

Messiaen 2015: Between Heaven and the Clouds

Cordelia Williams continues her year-long project *Messiaen 2015* with events in Winchester Cathedral and Kings Place



Thursday 24 September 2015
Milton Court

Wednesday 7 October 2015
Winchester Cathedral

Monday 12 October 2015
Kings Place

Saturday 5 December 2015
Wiltshire Music Centre
(full listings below)

"It's not hard to understand her success. Her playing has a warmth and finely judged flexibility that are immediately attractive..."

BBC Music Magazine

Young British pianist **Cordelia Williams** continues her acclaimed series *Messiaen 2015: Between Heaven and the Clouds*, taking her new multimedia exploration of **Olivier Messiaen's** wartime masterpiece ***Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*** to London's Milton Court and Kings Place, as well as Winchester Cathedral and Wiltshire. Williams commissioned Costa award-winning British poet **Michael Symmons Roberts** to respond to Messiaen's musical interpretation of the nativity story with 20 poems alongside paintings by British artist **Sophie Hacker**.

These concerts come after a hugely successful event at **Westminster Abbey** in June, which featured a special evensong, a discussion with Professor Ben Quash, composer James Macmillan, musical performances by Williams, and poetry by Michael Symmons Roberts.

As Michael Symmons Roberts explains:

"I first heard Messiaen's music in my twenties, and longed to go and hear him at St Trinité, where he performed every Sunday at the end of Mass but, much to my regret, I never managed to hear him before he died in 1992. I hope that my poems will find many connections with Messiaen's themes - of oppression and liberation - while standing as a poetic sequence in its own right."

Olivier Messiaen, whose life and work were grounded in his profound Catholic faith, composed *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* in 20 movements. therefore Williams commissioned 20 tanaential poems from

Rowan Williams was also commissioned to write a poem inspired by Messiaen's life and the Christian themes explored in Messiaen's work for solo piano. Messiaen was a well-known synaesthete and colour combinations were fundamental to his compositional process. Artist **Sophie Hacker** has created a **suite of paintings** in response to the ideas expressed in the *Vingt Regards*.

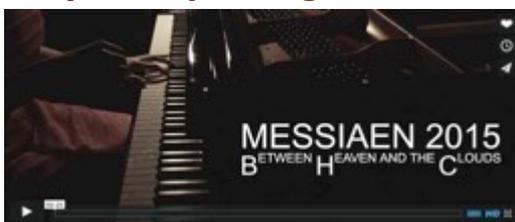


It was Williams' interest in religions and faith that led her to envisage and organise *Messiaen 2015*. Following performances of the complete *Vingt Regards* in London, Lucerne and Cambridge during 2013, she decided to commission work by leading British artists to accompany and explore the work in a series of events in and around London.

Former Piano Winner of **BBC Young Musician of the Year**, Cordelia Williams is quickly establishing her career as a sought-after young concert pianist. Her debut recording of Schubert's complete Impromptus for SOMM Recordings was released in 2013 to excellent reviews. Classic FM described her "**Unassuming mastery of the piano**". Williams's most recent CD of Schumann for SOMM drew praise from BBC Music Magazine: "**Cordelia Williams, whose musicality, intelligence and pianistic command are evident here from the start**".

As Cordelia Williams explains:

"I found 'Vingt Regards' to be such a fascinating and satisfying work to study and perform that I wanted to explore it further... the breadth of Messiaen's inspiration and sound-world is really extraordinary. It's a musical interpretation of his world and his faith and he gives us so much to think about; 'Messiaen 2015' is a way of responding to that challenge."



Watch a short trailer for *Messiaen 2015* with performance by Cordelia Williams and poetry read by Michael Symmons Roberts.

Written in 1944 in occupied Paris, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jesus* explores various aspects of the Christian story, from the love of God the Father for His Son, via the contemplations of the Virgin, the Angels and the Cross, to the celebration of the Church. Messiaen wrote: "**More than in all my previous works, I searched here for a language of mystical love, at once varied, powerful and tender, sometimes brutal, in a multicoloured order.**" The work is one of the most iconic of the twentieth century and of the whole piano repertoire.

Recent Press Quotes:

"Williams' brilliantly fluid technique and unassuming mastery of the piano is to the fore on this recording which promises much for the future."

Classic FM Review

"Don't be lulled by Cordelia Williams's sweetly cool reading of the first two of Schubert's Impromptus D899 in this recording; there's romantic fire lurking under the surface."

The Observer

"Cordelia Williams brought both elasticity and poetry to Beethoven's inward Piano Concerto No. 4, so searchingly demanding of a musicianship which Williams conveyed with conviction and inner strength."

Birmingham Post

"It was given a terrific, rhapsodic performance, one fully alive to the piece stretching the boundaries of chamber music."

Classical Source

Upcoming Events

Thursday 24 September

Milton Court, 7pm

Performance of *Vingt Regards* with music by Guildhall School composers based on **Sophie Hacker's** art
Cordelia Williams, Guildhall School Postgraduate composition students

Wednesday 7 October

Winchester Cathedral

Performance of *Vingt Regards* with poetry reading and an exhibition

Cordelia Williams

Michael Symmons Roberts

Sophie Hacker

Monday 12 October

Kings Place, London, 7pm

Performance of *Vingt Regards* with poetry reading and a projection of the paintings.

Cordelia Williams

Michael Symmons Roberts

Sophie Hacker

Saturday 5 December

Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon

Performance of *Vingt Regards* with poetry reading and art exhibition

Cordelia Williams

Michael Symmons Roberts

Sophie Hacker

Cordelia Williams

Cordelia Williams has been acclaimed as a pianist of "**great power and delicate sensitivity**", drawing in audiences with her rich sound, natural eloquence and "**spell-binding simplicity**". She has performed all over the world, including concertos with the English Chamber Orchestra, and recitals at Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall and Beijing Concert Hall. In December 2014 she will make her debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra playing Beethoven's Emperor Concerto at Barbican Hall, London and Symphony Hall Birmingham.

At the core of her musicality is a fascination with the human soul and the artistic expression of struggles and beliefs; alongside her performing career she gained a First in Theology from Clare College, Cambridge. She is recognised for the poetry, conviction and inner strength of her playing and the depth and maturity of her interpretations. Cordelia is drawn especially to the music of the late Classical and early Romantic periods: her debut CD, featuring Schubert's complete Impromptus for SOMM Recordings, was released to critical acclaim in July 2013 and a CD of Schumann was released earlier this year.

Cordelia has a great enthusiasm for presenting and introducing music; her series Cafe Muse brings classical music out of the concert hall and into the relaxed setting of bars and brasseries. She is also a passionate chamber musician, having appeared with the Endellion, Fitzwilliam and Maggini quartets among others. Since becoming Piano Winner of BBC Young Musician 2006, she has performed with orchestras including London Mozart Players and Royal Northern Sinfonia, and given recitals at the Barbican Hall and Purcell Room, as well as in France, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, Thailand, China, America, Mexico, Kenya and the Gulf States.

www.cordeliawilliams.net

www.messiaen2015.com

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