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presents

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO

This performance marks Jean-Yves Thibaudet's sixth appearance with the Harriman-Jewell Series.

**The Muriel McBrien Kauffman Family Foundation
is the sponsor of our 58th Season.**

3:00 P.M., SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 2023
FOLLY THEATER
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO

Préludes: Book I (1909–1910)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

- I. Danseuses de Delphes (Female dancers of Delphi)
- II. Voiles (Sails, or Veils)
- III. Le vent dans la plaine (The wind in the plain)
- IV. Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir"
(The sounds and scents waft through the evening air)
- V. Les collines d'Anacapri (The hillsides of Anacapri)
- VI. Des pas sur la neige (Footsteps in the snow)
- VII. Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest (What the west wind saw)
- VIII. La fille aux cheveux de lin (The girl with the flaxen hair)
- IX. La sérénade interrompue (Interrupted serenade)
- X. La cathédrale engloutie (The sunken cathedral)
- XI. La danse de Puck (Puck's dance)
- XII. Minstrels

INTERMISSION

Préludes: Book II (1912–1913)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

- I. Brouillards (Fog/Mists)
- II. Feuilles mortes (Dead leaves)
- III. La Puerta del Vino (The Gate of Wine)
- IV. Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses (Fairies are exquisite dancers)
- V. Bruyères (Heather/Town in Eastern France)
- VI. General Lavine - eccentric
- VII. La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
(The terrace of moonlight audiences)
- VIII. Ondine
- IX. Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C. (Hommage to S. Pickwick)
- X. Canope (Canopic Jar)
- XI. Les tierces alternées (Alternating thirds)
- XII. Feux d'artifice (Fireworks)

PROGRAM NOTES

Debussy's *Préludes*

■ Achille-Claude Debussy (August 22, 1862–March 25, 1918) was a key figure in the French musical scene, known for his facility of capturing the essence of French artistic, linguistic, and philosophic expression of the day through his compositional language. Still a relatively new republic at the time of Debussy's birth, France was longing for an end to the economic and social gulf between classes of citizens that had existed for centuries. Debussy, who was born into a poor family, but taken under the wing of a wealthy Russian patron at a young age and who enjoyed recognition for his musical contributions throughout his lifetime, seemed destined to be a voice that could, at least musically, bridge that gap. Debussy's compositional language was texturally and harmonically complex, yet tunefully accessible, rendering him a successful composer during his lifetime.

At the age of 10, young Debussy entered the famed Paris Conservatory as a student of piano and composition, where he enjoyed success and earned the coveted compositional prize, the Grand Prix de Rome for his work *The Prodigal Child*. His time at the Paris Conservatory and his subsequent years in Paris and abroad exposed him to many cultural influences, but perhaps one of the greatest influences on his compositional style was that of Javanese gamelan music. In 1889, Paris hosted the *Exposition Universelle*, which Debussy attended, and it was during this experience that he was introduced to music from multiple East-Asian cultures. In reference to Javanese music, Debussy wrote the following in an *S.I.M.* article published in 1913, "Their school consists of the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind in the leaves, and a thousand other tiny noises, which they listen to with great care, without ever having

consulted any of those dubious [traditional European] treatises. Their traditions are preserved only in ancient songs, sometimes involving dance, to which each individual adds his own contribution century by century. Thus Javanese music obeys laws of counterpoint which make Palestrina seem like child's play. And if one listens to it without being prejudiced by one's European ears, one will find a percussive charm that forces one to admit that our own music is not much more than a barbarous kind of noise more fit for a traveling circus."

The impact that gamelan music had on Debussy's writing is reflected in his choice of wording for certain piece titles, his decision to often forsake traditional Western diatonic writing in favor of whole tone and pentatonic scales, his use of ostinato, layered textures with varied articulations and rhythms in each voice, and specific intervals such as the 5th which he often sustained in lower voices. All of these elements are present in various movements of his piano preludes.

The first 12 of Debussy's 24 piano preludes were composed over a relatively short time period. Nine of the first 12 preludes of Book 1 were written between December of 1909 and February of 1910 and the entire set of 12 preludes were published as a set in 1910, a relatively short time after his 1889 *Expo* experience. The preludes in the second book were composed between late 1912 and the spring of 1913.

With their evocative titles, whimsical gestures, and grounded harmonic layers, these works give a nod to many parts of the world, but surely it is no coincidence that the 24th and final prelude includes an homage to *La Marseilles*, the French National Anthem.

Program Notes by Jessica Koebbe, DMA

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO



Photo by E. Caren

■ For more than three decades, Jean-Yves Thibaudet has performed world-wide, recorded more than 50 albums, and built a reputation as one of today's finest pianists. From the start of his career, he delighted in music beyond the standard repertoire, from jazz to opera, which he transcribed himself to play on the piano. His profound professional friendships crisscross the globe and have led to spontaneous and fruitful collaborations in film, fashion, and visual art.

This season, Thibaudet continues his multi-year focus on Debussy's *Préludes*, playing the complete *Préludes* in solo recitals throughout the US and Europe. He also performs several recitals and small-ensemble concerts with close friends and new collaborators this season. In addition to a recital with Renée Fleming, Thibaudet tours Beethoven's violin sonatas with Midori in the US and Japan, appears with the all-star Itzhak Perlman and Friends program in Michigan, Toronto, and at Carnegie Hall, and joins Michael Feinstein for a bespoke evening-length program featuring the music of George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, and more, specially arranged for piano duos, solos, vocals, and orchestra.

In addition to his recital dates, Thibaudet appears as soloist in eight different pieces this season, performed with eleven orchestras. Among them are Gershwin's Concerto in F, Debussy's *Fantaisie* for piano and orchestra, Messiaen's *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine* and *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2, Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No. 5, Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety," and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major.

Thibaudet has a lifelong passion for education and fostering young musical talent. He is the first-ever Artist-in-Residence at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he makes his home. In 2017, the school announced the

Jean-Yves Thibaudet Scholarships, funded by members of Colburn's donor community, to provide aid for Music Academy students, whom Thibaudet will select for the merit-based awards, regardless of their instrument choice.

Thibaudet records exclusively for Decca; his recording catalogue has received two Grammy nominations, two ECHO Awards, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the Diapason d'Or, the Choc du Monde de la Musique, the Edison Prize, and Gramophone awards. His most recent album, 2021's *Carte Blanche*, features a collection of deeply personal solo piano pieces never before recorded by the pianist. Other highlights from Thibaudet's catalog include a 2017 recording of Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop, a box set of Satie's complete solo piano music, the Grammy-nominated 2007 recording *Saint-Saëns - Piano Concertos Nos. 2 & 5*, a two-disc recording of Debussy's complete solo piano music, and the jazz albums *Reflections on Duke* and *Conversations With Bill Evans*. He is the soloist on Wes Anderson's 2021 film *The French Dispatch*; his playing can also be heard in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, *Wakefield*, and the Oscar-winning and critically acclaimed film *Atonement*. His concert wardrobe is designed by Dame Vivienne Westwood.

Jean-Yves Thibaudet was born in Lyon, France, where he began his piano studies at age five and made his first public appearance at age seven. At twelve, he entered the Paris Conservatory to study with Aldo Ciccolini and Lucette Descaves, a friend and collaborator of Ravel. At age fifteen, he won the Premier Prix du Conservatoire and, three years later, the Young Concert Artists Auditions in New York City. Among his numerous commendations is the Victoire d'Honneur, a lifetime career achievement award and the highest honor given by France's Victoires de la Musique. In 2010 the Hollywood Bowl honored Thibaudet for his musical achievements by inducting him into its Hall of Fame. Previously a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Thibaudet was awarded the title Officier by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012. In 2020, he was named Special Representative for the promotion of French Creative and Cultural Industries in Romania. He is co-Artistic Advisor, with Gautier Capuçon, of the Festival Musique & Vin au Clos Vougeot.

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HarrisonParrott represents Jean-Yves Thibaudet
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