeth Kipler from Lille. Some of them had not seen each other for some twenty-five years.



Didier Poskin, Paolo Rivaroli, Walter Grimmer, Yu Bing Chu, Edouard Sapey-Triomphe and Hélène Marie Foulquier (Photo: Balthazar Soulier)

During the afternoon they played in various places of the abbey in varying strength and with the support of other musicians. On the advice of Walter Grimmer Didier Poskin performed Servais' *Fantaisie et Variations sur Le Désir*. As a matter of fact, Maurice Gendron was particularly interested in the oeuvre of Servais, so Walter Grimmer told me when he visited Halle in April 2010: "Gendron regularly played works by Servais and encouraged me as well as his other students to get acquainted with Servais' compositions. He even made an edition of his own of Servais' *Grande fantaisie sur le Barbier de Séville*", which was confirmed with a nod of approval by Didier Poskin: "In his house at Grez-sur-Loing Servais' portrait was given a prominent place by the side of Paganini's. And do you know what his question was when we met for the first time? Where could he possibly find the orchestral scores of Servais' first cello concerto!" Both Walter Grimmer and Didier Poskin gratefully remember their time spent with Gendron. In his introductory address Grimmer respectfully confessed: "tout ce que je peux faire sur mon instrument, je lui dois."

During this concert to honour Gendron the cello players reminded us of his device: "Tu dois servir la musique et pas t'en servir". Also a few anecdotes were an indispensable part of this occasion. So François-Eric Gendron, son of Maurice, a famous French actor himself, told us his father, who was to



Walter Grimmer standing in front of Gendron's photograph in the background

give a concert in Namur featuring twentieth-century music, was approached in his box before the performance proper by the local cello teacher saying: "I strongly advise you not to take part in this very modern programme; personally I have already given concerts in this hall and the audience are utterly 'uneducated'". Nevertheless, Gendron did follow his intended programme while the listeners kept as quiet as a mouse; at the end Gendron was even honoured with a standing ovation. Afterwards the Namur musician rushed to him to ventilate his surprise: "I really don't know what has enthralled them tonight!".

On April 3, 2011 I felt I was a privileged attendant of a fully deserved and excellent tribute to a great cello player.



Walter Grimmer and Didier Poskin visiting Halle, April 2010



Walter Grimmer in Halle

Miscellaneous News

» On August 30, 2011 Anat Meidan and her husband paid a visit to Halle. Anat is an art historian now living in Tel Aviv. She is particularly interested in Misia Godebska, Servais' granddaughter. Consequently she was utterly pleased to have the privilege of walking around in the town where Misia had spent part of her youth. She also showed a keen interest in the many books and documents related to Misia, which she could consult in our Servais collection.

» On September 5, 2011 harpist Dominique Piana paid us a visit. She has been working as a soloist in California for the last thirty years, and also as a teacher and editor of harp music. She is specially interested in the Belgian harp players Jules and Felix Godfroid, who were good friends of Servais. As a matter of fact she was very fascinated by the Servais collection.

www.dominiquepiana.com

» The Italian publishing house Ricordi brought out a revised edition of Servais' *Six Caprices* by Rocco Filippini in 1990. We have recently discovered that this edition was reprinted in a smaller format in 2006. The Six Caprices are also available from Schott (Mainz), Billaudot (Paris) and the International Music Company (New York).

www.duotoiviopuusepp.com

» The exhibition 'CreArtist' of Studio JUNO, set up in the former Halle Post Office building, could be visited between October 1 and 9, 2011. Photographer Thierry Rosmane photographed 25 artists from various cultural "strains", who either now live in Halle or have contributed to the fame of the town. Among them is the Finnish cellist Seeli Toivio, who has made great efforts over the past few years for the propagation of Servais' oeuvre and who was portrayed in the Villa Servais. On the varnishing day of this exhibition on September 30 it was cello player Sarah Dupriez who performed Servais' *Le Lac de Côme*.



© JUNO

www.juno-fotografie.be

- » A cd with an execution of Servais' *Fantaisie sur Le Désir* (see "In the Showcase") has just been released this year. Exactly one hundred years ago the same work was brought out on a record, then also performed by a German orchestra, with Heinrich Kruse as the soloist. A few months ago the Servais Society was able to lay hands on a copy of that 78 rpm disc for the Servais Collection, undoubtedly a rarity after a hundred years. As far as we know it is the oldest recording of a work by Servais. Admittedly, the record does not give the complete composition but only a selection of 8 minutes, as each side could only contain 4 minutes of music.



'Fantasie über Schumanns [sic] Sehnsuchtswalzer (Servais)', Parlophon 665/6 (Servais Collection Halle)

- » Servais' statue in the Halle Great Market Square has been thoroughly cleaned up this year. At the request of the town authorities a specialized firm took in hands the socle and statue, made of precious Carara marble, so they look as new. The statue has been in the centre of the square for 140 years just in front of the Old Town Hall, where it was erected to commemorate Servais. Precisely on October 1 1871 it was solemnly inaugurated in the presence of numerous prominent people – such as painter Félicien Rops, Jean-Pierre Cluysenaer, Henry Vieuxtemps and François Auguste Gevaert. No fewer than twenty local music groups gave performances in town on that day, there was a special gala banquet and three different commemoration medals were made. And last but not least, the sculptor himself attended the festivities: Cyprien Godebski, Servais' Polish-French son-in-law. Statues by Godebski can be admired all over the world and have increasingly been in the focus of public attention for the last few years. The town of Halle can be the first to boast a statue of a cellist. Pablo Casals – 'the Servais of the twentieth century' – got his several decades later. It is also worth remarking that Servais was pictured with his bow and strings carved out of the same block of marble. Servais fans coming to Halle – and there are an ever increasing number of them – are surprised at the beauty of the statue. The Halle website now features some picture postcards of



Postcard from ca. 1910 – © Servais Collection Halle



Servais' statue dating from the 1900-1950 years, kept at the Servais collection of the 'Zuidwestbrabants Museum'. www.stedelijkkeerfgoedcelhalle.be

» In Vienna **FACTORY Theater** worked out the Chopin project, which concerns the performance of some scenes from Frédéric Chopin's life, followed by the publication of a 'Musikhörbuch'. For this publication a short extract from Liszt's *Liebestraum* was used as performed by Seeli and Kalle Toivio in the Halle Basilica on June 6 2007, explicitly referred to in the accompanying cd leaflet.

www.theater-factory.de

In the Showcase

Wen-Sinn Yang plays Servais

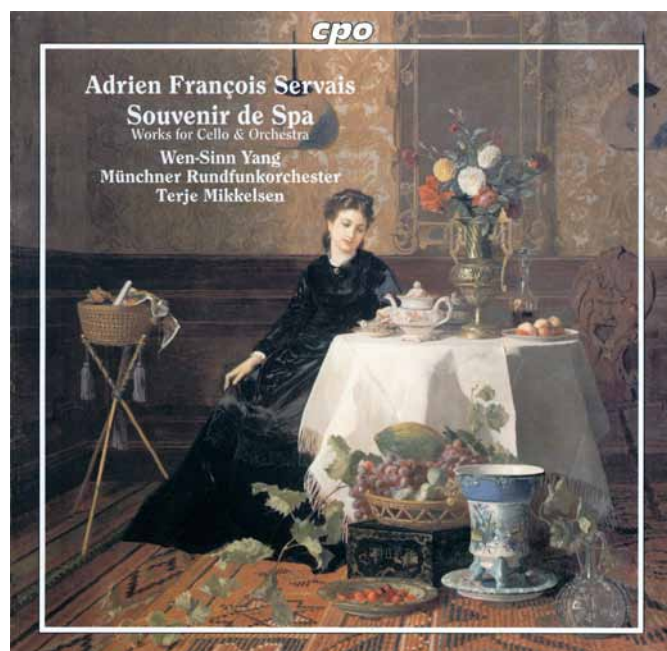
A new cd with works by Servais was brought out by the German CPO label. The performers are the Swiss cellist Wen-Sinn Yang and the 'Münchner Rundfunk Orchester' – the resident orchestra of the 'Bayerische Rundfunk' in Munich. It is the first cd recording of Servais' *Cello Concerto in b minor* and also the very first recording with an orchestra of *Souvenir de Spa*, the *Fantaisie sur Le Barbier de Séville* and the *Fantaisie sur Le Désir*. So an absolute must. As this cd will be circulating all over the world, it is a pleasure to add that Servais' statue features in the accompanying booklet.

It was Wen-Sinn Yang himself who took the initiative for the recording of this cd. Until 2005 he was the solo cellist of the 'Münchner Rundfunkorchester' and he found the orchestra willing to co-operate. Servais' *Souvenir de Spa* was already part of Yang's repertoire, while he was not very familiar with other aspects of his oeuvre. Subsequently he got in touch with the Halle Servais Society for artistic and practical information. After a couple of weeks the choice of the works to be performed was virtually finished: the material to be performed was largely made available by the Servais Society, with the collaboration of the Brussels Academy of Music. Hardly a month later the recording was completed, a dashing exploit if one takes into account the great difficulty of Servais' music the soloist has to face. Chris Hathaway, music librarian of the Houston Public Library, writes about the newly released cd what follows:

(...). *Servais' music for his own instrument doesn't get played often, mainly because it is hugely demanding. It has enormous emotional and lyrical appeal, and the Swiss cellist Wen-Sinn Yang (yes, Swiss: his parents came from Taiwan), now based in Munich, is a more than able advocate for this neglected but very significant part of the cello repertoire. The Souvenir de Spa, a specialty of the young Pablo Casals in the late nineteenth century, has been called "hard to handle" by Wen-Sinn Yang himself, with its long staccato passages and profusion of octaves; the b-minor Concerto, while a finely-shaped piece and by no means a gratuitously "virtuosic" one, abounds in tricky double-stops. The Schubert piece, taking as its basis the Austrian composer's brief Trauer-Walzer, employs literally every virtuoso trick in the book. It's important to remember that the emotional appeal of Servais' music (as much a characteristic of his output as its intimidatingly demanding nature) and his skilled hand as an orchestrator make this work, and all the other pieces on this disc, more pieces of music than merely showpieces.*

The Barber fantasy is not a traditional potpourri or even a Lisztian operatic fantasy. Operatic it most certainly is, but it is a tribute to Servais' ability as a composer as much as it is to his supreme virtuosity as a cellist. Make no mistake: there

is no shortage of fireworks in this piece, but neither is there a shortage of cantabile writing. Wen-Sinn Yang has done a wonderful service for his instrument in getting everything out of the music that's in it, and — what is more — possessing the humility of a true artist, and letting that elusive but unmistakable quality evoke the spirit of a much-neglected composer.¹



What Hathaway is writing here is a good illustration of the turning point which has been discernible for the past decades, slow but steadfast, towards a re-evaluation of the 'virtuoso' music from the romantic era. People are increasingly beginning to realize that quite a lot of valuable music lies hidden in the gigantic pile of scores from that period. Admittedly, also piles of inferior compositions have come to us, which far too long influenced our image of that period. The oeuvre of Servais, the Halle cellist – or at least a great deal of it – rises to the surface, ranking as valuable music. However, Servais' discography, which was poorly represented until the beginning of the 1980's, proves the situation to have been completely different in the past.

'Adrien François Servais. Souvenir de Spa. Works for Cello & Orchestra', cpo 777 542 – 2 (2011).

The cd is available from the Servais Society at €18 (postage not included), to be ordered via peter@servais-vzw.org.

'Reflets de Misia'. Misia in the literature.

After the publication of a novel and a musicological study about Misia author David Lamaze keeps being absorbed in the life of Servais' granddaughter. So he was able to trace some novels and plays in which Misia, on closer inspection, plays a leading part, though her name is not explicitly mentioned. They shed a different or even better light on this fascinating person and, very remarkably, help us to get a more correct image than the novel personage she tended to depict of herself in her memoirs. Six of these texts have now been re-edited by David Lamaze, together with an introduction or

¹ Chris Hathaway, *Music Library Reviews: Di Vittorio and Servais*, www.classical917.org/articles/1312238774-Music-Library-Reviews-di-Vittorio-and-Servais.html, August 1, 2011.

epilogue and numerous notes. The book is concerned with works by Romain Coolus, Robert Scheffer and Claude Anet.

David Lamaze, Reflets de Misia (Lille, Thebookedition).

1: *Romain Coolus, Raphaël (2009, 2-9195-2500-10, 158 p.)*

2: *Robert Scheffer, Le Chemin Nuptial (2010, 978-2-919525-02-7, 163 p.)*

3: *Claude Anet, Ariane jeune fille russe (2010, 978-2-919525-03-4, 166 p.)*

4: *Romain Coolus, Les Amants de Sasy (2011, 978-2-918525-4, 151 p.)*

5: *Robert Scheffer, Le Palais de Proserpine (2011, 978-2-97952-50-5, 256 p.)*

6: *Romain Coolus, Antoinette Sabrier. M. Hennequin & P. Bilhaud, La Gueule du loup (2011, 978-2-919525-06-5, 271 p.)*

The Halle Servais Collection possesses a copy of these books (to be consulted by appointment).

www.le-cygne-de-ravel.com/Reflets.html

Concert Calendar

Servais Society

November 25, 2011 – 12th Servais Concert

Alexander Hülshoff (cello) & Friedemann Eichhorn (violin)
Work by Servais: 3me Duo de Concert; Variations brillantes et concertantes sur l'air God Save the King
Halle, New Town Hall, at 8 p.m.

Organized by: Servais Society and cc 't Vondel

www.servais-vzw.org – www.alexander-huelshoff.de
www.friedemanneichhorn.com

June 9, 2012 – 13th Servais Concert

Wen-Sinn Yang (cello) & Adrian Oetiker (piano)
Work by Servais: to be determined
Halle, New Town Hall, at 8 p.m.

Organized by: Servais Society and cc 't Vondel

www.servais-vzw.org – www.wensinnyang.de
www.adrianoetiker.com

Other initiatives

October 26 & 29, 2011 - Cellist-Composer Collection

Yutaka Hayashi (cello) & Kaeko Suzuki (piano)
Work by Servais: Souvenir de St. Petersburg, opus 15

- October 26: Osaka (Japan),
Osaka Shin-Ai Jogakuin, 10.30 a.m.
- October 29: Shiga (Japan), Figaro Hall, 7 p.m.

www.yutaka-hayashi.vc

November 3, 2011 - Cellist-Composer Collection

Yutaka Hayashi (cello) & Chamber Ensemble Ashia
Work by Servais: Souvenir de St. Petersburg, opus 15
Kobe (Japan), Kobe Uhara Hall, 2 p.m.

www.yutaka-hayashi.vc

November 20, 2011 - Astoria Concerts

Nicolas Deletaille (arpeggione) & Alain Roudier (piano)
Work by Servais: La Romanesca
Brussels, Muziekinstrumenten Museum, 11 a.m.

www.nicolasdeletaille.com
www.astoria-concerts.be

November 28 & 29, 2011 - Cellist-Composer Collection

Yutaka Hayashi (cello) & Kaeko Suzuki (piano)

Work by Servais: Souvenir de St. Petersburg, opus 15

- November 28: Kobe (Japan),
Kobe Shinbun Matsukata Hall, 7 p.m.
- November 29: Nagoya (Japan),
Meito Bunka Sho-gekijo, 7 p.m.

www.yutaka-hayashi.vc

December 16, 2011

Sarah Dupriez (cello) & Camille Thomas (cello)

Work by Servais: Caprice sur des motifs de l'opéra Le Comte Ory de Rossini, opus 3

Elsene (B), D'Ieteren Gallery (50 rue du Mail), 8 p.m.

www.sarahdupriez.com

<http://classicandclassics.blogspot.com/>

January 11, 2012

Sol Gabetta (cello) & Bertrand Chamayou (piano)

Work by Servais: Fantaisie sur deux Airs Russes, opus 13

Hamburg (D), Leiszhalle

www.solgabetta.com

January 21-29, 2012

Sol Gabetta (cello) & Bertrand Chamayou (piano)

Work by Servais: Fantaisie sur deux Airs Russes, opus 13

- January 21: Lörrach (D), Burghof Lörrach
- January 23: Maasmechelen (B), Sint-Pieterskerk Leut, 8.15 p.m. (www.ccmaasmechelen.be)
- January 24: Eindhoven (NL), Muziekgebouw, 8.15 p.m. (www.muziekgebouweindhoven.nl)
- January 25: Gent (B), Handelsbeurs, 8.15 p.m. (www.handelsbeurs.be)
- January 26: Hannover (D)
- January 27: Freiburg (D)
- January 28: Bern (CH), Casino
- January 29: London (UK), Wigmore Hall

www.solgabetta.com

February 1-11 2012

Sol Gabetta (cello) & Mihaela Ursuleasa (piano)

Work by Servais: Fantaisie sur deux Airs Russes, opus 13

- February 1: Berlin (D), Konzerthaus Berlin
- February 3: Münster (D)
- February 4: Bielefeld (D)
- February 5: Munich (D), Prinzregententheater
- February 11: Washington (USA), John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

www.solgabetta.com

Are you going to perform a composition by Servais in the near future or do you know about a performance?

Please let us know!

Most recent info: www.servais-vzw.org

Photos (unless otherwise specified) : Guido François, Peter François, Didier Poskin

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