

Strings



Evans-Pughe Strings of Hitchin Ltd

- Fine instruments & Bows
- Student instruments
- Commissions by:-
English, Italian makers
- Professional consultation
- Expert Repairs
- Restoration
- Bow Rehairs
- Excellent try-out facilities
- Extensive accessories
- Mail order welcome
- Old Instruments bought

**24 Bucklersbury, Hitchin,
Herts, England. SG5 1BG**
Tel: +44(0)1462-426012
Fax: +44(0)1462-426013
email: sales@strings.co.uk

Residential Music Courses

BENSLOW is a unique centre for the study and practice of music. Our programme offers over 100 courses a year catering for both the experienced and less experienced musician. We provide expert tuition from visiting professional musicians, many of them distinguished figures from the major educational establishments and international music world. Choose from day, weekend, midweek and weeklong courses including eight weeks of summer schools:

Choral and Solo Singing, Theory, Alexander Technique, Big Band, Recorder, Orchestras, Jazz, String Quartets, Saxophone, Harp, Baroque Opera, Solo and Ensemble Wind, Brass Ensembles, Keyboards and Piano

Send for a copy of our full brochure

BENSLOW MUSIC TRUST

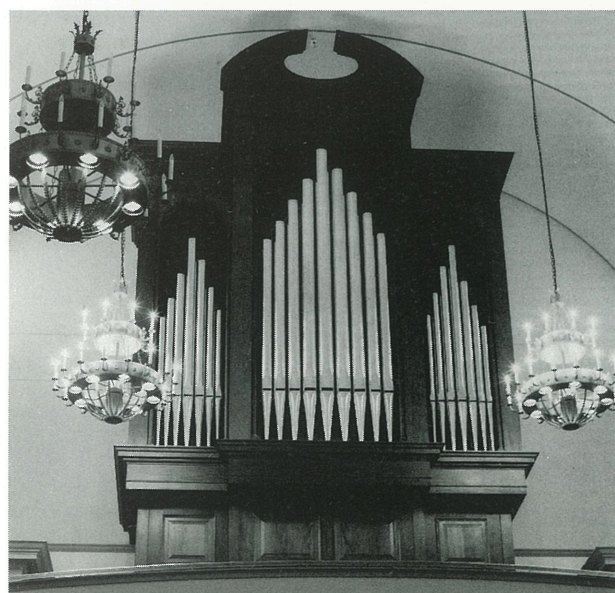
Little Benslow Hills, Off Benslow Lane,
Hitchin, Herts SG4 9RB

Tel: 01462 459446 Fax: 01462 440171

Registered Charity No. 313663

Supported by the proceeds of the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England

CHURCH OF ST. AGNES, NEW YORK CITY



Write or e-mail for a copy of our free brochure

E-Mail: ManderUK@mander-organs.com

MANDER ORGANS ST. PETER'S SQUARE LONDON E2 7AF TEL:0171 739 4747 FAX:0171 729 4718

On the 10th of December 1992, a disastrous fire razed St. Agnes RC on 42nd Street to the ground. With it went their somewhat altered Skinner organ.

Now, five years later, the construction of a new church is completed. Although some of the walls of the original church remained standing, a fine new building with Romanesque influences has been built for which we have installed an organ with appropriately designed casework.

It is a large two manual instrument of 31 stops designed to complement the architecture of the church. It is sited on the West gallery with a reversed, detached console of terraced design. The key action is mechanical, with electric drawstop action. It was first used for the Easter Vigil Service and dedicated with a Gala Recital by Gerre Hancock and Kent Tittle on the 5th of October.

INTRODUCTION

"As a composer Messiaen is enjoying at the moment a vogue, owing to the support of some whose approach to music is sensational rather than intellectual. Whether this will endure I very much doubt..." Musical history is littered with rash predictions of this kind, and this comment by an English critic in 1938, following the first performance of *La Nativité du Seigneur* in London, was particularly unfortunate.

In this ninetieth anniversary year, the music of Olivier Messiaen continues to inspire a devoted following among both performers and listeners, its radiant spirituality shining ever more brightly in an increasingly superficial and materialistic world.

Messiaen was born into a literary family in Avignon in 1908; his mother wrote poetry, and his father was an English teacher and translator of the complete works of Shakespeare. On the outbreak of war in 1914, Messiaen's mother took him to live with his grandmother in Grenoble, where he grew up in "a climate of poetry and fairy tales... such as enormously develops a child's imagination"; the dramatic landscape of the French Alps was to remain his spiritual home, and coloured much of his music in later life. In 1919 the family moved to Paris, and Messiaen entered the Conservatoire, at the tender age of ten; his studies were to continue for ten years, during which he obtained his *premiers prix* in a wide range of musical disciplines. He was much younger than most of the other students; in contemporary class photos he appears as an angelic child in round spectacles, with a far-away look in his eyes, clearly very much his own person, and already dreaming his own dreams. Marcel Dupré, the newly appointed Organ Professor, was unsure how to handle him, and approached Messiaen's father: "Sir, I have not had great experience as a teacher, and I cannot understand your son, though it is obvious he is gifted. Can you help me?" To which Messiaen père replied: "Of all the pupils I have had in twenty-five years of teaching, my son is the only one I cannot begin to comprehend!"

Soon after leaving the Conservatoire, Messiaen won the important post of organist at the church of La Trinité, becoming, at the age of twenty-two, the youngest *Organiste Titulaire* in France; he was to remain in this post for more than sixty years, the routine of weekly services providing the bedrock for an increasingly busy and celebrated career in the wider musical world. During the 1930s 'the young organist of La Trinité' began to make his mark with a number of orchestral and organ works of startling originality, but his progress was disrupted by the war, during which he spent a year imprisoned in a German internment camp in Silesia. After his release in 1941 he returned to Paris, and was appointed Professor of Harmony at the Conservatoire, where he was to remain as an inspiring and influential teacher until his retirement in 1978, taking on the Musical Analysis class in 1947, and then becoming Professor of Composition in 1966. And amid all this varied activity he composed – for organ, for piano, for voices, for orchestra – incessantly and prolifically, one major work following another in multi-coloured profusion.

hommage à messiaen

Cambridge Summer Recitals and Oundle International Festival are pleased to be joining resources to present this exciting festival, dedicated to Messiaen's music. Olivier Messiaen, who would have been ninety this year, is increasingly revered as a composer of great significance. Our *hommage* includes all his organ works, a major cycle he wrote for piano, and one of his orchestral scores.

We would like to thank our sponsors, and also gratefully acknowledge the help given by Stephen Cleobury, Director of Music at King's, who has aided and abetted our project with such enthusiasm.

May Messiaen's music, with its magical colours, ecstatic birdsongs, and resolute Christian foundation, inspire you as it reverberates within some of the finest buildings England can offer.

**Juliet Abrahamson, Cambridge Summer Recitals
James Parsons, Oundle International Festival**

The key to Messiaen's work, the *raison d'être* for all his music, was his Catholic faith: "The first idea that I have wished to express, the most important," he once said, "is the existence of the truths of the Catholic Faith... I was born a believer..." In the year of his seventieth birthday, he wrote this simple resumé of his philosophy of life and art: "Contemporary scientific research, advanced mathematics and biological

experiments have not saved us from uncertainty. On the contrary, they have only increased our ignorance, constantly providing evidence of new realities beneath what was previously believed to be true reality. In fact the only true reality is of a completely different order; it exists only in the domain of faith. It is only in the presence of God that we will understand it. But to do this we have to pass through death and resurrection – which means leaving our temporal world, taking a leap outside time. In some strange way, music can prepare us for this, as an image, as a reflection, as a symbol..."

The 'leap outside time' remained an explicit aim throughout his life, and the hypnotic, timeless effect of his music was produced by means of a carefully formulated range of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic devices; the disarming integrity of his artistic personality arose – as the critic quoted above clearly failed to realise – from a complete union of sensation and intellect. The basic forms of Western classical music all derive their inner vitality from processes of constant development and growth, tension and resolution; but Messiaen's music never grows or develops – it simply *is*.

One of the most significant aspects of his new language lay in the creation of symmetries. Melodic symmetry is created by abandoning the twin pillars of the traditional system, the tonic and the dominant, and relying instead on the tritone (C–F sharp), which creates a condition of perpetual stasis by dividing the octave into two equal and symmetrical halves. Melodic inspiration comes from a variety of

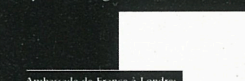
ancient and natural sources – the meditative, hieratic *ragas* of India, the flexible, rhapsodic melismas of Gregorian chant – and, of course, the songs of the birds, the supreme musicians of God's creation.

In the realm of harmony the old major and minor scales, which can be transposed twelve times without exact repetition, are abandoned in favour of a specially designed system of 'modes of limited transposition' whose internal symmetry makes possible only three or four transpositions, creating a closed, claustrophobic harmonic world where all sense of direction and forward movement has been destroyed. Harmony is no longer a functional element in a formal structure; it is now essentially a sophisticated medium of colour, intensified by Messiaen's love of stained-glass windows and his unusual ability to 'see' each harmony in terms of a particular colour. While most listeners cannot share this gift, we can all appreciate the evocative poetry of his descriptions of his 'coloured chords'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all those who have made this project possible by their support, which has been received in many forms: sponsorship, grant aid and help in kind.

The Williams School of Church Music inaugurated in 1971 according to the last will and testament of George Williams of the Bourne, Salisbury Avenue, Harpenden. The main object of the trust is to promote church choral singing and organ music. Since its inception the trustees have been able to award scholarships to both choral singers and organists. It has also offered financial assistance in the building of organs, in supporting choirs and in sponsoring concerts.



The Provost, Dean and Fellows of King's College The Master and Fellows of St John's College The Dean and Chapter of Ely Cathedral Chris Bagnall, Emma Chopourian, Stephen Cleobury, Stuart Curtis, David Gammie, José and Harold Hopkins, Heather Kilpatrick, Beck Laxton, Sarah Mpatzaganian, Patricia Ryan, Jeremy Sampson, Marijka Stephens-Keijzer, and all the CSR stewards: Linda Franklin, Scilla Hall, Charlotte Rendle-Short, Andy Laing, Alison Suter, Sheila Nightingale, Gabriele Reifenberg, Bruce Conochie, José Hopkins, Robert Stripe, Veronica Baker, and Alan & Audrey Kettley