

TOBIAS BORSBOOM

Although the year 2020 will mainly be devoted to celebrating Beethoven's 250th birthday, there are more composers to commemorate this year. For example the Czech composer Vítězslav Novák: a cherished celebrity in his own country for more than a century, but barely known to the Dutch public. This year marks the 150th anniversary of this student of Dvořák, and the pianist Tobias Borsboom is determined to not let this anniversary pass unnoticed in the Netherlands. Since January of this year, Borsboom has been presenting Novák's *Suite Pan* from 1910, and given his performance in Vlissingen, Borsboom's interpretation will shape our first introduction to this composer. Colourful, sensitive, beautifully balanced, technically impeccable and musically extremely accomplished, Borsboom's presentation of Novák's ambitious tone poem made a huge impression. The five-part piece (Prologue, Mountains, Sea, Forest, Woman) lasts more than 50 minutes, but the audience remained spellbound to the end. The pianist seemed to produce a sea of sounds in a never-ending alternation of melodies, moods and rhythms. Surging, tempestuous, powerful, mysterious and capricious, moving back and forth from melodic to harmonic, reminiscent at times of folk music and of Debussy: Novák's *Pan* has it all. The work as a whole forms an overwhelming musical tribute to nature in all its guises. The concert was augmented in a striking manner by five paintings by Maryleen Schiltkamp, inspired by the evocative music of all five parts of Novák's *Pan*. With this wonderful lunch concert, Tobias Borsboom has definitely succeeded in putting Vítězslav Novák squarely on the map.

Heard 26 January, Concerten Vlissingen.

Olga de Kort