

Pianist Nicolas Hodges performs Messiaen's  
intrepid *Des canyons aux étoiles* at the BBC Proms



**Sunday 28 July, 19:30**  
Royal Albert Hall

**Messiaen** *Des canyons aux étoiles*

**Nicolas Hodges** piano  
**BBC Symphony Orchestra**  
**Sakari Oramo** conductor

***"He plays the classics as if they were written yesterday, and what was written yesterday as if it were already a classic."***  
Tempo Magazine

**Nicolas Hodges** returns to the Proms to perform **Messiaen's** intrepid ***Des canyons aux étoiles*** at the **BBC Proms** on **28 July** with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Sakari Oramo**. Mark Swed (LA Times) recently described Hodges as *"one of the leading performers of advanced European music ... He makes seemingly unintelligible music speak for itself ... and is a pianist with a flabbergasting technique and instantly engaging musicality."*

A vast 90-minute sonic meditation, **Olivier Messiaen's** singular ***Des canyons aux étoiles*** (1974) was commissioned by Alice Tully to celebrate the bicentenary of the **United States Declaration of Independence**. Twelve movements take listeners on a journey from the deserts of Utah to the stars, inspired by the colourful Bryce Canyon, which stimulated the composer's sound-colour synaesthesia. Messiaen includes the



calls of over 80 species of birds from Utah, Arizona, and beyond. Hodges appears with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of **Sakari Oramo**.



Nicolas Hodges first performed at the BBC Proms as a 12-year-old chorister with Christ Church Cathedral Choir performing Penderecki's St Luke's Passion. He last championed Messiaen at the festival through his *Trois petites liturgies de la Présence Divine* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 2005.

He has returned to the Proms frequently, championing 20<sup>th</sup>-and 21<sup>st</sup>-century music by Pierre Boulez, Elliott Carter, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Harrison Birtwistle. Hodges gave the UK premiere of Birtwistle's *Gigue Machine* at the Proms, which he will record in November coupling Birtwistle's music with Beethoven's *Bagatelles* and *Fantasia op. 77*.

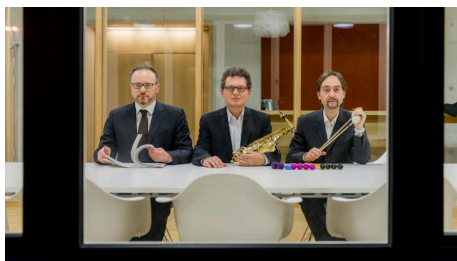
**Nicolas Hodges** said:

*"I'm thrilled to be returning to the Proms this year. Performing there in a major choral work by a living composer as a boy in the vast cavern of the Albert Hall was immeasurably formative, as was my childhood as a chorister, which exposed me to Messiaen's great organ works. I was lucky to hear Messiaen's wife Yvonne Loriod performing his music in London on many occasions. His *Des Canyons* is a definitively American piece with an American sound world. I travel extensively as a performer and am always amazed by how each continent's sound is so distinctive due to its birdsong."*

Hodges has long encouraged the creation of new contemporary repertoire for the piano. He has premiered works by Thomas Adès, Elliott Carter, Wolfgang Rihm and Sir Harrison Birtwistle, prompting the latter to say: *"Nic Hodges is becoming like my Peter Pears."* On **1 April**, Hodges returns to the UK to revisit **Thomas Adès' *In Seven Days*** Piano Concerto, which he will be perform with Vladimir Jurowski and the London Philharmonic Orchestra following his critically acclaimed recording with the London Sinfonietta.

With an inexhaustible energy to communicate new music, Hodges has commissioned over **25 piano concertos** to date including most recently those by Gerard Barry and Simon Steen-Andersen. By choosing to maintain close collaborative relationships with contemporary composers, Hodges presents an extraordinary first-hand insight into the music of today. His next disc will be music by **Helmut Lachenmann** with **Trio Accanto**, including his *Marche Fatale* in its original piano version, alongside music by **Michael Finnissy** and others.

Hodges gives the world premiere of a new work by **Rebecca Saunders** with **Trio Accanto** on **15 February 2020** at the Maison de la Radio, Paris as part of **Festival Présences**. This is followed on **29 August 2020** by the world premiere of Rebecca Saunders' new **Piano Concerto** at **Lucerne Festival**. Roche, in collaboration with the Lucerne Festival and the Lucerne Festival Academy, has awarded Saunders their prestigious **Roche Commission**.



Berlin-based composer **Rebecca Saunders** is one of the UK's most radical and distinguished composers, noted for her distinctive and intensely striking sonic language. Saunders' compositions have been performed from Darmstadt to the Proms, and she adds the Roche Commission to an ever-growing number of accomplishments, alongside the Ernst von Siemens Prize which she will receive in Munich on 7 June.

The biannual **Roche Commissions** have previously been awarded to several high-profile composers, including Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Sir George Benjamin. They enable musical works to venture beyond the conventional and provide intellectual stimulation. Saunders has been interacting with leading scientists since the commission, and **Nicolas Hodges** is the ideal collaborator for Saunders' commission. Never shying away from challenging new writing, Hodges continues to push the boundaries of modern piano music with bold and incisive performances. His next commission will be a new piano concerto from **Betsy Jolas**.

## Featured Listings

**Sunday 28 July, 19:30**

Royal Albert Hall

**Olivier Messiaen** *Des canyons aux étoiles*

**Martin Owen** horn  
**BBC Symphony Orchestra**  
**Sakari Oramo** conductor

**Thursday 26 September, 19:30**

Wiener Konzerthaus

**Saturday 28 September, 20:15**

De Doelen, Rotterdam

**Birtwistle** *Intrada for piano and percussion* **NETHERLANDS PREMIERE**

**Stockhausen** *Klavierstück V*

**Birtwistle** *Variations from the Golden Mountains*

**Feldman** *King of Denmark*

**Birtwistle** *Intrada for piano and percussion (reprise)*

**Stockhausen** *Kontakte for Piano, tape and percussion*

**Colin Currie** percussion

**Saturday 15 February, 18:00**  
Maison de la Radio, Paris

Programme to include:  
**Rebecca Saunders New Work**  
**WORLD PREMIERE**

**Trio Accanto**

**Wednesday 1 April, 19:30**  
Royal Festival Hall

Programme to include:  
**Thomas Adès In seven days**

**London Philharmonic  
Orchestra**  
**Vladimir Jurowski** conductor

**Tuesday 23 June, 19:30**  
Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg  
**Sunday 16 August**  
Lucerne Festival

## **Nicolas Hodges**



*"Hodges... is one of the leading performers of advanced European music... He makes seemingly unintelligible music speak for itself... And is a pianist with a flabbergasting technique and instantly engaging musicality".*

*LA Times, Mark Swed, 27th March 2018*

An active and ever-growing repertoire that encompasses such composers as Beethoven, Berg, Brahms, Debussy, Schubert and Stravinsky reinforces pianist Nicolas Hodges' superior prowess in contemporary music. As *Tempo* magazine has written: *"Hodges is a refreshing artist; he plays the classics as if they were written yesterday, and what was written yesterday as if it were already a classic."*

Born in London and now based in Germany, where he is a professor at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart, Hodges approaches the works of Classical, Romantic, 20th century and contemporary composers with the same questing spirit, leading the *Guardian* to comment: *"Hodges' recitals always boldly go where few other pianists dare... with an energy that sometimes defies belief."*

Programme to include:  
**Rebecca Saunders New Work**

**Trio Accanto**

**Saturday 29 August 2020**  
Lucerne Festival

Programme to include:  
**Rebecca Saunders Piano  
Concerto** **WORLD PREMIERE**

**Orchestra of the Lucerne  
Festival Academy**

Nicolas Hodges' virtuosity and innate musicianship give him an assured command over the most strenuous technical complexities, making him a firm favourite among many of today's most prestigious contemporary composers. Collaborating closely with such contrasting figures as John Adams, Helmut Lachenmann and the late Karlheinz Stockhausen is central to Hodges' career, and many of the world's most revered composers have dedicated works to him, including Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry, Elliott Carter, James Clarke, Francisco Coll, Hugues Dufourt, Pascal Dusapin, Beat Furrer, Isabel Mundry, Brice Pauset, Wolfgang Rihm and Miroslav Srnka. Hodges enjoys a particularly close relationship with Sir Harrison Birtwistle, who recently described him as "becoming like my Peter Pears." In September 2018, it was announced that the eminent composer, and long-term collaborator of Nicolas Hodges, Rebecca Saunders, had been selected by Roche Commissions as the 10<sup>th</sup> recipient in their commissioning series. The new commission, a piano concerto for Hodges, will be premiered at the Lucerne Festival, by Hodges and the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra, in late August 2020, and will subsequently be toured in Europe.

Recent performance highlights for Nicolas Hodges have included the premiere of Simon Steen-Andersen's award-winning Piano Concerto, performed with Francois-Xavier Roth and the SWR Symphony Orchestra Freiburg Baden-Baden as part of the Donaueschingen Festival in 2014, as well as the world premiere of *Variations from the Golden Mountains* by Sir Harrison Birtwistle at London's Wigmore Hall. Hodges also recently gave the world premiere of Gerald Barry's Piano Concerto, with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Peter Rundel, and the UK premiere with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Thomas Adès in Birmingham, followed by a repeat performance at the Aldeburgh Festival. He also gave the world premiere of Thomas Adès' own piano concerto *In Seven Days* with the London Sinfonietta, followed by further performances of the work with orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

Further performance highlights for Hodges have included the world premiere performance of Elliott Carter's *Dialogues* for piano and orchestra, with the London Sinfonietta and Oliver Knussen, as well as the US and Berlin premieres of the work, with the Chicago Symphony and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras respectively – both conducted by Daniel Barenboim – and the New York premiere, at Carnegie Hall, with the MET Orchestra.

Hodges' has established successful relationships with many of today's leading orchestras and ensembles, and engagements include regular performances with orchestras such as the BBC Symphony, Boston Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony, MET Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Philharmonia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, St Louis Symphony, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and WDR Sinfonieorchester Cologne, and ensembles

such as ASKO/Schoenberg, Amsterdam, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Contrechamps Geneva, International Contemporary Ensemble New York and the Remix Ensemble, Porto.

Among the distinguished conductors with whom Nicolas Hodges regularly collaborates are Thomas Adès, Daniel Barenboim, George Benjamin, Martyn Brabbins, Sylvain Cambreling, James Levine, Susanna Mälkki, Cornelius Meister, Jonathan Nott, Emilio Pomarico, David Robertson, Pascal Rophé, François- Xavier Roth, Peter Rundel, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Pierre-André Valade, Ilan Volkov and Ryan Wigglesworth.

Also an avid chamber musician, Hodges has performed in Berlin (Musikfest), Brussels (Ars Musica), Hamburg (Ostertoene), Helsinki (Musica Nova), London (Barbican Centre, Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre and the BBC Proms), Lucerne (Festival), Madrid (INAEM), Melbourne International Arts Festival, New York (Carnegie Hall and Mostly Mozart), Paris (IRCAM and Festival d' Automne), Rome (IUC), Salzburg (Festival and Biennale), Strasbourg (Musica), Stuttgart (Eclat), Tanglewood (Festival), Tokyo, Vienna (Wien Modern) and Zurich (Tage für Neue Musik). He also collaborates regularly with the Arditti Quartet, Adrian Brendel, Colin Currie, Ilya Gringolts, Anssi Karttunen, Michael Wendeborg, Carolin Widmann and has been a member of Trio Accanto since 2013.

Nicolas Hodges' varied discography includes Thomas Adès' piano concerto *In Seven Days*, with the London Sinfonietta and Thomas Adès (Signum Classics); two discs of works by Harrison Birtwistle; and a live recording of Luca Francesconi's piano concerto with the Orquestra Sinfónica Casa da Musica. On the Wergo label, Hodges has recorded "Voces Abandonadas", comprising works by Walter Zimmermann; a disc of works by Brice Pauset entitled "Canons for solo piano"; and "Songs and Poems", which includes repertoire by Hans Thomalla, Walter Zimmermann and Wolfgang Rihm with Trio Accanto.

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