

Insula orchestra and Laurence Equilbey champion Louise Farrenc on disc



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Farrenc *Symphony No. 1*

Farrenc *Symphony No. 3*

Laurence Equilbey musical director

Insula orchestra

In a new recording to be released on **Warners Erato** on 9 July 2021, **Laurence Equilbey** and her period-instrument **Insula orchestra** champion the Symphonies of Louise Farrenc, a prominent and pioneering figure in 19th century Paris. Recorded **live in concert** in March 2021, this album presents two of Farrenc's three symphonies, *No. 1 in C minor*, first heard in 1845, and *No. 3 in G minor*, premiered in 1849.

Farrenc's rich harmonic writing, vivid colours and lyricism shine through in the performance by Insula orchestra, which specialises in performing Classical and Romantic repertoire **on period instruments**.

Insula orchestra and Laurence Equilbey have long championed the works of Louise Farrenc. In March 2018, Equilbey led the orchestra in a performance of *Symphony No. 3* at London's Barbican Centre to mark International Women's Day, with the Financial Times remarking: *"The score is so well written that it deserves a prominent place in the history of the early Romantic symphony. Equilbey and the Insula orchestra gave it a fleet, fiery performance. Their crusading spirit lived up to the day's billing."*

Insula orchestra recorded the two *Symphonies* live in concert on 6 March 2021 at home in their new state-of-the-art concert hall, **La Seine Musicale** in Boulogne-Billancourt in Paris. The concert was streamed on ARTE Concert and is currently available at: arte.tv/fr/videos/102491-000-A/insula-orchestra-joue-les-symphonies-n-1-et-3-de-louise-farrenc/.

Louise Farrenc, born Louise Dumont in Paris in 1804, took piano lessons from Johann Nepomuk Hummel and Isaac Moscheles, and at the age of 15 she began to take composition lessons including from Anton Reicha, before marrying the flautist, musicologist and music publisher Aristide Farrenc, who was supportive of her in her work.

Louise Farrenc soon established a reputation as a pianist and gained praise for her chamber compositions. In 1842 she made history by becoming a professor at the Paris Conservatoire – the first woman in Europe to fill a senior position of this kind. She spent 30 years at the institution, where she successfully fought to achieve remuneration on an equal level with the male professors, only ceasing her public activities as a composer on the death of her daughter, Victorine, in 1859.

As a female composer who achieved significant recognition, Farrenc was also unusual as a symphonist: at the time, symphonies were not considered the domain of French composers, but as a Germanic form. Farrenc's works are closer to the spirit of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann than to her French contemporaries.

Her ***Symphony No. 1***, completed in 1841, premiered in Brussels in 1845 in a programme also featuring Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No 5*, with Victorine Farrenc as soloist. A spirited *Andante sostenuto* opens the *Symphony* before the lyrical *Adagio cantabile* and *Menuetto Moderato* give way to the fiery *Finale*. At the first Parisian performance, the critic Henri Blanchard noted Farrenc "*as a composer who surpasses the capacities of any woman who has written music, rivalling our sex and honouring the country of her birth with an exceptional talent that unites a feeling for melody with the science of sound.*"

Farrenc's ***Symphony No. 3*** premiered in 1849 as part of the prestigious subscription season of the Société des concerts du Conservatoire, performed alongside Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. In Farrenc's third and final symphonic work, the fraught *Allegro* turns to a skilfully expressive *Andante* and dancing *Scherzo* culminating in a restless *Finale*.

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 Sempy, 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.

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