

**2016**  
SEASON



**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**

The Lowy Chair of

Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



**FROM THE CANYONS  
TO THE STARS**

APT MASTER SERIES

**Wednesday 9 March 8pm**

**Friday 11 March 8pm**

**Saturday 12 March 8pm**



Principal Partner



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**Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**  
*An evening of jazz standards*

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Wynton Marsalis trumpet  
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

**Wynton Marsalis's Swing Symphony**

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**Fri 26 Feb 8pm**  
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MARSALIS Swing Symphony **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

David Robertson conductor  
Wynton Marsalis trumpet • Francesco Celata clarinet  
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra



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*Her Story Continues*

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**Thu 3 Mar 1.30pm**  
Emirates Metro Series  
**Fri 4 Mar 8pm**

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Scheherazade  
ADAMS Scheherazade.2 – Dramatic Symphony for violin and orchestra **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**

David Robertson conductor  
Leila Josefowicz violin



**From the Canyons to the Stars**

APT Master Series  
**Wed 9 Mar 8pm**  
**Fri 11 Mar 8pm**  
**Sat 12 Mar 8pm**

MESSIAEN Des canyons aux étoiles  
[From the Canyons to the Stars]  
with visual production by Deborah O'Grady

David Robertson conductor  
Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano  
Robert Johnson horn • Rebecca Lagos xyloimba  
Timothy Constable glockenspiel



**Crossing the Threshold**

SSO at Carriageworks  
**Sun 13 Mar 5pm**  
Bay 17, Carriageworks

BOULEZ Dérive 1  
DEAN Pastoral Symphony  
ILLEAN New Work Premiere  
GRISEY 4 Songs for Crossing the Threshold

David Robertson conductor • Jessica Aszodi soprano  
Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano



**Pierre-Laurent Aimard in Recital**

International Pianists In Recital  
Presented by Theme & Variations  
**Mon 14 Mar 7pm**

MESSIAEN Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus  
[20 Contemplations of the Christ Child]

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Principal Partner



# WELCOME



**Welcome to tonight's concert in the APT Master Series – a very special evening of music-making that is sure to leave you with vivid memories.**

Tonight Chief Conductor David Robertson brings us Olivier Messiaen's *From the Canyons to the Stars...* in a remarkable collaboration with the photographer Deborah O'Grady. The collaboration – which was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in partnership with the St Louis Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and others – was premiered just weeks ago and now receives its first Australian performances.

We are promised a spectacular, moving and immersive experience as Deborah O'Grady's vision complements Messiaen's music. Tonight's performance will take you to the great canyons of Utah in your imagination, and if it inspires the urge to see these landscapes in person, we offer a Luxury Land Journey that takes in Bryce Canyon as well as the Grand Canyon.

Tonight will be unique – extraordinary music and extraordinary images will set it apart from the 'typical' orchestral concert. In the same way, APT's unique spirit sets us apart from other tour operators. Whether you choose to cruise the iconic rivers of the world in luxury, explore incredible landscapes by land or sail the globe on one of our small ships, with APT you're ensured an unforgettable journey – and many vivid memories to treasure.

Thank you for joining us for this special performance – we hope you enjoy the concert!



**Geoff McGeary OAM**  
APT Company Owner



**sydney symphony  
orchestra**

**David Robertson**  
Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

**APT MASTER SERIES**

WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH, 8PM

FRIDAY 11 MARCH, 8PM

SATURDAY 12 MARCH, 8PM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL

# FROM THE CANYONS TO THE STARS

**David Robertson** *conductor*

**Pierre-Laurent Aimard** *piano*

**Robert Johnson** *horn*

**Rebecca Lagos** *xylorimba*

**Timothy Constable** *glockenspiel*

**OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908–1992)**

*Des Canyons aux étoiles...*

**(From the Canyons to the Stars...)**

**with visual production by Deborah O'Grady**

**PART ONE**

- I. *Le Désert* (The Desert)
- II. *Les Orioles* (The Orioles)
- III. *Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles...*  
(What is written in the stars...)
- IV. *Le Cossyphé d'Heuglin* (The White-Browed Robin-Chat)
- V. *Cedar Breaks et le Don de Crainte*  
(Cedar Breaks and the Gift of Awe)

**PART TWO**

- VI. *Appel interstellaire* (Interstellar Call)
- VII. *Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange*  
(Bryce Canyon and the Red-Orange Rocks)

**PART THREE**

- VIII. *Les Ressuscités et le chant de l'étoile Aldébaran*  
(The Resurrected and the Song of the Star Aldebaran)
- IX. *Le Moqueur polyglotte* (The Mockingbird)
- X. *La Grive des bois* (The Wood Thrush)
- XI. *Omao, Leiothrix, Elepaio, Shama*  
(Hawaiian Thrush, Old World Babbler,  
Monarch Flycatcher, Magpie-Robin)
- XII. *Zion Park et la Cité céleste*  
(Zion Park and the Celestial City)



**92.9 ABC**  
Classic FM

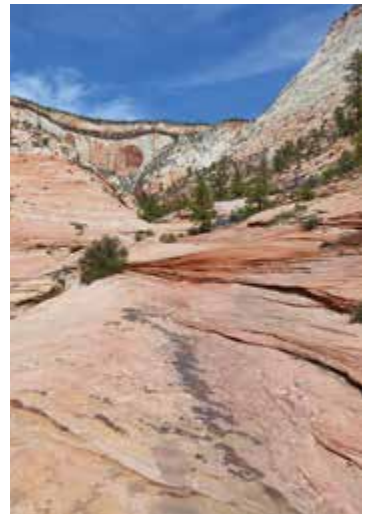
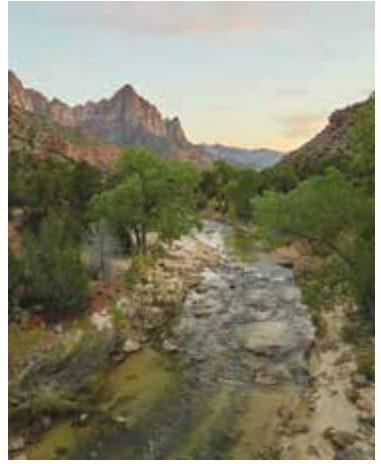
Saturday's performance will be recorded by ABC Classic FM for broadcast across Australia on Saturday 2 April at 1pm.

**Tonight's pre-concert talk, presented by David Robertson with Deborah O'Grady and musicians of the SSO, will take place in the Concert Hall, beginning at 7.15pm. General admission: please take a seat in the Stalls. You will be able to move to your ticketed seat before the concert begins.**

Estimated duration: 95 minutes, performed without interval  
The concert will conclude at approximately 9.45pm



Principal Partner



Photographs from tonight's project, showing (clockwise from top left): Bryce Canyon, Virgin River in Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon with the striking 'Sinking Ship' formation in the distance, slickrock in Zion National Park, and Cedar Breaks (Deborah O'Grady © 2014)

# From the Canyons to the Stars

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David Robertson's programming for the SSO has long revealed an enthusiasm – and a sure touch – for making connections. 'When we bridge the apparent between contrasting ways of experiencing the world around us,' he says, 'the results are frequently inspiring.' Those connections often emerge between musical works in a concert. Even more strikingly, they can emerge in collaborations between art forms: between music and visual art, moving image, theatre and dance.

The distinctiveness of Messiaen's influences and personal enthusiasms resulted in a unique sound world – touched by landscape, colour, birdsong and a stargazing faith. Nowhere is that more apparent than in *Des Canyons au étoiles...* (From the Canyons to the Stars...) where, as one critic writes, the tone-painting is 'geological, ornithological and astronomical'.

In the case of *Des Canyons...* the inspiration is grounded in a particular location: the awe-inspiring landscapes of Utah. David Robertson has conducted this piece on many occasions and all over the world. And, he says, 'I've always felt that I have to explain what these places look like – how majestic and awe-inspiring they are – because that's key to understanding the sound world Messiaen has created.'

The production that you experience tonight, therefore, represents the fulfilment of a long-held ambition: to present this music in a context that will allow us to experience something of Messiaen's inspiration and the 'gift of awe'.

We've achieved this through the immersive and powerful work of photographer Deborah O'Grady – a photographer, says Robertson, 'with a marvellous eye and a musical ear'. Reporting on the recent performance in Los Angeles, Alex Ross wrote: 'As towers of rock loomed on a screen behind the orchestra, O'Grady created the mirage of a performance in the canyons themselves.'

Now the mirage comes to the Sydney Opera House. Arriving here tonight, your eyes may have been drawn up to Utzon's splendid sails and the Sydney sky. Now in the Concert Hall you can – just as Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod did in 1973 – gaze into the depths of the rock formations and up into the heavens. From the Canyons to the Stars.

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## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### Olivier Messiaen

#### *Des Canyons aux étoiles...*

#### **(From the Canyons to the Stars...)**

for piano solo, horn, xyloimba, glockenspiel  
and orchestra

**Pierre-Laurent Aimard** *piano*

**Robert Johnson** *horn*

**Rebecca Lagos** *xyloimba*

**Timothy Constable** *glockenspiel*

with visual production by Deborah O'Grady

*Des Canyons aux Etoiles...* is a 12-movement work for piano and orchestra. Olivier Messiaen glossed his title thus:

*From the Canyons to the Stars – that is to say, ascending from the canyons up to the stars – and higher, up to the Resurrected in Heaven – to glorify God in all his creation: the beauties of the earth (its rocks, its bird songs), the beauties of the physical sky, the beauties of the spiritual sky. Consequently, it is first of all a religious work, a work of praise and of contemplation. It is also a geological and astronomical work; a work of colour-sound, where all the colours of the rainbow revolve around the blue of the Steller's Jay and the red of Bryce Canyon. The bird songs are foremost those from Utah and the Hawaiian Islands. Zion Park and the star Aldebaran are here as symbols of the sky.*



### Keynotes

#### MESSIAEN

*Born Avignon, 1908*

*Died Paris, 1992*

Composer, organist and teacher, Olivier Messiaen was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. An early influence was Debussy, as well as Stravinsky and Bartók, but he quickly developed a distinctive harmonic style based on a system of invented modes. Other influences included the French organ tradition and his profound Catholic faith. His most popular orchestral work is the *Turangalila-symphonie*, famous for its use of the Ondes Martenot. He was also an ornithologist and many of his works, including *From the Canyons to the Stars...*, are filled with birdsongs he had notated in the wild.

#### DES CANYONS AUX ÉTOILES...

*Des Canyons aux étoiles...* was commissioned to celebrate the bicentenary of the USA. Messiaen took inspiration from the canyons of Utah, photographs of which prompted him to visit in person in 1973. There with his second wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod, he recorded the birdsongs and photographed the striking colours and formations of the landscape, viewing them from on high and from the trails below. This, he explained, provided the title: 'one progresses from the deepest bowels of the earth and ascends toward the stars.' The music is in 12 movements, divided into three parts (1–5, 6–7, 8–12). The sixth movement (*Interstellar Call*) is for horn alone, and two movements are for solo piano (4 and 9).

With Messiaen it is always best to begin with his own words – he had a scholastic reverence for precision of definition, and all his lifelong concerns as a man and musician are here: God first of all, for the devoutly Catholic composer, then his creation: birds as the original musicians, and colours perceived both in nature and in ‘colour-sound’ – colour seen as music is heard. The only major omission is rhythm, and this is implicit as Messiaen goes on to describe the ‘very complex percussion section...which includes two unusual instruments: the *eoliphone* (the sound of the wind) and the *géophone* (the sound of the earth, sand-machine)’.

In 1988 Messiaen nursed the geophone (an invention of his – a kind of drum filled with sand) on the long flight bringing him from France to Australia for the first and only time. With him was Yvonne Loriod, his second wife and the astonishing master pianist for whom the solo part in *From the Canyons to the Stars...* was written – one of the longest and most demanding in the whole repertoire for piano with orchestra. With the Australian Chamber Orchestra (including tonight’s xylorimba soloist as a section player), Yvonne Loriod, playing from memory, gave performances in Canberra, Brisbane and Sydney, the last producing what Messiaen himself called a miracle – a term he did not use lightly – when the trombones’ music was left behind in Brisbane and the players had to read their parts (miraculously accurately) from Messiaen’s own copy of the full score.

*Des Canyons aux étoiles...* was completed in 1974, the result of a commission to celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States of America. Messiaen owned a book called *Wonders of the World*, and its description of the canyons of Utah made him decide to go there to see them for himself. The contemplation of nature which leads Messiaen naturally to contemplate God takes its starting point in this part of America.

Messiaen also mentions 57 separate bird species whose songs he has used in this composition. Most of these he had heard ‘live’, but he included, in the ninth movement (*The Mockingbird*), several Australian birds: the Golden Whistler, the Superb Lyrebird, the White-backed Magpie, the Prince Albert Lyrebird and the Grey Thrush. The major highlight of his visit to this country was hearing our birds in the bush. In his orchestral work *Eclairs sur l’Au-delà...* [c.1987–1991] – Messiaen’s last major composition, written after his trip to Australia – he includes more Australian birds, notably the kookaburra.

*Des Canyons aux étoiles...* is a vast but balanced structure, lasting 90 minutes in performance, and held together by the piano which plays in all but one of the movements, and has two entirely to itself.

...the solo part is one of the longest and most demanding in the whole repertoire for piano with orchestra.

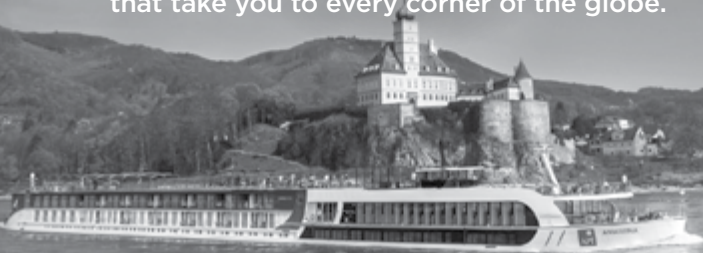




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## PART 1

### **I. *The Desert.***

The horn theme evokes the peace of this emptiness which symbolises the soul's readiness to perceive the inner conversation of the Spirit. The eoliphone recalls the wind that sometimes blows there, and the high instruments sound a bird heard among silence: the Bifaciated Lark.

### **II. *The Orioles***

Yvonne Loriod's surname means 'Oriole' in French. Five types of Oriole heard in the western United States are heard here, all excellent singers. Messiaen's resourcefulness in exploiting his orchestra of 43 players for all the varied attacks and colours of which the instruments are capable, begins to be obvious.

### **III. *What is Written in the Stars***

The 'faticid' words from the Book of Daniel 'ME'NE, TE'KEL, U-PHARSIN', the numbering, weighing, and the division of the kingdom, suggest to Messiaen a language of quantity, weight and measure, translated into musical language – an alphabet of sounds and durations accompanied by unchanging harmonies. A chorale for brass is interrupted by bird songs. The sound of the geophone is also heard.

### **IV. *The White-Browed Robin***

For piano solo – the varied song of a single bird, from south-east Africa, which enables Messiaen to write for a 'bird-piano which is at the same time an orchestra-piano'.

### **V. *Cedar Breaks and the Gift of Awe***

Cedar Breaks, writes Messiaen, is a vast amphitheatre sliding down towards an abyss with walls, turrets and columns of orange, yellow, brown and red rocks: colours the music seeks to reproduce, especially in the massive theme of the orange-red rocks, played by woodwind and brass. The wind blows violently. The bird songs are especially those of the vivid blue Steller's Jay and the Scott's Oriole.

## PART 2

### **VI. *Interstellar Call***

This solo for the French horn alone, using an extraordinary range of effects, is a sometimes heart-rending call into space – the silences are an answer of adoration.

### **VII. *Bryce Canyon and the Orange-Red Rocks***

Bryce Canyon is, says Messiaen, the greatest wonder of Utah, a forest of petrified stone and sand with fantastic coloured formations, reminding him of the colours of the celestial city (the New Jerusalem) described in the Book of Revelation (21:19–20). Again the Steller's Jay (in the brass) and Scott's Oriole (in the piano) are heard. The colours are achieved by Messiaen's superimpositions of modal harmonies each with its colour equivalents.

## PART 3

### **VIII. *The Resurrected and the Song of the Star Aldebaran***

The singing of the stars is a long phrase for the strings, whose transposed modes give 'an overall blue sonority'. Birds are heard in counterpoint. Messiaen took as his text verses from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (15:41–42) in which the difference of one star from another in glory is compared to the difference of the earthly body to the resurrected body.

### **IX. *The Mockingbird***

The most famous bird of the United States goes through its repertoire in an extensive piano solo, joined later by a group of Australian birds which add their melodic and harmonic colours to the Mockingbird's repetitions.

### **X. *The Wood Thrush***

This bird is reddish, with a white chest spotted with black, its song a major arpeggio (in C major), followed by a deeper rustling sound. For Messiaen this stands for the archetype God intended for us in his predestination, 'which we more or less misrepresent in the course of our worldly life' and which is fully realised only after Resurrection. Finally the theme becomes simple: 'the new name is engraved on the stone, the eternal model is rediscovered.'

### **XI. *Omao, Leiothrix, Elepaio, Shama***

These are birds of the Hawaiian Islands. There is a refrain, played by the horns, and the songs of 13 different birds fill the verses. After the third hearing of the refrain, the strings' counterpoints are in three of the Hindu rhythms of which Messiaen made a deep study.

### **XII. *Zion Park and the Celestial City***

'Those who discovered the pink, white, mauve, red, black walls, the green trees and limpid river of Zion Park (Utah) looked on it as a symbol of Paradise...I did as they did.' The elements of this final movement are a chorale for the brass, in grey and gold, blue and green; a carillon; and bird songs Messiaen heard in the western United States, and particularly at Zion Park. 'With an A major chord from the strings, as immutable as Eternity, the chime bells bring their resonance along with final joy.'

DAVID GARRETT © 2005

In addition to the solo piano, *Des Canyons aux étoiles...* calls for two flutes, piccolo, alto flute, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon; two horns, three trumpets and three trombones; a large percussion section including the featured xyloimba and glockenspiel; and a small string section of six violins, three violas, three cellos and double bass. A note in the score says that 'all the woodwinds have difficult parts' as do the two featured percussion parts, and that the solo piano part is 'très difficile'!

*Des Canyons aux étoiles* was commissioned by Miss Alice Tully and first performed on 20 November 1974 in Alice Tully Hall in the Lincoln Center, New York. Yvonne Loriod played the piano part and the Musica Aeterna Orchestra was directed by Frederic Waldman. The Australian premiere was in 1988 in the presence of the composer. The Australian Chamber Orchestra was conducted by Marc Soustrot, with soloists Yvonne Loriod, Hector McDonald (horn), Michael Askill (xyloimba) and Graeme Leak (glockenspiel). The ensemble included musicians performing with us tonight: Kirsten Williams, Paul Goodchild and Rebecca Lagos. The SSO first performed *Des Canyons...* in 2005 at the Sydney Conservatorium, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw with Michael Kieran Harvey (piano), Robert Johnson (horn), Rebecca Lagos (xyloimba) and Colin Piper (glockenspiel).

## MORE MUSIC

### MESSIAEN

Among the single releases of Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux étoiles...* is the recording made in 2001 by Myung-Whun Chung and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. The piano soloist is Roger Muraro, a student of Yvonne Loriod.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 471 6172

Alternatively, if you're keen to discover more of Messiaen's music you, you can find the above recording in a 10-CD Collectors Edition, *Messiaen Orchestral Works: Pierre Boulez, Myung Whun Chung*. You'll find the *Turangalila-symphonie* and Messiaen's last major work *Éclairs sur l'au-delà* (in which he quotes the kookaburra), as well as smaller pieces. Also in the set is Pierre-Laurent Aimard's performance of *Réveil des oiseaux*.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 0114

Or look for the recording featuring Yvonne Loriod, the pianist for whom Messiaen wrote the solo part and Pierre-Laurent Aimard's teacher. Marius Constant conducts the Ars Nova Ensemble of the ORTF. Find it in the iTunes Store or reissued in the 18-CD *Messiaen Edition* from Warner.

WARNER CLASSICS 62162

The year Messiaen visited Australia, 1988, was also his 80th birthday, and the celebratory concert presented by the Ensemble Intercontemporain and Pierre Boulez was recorded as *Hommage à Messiaen*. Yvonne Loriod is the pianist in *7 Haikai, Couleurs de la cité céleste, Un vitrail et des oiseaux* and *Oiseaux exotiques*.

NAIVE 82131

### AIMARD PLAYS MESSIAEN

Pierre-Laurent Aimard's *Hommage à Messiaen*, released in 2008, the Messiaen centenary, is an affectionate tribute to a composer with whom Aimard has a close connection. For this program he chose the 8 Préludes, two movements from the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* and two of the études.

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 477 7452

In 1999 Aimard recorded *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* for Teldec. The original release is out of print, but you can find it in the 6-CD set *Pierre-Laurent Aimard: The Warner Recordings*, together with signature performances of music by Debussy, Ravel, Boulez, Berg, Ives, Ligeti and Carter.

WARNER CLASSICS 256 466 0448

### MORE SYDNEY CONCERTS

#### Crossing the Threshold

Pierre-Laurent Aimard joins musicians of the SSO for  
BOULEZ Dérive 1  
With music by Illean, Grisey and Dean  
SUN 13 MAR, 5pm  
Bay 17, Carriageworks

#### Pierre-Laurent Aimard in Recital

MESSIAEN *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*  
(20 Contemplations of the Christ Child)  
MON 14 MAR, 7pm  
City Recital Hall Angel Place  
[sydneysymphony.com](http://sydneysymphony.com)

## Broadcast Diary

### March–April



92.9 ABC  
Classic FM

[abc.net.au/classic](http://abc.net.au/classic)

Thursday 17 March, 8pm

#### LERIDA'S PLAYLIST

**Andrew Haveron** violin-director

**Lerida Delbridge** violin

including *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams

Saturday 2 April, 1pm

#### FROM THE CANYONS TO THE STARS

*See this program for details.*

### SSO Radio

Selected SSO performances, as recorded by the ABC, are available on demand:

[sydneysymphony.com/SSO\\_radio](http://sydneysymphony.com/SSO_radio)



#### SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOUR

Tuesday 12 April, 6pm

Musicians and staff of the SSO talk about the life of the orchestra and forthcoming concerts.

Hosted by Andrew Bukenya.

[finemusicfm.com](http://finemusicfm.com)

# ABOUT THIS PROJECT

## Creating a Visual Symphony

When invited by David Robertson to create images to accompany performances of Olivier Messiaen's monumental symphonic work *Des Canyons aux étoiles...*, I was intrigued by the possibility of exploring the language of landscape imagery in conjunction with the emotional power of music. Messiaen composed this work to celebrate the magnificent landscapes of south-western Utah as well as the bicentennial of the United States, with the idea of including the geology, birds, colours and biblical associations of the landscape in his musical language. This production takes that music as the starting point and returns to the landscapes of inspiration, presenting them as a staging that encloses the orchestra within a halo of coloured lights and a backdrop of scenes from these landscapes that move and interact with the music.

DEBORAH O'GRADY

### Background

Olivier Messiaen's magnificent *Des Canyons aux étoiles...*, composed at the request of Alice Tully to commemorate the Bicentennial of the United States, is a monumental work in every sense of the word. Ninety minutes in length, divided into 12 movements, it celebrates the magnificent beauty of Utah's south-western canyon lands, specifically Bryce Canyon and Zion Canyon National Parks and Cedar Breaks National Monument. Messiaen said of Bryce Canyon: 'I searched in my library and found in an art book the most beautiful thing in the United States: Bryce Canyon in Utah. I said to my wife, "We must go to Bryce Canyon!"' The Messiaens made their visit in April–May 1972. During that time, they carefully documented the birds and their songs, and took extensive notes and photographs of the colourful canyon walls.

Although Messiaen did not have the traditional form of synaesthesia where one sees colours related to specific musical tones, he did experience specific relationships between colours and musical harmonies and timbres. Thus, he could interpret his visions of '...those formidable rocks tinted with all possible shades of red, orange, and violet, those amazing formations created by erosion: the shapes of castles, towers, bridges, windows, columns!' in musical terms. His stated aim was to 'compose a geological work, in tribute to the canyons. I also wanted to do a coloured work. You know the importance I attach to the relationship of sound and colour, and with this subject I was at home; I had red-orange rocks I was able to translate

**'I searched in my library  
and found in an art  
book the most beautiful  
thing in the United  
States...'**

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

into my chords and orchestration.' From these colourful canyons to the beauty of the night sky, Messiaen's work is infused with his deep spirituality, his recognition of the true sublime in the Creation, and his disciplined, unique musical voice.

## The Project

David Robertson knows these canyons well, having explored them extensively in his youth. As the former Music Director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris, he also knew Olivier Messiaen well. It had long been his wish to commission a visual production to accompany performances of *Des Canyons aux étoiles*... With the centenary of the United States National Parks Service in 2016, this project seemed the ideal way to celebrate a great American Institution and fulfil his wish to perform this 20th-century classic in a visually compelling production.

## The Artistic Challenge

The aim was to create a visual symphony that echoes the musical language with images corresponding to the places and colours referred to in the score. Musicologist Paul Griffiths states that the 12 movements of *Des Canyons*: 'complete a tour not only of the sights and sounds of Utah, but a tour indeed from the canyons to the stars. It begins in a chromatic desert and it ends in the gloriously diatonic celestial city, but it is not otherwise a sequential journey, not a pilgrim's progress: such would have been unthinkable given Messiaen's predilection for a sense of time that slows, stops, rotates and turns back on itself.'

This visual production of *Des Canyons* aspires to meet the music with an approach similar to the music itself. It combines Deborah O'Grady's deep appreciation of Messiaen's music with the towering landscapes of Utah's red rock canyons, and uses still and video photography, other extended visual techniques, and stage lighting, designed to create an integrated stage picture that embraces the orchestra within the projected landscape. Like the music, this is not a sequential journey or travelogue slide show of Utah's canyons. Rather, it explores the visual material referenced by the music in ways similar to Messiaen's own compositional techniques, transitioning from the literal to the abstract, from details to vast horizons, from the canyons to the stars.

**'Having conducted performances of *Canyons* all over Europe and America, I became aware of how the beauty Messiaen evokes so perfectly is missed by those who have no visual experience of these incredible natural monuments. While verbal explanation can help, nothing can convey the majesty and wonder of Olivier's inspiration more than images which allow one to enjoy the music's unique splendour. Deborah's eye for the intensity of this landscape makes her the perfect choice.'**

DAVID ROBERTSON

## Realising the Vision

Before the premiere of this production in St Louis, Deborah O'Grady spoke with St Louis Symphony annotator Eddie Silva, explaining:

The images are set to Messiaen's music like choreography and translation: 'Choreography: having something that moves and interacts with the music visually. Translation: he went to a place and experienced it with all his senses. And he left that place and he took those experiences and put them into the music – he translated his experiences through the music... I felt I was going back through the music and bringing it back into the visual world.'

Although Deborah O'Grady has worked primarily as a landscape photographer, for *Des Canyons aux étoiles...* she felt the need to expand and compress time, in the same way Messiaen's music seems to, and so made use of video. Some still photography is retained, although it is rarely still in the auditorium, even as the video images appear sometimes stationary, with barely perceptible motion.

This production was developed with the official permission of the Olivier Messiaen Estate/ Fondation de France. It was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, St Louis Symphony, Cal Performances (UC Berkeley), Washington Performing Arts Society and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. It was premiered by the St Louis Symphony, conducted by David Robertson, on 16 January 2016.

New in 2016

# Playlist

*New to classical music and want to know more?*

Playlist is your perfect introduction to classical music – a one-hour informal concert where a member of the SSO curates a unique program – their Playlist – of music that has inspired them and shaped their life. Join us at the bar and meet the musicians after every concert!



LERIDA DELBRIDGE Assistant Concertmaster

### Lerida's Playlist

Tue 15 Mar | 6.30pm

Music by **Mendelssohn, Fauré, Copland, Mahler** and **Bach**, and including **Vaughan Williams** The Lark Ascending

**Andrew Haveron** violin-director  
**Lerida Delbridge** violin



RICHARD MILLER Principal Timpani

### Rick's Playlist

Tue 24 May | 6.30pm

Music by **JS Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Elgar** and **Stravinsky**, and including **WAGNER** Good Friday Music from *Parsifal*

**Brett Weymark** conductor



ALEXANDRE OGOUEY Principal Cor Anglais

### Alexandre's Playlist

Tue 1 Nov | 6.30pm

Music by **Bach, Haydn, Martin, Schoenberg** and **Schubert**, and including **RAVEL** Mother Goose: The Enchanted Garden

**Toby Thatcher** conductor

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



### Deborah O'Grady

---

Deborah O'Grady is a fine art photographer with exhibitions and commissions from Stockholm to Buenos Aires and Washington DC to California. She has collaborated extensively with orchestras, including with the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Left Coast/West Coast Festival, where her work illuminated the interior of Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall. She is an especially musically sensitive visual artist. Not only is she a huge admirer of Messiaen, but also, before photography, she trained in composition. She is also interested in the psychological aspects of landscape.

Her career in photography, spanning three decades, centres around the landscapes of the western United States. Key projects – often linking image and text – have included: *Talking Lake*, which placed photographs within a rich sound installation by composer Mark Grey; *crossings/fragments* weaves the scanned letters of pioneer settler Susanna Roberts Townsend (grids of 'crossing' script adopted as a paper-saving technique) and scans of the ethnographic transcriptions of the Pomo myths collected by S.A. Barrett into the landscapes; and *dreaming coyote, dreaming the world*, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic

for projection in the concert hall foyers, tells the story of the creation of Clear Lake through images of dawn and the story of Coyote traveling to the east and stealing the sun.

Her territory expanded to include the Navajo Nation and the Four Corners area of Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico in the video montage commissioned for Grey's *Enemy Slayer – A Navajo Oratorio* (Phoenix Symphony), and in *Code Talker Stories*, a book of oral histories and portraits of the World War II Navajo Marines whose native language was used to create an unbreakable code that aided in the defeat of the Japanese at the close of the war.

Deborah O'Grady's work has been seen in museums, galleries, collections and concert halls worldwide. In addition to the LA Philharmonic and Phoenix Symphony, she has also been commissioned by the Berkeley Symphony (*Bitter Harvest*).

With John Meyer, Helen Meyer and Pierre Germain of Meyer Sound Labs, and architect Marci Li Wong, Deborah O'Grady is co-creator of the patented Libra Acoustic Image System – designed to beautify the aural and visual environment of public spaces.

### Production Credits

**Deborah O'Grady** *Photographer, Director*  
Seth Reiser *Scenic and Lighting Designer*  
([www.sethreiserdesign.com](http://www.sethreiserdesign.com))  
Adam Larsen *Video Design Consultant*

Jon Else *Cinematography,*  
*Time Lapse Photography*  
Cath Brittan *Production Manager*  
Laura Daniel *Head of Production [SSO]*





MICHAEL TAMMARO

## David Robertson

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

---

David Robertson is a compelling and passionate communicator whose stimulating ideas and music-making have captivated audiences and musicians alike. A consummate musician and masterful programmer, he has forged strong relationships with major orchestras throughout Europe and North America.

He made his Australian debut with the SSO in 2003 and soon became a regular visitor to Sydney, with projects such as *The Colour of Time*, a conceptual multimedia concert; the Australian premiere of John Adams' *Doctor Atomic Symphony*; and concert performances of *The Flying Dutchman* with video projections. In 2014, his inaugural season as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, he led the SSO on a seven-city tour of China.

Last year he launched his tenth season as Music Director of the St Louis Symphony. Other titled posts have included Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon and resident conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. An expert in 20th- and 21st-century music, he has also been Music Director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris (where composer and conductor Pierre Boulez was an early supporter). He is also a champion of young musicians, devoting time to working with students and young artists.

David Robertson is a frequent guest with major orchestras and opera houses throughout the world and in recent seasons he has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2014 he conducted the controversial but highly acclaimed Metropolitan Opera premiere of John Adams' *Death of Klinghoffer*.

His awards and accolades include Musical America Conductor of the Year (2000), Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and, with the SLSO, the 2005–06 ASCAP Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2011 a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

David Robertson was born in Santa Monica, California, and educated at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied French horn and composition before turning to conducting. He is married to pianist Orli Shaham.

*The position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director is also supported by Principal Partner Emirates.*



MARCO BORGREVE / DG

## Pierre-Laurent Aimard

*piano*

---

Pierre-Laurent Aimard is widely acclaimed as a key figure in the music of our time and as a uniquely significant interpreter of piano repertoire from every age. He regularly performs throughout the world with major orchestras and conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Jurowski, Peter Eötvös, Simon Rattle and Riccardo Chailly, and his residency invitations include projects at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, Wiener Konzerthaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Lucerne Festival, Mozarteum Salzburg, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Tanglewood Festival and London's Southbank Centre. He is also the Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival.

In the 2015–16 season he is Artist-in-Residence with Wiener Symphoniker, performing all the Beethoven piano concertos under the baton of Philippe Jordan. He also performed in a major Stockhausen projects for Musica Viva in Munich, followed by concerts in Paris and Amsterdam, and a performance of Lachenmann's *Ausklang* in Luxembourg. Other highlights include solo recitals in Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Tokyo and London.

Born in Lyon in 1957, Pierre-Laurent Aimard studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Yvonne Loriod and in London with Maria Curcio. He won the 1973 Messiaen Competition at the age of 16, and three years later Pierre Boulez appointed him as Ensemble Intercontemporain's first solo pianist.

He has had close collaborations with many leading composers including Kurtág, Stockhausen, Carter, Boulez and George Benjamin, and had a long association with Ligeti, recording his complete works for piano and recently launching a major online resource ([www.explorescore.org](http://www.explorescore.org)). He gave the premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's *Responses: Sweet Disorder and the Carefully Careless* (2014), as well as Elliott Carter's last piece, *Epigrams* (2013), which was written for Pierre-Laurent Aimard and premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival.

His accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist Award (2005) and Germany's Schallplattenkritik Honorary Prize (2009), and in 2007 he was named Musical America's Instrumentalist of the Year in 2007. He has made many highly successful recordings, including a prize-winning recording of Bach's *Art of Fugue, Hommage à Messiaen* (2009 ECHO Klassik Award) and Ives' *Concord Sonata and Songs* (2005 Grammy). More recent releases include *The Liszt Project*, Debussy *Préludes*, and Book 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Pierre-Laurent Aimard previously appeared in Australia in 1988.

See page 13 for more Sydney performances by Pierre-Laurent Aimard.



## **Robert Johnson** *horn*

*Principal Horn, James & Leonie Furber Chair*

Robert Johnson studied the French horn at the NSW Conservatorium of Music. After holding the principal horn positions with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, he was appointed Principal Horn with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1986. During his time with the SSO, he has performed as soloist in works by Mozart, Richard Strauss, Benjamin Britten and Ross Edwards, and in 2005 he was the horn soloist in the SSO's first performance of *From the Canyons to the Stars...* In 2009 he commissioned and premiered with the SSO a new horn concerto, *Lightfall*, by Sydney composer Christopher Gordon. He has also appeared as guest principal with all the major Australian symphony orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He has played chamber music with the Australia Ensemble, Sydney Soloists and New Sydney Wind Quintet, and has appeared at the Huntington and Townsville chamber music festivals. As a teacher he has worked as Senior Horn Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Canberra School of Music, and he has appeared as Artist in Residence at universities and music schools in Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Hong Kong. In addition to playing the horn, he sings Mediæval and Renaissance songs in his 'other life' as a countertenor.



## **Rebecca Lagos** *xylorimba*

*Principal Percussion*

Rebecca Lagos began her musical studies on the piano and later studied percussion with Richard Miller. She gained her bachelor's degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, and on her return to Australia she worked with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra as Acting Principal Timpani, before taking up the position of Principal Timpani with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. In 1987 she joined the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as a member of the percussion section. That same year, she joined the percussion ensemble Synergy and was a core member for the next ten years. During that time Synergy premiered and recorded works by numerous Australian composers and collaborated with the Sydney Dance Company in *Synergy with Synergy*. The group also recorded concertos for percussion ensemble by Carl Vine and Toru Takemitsu with the SSO. She has also performed with the Seymour Group, Sydney Alpha Ensemble, Australia Ensemble, TaikOz and Australian Chamber Orchestra. In 2006, with the SSO, she gave the premiere of Nigel Westlake's percussion concerto *When the Clock Strikes Me*, which was subsequently named Best Performance of an Australian Composition in the 2007 APRA Classical Music Awards. Rebecca Lagos was appointed to the position of Principal Percussion with the SSO in 2006; she is also the resident cimbalom player for the orchestra.



## Timothy Constable *glockenspiel*

Timothy Constable is an award-winning percussionist, composer and director. He is the Artistic Director of Synergy Percussion, as well as a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He has performed concertos and chamber music in most of the Australian classical music festivals, and in New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, UK, Ireland, Senegal, USA, China, Korea, Nepal and South-East Asia. His composition credits include the Australian Chamber Orchestra [2016], Synergy and Noreum Machi (*Wastelands*, 2014; *Short Flight*, 2015), Southern Cross Soloists (*Ordinary Time and Spirals*, 2013), YouTube Symphony Orchestra (*Suna*, 2011), Legs on the Wall [2011], Meryl Tankard (*Kaidan*, 2006) and numerous works for TaikOz. He has a large body of world and Australasian premieres to his name, including Steve Reich's Mallet Quartet; György Ligeti's *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel*; Anthony Pateras' *Beauty will be amnesiac or will not be at all and Flesh and Ghost*; and works by Simon Holt, Lisa Lim, Arvo Pärt and Gerard Brophy. In the realm of ancient music, he has studied with Senegalese master drummer Aly N'Dyaye Rose, and (currently) Korean Jangoo with Kim Yeong-Taek and Kim Chong-Hee. He is a Freedman music fellow, Elizabethan Theatre Trust scholar, university medallist of Newcastle University, and graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.



## sydney symphony orchestra

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# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



## DAVID ROBERTSON

THE LOWY CHAIR OF  
CHIEF CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

.....  
PATRON Professor The Hon. Dame Marie Bashir *AD CVO*  
.....

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities.

Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, where it gives more than 100 performances each year, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales. International tours to Europe, Asia and the USA – including three visits to China – have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The orchestra's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures

such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

The SSO's award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people.

The orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Mary Finsterer, Nigel Westlake and Georges Lentz, and the orchestra's recordings of music by Brett Dean have been released on both the BIS and SSO Live labels.

Other releases on the SSO Live label, established in 2006, include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Vladimir Ashkenazy and David Robertson. In 2010–11 the orchestra made concert recordings of the complete Mahler symphonies with Ashkenazy, and has also released recordings of Rachmaninoff and Elgar orchestral works on the Exton/Triton labels, as well as numerous recordings on ABC Classics.

This is the third year of David Robertson's tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

# THE ORCHESTRA



**David Robertson**  
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**Dene Olding**  
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### Sun Yi

ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER

**Kirsten Williams**

ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER

Georges Lentz

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Emily Long

## VIOLAS

**Tobias Breider**

**Justin Williams**

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Felicity Tsai

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Nick Byrne

**Christopher Harris**

PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE

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Timothy Costable

Mark Robinson

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Alison Pratt\*

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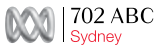
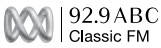


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