

philharmonia orchestra

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA LAUNCHES MESSIAEN CELEBRATIONS **A major festival to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the composer's birth**

The Philharmonia Orchestra is mounting a significant celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Messiaen's birth (1908-1992), from 4 February to 23 October. Esa-Pekka Salonen, who becomes Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor in September, conducts the first part in February with concerts in London, Basingstoke, Cardiff, Southend-on-Sea, Bari, Luxembourg, Parma and Palermo and featuring two iconic works: Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Both works are iconic pieces in Salonen's own history; indeed Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie* was the piece that inspired him to take up music. "I was about 11 and couldn't believe there was music like that... if that's what you could produce, I thought it must be the most fascinating thing on earth."

The exploration of Messiaen's work throughout the festival highlights the sheer range of the composer's output from the chamber music (*Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*) to song cycles (*Poèmes pour Mi*), from works for solo piano and small ensemble (*Oiseaux exotiques*) to the two very gigantic but very different masterpieces: *Turangalila-symphonie* and *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus Christ*. The Philharmonia is proud to bring together an array of performers who are not only the very finest exponents of Messiaen's music, but who knew and admired him as a friend, teacher or mentor: Pierre-Laurent Aimard, George Benjamin, Sylvain Cambreling, Roger Muraro, Cynthia Millar and Kent Nagano. The concert on 21 October brings together the music of two of his pupils – George Benjamin and Xenakis – with Messiaen's own *Chronochromie* and Ligeti's *Atmosphères*.

Other resources and events in the Series include recitals by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, performing Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* in Basingstoke, Southend-on-Sea and Worcester, pre-concert talks and a major web resource at www.philharmonia.co.uk/messiaen, online from February.

The Orchestra's concerts at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall form part of Southbank Centre's major festival, *From the Canyons to the Stars: The Music of Olivier Messiaen*, celebrating Messiaen's centenary year, in collaboration with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Royal Academy of Music and London Sinfonietta, with Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, London Oratory, St Paul's Cathedral, Intermusica and Harrison Parrott.

Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Festival Artistic Director, commented:

"London has always been at the forefront in celebrating the music of Olivier Messiaen. Messiaen, measurer of time and craftsman in sound and colour, has influenced generations of composers. His spirituality, his love of nature, and the sheer boldness of his music communicate directly with audiences. This gentle dreamer with a collector's soul worked independently of contemporary trends – unclassifiable because, piece by piece, he constructed a truly unique language. It is my great wish that this festival, in homage to Messiaen, will illuminate the many aspects of this great original."

David Whelton, Philharmonia Orchestra Managing Director, said:

"This is one of the most important projects that the Philharmonia Orchestra has ever undertaken. The vision behind it, and driving force that has led to its rich fruition over more than seven years, is that of the Orchestra's President, Mr Vincent Meyer, who has also enabled it to take place through the generous support of the Meyer Foundation. We are extremely proud to bring some of Messiaen's colossal works, performed so rarely, to the stage in honour of Messiaen's centenary, and indebted to Vincent for his immense contribution to the Orchestra's artistic life."

A full schedule of dates, repertoire and booking information for the Series is attached. More detailed information is available at www.philharmonia.co.uk/messiaen.

ENDS

For further information, interviews, biographies and photographs please contact Emma Peters on 020 7921 3932 or emma.peters@philharmonia.co.uk or Lisa Tolliday on 020 7921 3930 or lisa.tolliday@philharmonia.co.uk.

Philharmonia Orchestra Messiaen Celebrations

4 February – 23 October 2008

Monday 4 February 8pm

Teatro Regio, Parma

Box office +39 0521 039393

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Tamara Stefanovich *piano*

DEBUSSY *La Mer*

MESSIAEN *Oiseaux exotiques*

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Wednesday 6 February 7.45pm

The Anvil, Basingstoke

Box office 01256 844244

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Pierre-Laurent Aimard *piano*

Cynthia Millar *ondes Martenot*

MESSIAEN *Turangalila-symphonie*

Thursday 7 February 7.30pm

Royal Festival Hall, London

Box office 0800 652 6717

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Pierre-Laurent Aimard *piano*

Cynthia Millar *ondes Martenot*

MESSIAEN *Turangalila-symphonie*

Saturday 9 February 7.30pm

St. David's Hall, Cardiff

Box office 02920 878444

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Tamara Stefanovich *piano**

Juho Pohjonen *piano***

MESSIAEN *Oiseaux exotiques**

PROKOFIEV *Piano Concerto No. 5***

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Sunday 10 February 7.30pm

Royal Festival Hall, London

Box office 0800 652 6717

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Tamara Stefanovich *piano*

JOLIVET *Cinq danses rituelles*

MESSIAEN *Oiseaux exotiques*

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Monday 11 February 8.30pm

Teatro Massimo Di Palermo, Palermo

Box office +39 0648 078400

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Juho Pohjonen *piano*

MUSSORGSKY *Night on the Bare Mountain*

PROKOFIEV *Piano Concerto No. 5*

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Tuesday 12 February 8pm

Philharmonie, Luxembourg

Box office +35 2263 22632

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Tamara Stefanovich *piano*

JOLIVET *Cinq danses rituelles*

MESSIAEN *Oiseaux exotiques*

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Thursday 14 February 8pm

Auditorio Guardia di Finanza, Bari

Box office +35 0805 212484

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Tamara Stefanovich *piano*

JOLIVET *Cinq danses rituelles*

MESSIAEN *Oiseaux exotiques*

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Friday 15 February 7.30pm

Cliffs Pavilion, Southend

Box office 01702 351135

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Pierre-Laurent Aimard *piano*

Jacques Tchamkerten *ondes Martenot*

MESSIAEN *Turangalila-symphonie*

Thursday 16 October 7.30pm

Royal Festival Hall, London

Box office 0800 652 6717

Kent Nagano *conductor*

Pierre-Laurent Aimard *piano*

Soloists from the Philharmonia Orchestra

BBC Symphony Chorus; Philharmonia Voices

MESSIAEN *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*

Tuesday 21 October 7.30pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

Box office 0800 652 6717

George Benjamin *conductor*

XENAKIS *Pithoprakta*

MESSIAEN *Chronchromie*

LIGETI *Atmosphères*

BENJAMIN *Sudden Time*

Thursday 23 October 7.30pm

Royal Festival Hall, London

Box office 0800 652 6717

Sylvain Cambreling *conductor*

Roger Muraro *piano*

Mireille Delunsch *soprano*

DEBUSSY *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

MESSIAEN *Réveil des oiseaux*

MESSIAEN *Poèmes pour Mi*

SCRIABIN *Le poème de l'exstase*

Recitals by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra

Matthew Schellhorn *piano*
Barnaby Robson *clarinet**
Mark van de Wiel *clarinet***
Jim Clark *violin*
David Cohen *cello*

MESSIAEN *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*

Wednesday 6 February 6.15pm
The Anvil, Basingstoke*

Friday 15 February 6.15pm
Cliffs Pavilion, Southend*

Sunday 3 August 10pm
Worcester Cathedral,
Worcester Three Choirs Festival**

Music of Today

Sunday 30 November 6pm
Royal Festival Hall, London
Pascal Rophé *conductor*
soprano to be announced

GÉRARD GRISEY *Quatre Chants pour Franchir le Seuil*

Pre-concert talks

Sunday 10 February 6pm
Royal Festival Hall, London
Messiaen biographers Nigel Simeone and Peter Hill
on Messiaen, birdsong and *Oiseaux exotiques*.

Thursday 16 October 6pm
Royal Festival Hall, London
The statue remains on its pedestal; understanding
Messiaen's *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur
Jésus-Christ*, with Dr Christopher Dingle, author of
The Life of Messiaen.