

Chopin Resonances Today

Brussels 9 >14 April 2024



"Chopin Resonances Today," held on April 13, 2024, will forever be remembered as a day when the magic of arts and music graced the walls of an unexpected venue: the Chirec Hospital Delta in Auderghem, Brussels. This event, a satellite of the New European Bauhaus Festival, was a vibrant celebration of the fusion between art and healing, under the enlightened direction of Dr. Pick Keobandith.

The creative journey began at the Tasty Café of the Chirec Hospital, where participants were immersed in the captivating world of literature. Under the passionate guidance of Pina Urso, an art psychotherapist devoted to the therapeutic effects of the arts, and the readers Hannah Heinz, a multitalented German jurist, and Alina Trif, a doctor in history, archaeology, and art history, guided the audience through a fascinating literary exploration. Hannah led us with fervor into the universe of "Madame Pylinska and the Secret of Chopin" by Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, while Alina introduced us to the vibrant pages of "Wunderkind" by Nikolai Grozni. Their passionate presentations shed light on the links between music, creativity, and personal challenges, offering unique perspectives on Chopin's impact on life and art.

Then came the magical moment when pianist Aarun Monteiro Kassam offered a dazzling concert on the hospital's second floor. On a piano placed on a white crescent moon-shaped carpet, his masterful interpretations of Chopin merged with the familiar sounds of hospital life, creating a symphony of hope and comfort. Guests, along with patients, visitors, and medical staff, were captivated by the transcendent power of music.

At the heart of this day was the Re-Source a.s.b.l. center, led by Mrs. Janik Nicodème, a restorative therapeutic sanctuary for patients undergoing prolonged medical treatments. This haven of well-being hosted an enchanting exhibition of contemporary artworks and design, shimmering to the haunting rhythms of Chopin, enveloping visitors in an atmosphere of serenity and contemplation. Our thanks go to Stanislav Bojankov (BG), Ulrike Bolenz (BE-GER), Louisa Burnett-Hall (FR-UK), Sofi Etsadashvili (GE), Sarah Ferreira (FR-PT), Adrien Horvatovic (FR-CR), Daun Jeong (KR), Edward Liddle (UK), MOME University, Budapest (HU): Edit Szuc, Ádám Ellenbacher, Laura Hoover, Andrea Kovács, Szimonetta Lóki, Asif Shaikh (IN), and Layla Walter (NZ), who contributed to this unique artistic experience.

Chopin's music was often influenced by the Polish folk dance, 'mazurka,' so it was fitting that the afternoon concluded with a mazurka dance workshop, where guests were introduced to the delights of this traditional dance by the talented teachers of Frisse Folk. A fundamental truth emerged among the graceful movements and joyful laughter: the arts, in their infinite diversity, are the mirror of humanity, reflecting its beauty, resilience, and aspiration to healing.

On this magical and varied day, Chopin's immortal legacy found new resonance in the hearts and minds of those who witnessed this encounter between art and healing. The simplicity and truth of these shared moments remind us that even in the darkest moments, music can stimulate and is stimulated by various art forms that light the path to healing and transformation.

Pina Urso



Chopin in Literature : A Talk

- **Madame Pylinska et le secret de Chopin, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt - Wunderkind , Nikolai Grozni**
Animated by Pina Urso, Hannah Heinz and Alina Trif

Pina Urso

Pina is a seasoned multilingual educator and art psychotherapist with over 25 years of international experience. Specializing in using art for personal exploration and growth, she intricately weaves the psychology of her environment into her artistic expression. Holding a master's degree from Goldsmiths' College University of London and additional credentials from New School in NYC, Pina offers a distinctive fusion of therapy and creativity. Her practice is particularly focused on aiding individuals through life transitions and providing support to people from diverse backgrounds.

Hannah Heinz

Hannah Heinz is a German lawyer (Ruprechts Karls University Heidelberg) and holds a Masters degree in International Relations from Boston University (USA). She draws from her professional experience as owner and director of a law firm, academic researcher, Co-Founder and President of an art company and as a member of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. She is based in Brussels.

Alina Trif

Alina Trif holds a doctorate in history, art history and archeology from the Free University of Brussels. She is a part-time documentalist in a sports teaching center at the VUB. His current interests focus on sign language and the identity of deaf communities in Africa. She teaches at the University of Burundi and at the Official University of Bukavu.



Alina Trif, Hannah Heinz, Pina Urso



Book review *Madame Pylinska and the Secret of Chopin*, Eric Emmanuel Schmitt

With *Madame Pylinska and the Secret of Chopin*, Eric Emmanuel Schmitt delivers an autobiographical novel full of love, tenderness, passion and poetry. The novel is a declaration of the author's love for Chopin and his music, as well as a testimony of love for life itself and the joy of living. This feeling is largely provoked by the moving and fascinating character of Madame Pylinska. Despite her eccentricity - or maybe even because of it - she succeeds to touch all of the reader's emotions. As a matter of fact, it is very easy to fall in love with Mrs. Pylinska.

As mentioned, the novel is somewhat autobiographical. As Schmitt pointed out during an interview: "I do not choose the stories I write about. They are rather imposed on me through my life and my imagination." Since childhood, the character of Eric hates the piano. However this changes dramatically when nine-year-old Eric hears his Aunt Aimee play Chopin. Completely mesmerised by Chopin's music, he immediately starts to take piano lessons. As time goes by, Eric, now a 20-year-old student in Paris, is frustrated with what he perceives as his incapacity to play Chopin. Bach, Debussy, Mozart and others he can play, but Chopin remains a mystery to him.



It's at that moment that he seeks out Madame Pylinska, piano teacher, Polish immigrant, eccentric, who uses unorthodox teaching methods. To Eric's utter surprise, her first instruction is that he can't touch the piano. Instead, he has to spread himself out underneath it, listening to the sound of silence. He has to go to the Luxembourg Gardens to throw pebbles into the water and observe the ripples, listen to the sound of the wind rustling the leaves. Madame Pylinska even instructs him in his love life with guidance such as, "Don't hurry, look into her eyes." While at first Eric is very sceptical of her methods, he decides to trust her and follow her advice. Slowly he begins to learn: why numbers are the best titles for compositions, and what cats, spiders and birds have to do with Chopin's mystery. As the book goes on, Madame Pylinska teaches him not only how to improve his piano playing, but also how to live life to the fullest.

The climax of the book arrives when suddenly Eric needs to play Chopin. His Aunt Aimee, with whom he has a very close relationship, confides in him that she has only loved one man in her life, and wants someone - Eric - to remember their story. With Aimee about to die, Eric goes to see her one last time, and plays Chopin for her as they share a final moment. It is in that moment that Aimee reveals Chopin's secret to him, a secret that has accompanied her her entire life.

After Aimee's death, Eric never again manages to play Chopin as perfectly as he did then. But Madame Pylinska sets him on a different path. She tells him that we all have a door: if Chopin's door into the world was his music, then Eric Emmanuel Schmitt's door into the world is his writing. Amazing how right she was.

Hannah Heinz

Wunderkind by Nikolai Grozny

Wunderkind is a novel by Nikolai Grozny, first published in English by Free Press in 2011 and translated into French by Editions Plon-Feux Croisés in 2013. Grozny is, of course, a pseudonym: "Grozny" for Russian speakers means "terrible", "formidable" and, we cannot help thinking, there is something of an allusion to Prokofiev's work, "Ivan Grozny". Grozny's real name is Nikolay Grozdinski. He was born in Bulgaria in 1973, and started playing the piano at the tender age of four. He was something of a wunderkind himself, winning his first major prize in Salerno, Italy, at the age of 10. In 1992, he left Bulgaria to study jazz at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. In 1995, shortly before graduating from Berklee, Grozdinski decided to give up music and, in search of the ultimate truth, set off for India to study the Tibetan language and learn how to become a Buddhist monk. The four years he spent there served as inspiration for his essay *Turtle Feet*, published in English in 2009. Grozdinski approaches the period of his youth, as a musical prodigy at the Sofia Conservatoire, with a great deal of distance. This distance allows him, as he says in an interview with Editions, to see more clearly the violence of that experience and he does this through the voice of Konstantin, the narrator and memorable character of *Wunderkind*.

Konstantin is 15 in 1987. Two years later, the Berlin Wall will collapse and the Iron Curtain will open. In the meantime, this prodigal pianist, with a sensitivity that runs deep under his skin, tries to breathe and searches for his voice under the low sky above the city and in the old, ruined building that houses the Sofia Conservatory for Prodigal Children. "The sky above Sofia is made of granite. Grey in the morning, even greyer in the afternoon, and black in the evening... Planes don't fly here. Time is a prisoner of this granite dome...". The



oppression of the Communist regime still weighs heavily on every aspect of life. Konstantin paints an electrifying portrait of the desires and anxieties of his comrades, "armed with both the bitterness of prisoners and their childhood dreams", in a loveless society. This is the plot of the novel: the striking contrast between this ideologically oppressive environment and the music, which is free.

Konstantin becomes part of the music school's furniture (he spends most of the day and a good part of the night there), taking part in small rebellions: he smokes, he drinks, and he mocks the pomp and ceremony of the Communist Party at every opportunity. But more than anything else, Konstantin plays the piano with a fiery passion: he plays a lot of Chopin – his hero, and we follow every rehearsal and every concert, as tension builds and takes hold of him. Lovers of classical music will be delighted to read this novel, which never ceases to stir the reader. A refuge from a reality that Konstantin hates, the piano is also what binds him to it.

Each chapter refers to a classical work that will be played or studied by Konstantin or another student. This work occupies the chapter and a whole host of things happen around it, life at the conservatoire, and life in Bulgaria in those times. Much music and copious Chopin, *Wunderkind* allows us to discover the world of music, the logic of a work, and the development of gifted children under the Communist regime.

Alina Trif

Chopin in Concert in Brussels

By Aarun Monteiro Kassam : Ballade op38, Nocturne op55n1, Polonaise op44, Mazurka op17 n4, Ballade op23



Aarun MONTEIRO KASSAM, Portuguese, was born in Brussels on 30th December 1998. At the age of five he began studying piano with Alice Di Piazza and at the age of eleven, he continued his piano studies with Orit Ouziel and enrolled at the Waterloo Academy of Music, where his teacher also gave lessons. In July 2016, he obtained the "Transition 4" grade. At the same time, he studied at the European School Brussels (Woluwe) and obtained the European School baccalaureate in July 2016.

In October 2015, Aarun won the 1st prize at the Andrée Charlier Piano Competition (Academy level) and in September 2016, Aarun was accepted at the Royal Conservatoire of Brussels to continue his piano studies with Professor Daniel Blumenthal.

In the summers of 2016 and 2017, Aarun also participated in the SIPO-Semana Internacional de Piano de Óbidos (International Piano Master Classes in Óbidos, Portugal) where he had piano master classes with Paul Badura-Skoda, Luis de Moura Castro, Boris Berman, Manuela Gouveia et Michiko Shoji.



In September 2017, Aarun was accepted into the International Certificate for Piano Artists – ICPA – under the artistic directorship of Nelson Delle-Vigne Fabbri. Through this programme, he has been able to interact with many great teachers such as Eugen Indjic, Jerome Lowenthal, Michel Bérroff, Mikhail Karpov, amongst others.

Having graduated with distinction from the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, Aarun is now pursuing a Master's degree in teaching at the Royal Conservatory of Mons.

Chopin in Movement: Mazurka Workshop



From 1825 to 1849, Frédéric Chopin wrote at least 59 compositions for piano called Mazurkas. The Mazurka is a traditional Polish dance. The Mazurka workshop introduced guests to the pleasures of this dance with talented teachers from the Frisse Folk Dance School. This association aims to bring people of different skills and levels together to teach them the fun of folk dancing.



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The Re-source center in Brussels provides a warm and welcoming environment for all cancer patients. It offers resources, emotional support, shared experiences, professional advice and rejuvenating activities. These activities are grounded in studies advocating for improved nutrition, stress reduction, and regular physical activity to enhance cancer treatment outcomes. The center is guided by principles of integrative medicine and four main pillars: Being, Moving, Eating and Sharing. Regardless of the hospital where patients receive treatment, the center ensures accessibility to emotional, physical, and social support for all individuals affected by cancer, irrespective of cultural or financial backgrounds.

Re-source ASBL
www.re-source-delta.be

