

Finally, in the sphere of rhythm, which became increasingly important to Messiaen in the middle part of his career, symmetrical or palindromic rhythmic figures ("non-retrogradable rhythms") and other technical devices deriving from the metrical patterns of ancient India and Greece all combine to destroy traditional concepts of accent and stress, creating a kind of suspended animation, a completely new dynamic of tension and relaxation. The music is like a flowing river; it sparkles with light and is full of inner life, but there are no points of reference, no obvious beginnings and no obvious ends.



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SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER

West Road Concert Hall 8pm in association with CUMS

CUMS I with Paul Galluzzo violin
conducted by Stephen Cleobury & James Weeks

L'ASCENSION Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

- Majesté du Christ demandant sa gloire à son Père**
'Père, l'heure est venue, glorifie ton Fils, afin que ton Fils te glorifie.'
- Alléluias sereins d'une âme qui désire le ciel**
'Nous vous en supplions, ô Dieu... faites que nous habitions aux cieux en esprit.'
- Alléluia sur la trompette, alléluia sur la cymbale**
'Le Seigneur est monté au son de la trompette...'
'Nations, frappez toutes des mains; célébrez Dieu par les cries d'allégresse!'
- Prière du Christ montant vers son Père**
'Père... j'ai manifesté ton nom aux hommes... Voilà que je ne suis plus dans le monde; mais eux sont dans le monde, et moi je vais à toi.'

"In [Messiaen's] extreme adagios the possibility of eternity becomes actually present in the music"; "The eternal within the temporal"; "The immeasurable within the measured" – the resonant phrases of the distinguished critic Paul Griffiths seem to penetrate to the essence of Messiaen. Linear, goal-directed time and onward-driving harmonies seem subsumed or eradicated by exotic sonority, structures that circle but never approach, and a sense of musical time so vastly distended as to demand an almost meditative contemplation from the listener.

"Time", Messiaen once said, "is the strangest of God's creations, because it is totally opposed to the divine principle of eternity. For God is the alpha and the omega, without beginning and without end." This is the music of eternity; if we allow it to work its hypnotic magic, then time does – just for a moment – seem to stand still, and, whatever our own beliefs (or lack of them) we emerge stimulated and refreshed. For Messiaen was always clear about his primary aim: "I want to speak", he said, "from heart to heart." ■ **David Gammie**

All unattributed quotations in this programme are from Messiaen's writings

Attractive as this approach to Messiaen is, it is worth remembering that an early work such as *L'Ascension* (1933) displays a much less unified approach to musical composition. In this and other

early orchestral pieces, we see the young composer grappling with problems of humanity as well as divinity and revealing a fascinating glimpse of his roots in the French tradition of Ravel and Dukas.

L'Ascension is a series of symphonic meditations on the Ascension of Christ. The outer movements consider, or depict, Christ's prayer to his father as he stands on the mountain; the sense of impending eternity is strong in the first movement, scored only for wind, where bright diatonic harmonies stream like sun through cloud. The fourth movement, for muted divisi strings, acts as counterbalance, almost the answer of the first movement's prayer. The inner movements depict the Ascension as seen from earth. The second alternates a woodwind monody (with increasingly elaborate embellishments) with a rhapsodic, quasi-improvisatory passage for solo wind, which prefigures Messiaen's later fascination with birdcalls. The incessant quickening and slowing of tempo in this movement, however, suggests a human pulse – however rarefied – which comes to dominate the third movement,

JAMES WEEKS

James Weeks began his musical career as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, won music and academic scholarships to Winchester College, and came to Cambridge in 1997 as organ scholar of Queens' College. He is a keen exponent of mainstream repertoire, but his interests lie further towards the peripheries of the musical canon: medieval, early Renaissance and the late twentieth century, which he explores as a performer and composer.

An experienced organist, James accompanies regularly at many major British venues, holds the ARCO and gives frequent recitals in Cambridge and beyond. Since coming to Cambridge, he has founded the vocal New Josquin Ensemble and a contemporary music ensemble, both of which he directs regularly; he has also conducted the MagSoc Chorus.

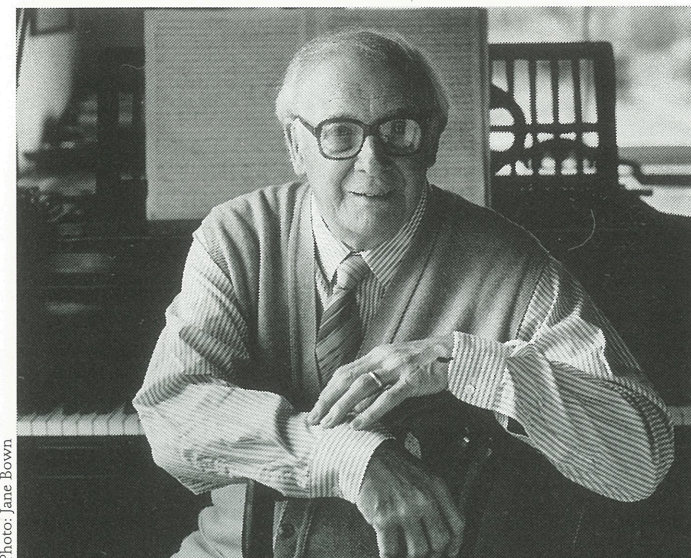


Photo: Jane Bown

ROBIN ORR

Few contemporary musicians can approach the rich variety of Robin Orr's life and work. A highland Scot, he has brought a distinctive Scottish flavour to an outstanding range of musical talents exercised over a long professional life in both Scotland and England. He was educated and trained at the Royal College of Music and at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he was organ scholar, and then in composition under Nadia Boulanger in Paris. From 1938 to 1951 he was organist and director of music at St John's College, Cambridge, except during the war, when he served as a flight lieutenant in photographic intelligence. In 1951 he returned to his native Scotland as Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow. In the nine years he was in Scotland he began to show the full range of his talents as composer, teacher and, more publicly, as impresario in the difficult world of grand opera – first with Carl Rosa and then, famously, as chairman of Scottish Opera which, under his direction, achieved national distinction. His academic career culminated in his return to Cambridge in 1965 as Professor of Music, one of Cambridge's oldest and most distinguished chairs, which he held for twelve productive years. With Sir Leslie Martin as architect, he was the driving force behind the design and building of the new premises for the University Music School in West Road. The concert hall that was the result of this partnership remains the finest building to be built in Cambridge since the war and Robin Orr deserves to have it named after him. However, despite his manifold gifts as a teacher and administrator and his public and academic honours, now, in his ninetieth year, he would wish to be remembered as a composer. Over the decades he has created a rich and varied corpus of work from church, chamber and symphonic works to incidental music for the stage. Above all he is the composer of three operas, of which the *Laird of Hermiston* with its Scottish subject is perhaps the best known.

Professor Frank Thistlethwaite

PAUL GALLUZZO

Paul Galluzzo, a third-year undergraduate, studies the violin with John Glickman in London. He began the violin at the age of three, and at six played his first concerto with an adult orchestra. Paul has played concertos with the Birmingham Conservatoire Junior School Orchestra and the Academy of St Phillips, Birmingham, and in the USA with the Kansas City Youth Symphony and the Overland Park Orchestra. Paul's involvement with the Cambridge University Orchestras follows the tradition set by his brother Eric, who was the leader of CUMS I for three years. Paul is now in his second year as leader of CUCO, and last February won the CUMS Concerto Competition. Paul is extremely grateful for the loan of the 1715 Daniel Parker violin on which he is playing tonight.

'Alléluia sur la trompette, alléluia sur la cymbale'. Two musical forces seem to conflict here: a static, declamatory music first heard on three trumpets, and a propulsive force generated initially by string figuration, which always threatens to turn the music into the brilliant Dukas-esque toccata it eventually becomes. The movement's sectional and eccentric structure can thus be seen as an awkward marriage of static blocks of material and more climactic motoring textures. The fascination of *L'Ascension* for its interpreters and listeners lies in the acknowledgement, not the resolution, of these oppositions in the score, both as a reflection of its subject and of the personality of its creator. ■ **James Weeks**
(See also the notes about the organ version of *L'Ascension* on page 4.)

THIRD SYMPHONY Robin Orr (born 1909)

Robin Orr's *Third Symphony*, which receives its English premiere this evening, was commissioned for the Llandaff Festival (Cardiff) in 1978 with funds provided by the Welsh Arts Council. The first performance was given by the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra conducted by Norman Del Mar, with live broadcast from Llandaff Cathedral. Subsequent performances included two by the Scottish National Orchestra, given by Sir Alexander Gibson in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh and the City Hall in Glasgow. He later conducted it with the Scottish Opera Orchestra at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama – an eightieth birthday celebration devoted entirely to Robin Orr's works.

Like his two earlier symphonies, this is a continuously developing work. The material is principally derived from two groups of notes: the first an ascending series – E F G A flat B flat C and D; the second C A B D G and E. There are five main sections. The first, *alla marcia*, offers a brassy opening with references to the first group of notes and leads to a fugal episode culminating in a broad, noble horn tune based on the second group. The second section, *molto moderato*, is a peaceful and lyrical development, featuring oboe with decorative accompaniment on the celeste. The third *allegro* section is largely in 7/8 time. Further lively development of previous material makes up the

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Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs*
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Stuart MacIntyre baritone
Stephen Cleobury conductor
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Respighi *Pines of Rome*
Debussy *Première Rhapsodie*
Sibelius *Second Symphony*
Sara Temple clarinet
Oliver Gooch & Adrian Kelly conductors
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CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Monday 21 December
Royal Albert Hall
King's College Choir, CUMS Chorus,
Philharmonia Orchestra
Verdi *Te Deum* & Seasonal Music

STEPHEN CLEOBURY

As Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge, and chief conductor of the BBC Singers, Stephen Cleobury is associated with two of Britain's outstanding choirs. He retains a strong commitment to the organ, often giving recitals, and has made a number of recordings. He was for ten years honorary secretary of the Royal College of Organists, followed by two years as President. He is also conductor of the orchestra and chorus of the Cambridge University Musical Society.