



Bio musicians – EN

Shirly Laub, violin

Shirly Laub studied in Brussels with Clemens Quatacker and then completed her training with Viktor Liberman and Philippe Hirshhorn in Utrecht. She was awarded the title of 'Jeune Soliste' by the 'Communautés des radios publiques de langue française' as well as Juventus Laureate by the Council of Europe. Her extensive discography includes many recordings as a chamber musician and as violinist/leader for public radio stations such as Musiq3, Klara, France Musique, Radio Suisse Romande, Radio Canada, RAI and the BBC. She joined the Silk Road Ensemble in New York in 2001 and subsequently played alongside Yo Yo Ma throughout the world. Shirly Laub was concertmaster of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London between 1998 and 2005 and is now a regular guest concertmaster for the major symphony orchestras of Belgium, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Korea. With chamber music ensembles such as Oxalys and TrioFenix she performs in such prestigious venues as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Wigmore Hall in London and the Library of Congress in Washington. Shirly Laub has taught violin at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles since 2003; she is also a frequent jury member in important violin competitions, including the Queen Elisabeth Competition.

Frédéric d'Ursel, violin

Frédéric d'Ursel received his first violin training from Édith Volckaert and then studied with Philippe Hirshhorn at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles. He took part in the Tanglewood Festival (USA) in 1985 and 1986, where he played under Leonard Bernstein, Eiji Oue and Leon Fleischer among others, and also took part in master classes with Joseph Silverstein and the Muir String Quartet. As an orchestral musician, he has played under Sir Colin Davis, Christopher Hogwood, Philippe Herreweghe, Reinbert de Leeuw, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Antonio Pappano and Emmanuel Krivine, amongst others.

Frédéric d'Ursel is a co-founder of the Oxalys ensemble and has been associated with it since 1993, performing all over the world in concert halls such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Conservatory of Moscow and the Library of Congress in Washington. He has taught violin at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles since 2000. He has also formed a duo with organist Cindy Castillo dedicated to Bach's sonatas; Jean-Pierre Deleuze composed his *Traüme und Erwachen* especially for them.

Elisabeth Smal, viola

Elisabeth Smalt enjoys a versatile and well-rounded career as a viola player in chamber ensembles. She is at home in a wide range of styles, from performances on period instruments to newly written works. Her first concert with Oxalys was in 1996 and she has remained a member of the ensemble ever since. Elisabeth Smalt also performs with the Van Swieten Society, a collective playing on authentic 19th-century instruments, the Prisma String Trio, the Luna String Quartet, focussing on new music, and the Wittgenstein Project, dedicated to chamber music commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein. She also performs in duos with pianists Riko Fukuda and Keiko Shichijo. She was director of the KlankKleurFestival in Amsterdam from 2005 to 2011, which strove to create a creative synergy between visual artists and chamber musicians. Elisabeth Smalt is currently artistic director of the Scordatura Ensemble, which specialises in music with tunings that deviate from the Western

12-tone scale. Scordatura first made headlines with the Amsterdam Partch Project, a concert series of works by the eccentric 20th-century American composer Harry Partch. Elisabeth finds all stylistic periods of classical music both interesting and inspiring; she loves to bring unknown chamber works into the light of day. Her adventurous spirit and passion for contemporary music have led her to commission numerous new works; she has premiered several works for solo viola — some composed especially for her — by composers such as Horatiu Radulescu, James Tenney, Lou Harrison, Frank Denyer, Ig Henneman, Judith Ring, Kevin Volans, Christopher Fox, Deirdre McKay, Christian Wolff, Lou Harrison, Phill Niblock, Yannis Kyriakides, Calliope Tsoupaki and Patrick Ozzard-Low. Elisabeth Smalt's discography includes more than 50 solo and chamber music recordings, several of which have won awards.

Justus Grimm, cello

Justus Grimm was born in Hamburg and began playing the cello at the age of five under his father's guidance. He then studied in Cologne with Claus Kanngiesser and Frans Helmerson and won first prizes at the Maria Canals International Music Competition and the Deutsche Musikwettbewerb. As a soloist he has performed with the English Chamber Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of La Monnaie, the Philharmonic Orchestra Hamburg and the Staatsorchester Frankfurt. Justus Grimm actively focuses on chamber music; with pianist Florian Wiek he has made recordings of cello sonatas by Beethoven, Brahms and Shostakovich. Together with flutist Christina Fassbender they form the Trio Wiek, which has also recorded several CDs. Justus Grimm became a member of the Oxalys Ensemble in 2022 and also performs with numerous international partners at festivals worldwide. He has taught cello and served as a member of the artistic board at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp since 2008. Justus Grimm plays on an instrument by P.A. Testore from 1760.

Koenraad Hofman, double bass

Koenraad Hofman studied double bass and chamber music at the Brussels Conservatory. He was solo bassist with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta under Lev Markiz and Peter Oundjian from 1996 to 2003 and also held the same position in the European Union Chamber Orchestra until 2007. Koenraad has been principal double bass in the Symphony Orchestra of Flanders from 2004. He taught double bass at the Conservatory of Ghent from 2015 to 2019, at which time he transferred to the Royal Conservatory of Brussels; he now teaches chamber music as well. Koenraad Hofman performs all over the world and collaborates with the most important Belgian symphony orchestras, including the Symphony Orchestra of La Monnaie and the Brussels Philharmonic; he is also a welcome guest with the Schönberg Ensemble, the Nieuw Ensemble, Philharmonie ZuidNederland, the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam. Koenraad Hofman succeeded Toon Fret as artistic co-ordinator of Oxalys in 2009.

Toon Fret, flute

Toon Fret received his training as a flutist in Brussels, Maastricht, Paris and Basel with Gaby Van Riet, René Kravanja, Michel Lefebvre, Barthold Kuijken, Ida Ribera and Peter-Lukas Graf. He himself teaches flute and chamber music at the Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Liège and flute at the Stedelijk Conservatorium Leuven. Toon Fret is active as a chamber musician and in recital both at home and abroad. He has given concerts on the most important stages in Europe, America and Asia and his more than thirty CDs have been enthusiastically reviewed in Diapason, Classica and the BBC Music Magazine. Toon Fret is a driving force within Oxalys and Het Collectief, two chamber music ensembles with an international reputation.

Nathalie Lefèvre, clarinet

Nathalie Lefèvre obtained her postgraduate diploma at the Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Mons at the age of 21 and then continued her training with Walter Boeykens, Guy Deplus, Antony Pay and Alain Damiens. She won the first prize at the Concours international du Lycéum de Suisse in Bern in 1990. Nathalie Lefèvre has given numerous recitals and performed as a soloist with the Neuchâtel Orchestra (Switzerland), as well as in Belgium with the RTBF Orchestra, the Beethoven Academy, Casco Phil and the Belgian Air Force Orchestra. She was solo clarinetist with the New Belgian

Chamber Orchestra from 1991 to 1996, since when she is a regular guest with the most important orchestras in Belgium (Belgian National Orchestra, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Flanders Symphony Orchestra, Opéra de Liège), as well as the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra. She is a founding member of the Oxalys ensemble, with whom she has performed in the world's most prestigious venues, including Bozar in Brussels, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, and the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Nathalie Lefèvre teaches clarinet, chamber music and methodology at the conservatories of Brussels and Mons (Arts2). She also teaches clarinet at the music academy of Sint-Agatha-Berchem. Nathalie Lefèvre regularly gives masterclasses, recently in Manchester, Changsha (China), Kumamoto (Japan), Madrid, Seville and Wrocław. She has been playing on RZ clarinets at various events since 2018, including the International Clarinet Festival in Ostend and Clarimania in Wrocław.

Annie Lavoisier, harp

Annie Lavoisier was born in Reims and began her musical studies at the age of six. She studied in Paris with Francis Pierre, who introduced her to contemporary and orchestral repertoire. She subsequently met the great French harpist Pierre Jamet, then 87 years old, and was one of his very last students. Annie Lavoisier is a laureate of major international competitions (Gargilèsse (FR), Israel, Munich, Geneva) and she also received the Special Prize for the best interpretation of a contemporary work. A solo harpist with the Belgian National Orchestra since the age of 20, she joined Oxalys in 1995 and has been a member of the contemporary music ensemble Ictus since 1996. Annie Lavoisier founded the harp class at the Lemmens Institute in Leuven, after which she became a harp teacher at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles in 2005. Her research into the connections between the pedal harp and the early harps led her to the triple harp (*arpa doppia*) in 2010, with which she has explored the Renaissance and Baroque repertoire.

Her 20-year practice of choral singing has led her to consider ways to make classical music accessible to all: not only does she regularly take part in various educational projects in conjunction with literature, poetry, fairy tales, actors, clowns, and so on, but she has also composed and performed music for short animated films, documentaries and puppet theatre. Annie Lavoisier has been associated with the French project '*Popharpe, harpes en carton*' since 2018; this project aims to make the instrument accessible to all thanks to workshops in which participants build their own cardboard harp. She also took up oil painting in 2012, with the intention of making her musical visions visible.