

Visualising Bartu Elci-Ozsoy's 1st Symphony "Once upon a Time in Paris"

Four canvases, 61x46cm each, acrylics on canvas

By Yannis Papayannis

About the Symphony No. 1 “Once Upon a Time in Paris”

By Bartu Elci-Ozsoy

“The world is changing too fast. We humans consume and waste too much of everything. We pollute and destroy. We are so distracted that we rarely care about aesthetic sensitivity, and disregard our natural gift to create, see and appreciate the beauty in everything... And we take for granted the most precious things we have: our planet, the nature, our lives and our future.

I wrote this symphony as a tribute to the days when our human-made environment was in accord with the natural environment. My music is my way of expressing the need for re-establishing the balance and harmony between humankind and the rest of the natural world. My inspiration lies in the early 20th century French classical music and the beauty of the past where that harmony existed and flourished.”

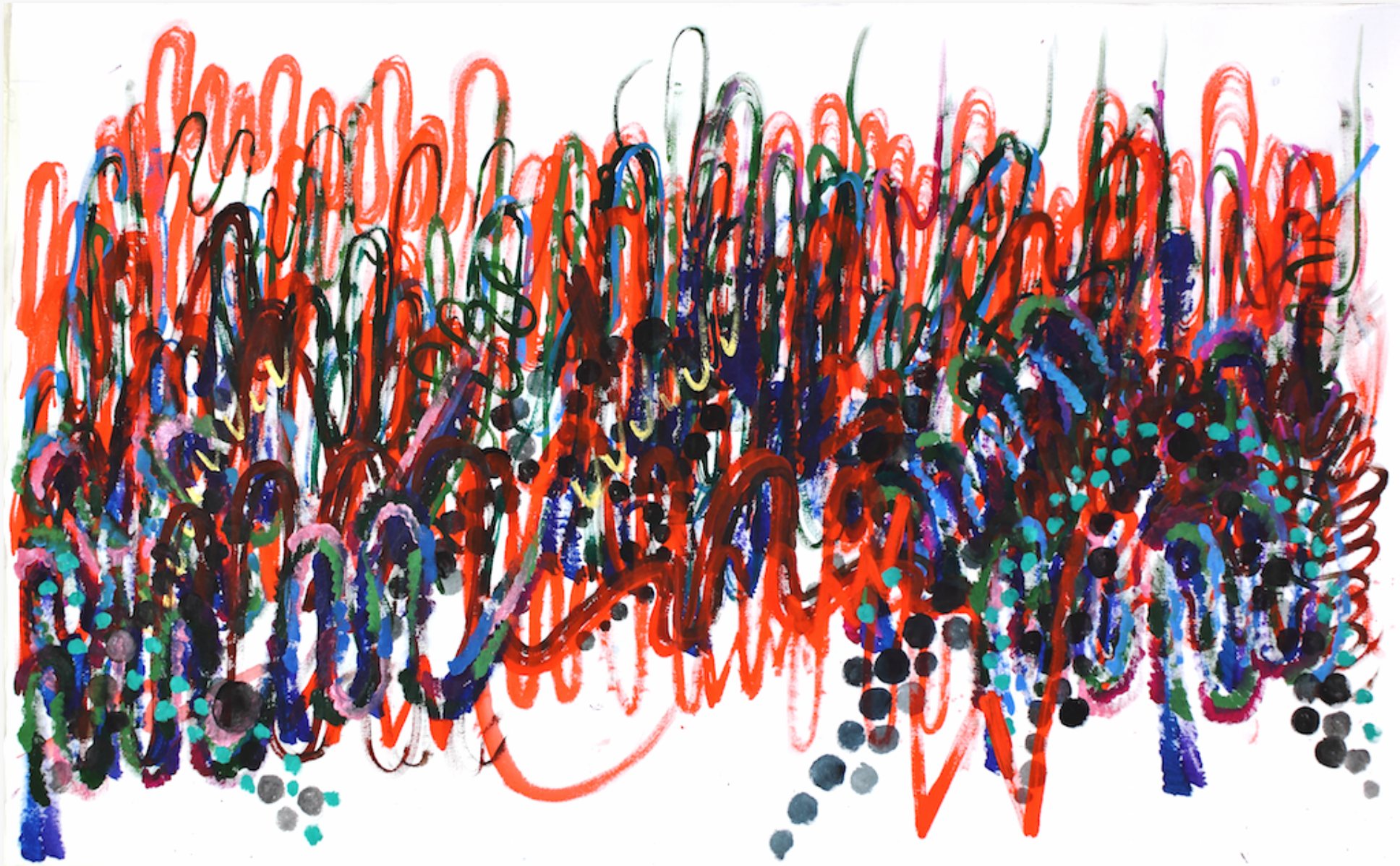
Excerpts of the Symphony are accessible at <https://youtu.be/erLj69tmOeY>

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Acrylics on canvas roll, 2020

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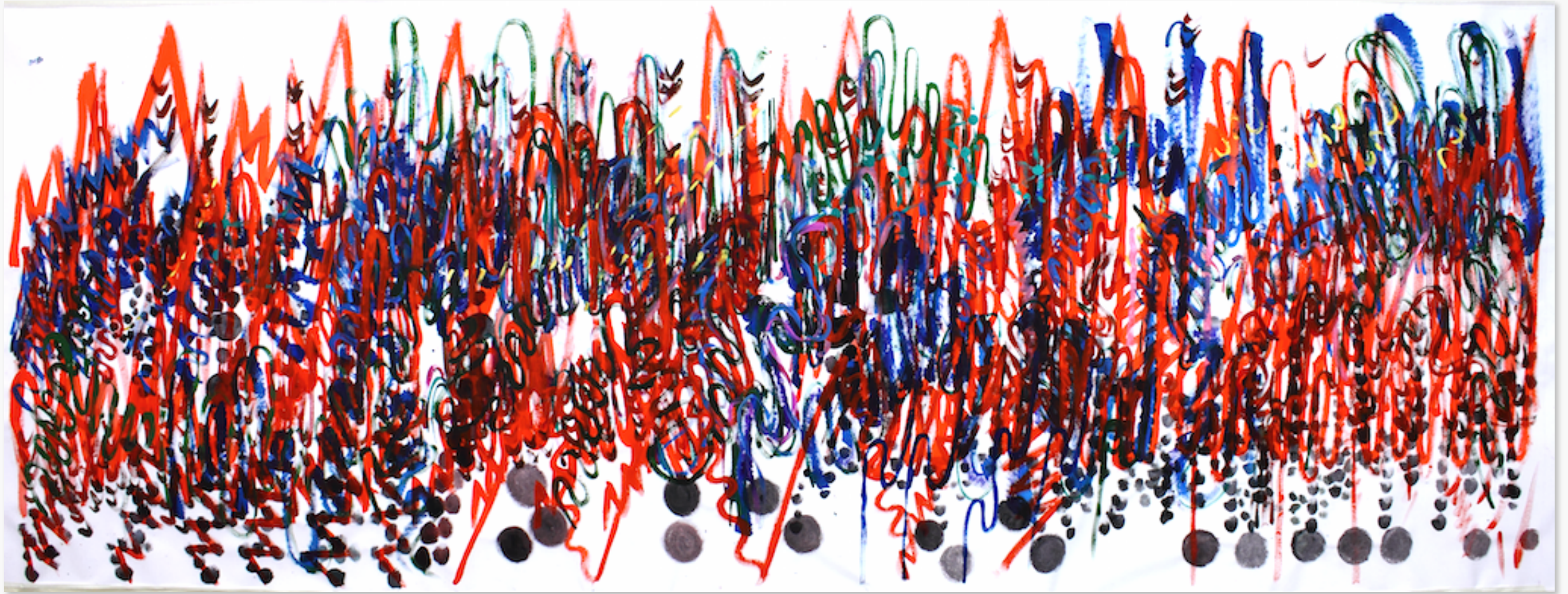
“Bartu's symphony is a neo-romantic gem written by a sapient young composer. The composition's main objective is to speak to us in a confident, honest and poetic way about lost beauty and idealised epochs... The symphony is comprised of four movements, two long and two very brief. This interesting imbalance intrigued me to create on a five meters long canvas a tetrptych of two large paintings and two very small ones, adjacent to one another, leaving only a very short space between them, imitating the very short interval between the movements during a performance.”



Movement 1

95x150cm, acrylics on canvas roll, 2020

The first movement of Bartu Elci-Ozsoy's symphony titled "Once upon a Time in Paris" is a confident, slow and meditative piece with emphasis on the strings. While listening to it, I imagine it starts at the end of the night, when the light is still shy, and gradually starts to appear calmly, rising its intensity, leading to shimmering and later culminating in an elegiac hymn.



Movement 2

95x250cm, acrylics on canvas roll, 2020

The second movement, the longest movement in the symphony, is rich in rhythms and melodies and challenging as a composition. It starts with Ravel's Bolero's rhythmical theme, which -like a small river- flows elegantly soon to be joined by a stream of an exotic eastern theme. This confluence encounters coloured rivulets in the form of dances, familiar melodies, little prayers, and supplications, hurrying and briefly appearing on the scene. Eventually, this multi-coloured river is spouting into an ecstatic crescendo and only the inceptive two themes survive and initiate a kind of ritualistic walk, in streets full of fragrances and nostalgic images, like a collage of pictures of 1900 Paris. This cosmopolitan couple -the persistent Ravel's Bolero and the eastern melody-, gradually diminishes and fades away.



Movement 3

95x62cm, acrylics on canvas roll,

A joyful march begins. Manet's Boy Soldier playing the piccolo, together with the frisky Chinese flute from 'L'enfant et les sortilèges', creates briefly a cheerful atmosphere, succeeded by tensive orchestral outbursts with contrasting harmonic implosions and dramatic phrases. All that in a extremely short piece of music, reminding me the contemporary composer Moondog, with his one or two minutes long symphonies.



Movement 4

95x38cm, acrylics on canvas roll, 2020

The conclusion is separated, forming the forth part of the work. The symphony ends with a parade in honour of Joy with Stravinsky's military trumpet leading the parade, soon disintegrating into light and this light turning calmly into the sea.

Yanis Papayanis

Visualising Bartu Elci-Ozsoy' s symphony

I always imagine a piece of music as a journey.

In my imagination Bartu Elci-Ozsoy's symphony titled "Once upon a Time in Paris" starts at the end of the night, when the light is still shy, and gradually starts to appear calmly, rising its intensity, leading to shimmering and later culminating in an elegiac hymn. I see Ravel's Bolero rhythmical theme, like a small river, starting to flow elegantly soon to be joined by a stream of an exotic eastern theme. This confluence encounters coloured rivulets in the form of dances, familiar melodies, little prayers, and supplications, hurrying and briefly appearing on the scene. Eventually, this multicoloured river is spouting into an ecstatic crescendo and only the inceptive two themes survive and initiate a kind of ritualistic walk, in streets full of fragrances and nostalgic images, like a collage of pictures of 1900 Paris. This cosmopolitan couple -the persistent Ravel's Bolero and the eastern melody-, gradually diminishes and fades away. And immediately a joyful march begins. Manet's Boy Soldier playing the piccolo, together with the frisky Chinese flute from 'L'enfant et les sortilèges', create briefly a cheerful atmosphere, succeeded by tense orchestral outbursts with contrasting harmonic implosions and dramatic phrases. The symphony is concluded with a parade in honour of Joy with Stravinsky's military trumpet leading the parade, soon disintegrating into light and this light turning into the sea.

Bartu's symphony is a neo-romantic gem written by a sapient young composer. The composition's main objective is to speak to us in a confident, honest and poetic way about lost beauty and idealised epochs. Short melodies from other composers, like Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and Korsakov are summoned like colours or elements from a past era, indispensable to construct this palimpsest. The symphony is comprised of four movements, two long and two very brief. This interesting imbalance intrigued me to create on a five meters long canvas a tetraptych of two large paintings and two very small ones, adjacent to one another, leaving only a very short space between them, imitating the very short interval between the movements movements during a performance.

Music for me is a journey consisted of seconds instead of places. My visualisation begins with a slow, cumbersome, and detailed process, a thorough empirical study, of listening to every second of the piece of music and writing down with coloured pencils on a roll of paper every sound reaction, and deciphering every instrument that caused it, never missing one second or changing its order. This roll of paper will eventually contain all the materials needed: I am calling them my gemstones, like signs representing gestural reactions, notes, names of instruments and other details, to start a painting. Then I can draw a simple line drawing (in Bartu' s Symphony I drew only parallel lines on the empty canvas). I later use it as a track to place my elements (dots, lines etc). My decision has been to be loyal to my study and put all the elements on canvas in exactly the same sequence as in my study. The problem is that the surface of a painting, whether large or small, is always limited when I want to convert music to painting. I have to disrespect linearity and fairness in reactive expressions as depicted in a computer-generated music visualisation because I want to give significance on expression emanated from the music, as emotions cannot be measured scientifically. Exciting music phrases always activate imagination, require bigger space and gesture and more amount of pigment. I let the elements overlap with each other.

You will say these are unmusical actions, but since I want to convert music to painting I have to abide by the rules of painting. Overlapping and crashing elements is a major characteristic of abstract art with exciting results in brush marking and colour combinations. Colour plays a key role in my visualisation, as each instrument is marked with a different colour. Deciding on what colour would represent each instrument is crucial to create a stripe on paper, composed of coloured marks and lines as loud or soft as the played sound. Colour separates lines and marks, creates a polyphony in the image which slowly emerges, and adds to the complexity of the drawing and eventually of the composition. The composition is formed of densely and sparingly written areas which sometimes let the empty canvas be exposed as an empty space.

The colours I chose for Bartu's symphony are as follows: Solo Violin: red, Violins, violas: orange, Cellos: orange browns, Bass: burnt umber, Flutes: sky blue, Piccolo: prussian Blue (thin line), Oboe: magenta, Cor Anglais: light green, Clarinet: green, Bassoon: light magenta, Horn: phthalic green, Trumpet: phthalic blue, Tuba: prussian blue (thick brush stroke), Percussion: black, Harp: gold.

I have often been wondering if visualising a piece of music is a utopia since painting is made for the eye and music for the ear. True, as it is also true that both are made for the mind and the soul which is their greatest relationship. I saw in Bartu not only curiosity how this experiment is going to go, but real cooperation, encouragement and anticipation, something that made this project exciting.

I would like Bartu to see my work not only as a thoughtful response of a curious member of the audience, who is an artist wishing to decipher music's rich language to the benefit of his art but also as a dialogue between a musician and a visual artist. I hope he will also be benefitted, by observing his composition as an image, to feel that his work travelled to another realm, and contemplate about its characteristics, like for example the frequency the instruments that appear in the symphony and the type of patterns his music inspires an artist to paint.



Bartu Elci-Ozsoy, born in 2003, is a composer, conductor and violinist, and attends the Paris Conservatory. He finished composing his 1st Symphony "Once Upon a Time in Paris" when he was 15. It was premiered under Bartu's baton on 26 May 2019 at the Théâtre des Variétés with the Orchestre Sinfonietta de Paris. More information about Bartu and his art is available at <https://bartu.fr>



Yannis Papayannis was born in Athens in 1962. He studied painting at the Bath Academy of Art and at the Byam Shaw School of Art. He has taught art in Greece and exhibited his work in solo and group shows in Europe. Since 2011 he lives and works in the UK. His interest in music started from a very early age together with his interest in visual art. The last ten years he has been able to fuse these two arts into his work, by interpreting music as painting, More information about Yannis and his art is available at <https://www.yannispapayannis.com>
