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MENUHIN FESTIVAL GSTAAD

PRESS RELEASE

World Premiere at the Menuhin Festival Gstaad 2010

Heaven and Earth / The Stairway to Heaven — a symphonic meditation by Daniel Schnyder

The theme of the Menuhin Festival in 2010 is “Between Heaven and Earth”. The symphonic work by Daniel Schnyder composed on commission for this year’s festival is connected to the request for a piece linked to the expansive festival theme that on the one hand would create a contemplative, meditative atmosphere in the center of a symphonic performance, thus acting as a point of tranquility between the works by Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky on the programme. And on the other hand, it should establish a relationship to one of the locations where the Gstaad Festival Orchestra will perform during its concert tour in the fall (on 9 October 2010): the reconstructed Church of Our Lady (Frauenkirche) in Dresden.

Heaven and Earth/ The Stairway to Heaven is a meditative symphonic concert overture on the theme of the connection between heaven and earth. The musical depiction of the theme consists of a stairway to heaven from E (earth) to B (“H” in German, heaven) over 1½ octaves. Daniel Schnyder ties in to the time-honored traditions of Dutch music while employing modern means. The music is filled with symbolism and connects our history with our traditions. The scale ascending to heaven cannot be described by music theoretical terms, it is not definable. The audience accompanied by the orchestra musicians ascends the steps of the musical stairway in continually changing intervals up toward heaven until the steps finally become completely vertical and unite into a great chord. This ascending motive is reflected in the texture of the orchestra in continually new manners and staggered in time intervals. The whole orchestra, all peoples, are in motion on these giant steps, striving up to the light. The stairway to heaven is thus musically expressed like Escher (see the book “Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid”). One can hear an eternal aspiring for heaven until, as at the end of the Bibel, heaven and earth unite in divine harmony.

Daniel Schnyder

Daniel Schnyder is well-known to jazz and classic audiences as a composer, saxophonist and flutist. He was born in Zurich in 1961 and has lived in New York since 1992. Schnyder’s music falls into the realms of new music, classical music (chamber music and symphonic concert music), old music, ethnic music, crossover, jazz, big band, opera, oratorio, ballet and Latin music. In addition to his work as a composer he regularly performs as a soloist, chamber musician and jazz improviser. Daniel Schnyder has composed numerous works in the areas of chamber music, jazz and orchestra music. His music is characterized by integration, by the connection between classical and jazz music in the broadest sense, a connection of European music with non-European music cultures. Another of the main elements of Daniel Schnyder’s art is to bring non-European music as an expression and phenomenon of our multicultural reality into concert frameworks.

Daniel Schnyder's opera "Casanova" was performed as a world premiere with Wolfgang Holzmaier in the leading role at the Menuhin Festival in 2005. The CD production "Absolution" with Kristjan Järvi and the Absolute Ensemble in which Daniel Schnyder collaborated as composer and producer was nominated for a Grammy award. His classical compositions have been performed by numerous leading orchestras, including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, the Absolute Ensemble under the direction of Kristjan Järvi, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, the NDR Symphony Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra.

World Premiere

13 August Festival-Zelt Gstaad
(recording broadcast by MEZZO, French television culture channel)

Additional Performances

15 August Rheingau Festival, Kursaal Wiesbaden
17 August Festspiele Mecklenburg Vorpommern
9 October Dresden, Frauenkirche
10 October Bregenz, Festspielhaus
13 November München, Philharmonie am Gasteig

Programme

Fazil Say, Piano
Gstaad Festival Orchestra – *cf. separate document*
Maxim Vengerov, Conductor

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844 – 1908)

Overture "The Great Russian Easter", Op. 36

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

¹ **Daniel Schnyder** (geb. 1960)

"Heaven and Earth", Symphonic Meditation

(Work commissioned by the Menuhin Festival Gstaad – *cf. separate document*)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839 – 1881)

"Pictures at an Exhibition", orch. by Maurice Ravel

¹ The commission of this composition by the Menuhin Festival Gstaad 2010 was made possible by the Artephtilia Foundation.