

ON THE SPLENDOR OF REASON

OPENING
CONCERT

Monday 22.09.2025 ♦ 20:30

AULA PIETER DE SOMER

OPENING CONCERT OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR KU LEUVEN

SPONSOR: PEETERS DRUKKERIJ/UITGEVERIJ/BOEKHANDEL

Intro Pieter Bergé – 19:45

Hannes Minnaar, piano

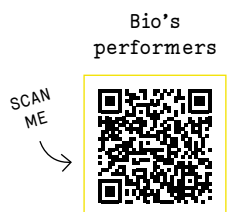
[ANNIVERSARY] In 1950, 200 years after J.S. Bach's death, an international music competition was started in Leipzig. Dmitri Shostakovich, who had rarely left Stalin's USSR, agreed to sit on the jury. One of the candidates was a Russian, Tatjana Nikolayeva, who had prepared all 48 preludes and fugues from Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* for the occasion. Shostakovich was impressed by both her performance and Bach's masterpiece itself. Inspired by Bach's genius, he began to compose his own preludes and fugues. Initially he saw the effort primarily as a tool for keeping his own compositional technique honed, but soon a plan took shape to write a complete cycle. The pieces were written between 10 October 1950 and 25 February 1951, a speed equivalent to one piece per three days. He dedicated the cycle to Nikolayeva.

[STRUCTURE] The two complete cycles by Bach and Shostakovich together last about seven hours. Hannes Minnaar has made a selection of about 70 minutes in total, alternating between the two composers for this opening concert. The pieces in the original volumes are paired. In other words, the prelude and fugue for each tonality

constitute a unit. Preludes are usually improvisational and/or melodic in nature, while fugues are contrapuntal. Minnaar's chosen route consists of fourteen pairs in total. They have been selected to bring out the many facets of both composers, while at the same time creating an overall arc of tension. Not only did Bach spark Shostakovich's imagination; he was also the main source of inspiration for the *Preludes and Fugues*, which explains why this work has become one of the jewels of 20th-century 'neo-baroque' style.

[SYMBOL] Fugues are by definition ingenious compositions, since their composers have to adhere to countless rules and conventions. As a genre, they enormously challenge a composer's powers of combination and imagination. The greatest challenge, however, is not to write a fugue correctly but to ensure that it is also convincing *musically*. A successful fugue is the musical symbol of a sublime symbiosis between reason and imagination par excellence, making it a fitting metaphor for the ideal that universities must pursue and foster, today more so than ever.

Pieter Bergé



PROGRAMMA

[ca. 60']

This concert is conceived as a continuous whole.
Please wait until the end before applauding.

◆ Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

Sonate '1.X.1905, From the Street' (1905)

- I. Presentiment
- II. Death

◆ Josef Suk (1874-1935)

Summer impressions, op. 22b (1902)

- I. At noon

◆ Josef Suk (1874-1935)

Things lived and dreamt, op. 30 (1909)

- IX. Whysperingly and mysteriously
- X. The forgotten graves on the Křečovice churchyard

◆ Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

On an overgrown path, I (1900-1911)

- I. Our evenings (1900)
- II. A blown-away leaf (1900)
- III. Come with us! (1908)
- IV. The Madonna of Frydek (1900)
- V. They chattered like swallows (1911)
- VI. Words fail! (1908)
- VII. Good night! (1900)
- VIII. Unutterable anguish (1911)
- IX. In tears (1908)
- X. The barn owl has not flown away! (1900)



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CONTACT

Festival van Vlaanderen Vlaams-Brabant, Brusselsestraat 63, 3000 Leuven
T 016 20 05 40 • info@festival2021.be • festival2021.be



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29.09.2025

THINGS LIVED
& DREAMT

OPEN MIND, OPEN EARS



FESTIVAL 20-21
22 SEPTEMBER > 26 OCTOBER 2025
TRANSIT
17 > 19 OCTOBER 2025