

LE SILENCE DE LA FORÊT



A RECITAL IN AND FOR THE FOREST
BY OLIVIA GAY

« Le Silence de la forêt », a committed initiative by Olivia Gay

A classical music recital in the forest, to benefit the forest. A citizen and artistic approach, mixing classical music and nature.



Official partner of her project **Le Silence de la Forêt**, the French National Forest Bureau (ONF) opened its network to Olivia Gay, linking artistic production with concrete action in the field of forest conservation. Today, Olivia donates a portion of her earnings to **Agir pour la forêt** (Take Action for the Forest) to support restoration of the **Echarcon Forest** in the Essonne region of France, tremendously affected by Ink disease, and to encourage others to do the same.

Using a mobile stage with a concert grand piano attached to it, Olivia can perform inside many forests in France as she raises public awareness for reforestation and environmental protection. This initiative, presented during the **Climate Academy** of March 2022 in France, was warmly received.

It sounds a bit crazy, but we are bringing music to the heart of the forest and donating the proceeds to forest preservation!

To defend the forest in which she lives and wherein she recharges her batteries, cellist Olivia Gay launched a unique project entitled **Le Silence de la Forêt**. Spectators are invited to discover the beauty of music coupled with the sound, fragrance and feel of forests, woods and other natural sites.

Le Silence de la Forêt refers to Dvorak's eponymous work as well as to the sadness caused by the disaster of recent mega fires in France.

It is an artistic and civic approach to the preservation of our forests, led by French cellist Olivia Gay.

Olivia's committed approach includes the organization of classical concerts tours throughout the forests in France which began in March 2022 (International Forest Day) and continued through October 2022 alongside pianists Celia Onéto Bensaïd or Aurélian Pontier, and other artists sensitive to her cause. In tandem, Olivia released her third album, **Whisper Me A Tree** on September 9, 2022 in great part recorded with the **Orchestre National de Cannes**, conducted by Benjamin Lévy.

This rare and unique concept is designed to mobilize and inform people, public authorities and the media about crucial issues we face with regard to preservation and the health of our forests.

The concept has caught on and Olivia's performances, heralded by French media continue from spring to fall 2023.

We do not inherit the land from our parents, we borrow it from our children.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

A moment with Olivia Gay



How was this project “The Silence of the Forest” born?

The roots of **Le Silence de la Forêt** are my passion for nature, and my need to live close to and with it, be that in my personal or artistic life. My relationship to nature was highlighted on my last two albums but with this third recording, I really wanted to focus specifically on the forest. I was very disturbed by the images of mega-fires that destroyed hundreds of acres of forest over the past summers. So, I began thinking about how I could better engage myself as a citizen and as artist to help effect a change. That all led to development of this project.

The album **Whisper Me A Tree** was designed around the imagery of the very forests and nature that inspired the music of composers I recorded for the Brussels based label, **Outhere** (September 2022). But, rather than just recording and performing, I needed to give more meaning to this project by physically, emotionally dedicating myself playing an active role in helping preserve our forests. So, thanks to the ONF, pianist Célia Oneto Bensaid and my work as a cellist, we can take on this somewhat crazy project of bringing music to the heart of the forest and donate a good portion of the proceeds to various forest preservation projects.

What connection do you have with the forest?

The forest, for me, is an integral part of my life

I now live near the forest of Fontainebleau and from my window, it stretches as far as the eye can see. My story goes back to childhood. I was born in the East of France, in a place where there are more trees than people! That is why moving to Paris at age 17 was quite painful. I had always lived geographically close to nature.

I walk this forest alone, with my dog or ride it on horseback. As soon as I am in the midst of these magnificent trees, the road noise and city disappear, leaving only the natural atmosphere of the forest. That environment naturally reduces stress, studies have proven it, I immediately feel physically different, am calmer, but my imagination awakens too, and so what worried me dissipates. When I get home, I always have a new burst of courage, energy and inspiration. The awakening of the senses in the forest, is something instinctive something that is as well present in my cello playing. It is all really quite magical.



The National Forestry Bureau is very attentive and sensitive to your approach...

And it is reciprocal too! I was already familiar with the work of the ONF in Fontainebleau, but am now still discovering their impact of as well as the enormous network of foundations and associations committed to defending the forest and our natural environment.

I was so happy and honored to be invited by the ONF to the **Climate Academy** in Paris in March of 2022 and take part in **International Forest Day**. I performed there with pianist Célia Onéto-Bensaid who joined me for a round table called « **When art dialogues with the forest** » as did Fabrice Hyber, Eva Jospin and Vincent Laval, three artists whose work also explores the imaginary world of the forest.

I was also surprised and honored when the ONF elected me Ambassador to their endowment fund, **Agir pour la forêt** (Take Action for the Forest) in spring of 2023.

How do you imagine these concerts in the forest

Playing outside is ultimately a very simple idea, but I find it particularly revealing to take that one step further by going into the heart of the forest to listen to works inspired by it. The trees, the birds, the wind, the smells and sounds: the very elements that inspired composers are there, right under our noses! My instrument, itself made of wood, fits logically into this landscape. It is a totally different experience from the concert hall which just makes sense to me!

I really want to help raise public awareness through music and by listening, being truly attentive to the nature we have around us, but also via an educational approach so I regularly intervene on government panels along with environmental specialists and notable guest speakers.

What musical programming for this project?



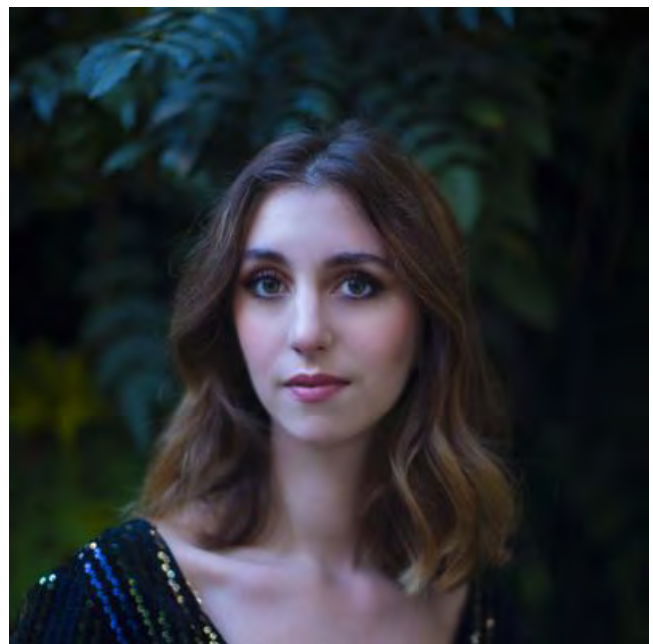
This project was linked to my latest album which explores repertoire inspired by the forest and by nature. I chose pieces that move me ranging from Offenbach to Camille Pépin, Elgar, John Luther Adams to Max Richter, Dvořák and many more. This repertoire is a means to showing how imagination goes beyond all eras and all cultural borders. My friend Célia Oneto Bensaid is also exploring piano repertoire, in particular, Schumann's Forest Scenes. The program has evolved a lot since we began, and will continue to do so. Because, I hope to invite other artists to support this cause: instrumentalists of course, but also singers, actors, anyone who wants to help and join in on this somewhat unusual project.



OLIVIA GAY, CELLO

Cellist and winner of several competitions, Olivia Gay has released 2 critically acclaimed albums and collaborated with and collaborated with many great names of the French scene. Very marked by the mega fires of the summer of 2021 in France, and in preparation for the release of her third album in October 2022, Olivia decided to act and naturally by naturally proposing the idea of playing in the forest, for the benefit associations.

olivia-gay.com



CELIA ONETO BENSaid, PIANO

Trained at the CNSM of Paris where she obtained five prizes, Celia is a singular and committed personality. A sought-after chamber musician who performs in the most important concert halls in Europe, Célia released two albums in 2018 and 2021, that were very well acclaimed by the critics.

celiaonetobensaid.com

WHISPER ME A TREE

Olivia Gay - Cello

National Orchestre of Cannes, Direction Benjamin Lévy
Piano – Célia Oneto Bensaid, Organ – Stéphane Catalanotti
OutHere Records (Fug 807) 2022 Total play time 1:12

- 01 **Chanson De Matin** Op 15 No 2 Arr. for cello and orchestra by Robin Melchior (E. Elgar)
- 02 **Papillon** Op 77 for cello and piano (G. Fauré)
- 03 Three High Places No 2 *The Wind At Maclaren Summit* (J.L. Adams)
- 04 **Rêverie Au Bord De La Mer** arr. cello and orchestra by Heinz Geese (J. Offenbach)
- 05 **Water Spirit Song** for cello solo (R. Edwards)
- 06 **Silent Woods from *The Bohemian Forest*** Op 68 B 133 No 5 for cello and orchestra (A. Dvorak)
- 07 **Elfentanz** Op 39 Arr. for cello and orchestra by Nicolas Krauze (D. Popper)
- 08 **On The Nature Of Daylight** for Cello And Orchestra. Transcription by Olivia Gay (M. Richter)
- 09 **Gris Brume** For Cello And Piano (C. Pepin)
- 10 **Musique Du Soir** For Cello And Organ (P. Vasks)
- 11 **Nuit Calme** For Cello And Piano (H. Bosmans)
- 12 **Chanson De la Nuit** Op 15 No 1 Arr. for cello and orchestra by Robin Melchior (E. Elgar)



The forest has always been an important place for Olivia Gay. She wanders through the woods alone, listening not only to its silence but also to its murmurs. It is a place of creation where her cellist's instincts are awakened and where she can find peace and quiet outside the city. She joined forces with the Office National des forêts (ONF) to raise public awareness of such spaces by inviting spectators to concerts given in the heart of the forest or in natural sites. This album continues this project and includes works by Jacques Offenbach, Camille Pépin, Edward Elgar, John Luther Adams and Max Richter ; the programme as a whole is under the aegis of Antonin Dvorak's magnificent Silent Woods which also lent its name to Olivia's initiative.

Olivia Gay has always lived according to nature's cycles, first in Belfort, and later near Paris, Stuttgart or Cologne, seeking inspiration far from the cities that have marked her career as a cellist. "I was born at the foot of the Vosges mountains in a region of great natural beauty. I continue to search for it: it's not only a crucial element of my equilibrium but also surrounds me each and every day."

Her recordings have always been associated with nature: after her first disc *Horizon[s]*, which allowed the listener to contemplate infinity through the musical languages of Philippe Hersant, Peteris Vasks and Thierry Maillard, and her second recording *Origine[s]*, based on traditional music, Olivia Gay decided to make forests the theme of her new programme. The cellist pays tribute to her instrument in a refined musical journey whose essence lies in the depths of the woods. The listener discovers the poetic journey of a spruce seed, from its initial flight to the tree's magnificent final sacrifice on the altar of music.

Recorded in Cannes and in Meudon in the southern suburbs of Paris, this record confirms the close complicity between the players: firstly, between Olivia Gay and Célia Oneto Bensaid, a faithful partner and pianist with boundless enthusiasm; they are united once more here in duo after their collaboration on *Origine[s]*. There is the organist Stéphane Catalanotti, who provided major support for the recording of the music of Peteris Vasks in Cannes. Finally there is Benjamin Lévy and the Orchestre de Cannes, essential and kindly supports in this very personal undertaking.

Olivia Gay's dramaturgy for this recording is based on Elgar's *Chanson de matin*, which opens the recital. Arranged for cello and orchestra by Robin Melchior, this simple and airy melody evokes the impressions of a walker at dawn. Fauré's *Papillon*, still in a light and optimistic mood, demonstrates the performer's virtuosity and mischievous temperament. John Luther Adams is the little known composer of *The Wind at Maclaren Summit*: an artist committed to the preservation of nature, he has long lived in the wilderness, first as a hermit in Alaska and now in the desert. The purely natural sounds (harmonics or open strings) give this piece an experimental and transcendent dimension: you can feel the wind and you imagine the elements twisting and turning...



Olivia Gay conjures up an aquatic element in the fourth piece, Jacques Offenbach's *Rêverie au bord de la mer*. Arranged for soloist and orchestra, it is highly optimistic in atmosphere; it presents a beautiful exchange between the orchestra and the cello, borne on a magnificent melody.

The Australian composer and environmental activist Ross Edwards' *Water spirit song* is more spiritual and telluric, revealing every aspect of Olivia Gay's cello in a melodic line of great profundity. The central work of the programme is Dvorak's *Silence of the Forest* from the cycle *From the Bohemian Forest*. "I feel the impressions that come over me when I enter the forest in this music. The shadows, the creaking, the mysteriously comforting atmosphere... everything acts on me like a wonderful calming drug". Dvorak's music, with its inimitably personal style and harmonies, marks the pivotal point of our journey, as the world darkens with the approach of night.

Whimsically facetious, David Popper's *Dance of the Elves* takes us into the mythological aspects of the forest as we discover the magical creatures that have been the stuff of tales and legends for thousands of years. The *Dance of the Elves* is a formidable virtuoso work; usually performed with piano, it has here been arranged by Nicolas Krauze for cello and string orchestra. This version allows the solo instrument to shine with a formidable palette of colours.

Max Richter's *On the Nature of Daylight* is a tribute to the struggles and war in Iraq. Its drama, unpretentiousness and deeply engaging qualities touched Olivia Gay's heart; she performs it at the midpoint of her programme not only as a hymn to the forest, but also as a call to preserve the environment.

Nature is a central element in Camille Pépin's work — and one of her compositions has naturally found a place in this sylvan meditation. Her *Gris-brume* is recorded here for the first time. Peteris Vasks' *Cello Concerto* appeared on Olivia Gay's first recording; deeply moved by Vasks' work, Gay once more explores the essentiality and sensitivity of his music with *Musique du soir*. This solemn and mystical discussion is accompanied by organ.

Night falls on the enchanted forest, with the richly developed harmonic language of Henriette Bosmans being used to convey an impression of peace and quiet. Olivia Gay's day in the forest now comes to its end: Elgar's *Chanson de nuit* provides a narrative epilogue to the day's events that is expressed in the fullness of Olivia Gay's playing, together with Benjamin Lévy and the Cannes orchestra. A hidden track concludes the recording: Sibelius' *Water droplets* is a final wink towards the listener.

"It takes thought, idealism and emotion to play my music". Olivia Gay here uses these words by Peteris Vasks to guide the listener through the sensory and immersive experience that she has conceived for this programme.

The Office National des Forests is an official partner of this project and has provided facilities to link artistic proposals with concrete actions in the field. Olivia Gay has pledged to donate a part of the royalties from this CD to the *Agir pour la Forêt* endowment fund; all monies collected will go to support the restoration of the Echarchon Forest forest in Essonne, which has been seriously affected by ink disease.

The initiative that was presented at the Climate Academy in March 2022 will continue in 2023 and 2024 bringing Olivia to perform in the forests. A great number of totally committed artists, singers and instrumentalists will also take part in this adventure.

Aude Giger

LE SILENCE DE LA FORÊT

CONCERT PROGRAM – piano & cello

- E. Elgar: « Chanson de matin » op. 15 n.2 - violoncelle et piano
- G. Fauré: « Papillon » op. 77 - violoncelle et piano
- D. Popper: Im Walde suite op. 50
- M. Ravel: Oiseaux tristes pour piano solo
- R. Edwards: « Water Spirit Song » pour violoncelle solo
- A. Dvorak: Silent Woods (Klid) n.5 - « From the Bohemian Forest » op. 68 pour violoncelle et piano
- C. Pepin: « Gris brume » violoncelle et piano
- H. Bosmans « Nuit calme » pour violoncelle et piano
- E. Grieg: « Dans l’antre du roi de la montagne » extrait de Peer Gynt



The Roving Piano



The roving piano is an inventive and charming necessity that allows Olivia to perform in places one would never imagine, like a forest.

Olivia shows up for concerts with the very stage on which she performs, complete with a beautiful, concert grand piano attached to it. Concert buyers need only provide the lounge chairs.

Olivia’s program is as much about celebrating the beauty of nature as it is a wake-up call to take action to preserve the green lungs of our planet, and one of the greatest sources of artistic inspiration ever : the forest. The fact that her instrument is also built from wood only multiplies her motivation to raise awareness for forest protection and appreciation.

Playing a concert inside a forest, by composers for whom nature played a vital role, is a way to bring the audience to the genesis of the music she recorded on *Whisper Me A Tree*. It is an unexpected invitation to experience music differently, to see, listen, feel and understand that without the forest, without nature in general, artistic landscapes would not bear the same face. Many of the greatest works we know of, might never have existed.

Playing in the forest is simple and a challenge all at once. Concert performers are used to the « flattering acoustics » that concert halls are designed to have. But that kind of resonance does not exist in natural environments. Concerts are not amplified nor is there any echo in the forest, only the raw sound of music, nature, birds and the rustling of plants and trees in the breeze. The sensorial effect is marvelously surprising.

In creating *Le Silence de la forêt*, and as Ambassador to the ONF, Olivia brings a touch of sensitivity to the important intellectual and factual work done by this national commission. In so doing, her determination coupled with sincerity and intense musicality, complements the work of the ONF by moving the mind and hearts.

OLIVIA GAY AMBASSADOR OF ONF

FRENCH NATIONAL FORESTRY BUREAU



Olivia Gay uses « *the finesse of her bow to bring out the sound* » (Diapason), creating a « warm and rich sound » (Libération), both on her recordings and on stage.

Performing works ranging from Bach to Vasks, his repertoire covers the entire spectrum of cello works, with a particular curiosity for works by contemporary composers.

With three albums and a busy recital schedule, Olivia Gay is one of France's most prominent emerging cellists, with engagements in Europe and abroad, including recent concerts at Carnegie Hall, the Easter Festival in Aix-en-Provence and the Salzburger Festspiel.

Olivia has just released her third album recorded with the **National Orchestra of Cannes** under the direction of Benjamin Levy, and with pianist **Célia Oneto Bensaïd**, under the Fuga Libera label of Outthere Music.

Dedicated to her love of forests, Olivia partnered up with the **ONF** (National Forestry Office in France) to help raise awareness and funds for the battle against forest fires and the dramatic effects of climate change on nature.

Released in September of 2022, the album entitled **Whisper Me A Tree** highlights the works of contemporary composers including John Luther Adams, Ross Edwards, Camille Pepin, Max Richter and others...

Olivia Gay explored her passion for performing contemporary music on her debut album, *Horizon[s]*, with recordings of concertante works by Philippe Hersant, Pēteris Vasks and Thierry Maillard, alongside the Orchestre Padeloup. Télérama commented, « *We love passionately... here is a first album that does not lack audacity,* » while Libération added, « *an ambitious and original program.* »

On her second album, *Origine[s]*, Olivia Gay explores another subject that captures her imagination: the origins of the cello repertoire. By placing works by Schumann, Kodaly, Boulanger and Piazzolla in mirror image with folk pieces directly related to the repertoire, the listener is taken on a fascinating journey. France Musique said « *This is how the learned and the popular resonate in a very successful program* ».

She has collaborated in concert and in her recordings with many talented musicians, including pianists Nelson Goerner, Jean-François Zygel, Vanessa Wagner, Laure Favre Kahn, Célia Oneto Bensaïd, Celimène Daudet, Simon Ghraichy, accordionist Basha Slavinska, the Van Kuijk Quartet, the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, the Orchestre des Jeunes du Centre, the Orchestre Padeloup, the chamber orchestra La Folia, the Jan Talich Orchestra of Prague and the Philharmonie Südwestfalen, the Orchestre national de Cannes.

Olivia Gay grew up near Mulhouse where she began studying the cello at an early age. She continued her studies in Strasbourg and Paris under the tutelage of Marc Coppey, Paul Meyer, Eric Le Sage and the Ysaye Quartet, before moving to Germany where she studied with J.G. Queyras at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart and Freiburg and completed her studies in the soloist class of Johannes Moser. She has won several competitions, including the International Leopold Bellan Competition (1st prize), the A. Glazounov Competition (1st prize) and the Gerardmer International String Competition (1st prize and audience prize), Padova Soloist International Competition among others.

Olivia Gay is also a laureate of the Cziffra Foundation and the Maurice Ravel Academy.

Olivia Gay plays a magnificent 1733 D. Montagnana cello on long-term loan from the **Beare's International Violin Society**.



AGIR POUR LA FORÊT

Office National des Forêts



Ambassador of the ONF's endowment fund **Take Action for the Forest**, Olivia strives to raise awareness for consequences of climate change on forests, such as the bark beetle, an insect that proliferates during heat waves and ravages spruce trees, and forest fires, whose intensity increases every year.

Official partner to her project, the National Forestry Office has opened its network to her in order to link her artistic approach with concrete actions in the field. Part of Olivia's royalties will be donated to the endowment fund and the sums collected will support an enterprise to restore a forest in the Essonne region of France, seriously affected by ink disease.

This initiative and concert performances in forests throughout France of **Le Silence de la forêt**, presented by Olivia Gay at the **Climate Academy in March 2022**, will continue throughout 2023 and 2024.

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