

GRÉTRY | FRANCK | YSAÏE

OUTSTANDING MUSICAL AND
MUSEUM HERITAGE
IN LIÈGE



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Liège is to music what Mozart is to Salzburg.

Liège is among the rare cities that have preserved the birthplaces of their famous music composers.

With André Modeste Grétry (1741-1813), César Franck (1822-1890) and Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), outstanding musical heritage lives on in the museum institutions of the Ardent City.

At each venue, the intimate approach to the musicians' daily lives is immediately perceptible. It is the basis of an original exhibition display presenting personal belongings, unique documents, old instruments and exceptional manuscripts in period settings.

The lives and works of these three composers and artists allow visitors to discover three centuries of intense musical activities and make it possible to address musical genres as different as comic opera, symphonic music, chamber music or also the school of the great violin virtuosos in particular.

Patrick Dheur Pianist-composer
Curator at the Musée Grétry

MUSÉE GRÉTRY

Grétry's birthplace is a superb building typical of 18th century Liège. Today, it is an emblematic museum of Liège's musical history. Numerous manuscripts allow us to picture how the composer went about his work and imagine the combination of musical instruments on display (such as the harp, violin, fortepiano, etc.) playing famous opera arias. His many personal belongings displayed are the secret of a particularly endearing and unforgettable atmosphere.

André-Modeste Grétry (who was born in Liège in 1741 and died in Paris in 1813) was educated at the collegiate church of Saint Denis in Liège. He honed his skills in Rome from 1758 onwards and moved to Paris in 1767. He was an undisputed master of comic opera and five of his masterpieces have endured as the centuries have passed, to grace the stages of renowned opera houses: *Le Huron* (1768) *Lucile* (1769), *Zémire & Azor* (1771), *Richard Cœur de Lion* (1784) and *Guillaume Tell* (1791). His "Memoirs or essay on music" (in 3 volumes) are writings of reference.

The composer survived the terrors of the French revolution by switching from the position of Queen Marie-Antoinette's private director of music to being the protégé of Napoleon, who awarded him the Legion of Honour. His personality and philosophy made him a key figure of the Enlightenment.





ESPACE CÉSAR FRANCK AT THE GRAND CURTIUS

Exhibition > 30/12/2024

The Espace "César Franck" was founded in 2022, at the Grand Curtius museum, 500 metres from the composer's birthplace, to commemorate the bicentenary of his birth. For the first time in the world, it brings together the console of the Cavaillé-Coll organ (1858) from the Sainte Clotilde Basilica in Paris, his Erard baby grand piano (1844) and his paternal grandmother's table grand piano (1790).

Many documents (newspaper cuttings, records and photos) are combined with rare displays of original manuscripts such as Symphonic Variations for piano and orchestra as well as his first writing exercises, when he was a young pupil at the Conservatoire Royal de musique de Liège music academy.

César Franck (born in Liège in 1822, died in Paris in 1890), was one of the first pupils to attend the Conservatoire Royal de musique de Liège music academy. He was a child prodigy and press cuttings testify that he possessed, at the age of 11, incredible gifts as a pianist and composer.





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In 1837, he was admitted to the Conservatoire de Paris music academy

His many awards and his exceptional skills as a composer, pianist and organist attracted the attention of the musical world. He triumphed in the musical salons and became a protégé of Franz Liszt who saw him as a new Johann Sebastian Bach.

However, his discreet and self-effacing nature combined with family frustrations extinguished such ambitions. His tenure as organist for the grand Cavallé-Coll organs in the Sainte Clotilde Basilica (in 1858) allowed his improvisational and performing talents to help him establish himself as an exceptional master.

Absent from the music scene for more than 20 years, his genius reappeared in full maturity a few years after his appointment at the Conservatoire de Paris music academy (in 1871). His greatest masterpieces, which were to influence the history of French music, were composed during the last ten years of his life.

His Symphony in D minor (in 1889), the oratorio *Les Béatitudes* (in 1879), the *Three Chorales for Organ* (1890), *Symphonic Variations and Prelude, Chorale & fugue* (1885) for piano, are just a few examples of his rich and varied output that has gone down in history. The height of these works was the *Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano*, dedicated to his friend, the violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe, who played it throughout the world.

César Franck died accidentally on 8th December 1890.

STUDIO EUGÈNE YSAÏE AT THE GRAND CURTIUS

The Eugène Ysaÿe art nouveau studio, founded in Brussels by Serrurier-Bovy was entirely moved to Liège in 1977 and then set up in the Grand Curtius museum. Visitors enter the music room of the musician whose skill with the violin was the basis for the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition. The objects in the studio, the books and scores in his library as well as the style of the furniture inspired the composer. It was the place where the virtuoso's music resonated the most perfectly during his rehearsals.

His legendary generosity, his friendship and his admiration for César Franck led the latter to dedicate and offer to him, as a wedding gift, his "Sonata for piano and violin", which is one of the most frequently played works of this specific repertoire.

Eugène Ysaÿe (born in Liège in 1858, died in Brussels in 1931) was a genius violinist idolised around the world, who produced a brilliant and innovative synthesis of violin playing technique in his 6 sonatas for solo violin (1823-1824). Educated at the Conservatoire Royal de Liège music academy but also in Brussels with Henryk Wieniawski and at the Conservatoire de Paris music academy by Henri Vieuxtemps, at a very young age he played with Clara Schumann, took part in the Franz Liszt festival and was the first violin in the Konzerthaus orchestra in Berlin, which later went on to become the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Together with his masters, he was the founder of the Liège violin school.

His violin was a 1740 Guarnerius del Gesù, which went on to be owned by Isaac Stern.

In 1912, after years of triumphant tours, he was appointed 'music director of the Belgian Court' and musical advisor to the Belgian Queen. The competition created by the Queen, which was initially named the "Ysaÿe Competition", was renamed the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition in 1951.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

MUSEE GRETRY

34, Rue des Récollets, 4020 Liège, Belgium
Tel.: +32 (0)4343 1610 – +32 (0)4221 6817 – 6840
museum@liege.be

OPENING TIMES

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from 10.00 to 18.00
and by appointment from Tuesday to Thursday for schools Closed on 1/01
– 1/05 – 1, 2 and 11/11 – 25/12

ADMISSION PRICE

Adults: € 2.25

Seniors, groups, unemployed, Article 27 concessions: € 1.25 Family ticket:
€ 5

5 visit ticket: € 8.75

Free admission

- Free for people under 26 years of age
- On the 1st Sunday of the month for all
- For accompanied school groups based within the City of Liège urban area and for students from music academies.

Combined Grand Curtius + Musée Grétry

Adults: € 10

Seniors, groups, students, unemployed: € 6 Article 27 concessions: € 1.25
Family ticket: € 21

CURATOR

Patrick Dheur



GRAND CURTIUS



The Espace César Franck and the Studio Eugène Ysaÿe are set up among the permanent collections at the Grand Curtius museum.

You can discover them when you buy a ticket to visit the Grand Curtius museum.

The Grand Curtius museum is housed in an exceptional architectural complex made up of magnificently restored buildings from the 16th to 21st centuries.

The collections put the spotlight on the eventful history of Liège since its origins and are at the forefront of art history. Rich evidence of early civilisations,

masterpieces of medieval art, sculptures and baroque goldsmithery can be admired, not forgetting the glassware and weapons collections whose abundance makes the Grand Curtius one of the world's leading museums in these fields

136, Féronstrée, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

Until further notice, entry is only via No. 13 Quai de Maestricht.

Tel.: +32 (0)4221 6817 - info@grandcurtiusliege.be

OPENING TIMES

From Monday to Sunday: 10.00 to 18.00.

Closed on Tuesdays and on 1/01 – 1/05 – 1, 2 & 11/11 – 25/12

ADMISSION PRICE

Adults: € 9

Seniors, groups, unemployed: € 5 Article 27 concessions: € 1.25

Free for people under 26 years of age.

Free admission

- Free for people under 26 years of age.
- On the first Sunday of the month for all.

www.grandcurtius.be

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