

Jean-François HEISSER

Biography



Photo : S. Poltronieri

Jean-François Heisser is a well-rounded artist, leading a versatile career as a pianist, conductor and teacher, fueled by a vast cultural knowledge and tireless intellectual curiosity. Born in Saint-Etienne, he is the disciple and heir of Vlado Perlemuter, Henriette Puig-Roget and Maria Curcio. He was professor at the Paris Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique from 1991 till 2016. Among his talented students are Bertrand Chamayou and Jean-Frédéric Neuburger, with whom he has developed a relationship of close musical complicity.

He now balances his career as a **soloist** with his activities as the musical director of the **Poitou-Charentes Orchestra** (since 2001), and as guest conductor and also artistic director of various institutions and major musical productions. His extensive discography boasts over 40 recordings: after his highly acclaimed recording of the *piano works* of Paul Dukas (awarded the *Diapason d'or de l'année* prize), he embarked on a collaboration with *Erato Records* (a 6-CD boxed set dedicated to the Spanish repertoire of Schumann, Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, etc.), then with *Naïve Records* (Beethoven, Brahms) and *Praga Records* (Weber, Berg, Manoury, Bartok...). His recording activities are currently centered on recordings with the Poitou-Charentes Orchestra for the *Mirare* (*de Falla, Wien 1925, Dubois, American Journey*) and *Musicales Actes Sud* (Albéniz, Mompou) labels. As a soloist, he has played under the baton of renowned conductors such as Janowski, Tilson-Thomas, Segerstam, Krivine, Mehta, Plasson, Roth etc., with, among others, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the Bayerischer Rundfunk, the Orchestre National de France or Les Siècles...

He frequently performs in recitals, with a preference for Beethoven (*Sonatas, Diabelli Variations* etc.), Brahms, Chopin, the Spanish repertoire (Albéniz, de Falla, Granados, Mompou) and, naturally, the works of great French composers of the past and present. Alongside his performances of great concertos and major works of the piano repertoire, he is also an eager proponent

of 20th century works and contemporary creation: *the Turangalîlâ-Symphonie* and Olivier Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux Étoiles*, under the direction of Mehta, Janowski or Segerstam; Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke, Mantra* and *Kontakte*; or the world first performance, among others, of Gilbert Amy and Nguyen Thien Dao's *Piano Concertos*, along with three major works by Philippe Manoury: *La Ville, Veränderungen pour piano seul* and *Terra Ignota for piano and 22 musicians*. His uncompromising approach to interpretation leads him to perform regularly on period pianos (Weber: *The Four Sonatas - Praga Records -*, *Konzertstück - on Mirare-*). Under the direction of François Xavier Roth and his orchestra "Les Siècles", he also alternates between modern pianos (the three Bartok concertos) and period instruments (Saint-Saëns and Brahms).

As a **chamber musician**, Jean-François Heisser has, needless to say, covered the entire repertoire with musical partners such as the Ysaye, Lindsay and Pražák Quartets, and his recording of the Bartok sonatas with Peter Csaba (on *Praga*) is now regarded as an essential work. He has also emerged as a leading advocate of the *four-hands piano repertoire* and of *works for two pianos*, notably with G. Pludermacher, M.J Jude and J.F Neuburger, and has also written daring and magnificent transcriptions for *two pianos* of works such as *The Rite of Spring* or *the Symphonie Fantastique*.

As a **musical director**, he has been in charge of developing the Orchestre Poitou-Charentes project since 2001, firmly establishing the orchestra as one of the finest French chamber ensembles, as reflected in its recordings on the *Mirare* label: the orchestra's rendering of a primitive version of de Falla's *El Amor Brujo* as well as of Berg's *Kammerkonzerte* were both widely acclaimed by the musical press, and are now praised as reference recordings of these works. A recording of the Complete Beethoven *Concertos* conducted from the piano will be released in 2016. As an artistic director, his ongoing partnership with *Editions Actes-Sud* has led him to direct the musical program of the *Soirées Musicales d'Arles*. From 2015 onwards, he will also serve as the artistic advisor of the *Festival de l'Orangerie de Sceaux*. And finally, continuing the work and preserving the memory of his mentor Vlado Perlemuter, "historical" performer of the great French composers, Jean-François Heisser is also the President of the Maurice Ravel International Academy, a major educational center for the training of talented young artists. His aim is to give such musical meeting places a truly international dimension. He works with Palazzetto Bru Zane - *Centre de musique romantique française* on this project from September 2015 onwards.