

Ephemeræ

Instrumentation

- 3 Flutes (3rd doubling Piccolo), 3 Oboes (3rd doubling English Horn), 3 Clarinets in Bb (3rd doubling Bass Clarinet), 3 Bassoons (3rd doubling Contrabassoon)
- 4 Horns in F, 3 Trumpets in C, 3 Trombones, 1 Tuba
- Timpani; Perc. 1: Xylophone, Triangle, Temple Blocks (hi-lo), Tam-tam, Vibraphone, Glockenspiel, Castanets, Maracas, Snare Drum, Crash Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal, Tom-toms (hi-med-lo-floor tom); Perc. 2: Crash Cymbals, Tubular Bells, Güiro, Suspended Cymbal, Glockenspiel, Tambourine, Cabasa, Snare Drum; Perc. 3: Triangle, Snare Drum, Crash Cymbals, Whip, Tom-toms (hi-med-lo-floor tom), Mark Tree, Bass Drum, Tam-tam, Suspended Cymbal, Woodblocks (hi-lo), Bongos (hi-lo)
- Solo Piano
- Strings

Ephemeræ, concerto for piano and orchestra

Duration: 30 minutes.

Fragrances may be amongst the most fleeting and ethereal sensations most sentient beings experience in their daily lives. They come in a myriad of varieties, making them incredibly hard to verbalize and categorize. Although elusive, they are also capable of making lasting impressions, remaining in our memory long after they are gone. The perfume industry has found ways to harness their power by meticulously studying them and classifying them. Michael Edwards' *Fragrance Wheel* is perhaps the most known successful attempt and has become an industry standard.

Divided into three movements, *Ephemeræ* journeys along the whole fragrance spectrum, from the high floral, fruity, and marine tones, all the way to the dark tones of dry and mossy woods. It all begins with a subdued motif on the piano, an oscillating minor second between C and B-natural that starts in earnest, but seems to faint with each passing repetition, like a fleeting scent. After a two-minute expository passage, **Bloom**, the first movement, goes on to evoke both, the vigorous act of blooming and the freshness of the scents associated with Spring. It is a splash of orchestral colors mirroring the piano's relentless energy, zest, and effervescence, all of it framed by the ever-present minor second motif.

In **Primal Forest** we explore the lush and dark dwellings of musk and wooden undertones. Here we enter an ancient realm, replete with suggestive aromas, some of which might have long vanished from Earth, but whose eerie and imperceptible vestiges can still be sensed by an imaginary, and highly sensitive, olfactory device. I cannot overstate how virtually impossible it would have been to conceive this movement had I not been inspired by Javier Perianes' otherworldly touch. Not only is Javier capable of reaching the nether regions that exist beyond *pianos* and *pianissimos*—regions which most pianists find impenetrable—he thrives within them and is capable of producing an astonishing variety of tones and timbers. The

movement swells into colossal heights only to dissolve again into the thinnest textures. After taking us through an extended transition, the movement does not end per se, but instead leads directly into our last fragrance chamber.

Oriental and spicy scents overwhelm our senses during the first five minutes of **Spice Bazaar**. Sensuous melodies and rhythms seduce us into a trance, blurring our senses and overloading our bodies to the point of abandon and ecstasy. The room fills with an intoxicating mix of cinnamon, sandalwood, incense, patchouli, and jasmine, later fusing with oak moss and lavender. Inebriated, this hypnotic trance comes to an end, leading us into fast and relentless rhythms evoking the first movement but tinged with the darkest colors of the fragrance wheel. With only a few minutes to spare, a cadenza begins, at first diaphanous, but then increasingly gaining in might and power until it reaches symphonic proportions, even though the orchestra remains silent. The last minute harkens back to the first five minutes of this movement, bringing the work to a decisive conclusion.

Ephemeræ is dedicated to Javier Perianes, who I have had the privilege to know for almost twenty years and whose exceptional sensibility and artistry have not ceased to astonish me ever since. Co-commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Oslo-Filharmonien, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, and Philadelphia Orchestra, *Ephemeræ* will receive its world premiere performance on February 23rd, 2022 in London by Javier Perianes as soloist, and the LPO under the baton of Klaus Mäkelä.

Jimmy López Bellido © 2021