

Iván Fischer: Stravinsky and Weill's Silbersee

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw
Iván Fischer, conductor · Thomas Oliemans, baritone · Netherlands Chamber Choir, choir

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>Tango</i>	4'
2	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>Four Norwegian Moods</i>	9'
3	STRAVINSKY 1882–1971 <i>Suite from 'The Firebird' (1919)</i>	22'
4	WEILL 1900–1950 <i>Der Silbersee (concert version)</i>	35'
TOTAL MUSIC		70'

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

Tango

4 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is over almost before it begins, so listen closely. Notice the deliberate stiffness. Stravinsky drains the tango of its usual heat and replaces it with clipped rhythms, tart harmonies and a slightly mechanical tread. There is sensuality here, but it is held at arm's length, observed with a cool, knowing eye. It makes a piquant, brief curtain-raiser, and a first glimpse of Stravinsky the émigré craftsman.

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

9 minutes

Four Norwegian Moods

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The suite falls into four short movements: an opening ‘Intrada,’ a ‘Song,’ a ‘Wedding Dance’ and a closing ‘Cortège.’ Listen for the simple Norwegian folk tunes at the heart of each, and for what Stravinsky does to and around them: the clean, slightly tart harmonies, the springy rhythms, the transparent scoring in which every line is audible. There is a deadpan humour to the way he sets these homely melodies in his own sophisticated frame, never mocking them, but never sentimentalising them either.

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

22 minutes

Suite from 'The Firebird' (1919)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The suite opens in darkness and mystery: low, slithering strings conjure the enchanted garden of the ogre Kashchei. Then the Firebird herself appears: listen for the flickering, darting woodwind and string writing that depicts her magical flight and dance, music of glittering, restless brilliance.

A gentler episode follows, the ‘Round Dance of the Princesses,’ with a tender, folk-like melody on the oboe and strings. Then comes the suite’s showstopper: the ‘Infernal Dance of King Kashchei,’ which erupts with a shattering chord and hurls the whole orchestra into a savage, syncopated frenzy of pounding, off-balance rhythms that point straight toward *The Rite of Spring*. After this violence, the ‘Berceuse’ (Lullaby) brings deep calm, a hushed bassoon melody over rocking strings. And then the Finale: a solo horn intones a noble, hymn-like Russian tune that grows, gradually and gloriously, into a radiant full-orchestra apotheosis, building through a broad, irregular seven-beat rhythm to one of the most thrilling final pages in the repertoire.

Kurt Weill

1900–1950

Der Silbersee (concert version)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is Weill in his great Weimar voice, the world of The Three-penny Opera: tunes you can whistle, sharpened by tart harmonies, dance rhythms and a knowing, cabaret edge. Listen for the way he shifts register, from acid, march-like satire to sudden moments of disarming sweetness, often within a single number, so that the music keeps undercutting easy sentiment.

One celebrated number is the savage ‘Ballad of Caesar’s Death,’ a mock-historical cabaret song about a tyrant brought low, whose point could hardly be missed in February 1933. Listen, too, for the contributions of the baritone soloist and the chorus, who carry the work’s storytelling, and for the salty, jazz-inflected orchestration. Above all, listen to this as a document of a vanished world: the sound of Weimar Germany’s daring popular-art experiment, captured at the very moment it was being extinguished.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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Version 3, 30 September 2026