Percussions de Strasbourg

LA MAITRESSE ET SON MARTEAU (PROVISIONAL TITLE)

Season 2027–2028

Composer: Ève Risser
Line up: Ève Risser, prepared piano + 5 percussionists from Les Percussions de Strasbourg
Commission and delegate production: Les Percussions de Strasbourg
Partners : Cie rever, Césaré – CNCM de Reims, Tromp Percussion Eindhoven



A pianist focused on gesture and transformation, Ève Risser has developed an approach to the expanded and prepared piano, which she regards as both a percussive and an orchestral instrument. Her compositional style, often open to improvisation, seeks to break down the boundaries between composition and performance, between written structures and oral transmission, within a dynamic of collective energy and formal freedom.

Vassilena Serafimova's statement of Intent

« From the very first sketches of my commissioning plan for this new artistic direction, one name emerged with an undeniable sense of évidence: Ève Risser. Having followed her work for many years, and witnessed her remarkable trajectory from solo improvisation to leading large ensembles, I became convinced that she was the ideal architect for this project. Entrusting her with a carte blanche for our ensemble is an opportunity to bring the telluric power of Les Percussions de Strasbourg into dialogue with the rich, rhythmically vibrant world of her prepared piano.

The Project: Blurring the Boundaries, Merging Our Worlds
The aim is to create a dreamlike sonic world in which boundaries dissolve. We want to erase the dividing line between contemporary written music and orally transmitted music.

- The challenge: how can a prepared piano sound like a percussion ensemble, and conversely, how can percussion instruments sing like a harmonic instrument? We want to explore this delicate balance between our instruments and perhaps discover a new, expanded instrument somewhere in between.
- A free gesture: a sonic improvisation in which the score becomes a compass rather than a predetermined path. We want the audience to keep guessing: Is it written? Is it improvised? Is it jazz, trance, or contemporary music? The answer will be all of these at once.

Ève Risser's artistic journey is a living proof that these worlds can converge with an irrepressible energy.

- With her Red Desert Orchestra (album *Eurythmia*), she has already created a rich and complex musical language that delicately brings together West African music, trance, techno and contemporary composition. She knows how to lead heterogeneous ensembles and draw from them a powerful, precise groove. Through the percussive approach to the piano she develops in her solo work and with her "ensemble ensemble", she transforms the piano into an orchestra of pitched percussion. Bowed strings, objects inserted into the instrument, explorations of its mechanisms: she turns the piano into an instrument of total percussion, naturally resonating with the DNA of Les Percussions de Strasbourg.
- Then there is oral transmission. Her work with Malian singers (with Naïny Diabaté), as well as her engagement with traditional music demonstrates her understanding of oral transmission and her ability to incorporate popular musical languages into a written, formal framework.

The project will be structured in several phases.
An initial working residency, serving as a true laboratory of movement where:

- The percussionists will appropriate the codes of free improvisation.
- The composer will test and confront her writing with the physical and performative reality of our ensemble.
- We will explore cross-preparations: how can objects placed on percussion skins respond to preparations applied to the piano strings? The idea is to create a timbral continuum in which the origin of the sound becomes elusive.

Ève Risser will then have dedicated time for composition;
followed by a second working residency of before the premiere.

With this carte blanche, Les Percussions de Strasbourg affirm their desire to take risks and celebrate living music. By collaborating with Ève Risser, we activate a process of transmission, exchange and collective joy. It is an invitation to leave technique at the door and instead privilege gesture, listening, and that magical space where written and oral traditions become one. »

Ève Risser's Biography



With a touch of defiance, pianist, composer, and improviser Eve Risser blends dreamlike imagery and feminism in a free-form musical style rooted in jazz, contemporary, and experimental music. After completing her academic training, she explored the European improvisational scene, with one foot in the institutional world and the other in alternative networks. Her poetic playing is often percussive and physical, in formats ranging from solo performances to large orchestras. Born in 1982, Eve Risser began studying piano and flute at a very young age. At the conservatory in Colmar, her hometown, she earned her music degrees in flute and then piano, even before completing high school. Improvisation and jazz made their way into her curriculum at the Strasbourg Conservatory and went on to form the core of her studies at the Paris National Conservatory of Music. During the 2006 edition of the Jazz à la Villette festival at the Cité de la Musique, she joined Charlie Haden's Junior Liberation Music Orchestra.

EARLY COLLABORATIONS

At age 25, Eve Risser set out on a solo hike through the canyons of the American West. Invited to the High-Zero Festival in Baltimore, she joined the jazz department at the Peabody Institute (Johns Hopkins University), led by flutist and saxophonist Gary Thomas, and recorded with Ron Anderson on John Zorn's Tzadik label. She joined the Orchestre National de Jazz from 2008 to 2013 as a pianist, flutist, improviser, and composer; the ONJ's collaboration with drummer John Hollenbeck had a particularly profound impact on her. Over the years, she has fulfilled numerous commissions and has become a leading voice in European improvised music. In 2009, at the urging of Swedish double bassist Joel Grip, she joined the Umlaut collective, founded in 2004 in Stockholm. Two branches were established, first in Berlin and then in Paris. Umlaut, which brings together about ten musicians, is also a record label and has launched a festival in Paris.

ACTIVISM AND COMPOSITIONS

In 2008, Eve Risser composed her *Concerto for Barbie Guitar and Symphony Orchestra*. The choice of this electronic toy humorously illustrates her activism against male dominance in jazz and expresses her rejection of a form of cultural elitism. Influenced by double bassist Joëlle Léandre, whose feminist activism left a lasting impression on her, Eve Risser took control of her career and developed her own artistic projects. For her compositions, this native of the Vosges region—in search of a dreamlike quality—draws inspiration from nature and the great outdoors: mountains, snow, and minerals serve as the common thread running through her creations.

BREAKING THE RULES

After conservatory, the time for freedom and ease in space arrives. But the piano is restrictive; one must use creativity to circumvent the static ritual of concerts, breaking down distance and conventions. Extended playing techniques, experimentation, and staging—everything must work together to bring the artist closer to the audience. The prepared piano is her instrument of choice. *Pianos dérangés*, a performance for the Colmar Boys' Choir (2013), and the solo pieces *Des pas sur la neige* (2015) and *Après Un Rêve* (2018) attest to this. Eve Risser explains this choice and her creative process as follows: "The physicality required by the piano resonates with me. With the flute, the whole body is engaged, but it produces only one sound at a time. Generally speaking, however, I concentrate better when my attention is focused on several things at once." The percussive quality of the piano—placed in the heart of the audience or on stage—is also harnessed to invite dance and a trance-like state (Rêve Parti, 2020, or Le Mur with Mathilde Monnier in 2026).

JAZZ REBELLION

From 2007 to 2015, her projects moved away from "classic" jazz. The jazz-pop of the duo Donkey Monkey, formed with drummer Yuko Oshima, took her around the world. Their repertoire is peppered with humorous nods to Carla Bley as well as to their Japanese and Alsatian roots. Eve Risser explores free improvisation in the trio En Corps, formed with Benjamin Duboc and Edward Perraud, and in her duo with pianist Kaja Draksler, whom she calls her sister. She also founded Brique, a punk-jazz quartet, with Luc Ex. As part of the La Sourde orchestra, she blends baroque, jazz, and classical music. The list of these original collaborations is long and varied. In 2014, she founded her large ensemble, the White Desert Orchestra. Five years later, it was succeeded by the Red Desert Orchestra. West Africa and the Sahel gave rise to this fusion of jazz with other rhythmic traditions, born from the collaboration between European musicians and Malian and Burkinabé musicians in the Kogoba Basigui and Eurythmia programs.

R(e)V(e)R, her company, was founded in 2020 to mark twenty years of rapid-fire progress, evolving—in the musician's own words—from a poetic, lunar form toward a current coexistence with her rhythmic and solar side. In 2021, she once again created and produced, alongside Samuel Achache, Florent Hubert, and Antonin-Tri Hoang, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, the debut performance of the Orchestre La Sourde, composed of

Ève Risser live :
Extract of *Eurythmia* with Red Desert Orchestra live at La Soufflerie (Rezé) 2022
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYPEAHOecig

Be Twin par ensemble Links, live at Radio France :
https://www.radiofrance.fr/francemusique/podcasts/le-concert-du-soir/festival-presences-2024-concert-2-4888673
de 39'50'' à 41'42''



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