

Newsletter

No. 30 - December 2014

Content:

In the pipeline

- > Festival ViolencellenSeine
- > Festival year '225 year Halse Harmonie'

Looking back

- > A three-day cello encounter with Servais
- > The Amsterdam Cello Biennal

Miscellaneous News

In the Showcase

- > Cd 'Duo Servais'
- > George Kennaway, Playing the Cello, 1780 1930
- > René de Vries, Met een cello door Siberië
- > Anat Meidan, Stepping out of the frame

A visit to Edmond Baert

Concert Calendar

CST VALVE OF THE COLUMN TO THE

A visit to Edmond Baert > p. 5

In the pipeline

Festival ViolencellenSeine

The third edition of the Festival 'VioloncellenSeine' will take place in Paris from December 12 to 14. The programm includes many masterclasses, concerts and a competition. Didier Poskin will perform two pieces of Servais. Peter François will give a lecture about Servais' life and work. The Servais Society is also present with a stand.

More information on the website of the Festival or on the website of the Association Française du Violoncelle.



Festival year: Celebrating the 225th Anniversary of the "Halse Harmonie"

The "Koninklijke Harmonie Sinte- Cecilia" Halle is a wind band. Boasting no fewer than 225 summers, it is one of the oldest musical societies in Belgium. For more than 200 years this society has had a close relationship with the Servais family. François Servais himself was most probably first a musician and a conductor, then an honorary member and honorary president. This strong link constitutes the main theme of the book 'Servais, fils de l'harmonie! De familie Servais en de Halse Harmonie' by Peter Servais. The book, written in Dutch, is to appear next February and will cover some 200 pages and contain more than 200 images. It is available via the Servais Society. Those who want to secure a copy are advised to order it in advance.

On the occasion of the winter concert of February 7th the wind band will perform one of Servais' compositions specially arranged for wind band.

The 18th Servais Concert on November 14th 2015 will close the festivities. As a matter of course, the programme of that concert also features work by the Halle composer.

For more detailed information about the festival go to www.khhalle.be



Looking back

A three-day cello encounter with Servais

Between April 11th and 13th 2014 the Tansman Cello Quartet was staying in Halle for a three-day cello encounter with Servais. The four members of the quartet, Marinela Doko, Fernando Lima, Didier Poskin and Karel Steyaert conducted masterclasses at the Servais Academy for three successive days. The participants, sixteen altogether aged between 10 and 59 years, were taught individually, but above all they were given an opportunity to make music together. They also explored Servais' Halle during a special city trip and visiting the Museum.



On April 11th the masters themselves gave a highly appreciated concert in the New Town Hall. The cello quartets by Alexander Tansman, Joseph Jongen and Rudolf Matz proved to be quite a revelation. The audience was thrilled listening to the performance of the *Fantaisie burlesque ou Le Carnaval de Venise*. Admittedly, utterly difficult music to play but still very lighthearted and enjoyable, which was Servais' trademark. This was also manifest in the little work *La Babillarde*, one of Servais' 6 Etudes.



On Sunday afternoon the participants were given their turn to show the result of three days of hard work in the Servais Room of the Academy. The sixteen appeared on the stage performing excerpts from Verdi's *La Traviata*, a *Sarabande* by Händel and a cello version of Sting's Every Breath You Take; indeed, the cello seems to fit every genre of music!



The Amsterdam Cello Biennial

A feast lasting nine days; that is what this Cello Biennial really is. For the fifth time the "Muziekgebouw" near the IJ was resounding with cello sounds from early in the morning, starting with 'Bach & Breakfast' till late in the evening, with the 'Cello Coupé' closing the day at 22.30 pm after the evening concert. On the last night but one there was even a fully booked-up performance by the group '2Cellos' at midnight! And once again there was a rich programme, with musicians of repute, such as Mischa Maisky, Louise Hopkins and the Belgian Roel Dieltiens as well as young cello talents from schools of music from all over the world. For a short pause in between people were free to visit the central hall to look at stands with cello and string designers, publishers and distributors of CDs and scores. Also the Servais Society was manifestly present for eight days in a row. Tens of cellists and cello lovers came for a chat or bought a book, a score or a CD to get more acquainted with Servais. That was also possible during the afternoon concert given on October 20th: Jens Peter Maintz and Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt performed Servais' Caprice sur des motifs de l'opéra Le Comte Ory for two cellos. As the 'Cello Duello' they have been performing concerts all over the world for 23 years now. Not surprisingly, Servais' duo has often featured on their programmes over the last years.



On Sunday evening Anner Bijlsma, the cello pride of the Netherlands and an honorary member of the Servais Society, was honoured on the occasion of his 80th birthday. Job Cohen presented the first 'Anner Bijlsma Award' to him and very much to everybody's surprise the deputy major of the city of Amsterdam gave him the decoration of "Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw" on behalf of King Willem Alexander.



Foto: © Amsterdamse cellobiënnale

This fifth edition of the Biennial was a successful one, also for the Servais Society, which had joined in for the third time – with thanks to Jan, Nicole, Peter and Pieter-Jan.

Miscellaneous News

- » On May 16th 2014 the Maeterlinck Trio (Benjamin Glorieux, cello, Paulina Sokolowska, violin, and Anthony Romaniuk, piano) gave a concert in the "Zaal Miry" of the Conservatory in Ghent. The second half was largely devoted to Servais, more particularly the Grand duo de concert sur des airs nationaux anglais and the Fantaisie Caractéristique sur deux célèbres Romances de Lafont. The programme can be downloaded on www.bijloke.be
- » Cellist Stefaan Craeynest passed away on September 1st 2014, of heart problems. He was a teacher of music at the city conservatory of Ostend and the music academies of Diksmuide, Poperinge and Blankenberge, all of them in the province of West Flanders. He was also a member of several ensembles and one of the animating persons of ESTA Belgium-Flanders. It should be noted that Stefaan was also a member of our Society.
- » The Young cello talent Felix Vermeersch gave a recital in his home base Nieuwpoort on September 7th 2014. He performed parts of the cello concertos by Saint-Saëns and Haydn, Mosaïques by Eric Feldbusch and Le Lac de Côme by Servais. On September 24th the same programme was also presented at the "Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten" in Brussels and in Kronberg on September 13th. It is in this town that Felix is a student of the famous Kronberg Academy, where numerous musicians from all over the world flock together. Felix is also a pianist and a composer.

In the showcase

Cd ' Duo Servais'

Since 2011 cellist Raphaela Gromes and violinist Amelie Böckheler have given numerous performances as the 'Duo Servais'. One of the duets which they completed together was a duet by François Servais, which they wanted to have to their names for ever.

The Duo has already performed several times and last March their first Cd was released. It opens with two compositions by François Servais: the *Variations brillantes et concertantes sur God save the King* and the *2me Grand Duo de Concert sur des themes de Beethoven*. Then follow the *Tänze für Violine und Violoncello* composed by Dominik Giesriegl, dedicated to the Duo itself, and the *Sonate für Violine und Violoncello* by the same composer. And to conclude the Cd also features Bohuslav Martinu's *Duo No.1.ik Giesriegl*.

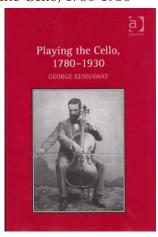
Cd 'Duo Servais', Doris Schwarzer Records, Freising, 2014. www.schwarzer-records.be.

Available via the Servais Society à €18 + postage costs. Orders to be sent to peter@servais-vzw.org.



George Kennaway, Playing the Cello, 1780-1930

George Kennaway is a cellist, a musicologist and a conductor, who teaches at the Leeds University School of Music. For many years he has shown a keen interest in old or historical performance practices. In *Playing the Cello* he presents a survey of the results of his research. He examines a variety of source material, ranging from methodology, concert reviews, and scores to iconography, poems and recordings. His approach is novel and yields a



much broader perspective. The book deals in detail with musical setting, holding of the instrument, handling of the bow, fingering, vibrato and portamento. François Servais comes up very regularly and proves to have had an important share in some innovations, particularly the techniques of the left hand and the introduction of the support pin. Other scholars had already pointed this out before; however, the picture drawn by Kennaway is more nuanced, better founded and more richly worked out than the one made by his predecessors. The book is a must for all those who are eager to

know more about the playing techniques of the cellists from a former generation in general, and of Servais in particular.

George Kennaway, Playing the Cello, 1780-1930. London, Ashgate, 2014 (298 p.), ISBN: 978-1-4724-0033-8. www.ashgate.com

René de Vries, Met een cello door Siberië

Met een cello door Siberië ('With a cello across Siberia') is a partially fictionalized biography of Lise Cristiani (1827-1853), who was one of the very first women, if not the first, to make a career in the predominantly male cello world. On the advice of Servais she undertook several concert trips in Russia, where she happened to meet him in persona in Kiev in 1851. Lise Cristiani was gifted with such an adventurous character that she ventured far into Russia.



René de Vries, Met een cello door Siberië. Het avontuurlijke leven van Lise Cristiani (1827-1853) en haar stradivariuscello (1700-heden). Delft, Uitgeverij Elmar, 2014 (176 p.), ISBN: 9789038924595.

www.uitgeverijelmar.nl

Anat Meidan, Stepping outside the frame

Anat Meidan is an art historian living in Tel-Aviv. She has been passionately interested in Servais' granddaughter, Misia, for years now. In 2011 she arrived in Halle to visit the sights where Misia had spent part of her youth. Anat Meidan recently wrote a short story about Misia's childhood and early youth. In Stepping out of the frame Misia tells the story of her life to Anat's granddaughter. Admittedly, an original way of focusing on the



first thirty years in Misia's life. The book is written entirely in Hebrew, but the author herself added a two-page summary in English.

Anat Meidan, Stepping out of the frame. Private publication, 2014, 100 pages. People who would like to order a copy should contact the author, which they can do via the Servais Society.

© Photo's & text (unless otherwise specified): Servais Society, 2014

Agenda

December 14, 2014 – Festival Violoncellen Seine

Didier Poskin (cello), Cédric Lorel (piano) & Peter François (musicologist)

Work by Servais: Souvenir de Spa, opus 2; Le Carnaval de Venise, opus 9

Paris, CRR de Paris, 2.30 PM

www.violoncellenseine.fr

January 8, 2015

Lecture 'François Servais, The Paganini of the Cello' by Peter François

Den Haag, Royal Conservatory (only for students of the 'Master Circle')

February 7, 2015 – Winterconcert Harmonie Halle

Koninklijke Harmonie Sinte-Cecilia Halle conducted by Anthony Devriendt

Work by Servais: Souvenir de Spa, opus 2 Halle, cc 't Vondel, 7.30 PM

www.khhalle.be

June 6, 2015 – 17th Servais Concert

Seeli Toivio (cello) & Nazareno Ferruggio (piano) Work by Servais: to be determined. Halle, New Town Hall, 8 PM

www.servais-vzw.org

November 14, 2015 - 18th Servais Concert, '225 jaar Halse Harmonie'

Jan Niklaaskoor, Bhagensemble & Benjamin Glorieux (cello) Work by Servais: Fantaisie Caractéristique sur deux célèbres romances de Lafont, opus 8 Halle, Basilica, 8 PM

www.servais-vzw.org

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

Visiting Edmond Baert

Peter François

On a rainy day I paid a visit to Edmond Baert, the Nestor among the Belgian cellists. He lives in a lovely little house in the very heart of Brussels near his beloved Conservatory, with which he has had a close link ever since 1951.

Life with a cello

Earlier this year Edmond Baert had turned eighty. Over a hundred former students and colleagues honoured their master at the Brussels Conservatory on February 8th 2014. Edmond was utterly surprised. "I was aware something was in the air since I was asked to keep that day free. But I had never expected that it was going to be such an event. What Pierre Brunello and his cooperators managed to fix is simply incredible. There were even cellists who had come from Germany, the Netherlands, France and England. It was indeed an emotional reunion."



Edmond Baert and Pierre Brunello at the Servais Concert in Halle on November 23th 2013 (Photo Wim François)

Edmond spent no fewer than 73 years in his life with the cello. "From the age of seven I took lessons at the academy of my native town Couillet near Charleroi. My teacher was Jean-Baptiste Joris, who was a graduate of the Brussels Conservatory in the same class as Marix Loevensohn." My mother, who was an amateur cellist herself, was a very severe master: he wanted me to practise playing the cello for at least a quarter of an hour every morning and evening.

Couillet was a so-called second class academy, where I could only follow the first five years. And so I went to the academy of Courcelles for the next seven years, where Joris was also my teacher. When I was 18 I registered as a student of the Brussels Conservatory with Maurice

Dambois as my master. After I graduated I studied under him till 1959 at the famous Music Chapel Queen Elisabeth. Afterwards things went very fast. I started my career as a cellist in the National Orchestra of Belgium together with Carlo Schmitz. That was a wonderful time. I'll never forget the trips to the United States, Portugal and Germany. After some ten years Carlo was engaged as a cello solo by the Radio Corporation, while I was the soloist in the National Orchestra. I was forced to give up my work as a soloist, as I could no longer combine this with my teaching position at the Conservatory."



Indeed, in 1966 Edmond had been appointed at the Brussels Conservatory as an assistant of Marcel Louon, Maurice Dambois' successor, and himself also a former student of Loevensohn's. Four years later he himself succeeded Louon and continued to teach until he retired in 1994. But this was not the end of his pedagogical career. Edmond kept on teaching for two half days a week at the Conservatory for nearly another twenty years on end. And even now he regularly receives young cellists. He is also still closely involved in the cello competition 'Prix Edmond Baert', which has yearly been organized in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe (Brussels) since the year 2002.

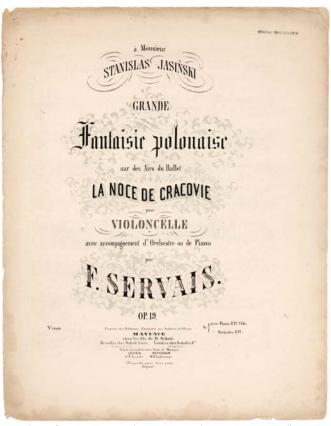
Edmond was not only part of the National Orchestra, he also often performed in chamber music ensembles. So he was a member of the Ensemble Bach de Belgique, the Ensemble Brahms, the Ensemble Franck and the Trio à Clavier de Belgique; he also played as a duo with the pianists Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden and Serge Bémant. "I gave numerous concerts with them in Belgium, but also all over Europe. Making trips on my own to perform as a soloist somewhere did never appeal to me. Rather, I preferred travelling around with a few fellow musicians."

Servais

Edmond's first teacher was entirely educated in accordance with the tradition of the Belgian Cello School. His master Loevensohn had studied under Edouard Jacobs in Brussels. And as a former student of Joseph Servais he was largely indebted to Joseph's father, François Servais, who can be regarded as the founding father of the Belgian Cello School. Servais was a teacher at the Brussels Conservatory from 1848 till his death in 1866. Due to his concert trips all over Europe and his numerous compositions he made an invaluable contribution to the development of the cello.

¹ Jean-Baptiste Joris (°Charleroi, July 3th 1904) registered as a student at the Brussels Conservatory as early as September 1918 in the cello class of (Edouard or Henri?) Jacobs. Joris was awarded his first prize in 1925. Marix Loevensohn (°Kortrijk, March 31st 1880) had gained a first prize magna cum laude under Edouard Jacobs, as well as at the Brussels Conservatory.

"When I was thirteen years old Joris wanted me to play Servais' Concerto militaire. Quite a challenge, but I performed it with the utmost pleasure. In his music you can find technique as well as 'esprit', a range of colouring, character.... Servais' music is spontaneous, varied and full of phantasy. His imagination is simply phantastic. Let us take as an example the Grande Fantaisie polonaise sur des Airs du ballet 'la Noce de Cracovie', which I got to know later. Servais must have attended a Polish wedding celebration, where he picked up a couple of tunes and a new phantasy began to bud in his mind.



First edition of Servais' Fantaisie polonaise' (Mainz, Schott, 1861) © Servais Collection

I also played Servais with Maurice Dambois, who was a passionate admirer of the Belgian Cello School: apart from Servais, there was also Ernest De Munck and Jules de Swert. All his students had to study the work of these composers and so I had to practise Servais' Caprices, the cello concerto by De Swert, and some more.

In the early 1980's I began to learn Servais' Fantaisie polonaise at the request of Michel Béro of the RTBF. I rehearsed the work with Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden in the Flagey Studio 1. Actually, we had a lot of fun. Servais' work had virtually fallen into oblivion in that time, which was a rather 'serious' period in history, while his compositions were merry and light. So it was somewhat risqué to perform them, but the audience appreciated it: it proved to be a complete success. A little later I also rehearsed Souvenir de Spa, which I had never played before, though I knew about its 'reputation'. Together with Serge Bémant, then the accompanist in the Conservatory, I recorded Souvenir de Spa for the programme "Les petits concerts du samedi", produced by Liliane Baker. That was October 1983. Eventually the plan arose to make a recording of both the Fantaisie polonaise and Souvenir de Spa."





Edmond Baert as an honorary member at the Servais Concert of November 2013. From left to right: Henry Vanderlinden (great great grandson of Servais), Didier Poskin and Viviane Spanoghe (cello teachers Brussels Conservatory), Jean-Paul Feldbusch (President Fondation Eric Feldbusch), Peter François (President Servais Society), Edmond Baert (photo Wim François).

Edmond regularly performed both these works in the 1980's, with Bémant as well as Vanden Eynden. Also his students had to cope with Servais. Two of them, Didier Poskin and Marie Hallynck, were to become the promoters of the romantic repertoire. Marie Hallynck saw to the recording of Servais' duo on themes from Lohengrin and of Henry Vieuxtemps' two cello concertos. Didier Poskin has already produced two CD recordings devoted to Servais and had his compositions resound at innumerable concerts in Belgium and abroad. Edmond Baert is very proud of them and pleased with his successors at the Brussels Conservatory.

Edmond's ally was Eric Feldbusch, his director. "Eric Feldbusch, with whom I could get on very well, was an excellent cellist. I also taught at the Music Chapel Queen Elisabeth for a number of years. The students had to play a Belgian work for their final exam. I persuaded Feldbusch to write a cello concerto, which he did. He dedicated it to me while I was the first to perform it. Didier Poskin and Marie Hallynck played it several times at the Chapel."

Edmond Baert and Halle

For the last years Edmond has regularly come to Halle, Servais' native town. The Servais Society has organized a Servais Concert every year since 2006. Meanwhile he has also become an honorary member of the Society in recognition of his contribution to the spread of Servais' oeuvre. But also much earlier one could meet him in our town.

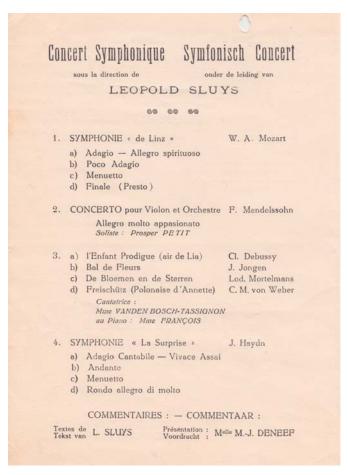
"I lived in Soignies when I studied at the Conservatory. On Sunday I often visited a fellow student of mine, Christiane Deneef in Halle. She helped me to master the theory of harmony, in which she was more advanced than I was. Obviously I also went to the market square, where I had already seen Servais' statue. And every time I had to pass by the 'Villa Servais' since the family Deneef was living in the Sint-Rochus district. Every now and then I went to a pub together with father François Deneef to savour the local 'Duivelsbier'."

François Deneef was a violin teacher at the Halle Academy of Music and also performed as soloist in the 'Cercle Servais', the symphonic orchestra, which had been founded in memory of Servais. In the years 1952-1955 Edmond sometimes came to Halle to support performances of the orchestra. At that time the conductor was Leopold Sluys.



On June 7th 1986 Edmond attended the final concert of the Halle 'Servaisdagen', an organization of the then v.z.w.

Adrien François Servais. Eric Feldbusch and Beni Erlich played Vivaldi's *Sonate nr.6*, *Mosaïque* by Feldbusch and Servais' *Morceau de Concert*, while Viviane Spanoghe and André De Groote performed two sonates by Beethoven and Brahms.



Edmond Baert played for this 'symphonic concert' of the 'Cercle Servais' on December 7th 1952 © Servais Collection Halle.

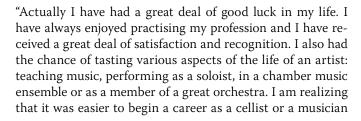


To conclude the concert in Halle on June 7th 1986 four of Edmond Baert's students, Didier Poskin, Albert Brunello, Luc Dewez and Xue-Wen Gao performed the Cello Quartet of Joseph Jongen (Het Nieuwsblad, June 10th 1986)

It's about time to say good-bye for the hours are flying. There is no trace of fatigue whatever. On the contrary. I am sitting in front of an energetic octogenarian, who keeps young by surrounding himself with youthful people and who can look back on a well-filled life with great satisfaction.



Concert in Halle on June 7th 1986. From left to right: Eric Feldbusch, Viviane Spanoghe, Luc Dewez, Albert Brunello, André De Groote, Didier Poskin and Xue-Wen Gao.





Reception after the concert of June 7th 1986. Edmond Baert (at the right) with three members of the Servais Committee and Servais' great-grandson Ernest Vanderlinden and son Henry Vanderlinden. © Servais Collection Halle

tout court in the 1960-1970 years. It's a lot more difficult for to-day's cellists to find a decent job. I wish them all the best!"

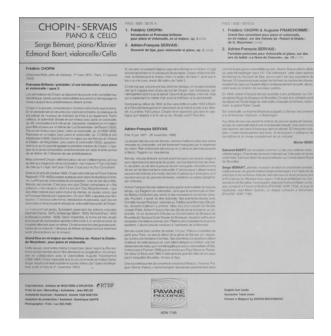
With thanks to Edmond Baert, Ilse Beel – Library of the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, Pierre Brunello and Didier Poskin.

Servais Discography Edmond Baert:

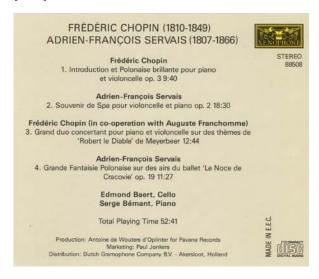
Edmond Baert, cello & Serge Bémant, piano Souvenir de Spa, opus 2 Grande Fantaisie polonaise sur des Airs du ballet 'La Noce de Cracovie', opus 19 Released on:

Record 'Chopin - Servais'. Pavane Records ADW 7185 (1985).

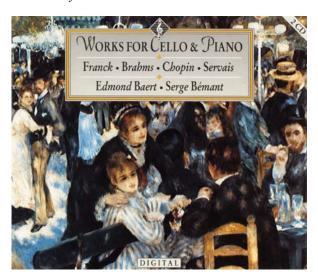








Cd 'Works for Cello and Piano'. Astoria, ADW 7124/5-2 [1988?].





Cd 'Romantic Cello sonatas'. Pavane Records, ADW 7124/5-2 (1994).





