

THE SILENCE BETWEEN

IGOR STRAVINSKY

- 01-04 Le baiser de la fée - Divertimento
Sinfonia
Danses suisses
Scherzo (Au moulin)
Pas de deux

TŌRU TAKEMITSU

- 05 Distance de fée

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

- 06 Beau soir (arr. Jascha Heifetz)

KURT SCHWERTSIK

- 07-08 Unterwegs nach Heiligenstadt
Energico
Tranquillo

FRANCIS POULENC

- 09-11 Violin sonata, FP 119
Allegro con fuoco
Intermezzo
Presto tragico

ABOUT THE ALBUM

It was a quote attributed to Claude Debussy that got them thinking. 'The music is not in the notes, but in the silence between them.' What could that phrase mean, violinist Pieter van Loenen and pianist Tobias Borsboom wondered. In the discussions the duo had, several explanations surfaced. These led to an idea: wouldn't the statement be a good starting point for an album? While associating, Pieter and Tobias came up with the title *The Silence Between*.

At first sight the pieces and composers – Igor Stravinsky, Tōru Takemitsu, Francis Poulenc, Kurt Schwertsik, and, given the title impossible to ignore, Claude Debussy – seem to have little in common. Four of the chosen works are from the 20th century, Debussy's *Beau soir* (around 1890) already points to it. But for all the pieces it is true that they both have a relationship with something extra-musical – a poem, a memory, a fairy tale – and in themselves, away from their source, their context, remain relevant. For all of them, the sources of inspiration have steered the composition in a certain direction, but the sources have not determined the music. Without knowledge of the story behind the pieces, they evoke images in many a listener. If we do take knowledge of these sources, they offer a direction in which to look, give the music a certain color, as it were. 'We find that an interesting process,' says Pieter. 'Knowing the story in such a piece can enrich the listening experience, but it can also have an impeding effect; that your own fantasy or feeling in a piece is slowed down.'

Let's get back to the title. The silence, which you can understand in so many ways, and about which you can talk for hours with musicians with a philosophical disposition – such as Tobias Borsboom and Pieter van Loenen. 'The silence is about the moment of processing,' says Pieter. 'The composer creates the music while there was nothing yet. The silence is then like a blank canvas: an abstract space in which the music originates. He has written down notes from which the musician has to make music, from silence. The listener then again makes an interpretation of what he hears. There is silence in between that as well, if you notice the silence as space. This album is about that process, about interpretations of interpretations.'

And then there is the silence in the score itself: the measures or beats in which a composer demands silence, a rest, from one or two performers in this case. Tobias believes that these 'silences' should also be given more thought. 'In fact, that is often very beneficial for a performance. The rests are a full part of the text. I think we should listen even better to the silences, there can be a lot of tension in it, and also a change.'

'You can work towards the rests and in the repose you get the opportunity to let something happen,' Pieter adds.

'But,' says Tobias, 'it's also about what happens between the notes, that which is not written down. What happens there?'

'And if you become aware that there is space on either side of every note, then something special can happen,' says Pieter. 'As musicians we have to fill the nothingness with expectation.'

The first work on the album is a piece that in itself has gone through many filters, or 'moments of silence': Stravinsky's *Divertimento* from *Le baiser de la fée* (the fairy's kiss). The source is Stravinsky's ballet of the same name from 1928, written in his neoclassical

period for the Parisian Ballets russes. But the source of the ballet is again the fairy tale *The Ice-Maiden* by Hans Christian Andersen. 'It is also a tribute to Tchaikovsky, admired by Stravinsky, who was dead for 35 years at the time,' says Pieter. 'Stravinsky quotes all kinds of songs and piano pieces. He has cut them up and rearranged them.' Will the piece get any better if you immerse yourself in Anderson's story about Rudy and Babette ending up in a storm? 'Not necessarily', Tobias laughs. Pieter: 'This divertimento, in four parts, should actually be seen again as a separate suite, so it will be difficult for you to find any relationships.' In 1932, this arrangement for piano and violin was made in collaboration with Samuel Dushkin. Tobias: 'We both love music from the 20th century, that period suits us very well. We felt that Stravinsky should not be missed on our debut.'

The duo was less familiar with the music of the Japanese Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996). 'It's a language you don't easily master,' says Tobias. Pieter: 'You don't get to play his music from an early age. That makes you more likely to be on edge – are we missing something?'

Moreover, the source of Takemitsu's composition is even further removed from the musicians. Takemitsu was inspired by a poem by the surrealist Shūzō Takiguchi (1903-1979). Although Tobias set his iPad to Japanese (his wife is from Japan) and he can converse well enough in that language, he is dependent on a translation. 'You make yourself crazy when you literally try to fathom texts by Takiguchi: you have to experience them. The poem brings a smile to your face and then there is a lot to discover in it. In this poem of the same name *Distance de fée* the poet sees his fairy in all kinds of natural phenomena. The teeth of the fairy sing from behind the trees, the beautiful shape of her ears is in the clouds, her colored nails melt with the water. Magnificent images which appeal to the imagination and which, according to our interpretation, show that the soul is not 'in' but 'in between' the phenomena.'

Pieter agrees: 'This sensitivity can also be found in Takemitsu's music. In the end we have come to the conclusion that we can achieve the most satisfactory result if we follow the precise instructions in the score closely, while at the same time keeping a very open mind for the moment. We wanted to give less tight direction to the musical lines, as we are accustomed to doing in a lot of Western music.'

One of his influences was unmistakably Debussy. *Beau soir*, a song based on a poem by Paul Bourget, became a favourite encore in the arrangement by violin legend Jascha Heifetz. 'I think this is an example of a piece that gains in meaning when you know the story behind it,' says Tobias. 'The sketch of a beautiful evening by the sea, and then the realization that everything is temporary, because the mortal human will disappear as the waves dissolve in the sea.'

The surprise on the album is probably the two-movement piece *Unterwegs nach Heiligenstadt* (2014) by the Austrian composer Kurt Schwertsik (born in 1935). He was asked to make a 'companion piece' to the Sixth Sonata for piano and violin by Ludwig van Beethoven. The title refers to the so-called *Heiligenstädter Testament*, a letter from Beethoven to his brothers, written in 1802. Due to his hearing loss he had fallen into a severe depression, but nonetheless dedicated his life to the Arts.

'Schwertsik has, just like Stravinsky did in the Divertimento with Tchaikovsky, in fact scrambled Beethoven quotes,' says Pieter. 'Of course we are aware of any origins

related to Beethoven. But I don't think that this work is inextricably linked to Beethoven. Precisely when you separate it from that, you discover that it also works well on its own. Here, Schwertsik mixes Beethoven with other influences. It often looks neoclassical, sometimes romantic, sometimes even impressionistic, and thus comes to a very convincing own language. It's just a very strong piece.'

And the same goes for the *Violin sonata* (1943) by Francis Poulenc, which was scuttled at the time of the publication and is now widely loved. The sonata is in memory of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, who was executed by the nationalists during the Spanish Civil War in 1936. 'In the second movement, a line of García Lorca is quoted,' says Tobias. Suddenly it all sounds Spanish, with guitar-like writing in the violin.' And the sonata has also gone through a moment of silence. Pieter: 'The piece was written at the insistence of violinist Ginette Neveu. When she died in a plane crash in 1949, at the age of thirty, Poulenc adapted the piece. This gave it a new meaning; it became an in memoriam for both Lorca and Neveu.'

Just as *The Silence Between* actually got another meaning because of the circumstances, the coronavirus pandemic. The album was prepared and recorded when the Netherlands was in lockdown or waking up from it and tried to deal with the loudest blow. Pieter: 'In this way, the silence also relates to the uncertain time when we couldn't perform anymore. It wasn't an easy time for musicians. I am glad that we were able to do something meaningful during that period.'

- Merlijn Kerkhof

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「妖精の距離」

瀧口 修造

うつくしい齒は樹がくれに歌った
形のいい耳は雲間にあった
玉虫色の爪は水にまじった
脱ぎすてた小石
すべてが足跡のように
そよ風さえ
傾いた椅子の中に失われた
麦畑の中の扉の発狂
空気のラビリンス
そこには一枚のカードもない
そこには一つのコップもない
慾望の楽器のように
ひとすじの奇妙な線で貫かれていた
それは辛うじて小鳥の表情に似ていた
それは死の浮標のように
春の風に棲まるだろう
それは辛うじて小鳥の均衡に似ていた

DISTANCE DE FÉE
SHŪZŌ TAKIGUCHI

Beautiful teeth sung behind the trees
Finely shaped ears were between the clouds
Iridescent nails blended with water
 Kicked off a pebble
 All like footsteps
 Even zephyrs were
 Lost in the tilted chair
Door-in-the-cornfield's insanity
 Air's labyrinth
 Not even one card is there
 Not even one glass is there
 Like an instrument of desire
 Penetrated with a peculiar line
That barely resembled the expression of a small bird
 Like a buoy of death
 It lives in the spring breeze
That barely resembled the balance of a small bird

(translation: Noriko Ohtake)

LAS SEIS CUERDAS
FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

La guitarra

hace llorar a los sueños.

El sollozo de las almas

perdidas

se escapa por su boca

redonda.

Y como la tarántula,

teje una gran estrella

para cazar suspiros,

que flotan en su negro

aljibe de madera.

THE SIX STRINGS

The guitar
weeps to the
dreams.

A little sob
of lost souls
escapes
through its round
mouth.

Like a tarantula
it weaves a great star
to quarry the sighs,
that float on its black
cistern of wood.

(translation: Lloyd Mallan)

BEAU SOIR
PAUL BOURGET

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses,
Et qu'un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé,
Un conseil d'être heureux semble sortir des choses
Et monter vers le cœur troublé;

Un conseil de goûter le charme d'être au monde,
Cependant qu'on est jeune et que le soir est beau,
Car nous nous en allons comme s'en va cette onde:
Elle à la mer, – nous au tombeau!

FAIR EVENING

When rivers are pink in the setting sun,
And a slight shiver runs through fields of wheat,
A suggestion to be happy seems to rise up from all things
And ascends toward the troubled heart;

A suggestion to taste the charms of the world
While one is young and the evening is fair,
For we are on our way just as this wave is:
It is going to the sea, – and we, to the grave!

(translation: Richard Stokes)



PIETER VAN LOENEN

Pieter van Loenen is an extraordinarily versatile violinist. As a soloist, he performed with a.o. the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and the Dutch National Youth Orchestra, and he is a much sought-after chamber musician in the Netherlands and abroad. At the Dutch Violin Competition (Audience Prize of 2016) he was lauded as 'extraordinarily energetic and deeply musical'. Van Loenen often seeks connections with other forms of art. In 2016 he played the musical lead role in the world's first Virtual Reality ballet *Night Fall*, by the Dutch National Ballet. As Young Artist in Residence at the Music Summer of the Dutch National Youth Orchestra in 2018, he showed his artistic vision in many discipline-crossing concerts, and his show *About Orpheus* was awarded with the Dutch Classical Talent Audience Prize 2019.

Van Loenen received his first violin lessons from Koojsje van Haeringen and continued his studies with Vera Beths in The Hague and Terje Moe Hansen in Oslo. He graduated in 2016 at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague with the highest honours and the Fock Medallion for the best graduation exam. Other important masters he studied with were Anner Bijlsma, Reinbert de Leeuw, and Pavel Vernikov. Van Loenen's violin was built by Marc de Sterke. He plays with a bow made by Eugène Sartory, on loan from the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation.

A close-up, black and white portrait of Tobias Borsboom. He has light-colored, wavy hair and is wearing round, thin-rimmed glasses. He is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

TOBIAS BORSBOOM

Tobias Borsboom, the pianist with 'a jewel of a touch' (Trouw), played as winner of the Dutch Classical Talent Award and the Audience Prize (2015) in many concert halls in the Netherlands, and has performed with different orchestras such as the Netherlands Student Orchestra. He received much praise for his debut album *Wanderer* (7 Mountain Records, 2017), chiefly because of his choice of repertoire and sensitive performance: 'an imaginative and very varied world that does justice to Borsboom's great pianistic qualities down to the finest detail' (Opus Klassiek). His most recent recital on texts by Goethe found much appraisal too: 'An unparalleled Tobias Borsboom, like a master storyteller, evoked the true tension' (NRC).

Borsboom has showed himself to be a many-faceted musician. He was guest programmer of the Vriendenconcerten in Amsterdam, and co-organises the concert series *Klassiek achter de Duinen* in The Hague. With his duo partner Yukiko Hasegawa he was chosen as *Shizuoka no Meishutachi* (Japan 2018) with many concerts following. He also likes to create collaborations with theater and other forms of arts, creating the children's play *Mister Tobias* and the *Black Monster*, together with Oorkaan. As founder of the Schubertianen, he brings a theatrical replica of a Schubertiade, based on the life of Schubert.



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recording & mastering engineer at TRPTK



CREDITS

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This album was recorded between July 7-10 2nd 2020, at the Westvest90 Church in Schiedam (NL). Tobias Borsboom plays on a Steinway Model D Concert Grand.

EQUIPMENT

Microphones	DPA d:dicate 4006A DPA d:dicate 4015A Sony C100
AD/DA converters	Merging Technologies Hapi Merging Technologies Anubis
Master clock	Grimm Audio CC2 at 352.8 kHz
Monitoring	KEF Blade Two loudspeakers KEF LS50 loudspeakers Hegel H30 amplifiers Sennheiser HD800S headphones
Power conditioning	Furutech Daytona 303E CAD Ground Control GC1
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