

# NOUS, L'ORCHESTRE DE PARIS

A film by PHILIPPE BÉZIAT



LES FILMS PELLÉAS PRESENTS

# NOUS, L'ORCHESTRE DE PARIS

A film by PHILIPPE BÉZIAT

With the ORCHESTRA OF PARIS  
Musical Director KLAUS MÄKELÄ

FRANCE | 2025 | 1H30 | DCP | 5.1 | 1.85 | COLOUR

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# SYNOPSIS

How can people play together as one?  
How can one contribute to something greater than oneself?  
How can a group cohabitate for decades without falling apart?  
And what role does the conductor really play?



For the first time, cameras and microphones slip among the 120 musicians of the Orchestre de Paris, under the baton of their young prodigy conductor, Klaus Mäkelä. A total immersion to share their experiences, emotion and beauty, at the heart of music in the making.



# INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE BÉZIAT

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BY  
SYLVAIN PRUDHOMME

Following the day-to-day life of an orchestra, with all its variety of events and its routines, is obviously not at all the same as following the making of a show. Did that create new difficulties?

I had to keep filming like a documentary filmmaker, which is to start from reality, from the daily life of the Orchestra of Paris, from the reality of the artists' work—which never ceases to fascinate me—with their ability to transform themselves the instant they enter into their art, that small miracle I love filming above all else, through which someone human suddenly becomes almost superhuman before our eyes, in sound and image. But this time there was no longer any external narrative to lean on in order to carry the film. The life of an orchestra consists of working on one piece for a week, then another the following week. We had to tighten the focus on the dramaturgy of the music itself. It was a challenge, but it was also a liberation. For the first time, I had the feeling that I no longer needed an alibi; I could simply articulate music and cinema.

**Usually in cinema, music is subordinate to the film. In your work, it becomes the heart of the film.**

"Film music" is generally created after the film, to support a discourse, a script, a dramaturgy—to accompany it, to illustrate it. In my case it is exactly the opposite: the music speaks first. The basic dramaturgy is that of the musical discourse; it lies in the Mahler or Bartók passage being played, in the emotion or the adventure of that passage in itself. Instead of a film with music, I believe we have a "music film." Many people make films by adapting novels. I make films by adapting music!

## Watching the film, one has the feeling of being “inside” the music. How did you manage to create that experience?

We had an extraordinary stroke of luck that no one had ever had before. To hear what you hear in the film required means that had never previously been made available—and they were made available here because the Paris Philharmonic was a co-producer.

For each take during filming, there were 90 open microphones. In other words, every take was recorded as if for a studio album. Then, during editing and mixing, I recovered all these sounds and recreated a mix based on the image, on where we were within the orchestra, and on the shots. I “reorchestrated” Ravel or Bartók according to the voices I wanted to bring out—not only depending on the camera’s position, but on the emotion I wanted to emphasize.

I was also lucky to work with an extraordinary team, from sound recording to editing and mixing, and to assemble everything in a remarkable space. In the end, the film offers an extremely rare sonic experience, both in Atmos and Dolby 5.1. These technologies are often used for exploding bombs or whizzing bullets. Very few people use the lateral and depth effects they make possible.

## In your film, you show how emotion and perception are closely linked...

Emotion is the very substance of music. It is produced by people for whom this is their entire life. People who have three pieces of wood, two pieces of brass, one piece of copper, and who have been doing this since childhood—people who simply cannot live otherwise. Not only because they have always done it, but because at the moment they do it, right here and now before our eyes, they cannot not be fully present.

It is so difficult that they cannot cheat. From extraordinarily concrete gestures, they allow us to reach something immaterial, invisible, infinite. And they must not only produce this emotion, but produce it together, with others.

We sometimes imagine an orchestra as a disciplined, focused group, an infallible army. In fact, it’s the opposite: it’s an army of human fragility.

For me, cinema should always be an experience of living perception—this is an ideal to strive for. I sought synesthesia, the fusion of sound and image. It’s as if the film gives us XXL hearing. One violinist uses a perfect metaphor at one point: she says that sometimes, while listening, she “zooms in” on one section or another. That’s exactly right. Ears can do that. And that’s also what the film tries to provoke.

## How did you create a bond with all these musicians?

It was a slow process of approach and encounter, almost one by one. It was very important to me that they trust me. That was the only way to enter this life we usually don’t hear—the whispered things, the muttered remarks, the words released in moments of emotion—which I could capture thanks to the multitude of microphones.

There’s everything that’s said and that the conductor doesn’t hear, these little groups within the orchestra: the woodwind family, the brass family... with everything that happens inside a group, as in all families.

## In the film, we discover the routine of the orchestra and the musicians’ everyday life: welcoming guest conductors, recruiting a second violin...

It’s always fascinating to see how 120 members of the same ensemble live and work together. This almost “office-life” routine that coexists constantly with art. I absolutely wanted to tell that story—the relative autonomy they enjoy, since the orchestra is still an association. But I didn’t want to tell only that.

## How did you choose the events that structure the orchestra’s life?

At the Orchestra of Paris, each week of the year is built around a single work, conducted by one conductor. That provided a possible playlist for



the film, as well as a list of guest conductors. From that program, we made choices.

Among the essentials was the work with music director Klaus Mäkelä, with his extraordinary charisma—a conductor who inspires unanimous support, which is extremely rare—and whose arrival also coincided with the orchestra’s move into the Philharmonic. Until then, the Orchestra of Paris had always been itinerant; for the first time, it was permanently housed in one place. And not just any place: the Philharmonic is considered by unanimous consensus among visiting conductors to have one of the two or three best acoustics in the world.

At the start of the film, there was this double renewal: a new conductor and a new venue. Two essential stories to tell. Then we had to choose which works to follow, which guest conductors—women, young conductors, older ones—and which musicians (I couldn’t film all 120), representing all sections. We also had to show the world they bring with them, their lives outside the orchestra. And then there was the delicate subject of how the orchestra functions internally.

### You’re alluding to the tensions that can exist within the collective?

An orchestra is like a condominium association, with similar flaws—only more complicated. I spoke a great deal with the musicians and quickly understood that there were things I could tell and others I couldn’t.

We were granted access to privileged moments: for example, being allowed to have a camera present during the selection of a new instrumentalist, when they listen to candidates and choose their future colleague—this had never been done before. There are many stakes in those moments, power dynamics as well. I think you can feel that.

### The film also addresses the difficulty of existing as an individual within the orchestra.

The challenge was to find the ridgeline between two slopes the film could slide down. I have pages and pages of testimonies about the difficulty

of existing within the collective as a great soloist—because these musicians are virtuosos. How do you find and keep your place? How do you live well and flourish individually within the group?

In exchange for the fusion required to play together, there is something very heavy, potentially difficult to live with—especially today, when individual identity is increasingly asserted. I could see hundreds of possible film scenarios full of clashes and conflicts emerging. But it was impossible to reveal everything.

### In the end, you chose to use title cards to convey their words anonymously.

Yes. With the title cards, we don’t know who says what. Reality is conveyed, including its conflictual dimension. And there’s another essential advantage: it doesn’t interrupt the flow of the music.

The words are documentary but reading them doesn’t have the same effect as hearing them spoken. The brain remains available for the music. Very concretely, this avoids having to lower the music and raise the voice—as is usually done whenever you want speech to come forward. That’s what happens on television every day; it works very well, but it eliminates polyphony between words and music. I wanted that polyphony to exist, exactly like in opera, where the composer places words at a precise point in the musical discourse.

### The title of the film, *Nous l’orchestre de Paris*, refers to this collective dimension. At one point, the principal viola says: “We have to be a bit more than colleagues.”

That’s the political dimension of the film, beyond music: if we don’t listen to one another, we can’t form a society. The orchestra—historically the space of Greek tragedy where the chorus danced—is a mirror of society, a school of democracy.

If we don’t listen, if everyone only defends their individuality, we can’t make beautiful music together. “Nous, l’orchestre” (“we, the Orchestra”) is the “we” of the musicians, but also us, the audience.

How did you handle the place of conductor Klaus Mäkelä? You had this extraordinary asset—a young, radiant, immensely talented, unanimously admired conductor—yet you chose not to make him the center of the film.

The year before filming, a portrait of Mäkelä had already been made for Arte by Bruno Monsaingeon. In a sense, that work was already done. And of course, the conductor is indispensable—but without the orchestra, there is nothing.

A few years ago, the musicians were quite angry with a conductor—whose name I won't mention—who was very dictatorial and arrogant. One day, he gave the downbeat, and they didn't play. To show him that he wasn't the only one making the music.

We have this myth of the conductor's gesture creating the sound. But it's the orchestra that creates the sound. The conductor drives the Porsche—but if it's a 2CV, he won't get anywhere! A conductor's job is first and foremost to make life easier for the orchestra. If something goes wrong, the question should be: what didn't I do to help the musicians play the score?

Mäkelä understood the project very well. He was the first person we met, and it was easy to explain that what we wanted to show was how things circulate between the conductor and the musicians. He was a cellist in an orchestra for years before becoming a conductor; he knows the relationship from the inside. All the musicians told me the same thing: "It's not that Mäkelä has less ego than others—it's that his ego is well placed." A problematic conductor is one who isn't clear about their ego.

That said, I don't want to deny the obvious: it's not all just technique and interpretation. There is also the mystery of charisma, aura, natural authority. Desire circulates in that relationship, and the film succumbs to it too. It exists—sometimes cruelly so. That's what feeds the star system and its mythologies. The musicians say it themselves: you judge a guest conductor in the first three minutes.

Would you agree that your film is also a film about happiness—about the possibility of happiness over time? Many musicians talk about long-term commitment. Some are happy, others less so.

It's like a couple. The question is how to navigate reality. It's like in Truffaut's *The Last Metro*, with those lines from the play they're rehearsing: "You are beautiful, Éléna—so beautiful that looking at you is suffering." "Yesterday you said it was joy!" "It's joy—and suffering."



# PHILIPPE BÉZIAT

Philippe Béziat has directed four opera-documentaries for cinema:

- ***Gallant Indies*** (2021), with Clément Cogitore, Leonardo García Alarcón, Bintou Dembélé and around thirty hip-hop, krump, breakdance and voguing dancers (nominated for the 2022 César Award for Best Documentary and the Lumières Awards)
- ***Becoming Traviata*** (2012), with Natalie Dessay and Jean-François Sivadier
- ***Noces, Stravinsky–Ramuz*** (2012), with Dominique Reymond and Mirella Giardelli
- ***Pelléas and Mélisande*** (2009), with Olivier Py and Marc Minkowski

He has directed several short musical films, and regularly films operas, ballets, concerts, and theater productions at institutions such as the Comédie-Française, the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and the Paris Philharmonic.



THE RITE OF SPRING  
IGOR STRAVINSKY

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conducted by Klaus Mäkelä

Klaus Mäkelä records,  
under exclusive license Decca Classics

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SHÉHÉRAZADE  
NIKOLAÏ RIMSKI-KORSAKOV

conducted by Elim Chan

with  
Ji Yoon Park *guest solo violon*

Lusine Harutyunyan *violons 2*  
Richard Schmoucler *violon*  
Frédéric Mellardi *solo trumpet*  
Guillaume Cottet-Dumoulin  
*solo trombone*

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PETROUCHKA  
IGOR STRAVINSKY

Louis Maubon, Lucien Prevot, Emile Spencer

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conducted by Klaus Mäkelä

Klaus Mäkelä records,  
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with  
Gilles Henry  
Richard Schmoucler  
Joëlle Cousin  
Lusine Harutyunyan *violon*

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FIREBIRD  
1917 VERSION  
IGOR STRAVINSKY

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conducted by Klaus Mäkelä

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with  
André Cazalet *solo horn*

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THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN

music BÉLA BARTÓK

lyrics MENYHERT LENGYEL

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with  
Amrei Liebold *solo contrabassoon*  
Gildas Prado *solo English horn*  
Francisco Lourenço  
Marie Poulanges *alto*

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SYMPHONY N° 8  
ANTON BRUCKNER

conducted by Herbert  
Blomstedt

with  
David Gaillard *first solo alto*  
Francisco Lourenço *altos*  
Hervé Blandinières  
Camille Baslé *timpani*

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CONCERTO IN G MAJOR  
MAURICE RAVEL

conducted by Klaus  
Mäkelä

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with  
Yuja Wang *solo piano*

with the kind authorization of Deutsche  
Grammophon Gesellschaft

Gildas Prado *solo English horn*

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SYMPHONY N° 8  
"SYMPHONY OF A THOUSAND"  
GUSTAV MAHLER

conducted by Daniel Harding

with  
Ulysse Vigreux *first solo double bass*  
Marie Van Wynsberge *third solo double bass*  
Stanislas Kuchinsky *double bass*

double bass students of the CNSMDP  
Lukas Carrillo Elgueta  
Philémon Renaud Invary  
Iris Plaisance Godey  
Estelle Caron  
Lucia Sanchez Perez

soloists  
Sarah Wegener, Johann van Oostrum  
Jamie Barton, Marie-Andrée Bouchard-Lesieur  
Johanna Wallroth, Christopher Maltman  
Andrew Staples, Tareq Nazmi

choir  
Children and Adults' Choir of the Orchestra Of Paris  
Young Choir Of Paris  
Richard Wilberforce *choir conductor*  
Rémi Aguirre Zubiri, Edwin Baudo,  
Désirée Pannetier, Béatrice Warcollier *associate choir conductors*  
Maîtrise du CRR de Paris  
Edwige Parat *choir conductor*

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SUITE FOR JAZZ ORCHESTRA  
N° 2

DMITRI CHOSTAKOVITCH

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conducted by Klaus Mäkelä

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with  
Eric Picard *first solo cello*  
Paul-Marie Kuzma  
Manon Gillardot  
Claude Giron *cello*

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MUSICAL WORKS

THE EASY WINNERS  
(A RAGTIME TWO STEPS)

**SCOTT JOPLIN**

by LES CELLIX  
Marie Leclerc, Frédéric Peyrat  
Claude Giron,  
Paul-Marie Kuzma

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INFERNO  
**DANIEL BJARNASON**

**ORCHESTRE DE PARIS**  
conducted by Elim Chan  
with Martin Grubinger *percussions*

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DON JUAN OP 20  
music by **RICHARD STRAUSS**

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THE BARBER OF SEVILLE  
OVERTURE

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI**

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David Gaillard, Alexandre Gattet,  
Samy DausSAT, Olivier Derbesse,  
Mathias Lopez

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LA GLYCINE  
**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

by the OFF SWING QUINTET  
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Samy DausSAT, Olivier Derbesse  
Mathias Lopez

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SUITE IMPROMPTU

**ANDRÉ LAFOSSE**

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by Célestin Guérin,  
Frédéric Mellardi  
André Cazalet, Stéphane Labeyrie  
Guillaume Cottet-Dumoulin

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LIEBESLIED  
music by **FRITZ KREISLER**

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KOLOMISHKA

by the SIRBA OCTET  
Richard Schmaoucler, Gilles Henry  
Philippe Berrod, Claude Giron  
Cécile Grassi, Tom Laffolay  
Christophe Henry

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CONCERTO POUR VIOLON  
KV.218 ET KV.219  
**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**

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MUSICAL WORKS





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**PHILIPPE BÉZIAT**

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ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

**PHILIPPE MARTIN  
DAVID THION**

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