

((Short bio))

She is a pianist, an organist, a chamber musician, and the initiator and director of Zurich's "Flügelschläge" fortepiano festival: Els Biesemans has explored many facets of music in the course of her career. After studying in Leuven, the Belgian artist further developed her specialization in the multidimensional 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century keyboard music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. With a performance repertoire ranging from medieval to modern music, Els Biesemans has won numerous international awards. She has won the Ciurlionis Competition in Vilnius and was awarded the Arp-Schnitger Prize at the Bremen Music Festival. Both in Switzerland and abroad, she performs as a soloist on the fortepiano, on the organ, and with her chamber music ensemble Elsewhere. Els Biesemans is celebrated as a brilliant interpreter of famous composers, but also as a discoverer of forgotten music.

((Long bio))

### **Through the Time Machine**

She is a pianist, an organist, a chamber musician, and the initiator and director of Zurich's "Flügelschläge" fortepiano festival. Els Biesemans is known for performance repertoires that are both sophisticated and unconventional. With a nuanced recital marked by freshness and elegance, this charismatic and accessible virtuoso explores the full tonal range of 200-year-old fortepianos as well as organs, harpsichords, and modern grand pianos. Els Biesemans is celebrated as a brilliant interpreter of famous composers, but also as a discoverer of forgotten musical treasures. From Schumann to Beethoven, from Hensel to Chopin, her mission is to make the music of a bygone age heard "as if through a time machine."

### **2021**

In musical terms, for Els Biesemans, the year 2021 evokes memories of Ludwig van Beethoven and the musical revival of 1790-1830. The "Flügelschläge" fortepiano festival and her latest CD project are dedicated to Beethoven, and to his contemporaries Hummel, Steibelt, Clementi, Dussek, and Vorisek. The pianist performs the vivacious anthology on her 1824 vintage Viennese fortepiano, made by Joseph Brodmann. With

her organ repertoire, Els Biesemans will be mainly touring Belgium, Germany, France, and Switzerland in 2021. Another project will be a harpsichord performance of works by contemporary Swiss composer Peter Mieg (1906-1990).

### **Musical Portfolio**

Her musical portfolio is a multifaceted one. After studying piano, organ, and chamber music at the Lemmens Institute at Leuven, Els Biesemans specialized in the rich keyboard heritage of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Commanding a repertoire ranging from the medieval to the modern ages, Els Biesemans has won numerous international awards for her performances. Born in Antwerp in 1978, the artist has won international competitions in Brugues, Paris, Prague, Tokyo, and Montreal. She won the Ciurlionis Competition in Vilnius and was awarded the Arp-Schnitger Prize at the Bremen Music Festival.

Today, her successful career as a concert pianist takes her all over Europe, Japan, Canada, and the US. As a pianist, organist, and chamber music performer, she has given guest performances at the Berlin and Essen Philharmonics, Zurich's Tonhalle, the Salle Philharmonique de Liège, the BOZAR and AMUZ venues in Brussels and Antwerp, the Palacio Euskalduna of Bilbao, the Philharmonics of Ekaterinburg and Omsk, and the Maison de Radio France in Paris. She is a regular performer at the Bremen Music Festival, the Montreal Bach Festival, the Würzburg Mozart Festival, the Leipzig Bach Festival, the Festival des Forêts at Compiègne, and at the Concerti of the Accademia Bartolomeo Cristofori in Florence.

Among her artistic partners are cellist Peter Wispelwey, singers Julian Prégardien, Andreas Wolf, and Christian Immler, actress Mona Petri, Andrea Marcon and the "La Cetra" Orchestra, and the Capriccio Baroque Orchestra of Basel.

Her preference for bringing back to life the music of earlier epochs "as it was" has produced CDs of works performed for the first time on a historic grand piano by Els Biesemans: The violin and piano sonatas of Franz Xaver Sterkel (Rameé, 2017), the piano cycle "The Year" by Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn (Genuin, 2012), Franz Liszt's transpositions of Schubert's "Winterreise" for pianoforte (Genuin, 2014), the complete organ works of Maurice Duruflé, and other recordings of symphonic organ works. Her

latest CD of music by Beethoven's circle of virtuoso friends will be published by Alpha Classics in 2021.

### **'En Famille' with Brodmann, Pleyel, and a Toggenburg Organ**

On her concert tours, Els Biesemans often plays her own instruments. Her collection includes a Viennese grand piano by Joseph Brodmann (1824), a fortepiano by Ignaz Pleyel (1836), and a Viennese grand fortepiano by Paul McNulty after Anton Walter, ca. 1805. Her latest addition is a Toggenburg home organ – a real rarity, dated 1780.

In Zurich, where she lives, Els Biesemans is the titular organist of the Predigerkirche and Bühlkirche churches. Since 2013, she has served as the initiator and director of Zurich's "Flügelschläge" fortepiano festival. Featuring a new concept and notable guests every year, this event introduces the public to the auditory world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "as if through a time machine."

Text: Claudia Rettore, culture manager