

Our Precious Planet

with the BBC Symphony Orchestra

Start time: 5pm

Approximate end time: 6.10pm, with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Olivier Messiaen Extract from *Les offrandes oubliées*

Einojuhani Rautavaara 'Swans migrating' from *Cantus Arcticus: Concerto For Birds and Orchestra*

Kaija Saariaho 'Terrestre l'oiseau dansant' from *L'Aile du songe*

Dani Howard *Argentum*

Anna Meredith *Nautilus* (arr for orchestra, UK premiere)

John Adams 'Panic' from *Doctor Atomic Symphony*

Benjamin Britten 'Storm' from *Four Sea Interludes*

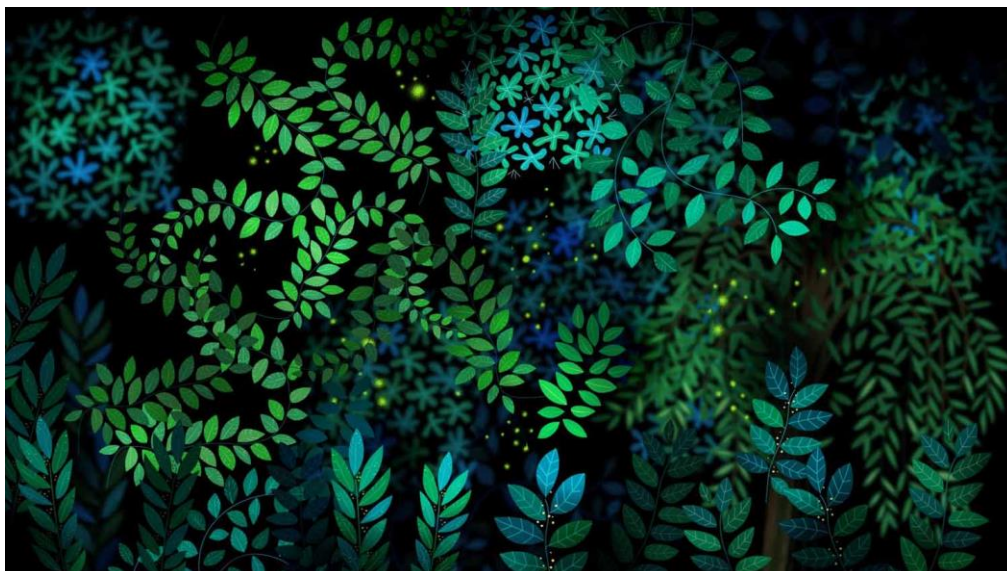
Alberto Ginastera 'Danza del trigo' from *Estancia*

Francis Poulenc *La baigneuse de Trouville*

Joanna Wyld speaks to Grégoire Pont to find out more about the ideas behind tonight's concert.

When he was a boy, Grégoire Pont was taken by his grandmother to the cinema in Paris. They went to watch a very special film: Disney's *Fantasia*. If you haven't seen *Fantasia*, it's an unusual film: apart from a few introductions there are no words, and there are no special effects. And what's even more unusual is that words and special effects simply aren't needed. We hear classical music by different composers, and the images on screen match the sounds, often telling a story. For Bach, the animators used lines and splashes of colour to illustrate the music's patterns. For Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, we see dinosaurs gnashing their teeth. We even see Mickey Mouse as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* in music by Dukas. Grégoire Pont was transfixed. 'It was as if Tchaikovsky had written the music specially for Disney!' He said to himself, 'I want to make something like this.'

Grégoire had always drawn lots of pictures, but after this inspiring experience he started going to a weekly animation class. He began these classes at the age of eight and kept going for 15 years, learning lots of approaches to animation, and using classical music whenever he could. Afterwards, he worked at a video game company for 10 years. And then, the chance came for him to create animations similar to *Fantasia*, just as he had always hoped! A friend from his teenage years, the conductor François-Xavier Roth, asked Grégoire if they could work together. They set out on a new adventure creating musical animations for French TV. At last, Grégoire had the chance to make his dream come true. Today, he can't believe his luck: that his job is to make animations and draw onstage while music plays. 'I love it so much!'



© Grégoire Pont

barbican

One of the people who most influenced Grégoire Pont is the Scottish-Canadian animator Norman McLaren, who made beautiful films that fed Grégoire's imagination. Grégoire is also interested in 'synaesthesia', which is when a person's senses overlap in unusual ways, such as what he calls 'seeing colours with the ears'. French composer Olivier Messiaen had synaesthesia, and said that his piece *Les offrandes oubliées* ('The forgotten offerings') made him see 'reds, gold, blues (like a faraway stained glass window)'. Grégoire Pont loves to express music through explosions of colour, as well as through images of the world around us. 'When animation is well synchronised with music it produces a magical effect. Even a single line dancing with the music makes an enormous impact.'

Grégoire Pont is above all faithful to the music. As he works, he follows each piece very closely, bar by bar. When he draws, his movements are in time with the music. The result is not the same as watching a film in a cinema. Grégoire's animation allows us the space to enjoy seeing and hearing the musicians of the orchestra as they play. His animation does not distract us from the music, but shows it off and adds something new.

So, what can we expect to hear during this concert? *Our Precious Planet* features music from the 20th century – Grégoire's favourite period of classical music – as well as more recent music. Grégoire has even chosen a couple of pieces himself: Ginastera's 'Danza del trigo' ('Dance of the Wheat') from *Estancia*, and *La baigneuse de Trouville* ('The bather of Trouville') by Poulenc.

Argentine composer Ginastera wrote his ballet *Estancia* about a 'gaucho' – a heroic, skilled South American horseman – but it is also about the composer's love of nature. Ginastera said that whenever he crossed the Pampa (South American grassland), 'my spirit felt itself inundated by changing impressions, now joyful, now melancholy ... produced by its limitless immensity and by the transformation that the countryside undergoes in the course of a day.' Poulenc's ballet was inspired by the fishing village of Trouville in northwest France, but also takes us to the Eiffel Tower, where a wedding party is in full swing.

The rest of the music we will hear today was chosen by the conductor Dalia Stasevska, and takes us on a journey around *Our Precious Planet*. There is music by two young British composers, Dani Howard and Anna Meredith – whose piece *Nautilus* is being performed in a new version for orchestra for the very first time. Benjamin Britten lived by the sea in Suffolk and used thundering percussion, sneering brass and shrill woodwind in his 'Storm', which he said is meant to sound like 'one of those treacherous howling gales so prevalent on the East Coast, which eat away whole stretches of the neighbouring cliffs'. And there is another fierce lightning storm in 'Panic' from American composer John Adams's opera *Doctor Atomic*.

Like Messiaen – and Grégoire Pont – the Finnish composer Rautavaara loved birds. His *Cantus Arcticus* (Concerto for Birds and Orchestra) includes recordings of birdsong made near the Arctic Circle and in Finland. Kaija Saariaho is also Finnish, and birds soar and flutter through her piece *L'Aile du songe* ('The Dream Wing').

For Grégoire Pont, this concert 'is a poem about the Earth – starting with chaos and becoming our beautiful planet. For me, the Earth is like a magical flower that grows and blossoms, but it is also very delicate and fragile. We have to take care of it.'

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Performers

Dalia Stasevska conductor

Grégoire Pont illustrator & animator

Richie Driss presenter

BBC Symphony Orchestra

violin I

Stephen Bryant
Jeremy Martin
Jenny King
Celia Waterhouse
Colin Huber
Shirley Turner
Ni Do
Molly Cockburn
James Wicks
Kate Cole
Laura Ayoub
Lulu Fuller
Kirsty MacLeod
Charlotte Reid
Malcolm Allison
Tina Jacobs

violin II

Dawn Beazley
Daniel Meyer
Vanessa Hughes
Danny Fajardo
Lucy Curnow
Rachel Samuel
Tammy Se
Caroline Cooper
Victoria Hodgson
Lucica Trita
Dania Alzapiedi
Ted Barry
Caroline Bishop
Martin Lissola

viola

Jane Atkins
Philip Hall
Joshua Hayward
Nikos Zarb
Aurdrey Henning
Natalie Taylor
Michael Leaver
Carolyn Scott
Mary Whittle
Peter Mallinson
Matthias Wiesner
Zoe Matthews

cello

Adrian Bradbury
Tamsy Kaner
Mark Sheridan
Clare Hinton
Michael Atkinson
Augutsa Harris
Kieran Carter
Molly McWhirter
Sophie Gledhill
Stephanie Truss

double bass

Nicholas Bayley
Richard Alsop
Anita Langridge
Michael Clarke
Beverley Jones
Elen Pan
Daniel Molloy
Alice Kent

flute

Laura Jellicoe
Tomoko Mukai

piccolo

Fergus Davidson

oboe

Alison Teal
Imogen Smith

cor anglais

Drake Gritton

clarinet

Richard Hosford

E♭ clarinet

Jonathan Parkin

bass clarinet

Andy Harper

bassoon

Ben Hudson
Lorna West

contra bassoon

Steve Magee

horn

Martin Owen
Michael Murray
Nicholas Hougham
Mark Wood
Phillippa Koushk-Jalali

trumpet

Philip Cobb
Martin Hurrell
Joseph Atkins
Chris Cotter

trombone

Helen Vollam
Dan Jenkins

bass trombone

Paul Lambert

tuba

Sam Elliot

timpani

Antoine Bedwei

percussion

David Hockings
Alex Neal
Fiona Ritchie
Joe Cooper

harp

Anneke Hodnett

celeste/piano

Joanna Elms