

Music: Laurence Equilbey offers a "heavenly funeral" to Fauré's "Requiem"

The conductor has reserved for La Seine musicale, in Boulogne-Billancourt, the kick-off of the anniversary season which marks the 30th anniversary of her Accentus choir.



Fauré's "Requiem" orchestrated by **Laurence Equilbey**, on February 15, 2023, at La Seine musicale, in Paris. JULIEN BENHAMOU

Wednesday, February 15, at the auditorium of La Seine musicale, in Boulogne-Billancourt (Hauts-de-Seine), marked the start of the anniversary season of the Accentus choir, created thirty years ago by Laurence Equilbey. An a cappella chamber formation, labeled the first Center national d'art vocal in 2018, which has renewed the landscape of choral music in France and which its founder, who has meanwhile become a conductor, has endowed with an instrumental corollary, Insula orchestra. The two formations opened the evening with [the rare oratorio of Charles Gounod](#) archives of the Sisters of Charity of Saint-Louis, in Vannes. [Saint Francis of Assisi](#), rediscovered in 1996 in the

[Laurence Equilbey](#) has always posed as a vector of meaning and images. This expressive and sensual sacred music which recounts the death of the preacher to the birds (probably the saint closest to nature) is counterpointed by a black and white video, between gray skies with moving clouds and gaps in light. The voice of Saint Francis is entrusted to the luminous tenor Amitai Pati, who walks briskly in the footsteps of his older brother, [Pene Pati](#) unfolding a supple prosody with perfect naturalness. A short vocal appearance of Jesus by the baritone Samuel Hasselhorn and [perfectly precise](#) celestial and the King of David and Lady Poverty" into a

Laurence Equilbey did not wish to interrupt the dramaturgy: an improvisation on the organ during the change of set for the *Requiem*, by Fauré, as in the office. The numbers have grown to address one of the masterpieces of French religious music. A *Requiem* more inclined to contemplation than to outbursts of terror, although the "Dies



Fauré's *iraë* can be as impressive as that of Mozart or Verdi. A large vulture appeared in Briton Mat Collishaw's video, *Sky Burial* ("a burial in the sky"). It hovers, majestic, while the "Introit" installs the sense of urgency that prevails throughout the musical performance.

mystery of death

Fast tempos, contrasting colors (almost brutal percussions), the music propels itself in space like the scavenging camera which revolves around a huge disused building tower, between rust and concrete. Inside, rooms for the dying, surrounded by a few relatives and oxygen bottles. The videographer's gaze will seek, in the hollow of each eyelid, the mystery of death which will soon close them. With each flight of soul, the flight over water filmed by drone, source, river then river. Finally, the open sea swell.

The dark and woody, almost mineral baritone of Samuel Hasselhorn magnificently deployed the solo of the "Offertory", which evokes this resurrection promised by God to Abraham and his descendants. The angelic oration of the "Sanctus" then the solo of the "Pie Jesu" sung by a young soloist from the Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine, have accompanied other silent deaths, the frail child's voice refreshing the forehead of the ultimate faces.

Samuel Hasselhorn's dark and woody, almost mineral baritone magnificently deployed the solo of the "Offertory".

It was on the poignant injunction of "Libera me" superbly dramatized by Samuel Hasselhorn that the dead were carried up the stairs for these "heavenly funerals" practiced by certain communities at the top of "towers of silence", exposing the bodies to gravedigger birds. The violence of the "Dies irae" called the vultures, which sting, greenhouses forward. The images are impressive, which ignore nothing of the reality of a corpse torn apart by beaks. The "In Paradisum" pacifies the raising of voices and large necrophages over a modern city at sunset, then the Earth seen from space, finally darkness and the stars.

Saint Francis of Assisi, by Gounod, and *Requiem*, by Fauré. With Amitai Pati, Samuel Hasselhorn, Mat Collishaw (video), Laurence [Accentus and Insula orchestra](#) Equilbey (conductor). [The musical Seine](#) in Boulogne-Billancourt (Hauts-de-Seine), Thursday February 16 at 7.30 p.m. Concert resumed on Friday February 17 at 8 p.m. at the [Grand Théâtre de Provence](#), in Aix-en-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône).