

Insula orchestra's phantasmagorical *Der Freischütz* released on CD & DVD on Warner Classics, 200 years after the work's premiere



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Warner Classics | 9029510954

The Freischütz Project

Stanislas de Barbeyrac *Max*
Johanni van Oostrum *Agathe*
Chiara Skerath *Ännchen*
Vladimir Baykov *Kaspar*
Christian Immler *Hermit, voice of Samiel*
Thorsten Grümbel *Kuno*
Daniel Schmutzhard *Ottokar*
Anas Séguin *Kilian*
Clément Dazin *Samiel*

Laurence Equilbey musical director
Insula orchestra & accentus

Clément Debailleul, Raphaël Navarro stage directions, illusions

"a staging of incredible insight in tandem with a powerful, intense performance garlanded by a chorus of the highest level."

Seen and Heard International, March 2019

200 years after the work's premiere, **Insula orchestra** and **Laurence Equilbey** release a new recording of **Carl Maria von Weber's** bewitching *Der Freischütz*, championing the work's vivid instrumental colours on period instruments with highlights of the orchestra's 2019 production on CD & DVD.

The Freischütz Project will be released on **Warner Classics** on **26 February 2021**, with a cast led by **Stanislas de Barbeyrac** as the young forester Max and **Johanni van Oostrum** as his beloved Agathe, with **Vladimir Baykov** as the devil's assistant, Kaspar.

DVD highlights of the orchestra's 2019 production show the illusions, apparitions, disappearances, and distortions of reality that plunged the spectator into a world of poignant beauty. Both CD and DVD were **recorded live** in performance at the **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées** in October 2019.

Der Freischütz is based on the German legend of the marksman who has entered into a contract with the devil so as to obtain bullets that hit their target without fail. Weber's opera tells a hopeful version: a young forester, Max, attempts to win the hand of Agathe by winning a marksmanship contest. Caspar, the devil's adjunct, convinces him to take seven magic bullets, the last of which is controlled by the forces of Evil. By the start of the contest, it is only this last bullet that is left, and Max will have no control over who it hits.



With a libretto by Friedrich Kind, Weber's opera, which premiered in 1821, is considered the first truly 'German' Romantic opera, with roots in Singspiel, German folklore and a Germanic national identity. The fantastical evil specific to German literature, as illustrated by Goethe or Hoffmann. Weber's writing is noted for its brassy fanfares for the huntsmen, but also for the sensual musical colours, particularly in the supernatural Wolf's Glen scene.

"Recordings of Der Freischütz on period instruments are virtually non-existent. For an opera that ushered in such important musical innovations, it's quite astonishing that period instrument orchestras have taken it up so rarely to date. This was the driving force behind our own engagement with the piece.

"If Mozart, Beethoven and, indeed, Schubert have been the object of abundant historical research and numerous inspired performances, why not Weber, too? On period instruments, his fantastical orchestral effects are able to reveal all their originality in the most direct way. Played on natural instruments, the horn parts regain their rusticity and majesty but also their bite when the drama requires. The evocations of the hunt are strikingly vivid. The lightness of the instruments recalibrates the orchestral balance and infuses the ensemble with an exhilarating rhythmic drive. This score, more than any other, concocts new colours using the instruments of the time."

– Laurence Equilbey

In its 2019 production seen on DVD highlights, Insula orchestra's *Der Freischütz* was directed by **Clément Debailleul** and **Raphaël Navarro** from **Cie 14:20**, an interdisciplinary dance company focusing on magical realism. Employing stupendous illusions to complement the rich musical imagery, Cie 14:20 employ modern visual trickery of their own to restore the magic of the theatre to this 'theatre of magic'. The suspension of disbelief being a product of the phantasmagorical Romantic imagination, the modern acrobatics of Cie 14:20 maintain the ethos of the work and allow today's viewer to be equally bewitched.

Founded by Clément Debailleul and Raphaël Navarro in 2000, Cie 14:20 affirms magic as an autonomous, contemporary, and popular language, investigating the imbalance of the senses and the division of reality at its heart. Following a production of Goethe's *Faust* last year, Insula orchestra's *Der Freischütz* is the first opera staged with the company. Illusions, apparitions, disappearances, and distortions of reality plunge the spectator into a world of poignant beauty.



[Watch the trailer for *Der Freischütz* here](#)

"videos, projections in real time and use of multiple digital screens are not leaving the opera house any time soon. And when treated sensitively, as was the case in this production, the effect can be transformative."

Opera Now

Insula orchestra



Insula orchestra performs on period instruments. Its artistic project is built around a repertoire ranging mainly from the Baroque to the Romantic eras. Bach, Beethoven, Farrenc, Mozart or Weber form naturally the core of this repertoire with symphonic programs as well as programs with choir and soloists. Its historically rigorous approach and the artistic innovation it develops make it a major ensemble of our time.

Founded in 2012 by Laurence Equilbey with support from the *Département des Hauts-de-Seine*, **Insula orchestra** is in residence in a new artistic venue, La Seine Musicale on Ile Seguin, an island in the River Seine just a few miles downstream from Paris. The orchestra is in charge of selecting part of the programme for the 1,150-seater auditorium.

Insula orchestra performs at other major French and international venues and leading festivals. Since its foundation, the orchestra has been invited to play at the Philharmonies of Paris, Hamburg, Cologne, Essen, Warsaw, Salzburg's Mozart Week, Opéra Comique in Paris, Basel Stadtcasino, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Lincoln Center in New York. Over the last two seasons, Laurence Equilbey has entrusted Insula orchestra's direction to invited conductors: Leonardo García Alarcón, Christian Zacharias, Speranza Scappucci and Duncan Ward.

The orchestra has developed a comprehensive, innovative programme of cultural and educational initiatives across its home base in the Hauts-de-Seine department. It also reconsiders the formats and codes of classical music with the aim of drawing in new audiences, creating an ongoing dialogue between symphony music, the spatial dimension of the venue and the stage. The orchestra associates each programme with a constellation of new digital, artistic and educational forms, featuring clips and Web series that resonate with our times and expand the artistic content of the project.

The season is organized around two scenic key moments: *Magic Mozart... Concert Spectaculaire!* with a staging created by the Compagnie DCA – Philippe Decouflé (La Seine Musicale, Grand Théâtre de Provence, Théâtre de Colombes, Grand Théâtre de la Ville - Luxembourg), a stage creation of Antonin Baudry, *Night of Kings*, around two of Schumann's last ballades (La Seine Musicale, Elbphilharmonie).

After release of its two records dedicated to Beethoven - *Piano concertos n° 4 and 5*, then *Triple Concerto* and *Choral Fantasy* (Warner Classics - Erato) - Insula orchestra and Laurence Equilbey record this season *Magic Mozart*, extracts from Mozart's operas with Sandrine Piau, Jodie Devos, Lea Desandre, Stanislas de Barbeyrac and Florian Sempey, and then the main part of Weber's *Freischütz*.

Insula orchestra receives support from the Département des Hauts-de-Seine and is in residence at La Seine Musicale. accio, the circle of friends of accentus and Insula orchestra, supports educational and artistic initiatives set in motion by Laurence Equilbey. Insula orchestra is part of the FEVIS and the SPPF.

Laurence Equilbey



The conductor and musical director of Insula orchestra and its partner choir, *accentus*, **Laurence Equilbey** is acknowledged for her demanding yet open-minded approach to her art. Her exploration of symphonic repertoire has seen her conducting BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the orchestras of the Hessische Rundfunk, Lyon, Bucharest, Liège, Leipzig, Brussels Philharmonic, Café Zimmermann, Akademie für alte Musik Berlin, Concerto Köln, CamerataSalzburg, Mozarteum-orchester Salzburg.

In 2012, with support from the Hauts-de-Seine General Council, she founded Insula orchestra, an ensemble devoted to performing classical and pre-Romantic repertoire on period instruments. In April 2017 the orchestra started their residency at the new arts centre La Seine Musicale, where Equilbey is in charge of the classical music programme for the 1,150-seat auditorium.

With *accentus*, Laurence Equilbey continues to interpret large-scale vocal repertoire such as the recent performance with the Orchestra of the Opéra de Rouen of *Comala* by Niels Gade in June 2017. She is an Associate Artist of the Grand Théâtre de Provence in Aix-en-Provence, a companion of the Philharmonie de Paris, and Artistic Director and Director of Education at the Department for Young Singers at the CRR, Regional Conservatoire of Paris. She regularly conducts the Orchestra of the Opéra de Rouen.

Past operatic engagements comprise of Mozart's *Lucio Silla* at the Theater an der Wien, Britten's *Albert Herring* at Opéra de Rouen and Opéra Comique, the ballet *Sous apparence* at Opéra de Paris, and Reynaldo Hahn's *Ciboulette* at the Opéra Comique, where Equilbey also conducted *La Nonne sanglante* by Gounod in June 2018.

On the concert stage, recent guest conducting engagements included the Danish National Choir and Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony (HR Sinfonie Orchester) in Germany, which was broadcast live.

Laurence Equilbey studied music in Paris, Vienna and London, and studied conducting with Eric Ericson, Denise Ham, Colin Metters and Jorma Panula.

www.insulaorchestra.fr/en

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

Nicky Thomas Media

2-6 Baches St, London N1 6DN

+44 (0)20 3714 7594 | +44 (0)7768 566 530

info@nickythomasmedia.com

www.nickythomasmedia.com