

# LAURENT METTRAUX

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Born in Fribourg (Switzerland). Musical studies at Conservatoire et Académie de Musique de Fribourg (complete studies of analysis, counterpoint, harmony and fugue with René Oberson, piano, violin and singing) and in Geneva (composition with Prof. Eric Gaudibert, conducting with Prof. Liang-Sheng Chen). Follows also courses of ancient music and musicology. Receives a prize of the Kiefer-Hablitzel Foundation (Association of Swiss Musicians). Counsels and courses with, among others, Klaus Huber, Luis de Pablo, Heinz Holliger, Arvo Pärt, Paul Méfano.

1st Prize and Public Prize of the 1st competition for young composers – 1993, organized by the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne; finalist of, among others, the European Competition of Choral Composition (Amiens, France); laureate of several foundations. His work « Ombre » (« Shadow ») for orchestra, chosen among 80 scores, won 1998 the prize of the prestigious Donaueschinger Musiktage, given for the first time (Jury: Wolfgang Rihm, Sylvain Cambreling, Gérard Grisey, Christian Wolff). He is also honoured in 2000 with a *contribution ad personam* from the UBS Kulturstiftung for his « remarkable partaking to the musical life in Switzerland and abroad ».

First compositions in 1982. Numerous orders, as much from the interpreters as from concert associations, festivals, broadcasting and foundations. His works are more and more performed, as well in Switzerland as in other countries. His style is appreciated as well by specialists of contemporary music and musicians as by the public. He is also one of the youngest composers about whom a notice appears in the International Who's who in Music and Musician's Directory, from the 16<sup>th</sup> edition onward (1998). He is since July 2007 member of the committee of the Association of Swiss Musicians.

His works have been performed in many countries all around the globe by numerous famous interpreters, among which are to be mentioned : Talich Quartet, Tibor Varga, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Sylvain Cambreling, Francisco Araiza, Wiener Klangforum, Zürcher Streichtrio, the New London Chamber Choir. Among his recent compositions : an oratorio for the Swiss National Exposition ; Complainte for solo violin, written at the request of Shlomo Mintz to be the set piece of the International Violin Competition of Sion 2003 ; a choral work, commission awarded through competition by the Foundation for Universal Sacred Music of New York ; « Émergences » for violin and accordion, first performed by Marianne Piketty and Pascal Contet ; a double-concerto for Boris Livschitz, violin, and the famous pi'pa player Yang Jing ; a quintet for flute and strings for Alexandre Magnin and the Janáček Quartet ; a concerto for organ and orchestra, for the inauguration of the new great organ of the Lausanne Cathedral, which shall be played again in April 2010 by the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, conducted by Riccardo Chailly.

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## PRINCIPAL WORKS

### Orchestral works :

- **Shadow** for full orchestra (1995-8). Composition prize of the "Donaueschinger Musiktage 1998", chosen among more than 80 scores by a board of examiners including Wolfgang Rihm, Gérard Grisey, Christian Wolff, Sylvain Cambreling, Armin Köhler. First performed by the SWR Orchestra, conductor: Sylvain Cambreling (Donaueschinger Musiktage, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1999).

- **Symphony for Chamber Orchestra** or **First Symphony** (1992). First prize and public award of the composition competition of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra (1993). First performance: Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, conducted by Jesus Lopez-Cobos (Lausanne, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993). First performed in its version for large orchestra by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Volgograd, conducted by Emmanuel Siffert (October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999).

- **Concerto for 15 soloist strings** (1994) Personal order by Tibor Varga. First performed at the opening concert of the 1994 Tibor Varga Festival by the Festival Orchestra, conducted by Tibor Varga (Sion, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994).

- **Concerto n.2 for violin and string orchestra** (1998) commissioned for the celebrations, in Budapest, of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution and of the Swiss Confederation. First performance by Isabelle Lambelet, the Camerata Symphonica of Budapest and Tibor Varga (Budapest, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998).

- **Le Cocyte** for orchestra (1999) ordered by the Pro Helvetia Foundation for the 100<sup>th</sup> Festival of Swiss Musicians (Swiss Musicians Association). First performed in St. Moritz by the Symphony Orchestra of Bern, conducted by Luca Pfaff (September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2000).

- **Concerto n.3 for violin and orchestra** (1999) ordered by the Swiss radio for the International Violin Competition Tibor Varga 2000 (set piece). First performed by Ryoko Yano and the Chamber Orchestra of Lithuania, conducted by Gilbert Varga (August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000).

- **Concerto for organ and orchestra** (2002-3), for the inauguration of the new great organ of the Lausanne Cathedral (First performance in December 2003 with Jean-Christophe Geiser at the organ and the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, conducted by Jean Balissat). The German first performance shall

take place in April 2010 at the Gewandhaus of Leipzig, with Michael Schönheit at the organ, and the Gewandhaus orchestra, conducted by Riccardo Chailly.

- **Concerto for pi'pa, violin and orchestra** for the famous pi'pa player Yang Jing and Boris Livschitz, violinist of the Zurich String Trio.

## Vocal works:

- **Vers le Soleil Couchant** (Towards the Setting Sun) (1995-6), Oratorio for soloists, choirs and orchestra (on words by around forty authors), commissioned by the Fribourg University choir. First performance on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 1996, in Fribourg.

- **Elogio della Notte** for bass voice and piano (1997), text taken from sonnets by Michelangelo. First performed during the Orpheus Concerts in Zurich (March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000).

- **First lamentation for Maundy Thursday** for mixed choir (1997) and **Lucis Creator optime** for children's choir (1997). Finalist works at the European Competition of Choral Composition of Amiens (1997).

- **Crucifixion** for mixed choir a cappella (1998). Commissioned and first performed by the Chamber Choir of the Fribourg University at the Greifswald Festival (Germany) and in Stettin (Poland), June 1999.

- **La plus belle des Lumières**, on texts taken from the Rig Veda, choral work commissioned by the Festival of Sacred Music in Fribourg for the New London Chamber Choir, for the Festival of 2000.

- **Le Nom Caché** (The Hidden Name), Oratorio commissioned by the Swiss National Exposition of year 2002.

- **Plus près de toi que tu ne l'es toi-même** for vocal ensemble (2006). Commission of the Foundation for Universal Sacred Music (New York), awarded through competition. First performance in November 2006

## Instrumental and chamber music:

- **Gethsemané** for organ (1990). First performance in Bern by Erwin Messmer (1994). This work has often being performed (Kreuzkirche Dresden, Braunschweig Cathedral, ...).
- **Fantasia** for violin (1995) commissioned by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. Set piece of the International Violin Competition Tibor Varga 1995.
- **Trio** for violin, cello and piano (1995-6) commissioned by the Musical Youths of Fribourg. First performance by the Trio Animae in 1999 at the Bratislava Festival of Contemporary Music.
- **String Trio** (1997-8) commissioned by the Pro Helvetia Foundation for the Zurich String Trio. First performance during a concert tour in India and Sri Lanka, in August 2000.
- **String quartet** (1998-9) ordered by the Jeunesses Musicales Gruériennes for the Talich Quartet. First performance in March 2003.
- **Paremboles** (1998) commissioned by the Triades Ensemble. First performance in Mar del Plata and Buenos Aires (October 1998).
- **Duo for flute and clarinet** (1999) commissioned by the Boswil Foundation for the Wiener Klangforum (First performance on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999).
- **Duo for two saxophones**, first performed on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Saxophone (Montréal, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000).
- **Wind Quintet** (2000). First performance by the Eole Quintet (Fribourg, on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000).
- **Lux Mundi** (2000). Commissioned by the European Music Month 2001. First performed by more than ten organists of Basel and surroundings, during the Holy Week of 2001.

- **String Quintet** (2001-2). Commissioned by the Zurich String Quintet, this work has been first performed during a concert tour in Helsinki (Finland) and Lithuania, in July 2003.
  
- **Quintet for flute and strings** (2002-3) for the flutist Alexandre Magnin and the Janacek Quartet (First performance in September 2003).
  
- **Complainte** (2003). Written at the request of Shlomo Mintz to be the set piece of the International Violin Competition of Sion (2003).
  
- **Trio for clarinet, cello and piano** (2003), order of the Avalon Trio, first performance during a concert tour in Ukraine and during the Festival « 2 days & 2 nights of modern music » of Odessa (April 2004).
  
- **Reflets** for violin and percussion (2002-4). First performance in 2004, Costa Rica, by Jan Dobrzelewski and Stuart Marrs.
  
- **Swiss Dances** for four-handed piano (2003-4). First performed July 2004, by the Piano Duo Dominique Derron & Pius Urech.
  
- **Stimmungen** for four cellos (2005-6). Commissioned by the Festival Viva Cello of Liestal.
  
- **Suite** for three flutes (2005-6). Written for the ensemble Les Chemins de Traverse.
  
- **Serenata in chiaroscuro** for organ (2005-6). Commissioned by the Bümplizer Orgelserenaden on the occasion of their 20<sup>th</sup> season. First performance in 2006-7 by Erwin Messmer.
  
- **Émergences** for violin and accordion (2006). First performed in July 2006, during the Festival of Auberive (France), by Marianne Piketty and Pascal Contet.

## QUOTES

After I had heard a work by Laurent Mettraux, I have spontaneously written to him, asking him to compose a work for my orchestra. The “Concerto pour 15 soloist strings” (1994) was the result of my demand, a work of exceptional quality. The innovative ideas, the subtleties, the contrasts, everything contributes in forming a work of perfect homogeneity. It requires from the musicians a great sensibility, an important mastery of the instrument, without appealing to a mathematician's austerity nor to the manual capacity of a circus artist. The musicians have played this work with an very great pleasure, the reaction of the public was spontaneous, enthusiastic. I hope to have the pleasure to listen to and to interpret more works by Laurent Mettraux. **Tibor Varga, violonist**

Mr. Mettraux has been mandated to compose the compulsory piece of the 34<sup>th</sup> International Violin Competition organised by our Festival, (...) the Third Concerto for Violin and Full Orchestra (...). Everybody was struck by the work's excellence and maturity, by the sensitivity of its details as well as by the use of large sequences leading to highest striving straining points. Laurent Mettraux knows how to draw the best of the soloist instrument with generosity and ability and his colourful orchestration develops all the shapes, from the darkest to the most luminous one. To my mind this work appears to be a first rank one. As for the composer, himself prize-winner of many distinctions – among others the prestigious Prize of the Festival “Donaueschinger Musiktage” – he has been known for years as one of the most important ones of his generation (...). **International Music Festival of Sion**

You have clearly your own particular way, which has not much to do with the musical languages of most of the contemporary composers. Your love for the grand phrase, for rhetoric in the noblest sense of the term, as well as your whole musical deportment associate you with a certain 'enlightened romanticism' and general independence of mind. That is the reason for which I want to tell you this : only listen to your own voice. **Luis de Pablo, composer**

Laurent Mettraux is a young promising composer, following an atypical and personal way, creating free from the dogmas and fashions of contemporary music. **Jesus Lopez Cobos, conductor**, *after the first performance of the Symphony for chamber orchestra by the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne in 1993.*

[About the first string quartet :] We enjoyed playing this lovely, thoughtful piece. **Jan Talich, violinist from the Talich Quartet**

The sonnets by Michelangelo are intense and wonderfully written. **Dalton Baldwin, pianist**

The “Complainte” by Laurent Mettraux is the best set piece of all competitions I have attended as a member of a Jury. **Prof. Herman Krebbers, violinist**

## FROM THE NEWSPAPERS

« Out of a deep harmony emerge forces that will stretch the phrase up to its climax. [...] There is a real talent in this language, that affects by the strength of its conviction. » (Patrice Borcard, La Gruyère, 18<sup>th</sup> 7. 2000)

« A composer of a new generation attracts the attention: Laurent Mettraux of Fribourg. His work "Ombre" is freed from the vanguards. It shows a strong, rather intuitive talent. » (Simone Mahrenholz, Die Welt, 20<sup>th</sup> 10. 1999)

« The highly and subtly lyrical music of the second Trio (1996) by Laurent Mettraux ! A really rare music, narrative to the utmost, that lays out a way of poetry filled with passions and illuminations [...] a striking language. » (Bernard Sansonnens, La Liberté, 21<sup>st</sup> 2. 2000)

« He is part of a new generation of musicians grown weary of formal researches, who return to the expression of their personality in contempt of the vanguards, and resort to tonality whenever they want to. » (Jean-Jacques Roth, Le Nouveau Quotidien, 3<sup>rd</sup> 3. 1993)

« The first performance of the work "Gethsemané" by the 24 year old high talented composer Laurent Mettraux from Fribourg constituted a high point. The work pictures in a subtle dramatical way the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. » (pof, Der Bund, 29<sup>th</sup> 3. 1994)

« The public has discovered with astonishment the very beautiful Concerto for 15 soloist strings by Laurent Mettraux. [...] This work is very modern as well as very classical, perfectly harmonious. » (Vincent Pellegrini, Le Nouvelliste, 14<sup>th</sup> 7. 1994)

« The Symphony for chamber orchestra is a work that speaks both to the heart and to the mind. A warm lyricism imbibes this score enriched by instrumental solos of unquestionable attraction. The revelation of a real talent. » (Yves Allaz, Journal de Genève, 3<sup>rd</sup> 3. 1993)

« It is a music made of strong atmospheres, of dramatical and meditating aspects. There is something authentically and deeply romantic in this first symphony. There cannot be found anything artificial in the writing manner of Laurent Mettraux. » (Emmanuel Siffert, quoted in La Liberté of the 16<sup>th</sup> 10. 1999)

« Today, his music corresponds to the expectations of the interpreters as well as of the institutions. It benefits by the traditions as well as it reflects the individuality of its conceptor, who vindicates by means of it the right to move freely. » (Dominique Rosset, L'Hebdo, 3<sup>rd</sup> 8. 2000)