

# Pour Sortir au Jour (2014)

Concerto for flute and orchestra

*Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra National de France.*

*Premiered on March 5, 2014 in Chicago (U.S.A.), by Mathieu Dufour and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles Dutoit. The Orchestra National de France with Mathieu Dufour gave its French premiere on December 10, 2015 at Radio France, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach.*

*Dedicated to Mathieu Dufour.*

*Pour sortir au jour* corresponds to the original name of *The Book of the Dead* in ancient Egypt. These papyrus scrolls were placed next to the mummy to help in the journey beyond, and to reach the light of Osiris. The work consisted of a series of prayers, magic formulas that would open doors, and also invocations and fables that would serve the dead, because to experience this second birth and see the clarity of the Justified, a series of trials awaited the dead. It is that spiritual journey that my Concerto evokes, a journey of shadow and light in the realm of Duat or Amenti, the afterlife of ancient Egypt.

My score unfolds in five movements following on from each other. You can find the classical structure in three, with the exception of the two ritual dances preceding movements One and Two. These dances call for a small ensemble accompanying the solo flute, reminding one of the baroque *concerto grosso*. I chose the instruments for them by analogy with the instrumentarium of ancient times : two oboes and a trumpet to represent the autos, the two harps and the percussion (where I gave preference to period instruments like crotales, systems, drums and clappers), and four solo violas that evoke the sounds of later period water organs.

1. **Processional dance** : The funeral cortège crosses the Nile to carry the deceased's mortal remains to the western banks of the river, to the sounds of this dance in seven. The whole of this movement where the solo flute is sustained by the polyrhythm of the 'Egyptian ensemble' is written on the Hindu Shri scale, abundantly transposed. Having entered the trance, the ensemble is suddenly covered by the large orchestra which makes its entry like a flash of lightning, marking its passing through the mirror to the land of the dead.
2. **Entrance into Duat** : This long movement is made up of six sections. The first evokes the difficult separation of the soul from its body. The solo flute seems to be multiplied by the flutes in the orchestra in games of mirrors. The second section states the principal theme of the movement in the middle register, a theme of mystery and disquiet followed by four variations. The first of these uses the mirrored theme set on a complex polyrhythm. The following variation is a light scherzo where the Ka twirls around in joyfully visiting its new universe. But it very quickly hears the wailing of those unable to escape the terrifying Ammut, the devourer of souls, as this new variation is based on a motif with an inflexion, like a lament. Finally, in the

last variation, the deceased comes face to face with Osiris, whose light invades the entire orchestra like a tidal wave.

3. **Dance of justification** : The Shri scale and the small ensemble from the beginning return here, without the solo flute, to play this hesitant, mysterious dance. Written over an ostinato in five, this is waiting-music that prepares the Judgement.
4. **The scales of the gods** : This slow movement, which reflects the capital moment in Psychostasia when the fate of the dead is to be weighed, unfolds like an interrupted song : a theme filled with gravity returns three times and, on each return, the flights of lyricism from the flute seem to break against a mechanical clock in the form of an ostinato that loses itself in the silence. Then judgement is rendered and, with a soft chord in G flat major, the flute is taken into splendour of Osiris.
5. **Dance un the fields of Ialou** : This is a final dance where, for the first time, the 'Egyptian ensemble' conducts a dialogue with the large orchestra. The soloist states a tense, rhythmical theme and is answered by a second theme, this time tonal, asserted by the full orchestra. This dance of joy is that of the righteous who, in the fields of Aaru, will see souls take to their heels and run towards a place of happiness ; they will learn of winds that carry the fluids of the infinite, thanks to which the heavens unite with the planets ; they will hear the souls of the pharaohs laughing like the geese of Geb, and plunge into the celestial Nile.

Guillaume Connesson