

Grégoire Pont

Animator and Illustrator

Grégoire Pont's remarkable work avoids easy technical effects and always sticks to the truth of text and music. Never had the meaning of 'spells' been so well embodied. The result is a masterwork where the stage setting shows unexpected details, designed with a great sense of poetry on the screen.

Classique News, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Opéra National de Lyon, November 2016

An exceptional artistic talent from the tender age of eight, Grégoire Pont attended the Animation Workshop in Paris where he studied Norman McLaren's techniques of animation dynamics. He graduated from the Penninghen school of Graphic Arts (ESAG) in 1992 and shortly thereafter directed his first animated film *Le concerto du chat*, with abstract drawings painted on glass or drawn directly on the film. This two-minute film depicted shapes dancing to the sounds of the instruments in an orchestral rehearsal and was recorded with the Orchestre de Paris at Salle Pleyel. Pont then spent ten years at Ubisoft, the French global software development company, where he worked on a number of educational CD-Rom programmes such as 'Guitar Lessons' and 'Beaux-Arts Lessons'. He also created 'The Cosmic Family', a series of interactive cartoon characters. An important stage in Pont's creative development came in 2000 when Pont participated in a master class with the great Canadian animation director Richard Williams (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *The Thief and the Cobbler*), allowing him to deepen his knowledge of the fluidity in animation.

A great lover of classical music, especially 20th century composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Koechlin, Poulenc and Strauss, Pont has always been passionate about making classical music more popular and accessible to children by means of animation. He developed a new performance concept called 'Cinesthetics': with a group of musicians, he draws and animates live, creating a unique experience where music and motion interplay. His refreshing approach, and the wit and insight of his animations, are gaining him plaudits around the world. His ever growing repertoire includes Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony premiered in Arkansas US, Stravinsky's *Firebird* in Helsingborg with Stefan Solyom, Ravel's *Ma mère l'oye* at London's Royal Festival Hall, Paris' Philharmonie and Frankfurt's Buchmesse opening concert at the Alte Oper, in Gothenburg Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* with Kent Nagano, Debussy's *La mer* in Tokyo's Suntory Hall with Kazushi Ono, Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* with French ensemble Les Siècles, Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* with SWR Symphony Orchestra, Holt's *The Planets* with Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. Next title will be Bizet's *La boîte à joujoux* with Rouen Opera, set around a storyline written by André Manoukian.

In November 2016, he premiered his first venture into the operatic repertoire, with a production at the Lyon Opera of Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* which uses projections of his animations as its sole staging, followed in 2018 by *L'heure espagnole* with the same team.

For three seasons, Pont worked with the French conductor François-Xavier Roth and his innovative orchestra Les Siècles on *Presto!* (France Television). This series of short musical excerpts introduced audiences to popular classical music works via animation and video and was seen by over three million viewers on weekly primetime television. Pont also illustrates books for children, most notably *Les Excalibrius*, and has made numerous animations for TV commercials, educational animated shorts and

music video clips. He has been commissioned by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark) to create animations for Guillaume Connesson's *Disco Toccata* by and André Dalbavie's *Flute Concerto*.