

ALSO AVAILABLE ON
SIGNUMCLASSICS



Ragtime & Blue
Elena Kats-Chernin - Piano
SIGCD058

Elena Kats-Chernin is a composer who defies categorisation: a virtuosic pianist and improviser, her compositions flow from her like a fountain. This CD is drawn from the small works she often writes for her own enjoyment - a cornucopia of rags, blues and heart-melting melodies.



Brahms and Schumann
John Lill - Piano
SIGCD075

Much-loved pianist, John Lill, plays touchstones of the 19th-century romantic piano tradition. Lill is at his sparkling best in this wonderful repertoire.



Haydn Piano Sonatas
John Lill - Piano
SIGCD097

John Lill returns to take the listener on a journey through the many moods of Haydn, in brilliant performances of some composer's most intriguing works for the keyboard.

signum
CLASSICS

Messiaen

Chamber Works

Matthew Schellhorn
soloists of the philharmonia orchestra

MESSIAEN: CHAMBER WORKS

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Fantaisie | [8.59] |
| Quatuor pour la fin du Temps | |
| 2. Liturgie de cristal | [2.37] |
| 3. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps | [5.04] |
| 4. Abîme des oiseaux | [8.21] |
| 5. Intermède | [1.48] |
| 6. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus | [7.26] |
| 7. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes | [6.08] |
| 8. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps | [7.21] |
| 9. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus | [6.56] |
| 10. Le Merle noir | [6.24] |
| 11. Pièce pour piano et quatuor à cordes | [3.07] |
| 12. Morceau de lecture à vue World Premiere Recording | [1.59] |
| Total Timings | [66.38] |

MATTHEW SCHELLHORN PIANO
SOLOISTS OF THE PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

www.signumrecords.com

MESSIAEN: CHAMBER WORKS

The general perception of Messiaen is of a composer who lived in some rarefied atmosphere of his own, floating far above the mundane, material world. Given his preoccupation with esoteric rhythms, sound-colours, theology and birdsong, this is perhaps a reasonable judgment and, to some extent, true: he admitted that he had never liked living in Paris and would much prefer to be on some desert island without traffic or a telephone. All the same, he did hold down a demanding teaching post at the Paris Conservatoire for over 40 years and was organist at the Church of the Sainte-Trinité in Paris for over 60. Four of the five chamber works recorded here duly testify to his close practical involvement with what we like to call the 'real world'.

In June 1932, at the age of 23, Messiaen married the violinist Claire Delbos, who had studied at the Schola Cantorum, the teaching institution founded and directed by Vincent d'Indy. Messiaen had just been appointed to La Trinité and was beginning to make a name for himself, especially with his orchestral piece *Les Offrandes oubliées*, premiered in February 1931. Later reminiscences by fellow pupils record that he was quiet, self-contained,

always turned up at class with mountains of work (not guaranteed to ensure popularity!) and was recognised as a young man likely to succeed. But any view of Messiaen as vague or indecisive in his opinions needs to be set against the truth - for all his pacific demeanour (and, in later years, anyway, enormous charm) he was quite capable of describing Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète* in a published interview as 'Lully with wrong bass notes' and damning the slow of movement of Ravel's immensely popular G major Concerto as turning 'a phrase reminiscent of Fauré on a bad day into Massenet'.

The *Fantaisie* for violin and piano, dating from 1933, was the second of the two works Messiaen wrote for Claire and himself to play, following the *Thème et Variations* of 1932. It was not published until 2007, having been disinterred by Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen (whom the composer married after Claire's death in 1959) from the mass of materials left behind at his death. The opening paragraph, for loud piano octaves, is decisiveness itself, even if the fluctuating time signatures (13/8, 10/8, 11/8 etc.) proclaim his early interest in rhythms that were at the opposite extremes

from the pounding regularities of the dance floor. (We can speculate that this stirring melody's later use in 'Alléuias sereins d'une âme qui désire le ciel', the second movement of *L'Ascension* of 1932-3, was one of the reasons the *Fantaisie* was not published during the composer's lifetime.) The overall shape of this paragraph, which contains much of the material for the whole work, recalls plainsong, but a plainsong expanded to include chromatic intervals, as in much of his later music. Perhaps the most noticeable ingredients in the piece are the common chords that regularly provide resting places for the discourse, whether unadorned or decorated with elegantly dissonant tracery. The basic key of G major, touched on from time to time, is at last emphatically announced as the final goal.

Before the Second World War Messiaen taught for a time at the École Normale de Musique and in 1934 he wrote a *Morceau de lecture à vue* - a sight-reading piece - for the piano exams there. Even if he had pity on the students' rhythmic capabilities (the piece is in 6/8 throughout), there are plenty of accidentals to sort out, often through his use of what he rather clumsily called his 'second mode of limited transposition', a scale of alternating tones and semitones. The opening five-note motif would later be developed into the 'Theme of Love' in the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-*

Jésus of 1944 (a further instance of the composer recycling material); the whole piece radiates the sort of lushness that was to upset so many critics after the war.

Looking back now over the whole of Messiaen's composing life, we can see that one of the most profound changes he brought about in Western European music, more radical even than his discoveries in the fields of harmony and colour, was in the perception of time. At the age of seventeen, in 1926, he wrote the organ piece *Le Banquet céleste*, which was the first of many extremely slow movements in which the very notion of pulse comes under threat. During the 1930s, other works such as *Apparition de l'église éternelle* continued in a similar vein, but it is fair to say that he made no new breakthrough on this front until the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* ('Quartet for the end of Time').

The circumstances of the work's composition are striking enough for them to have made a niche for themselves in twentieth-century musical history. Composers frequently complain that, what with promotional appearances, committees and the like, they have a job to find enough uninterrupted time for composition. In a prisoner-of-war camp such distractions are absent - as they were in

1940 for Messiaen in a German camp in Silesia. Locked in a wash-house with manuscript paper, pencils and dry bread, he proceeded to write, for himself and the three other more-than-capable instrumentalists available, one of the twentieth century's most extraordinary masterpieces.

For any prisoner anywhere, it is only to be expected that the experience of time should be altered. But for a prisoner of war, with no set term to his imprisonment, that experience must be further distorted by the process of waiting and, for most such prisoners, by anxiety. For Messiaen, though, anxiety was a foreign country - his profound Roman Catholic faith allowed him to leave the future in the hands of God, and no listener to the *Quatuor* can mistake the positive, life-affirming spirit of each and every bar. Reminiscences of fellow-prisoners testify both to Messiaen's equanimity and spiritual strength in captivity and to the impact the first performance of this work had on the 400 prisoners in Hut 27B on 15 January 1941; as the composer himself said, 'I was never listened to with such attention and understanding.'

If faith expels anxiety, it permits hope. The 'end of time' of the title might reasonably be taken to refer partly to the hoped-for end of Messiaen's incarceration, even if the explicit reference is to

the Angel of the Apocalypse 'who raises a hand to the heavens, saying, "There shall be no more time"'. However, Messiaen made it clear that a specific, local application was not what lay behind the score, but rather an 'end' on the much larger scale envisaged by the Angel - 'the abolition of time itself, something infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible to most of the philosophers of time, from Plato to Bergson'. In detail, the songs of birds in the score help destroy the traditional symmetry of phrases and paragraphs, as do the sporadic permutations of rhythmic patterns: the first movement, for example, stops at what to many listeners will seem to be a wholly arbitrary point, whatever purely mathematical justification can be provided by the analyst. Elsewhere Messiaen's technique of adding small, irregular rhythmic values to longer ones disrupts any end-directed pulse (for example, at the beginning of the 'vigorous, granite-like' sixth movement, in which the harmonic spectrum contracts arrestingly into naked single notes and octaves, the first two bars contain 17 and 13 semiquavers respectively, arranged as 2+2+1+2+2+4 and 2+2+1+2+1+1+4, with the underlined value being the disruptive element).

The work's symbolism is too rich to be done full justice in a programme note. But perhaps the

most important point about it, implicated in the lack of any anxiety or hurry, is that Messiaen here turns his back more resolutely than in any of his previous works on the Austro-German tradition of development, of striving and working for an end, as he lays a gentle yet authoritative hand on our brow and invites us to contemplate the mystery of the life to come. In the seventh movement, he even draws on his colourful prison dreams, induced by cold and hunger, to give body to the cluster of rainbows that appears on the Angel's head. And of course, as is well known, rainbows too have no end.

The long accompanied solos for cello and violin that form the fifth and eighth movements are, one might say, rewards for our attention in numbers 1-4 and 6-7; or, rather, they are musical expressions of the feelings those more eventful and colourful movements have stirred within us. This is all the more remarkable given that these two movements are in fact transcriptions, presumably from memory, of movements already written before the war: number 5 comes from a section of *Fête des belles eaux*, composed for the Paris International Exhibition in 1937 for six Ondes Martenot, and number 8 from the second part of the *Diptyque* for organ of 1930. If we accept the above interpretation, then Messiaen here effectively

had to compose backwards, inventing causes for pre-existent effects. There are no birds in these two movements, no complicated rhythms, no trumpets or rainbows; instead, we are invited to share in two complementary, ecstatic meditations on Jesus as the Word and as the Word made flesh; and, in the final slow climb of the violin to its high, ethereal E harmonic, on 'the ascent of man towards his God, of the child of God to his Father'.

Le Merle noir ('The Blackbird'), like the *Morceau* for piano, was written for students, this time for those taking the final flute exam at the Conservatoire in 1952. It was commissioned by the director, Claude Delvincourt, in line with his policy of bringing some fresh air into the institution's stuffy classrooms by introducing avant-garde musical ideas, from which French musical life under the Nazi Occupation had been almost completely isolated. The piece is in three sections, the second a slightly extended variation of the first, followed by a coda. Each of the main sections is divided into six subsections - piano atmosphere; bird cadenza; combined song; expanded octaves; chords plus silent bar; '*un peu vif*' with trills. The coda exhibits one of Messiaen's earliest, and rare, experiments with 12-note serialism, with rows being transposed up a semitone each time they occur. Even if listeners

can't be expected to follow this in detail, the increasing excitement is palpable.

Finally, Messiaen wrote the *Pièce pour piano et quatuor à cordes* ('Piece for piano and string quartet') not for any particular performers, but for the 90th birthday of Alfred Schlee, head for 40 years of Universal Edition, which had published *Cantéyodjayâ* and *Oiseaux exotiques*. As with much of the composer's later music, the structure is audibly sectional and follows his favourite pattern of a palindrome operating around a unique centre. Five sections (four notes on unison strings; piano chords; *tutti* chords; three bars of string canon; piano tune) lead to a fast, central piano solo representing the song of Messiaen's favourite Garden Warbler; then the five sections recur in reverse order and slightly varied. Such simplicity is perhaps recommended only for geniuses with a long creative life behind them.

© 2008 Roger Nichols

For more information on the life and works of Olivier Messiaen visit www.oliviermessiaen.org.



Messiaen, c. 1945

BIOGRAPHIES

MATTHEW SCHELLHORN PIANO

Born in Yorkshire in 1977, Matthew Schellhorn studied at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and at the University of Cambridge, where his teachers included David Hartigan, Ryszard Bakst, Maria Curcio and Peter Hill. He studied later in Paris with Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen.

Selected as a 'Talent to Watch' by *BBC Music Magazine*, and described as 'one of Britain's most exciting young pianists' (Classic FM), Matthew has a growing international career, which in recent seasons has seen recitals in Europe, Ireland and North America.

He has given performances in many major venues throughout the UK, including Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room (Southbank Centre) and St Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Recent concerto performances have included appearances with the London Mozart Players (St John's, Smith Square, London), sinfonia VIVA (Assembly Rooms, Derby), and Cambridge University



Photo: Jan Thijs

Chamber Orchestra (West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge). He has worked with numerous conductors, including Jane Glover, Peter Stark, Russell Keable, David Hill, Andrew Fardell, Stephen Cleobury and Baldur Brönnimann. He performs regularly on BBC Radio 3, and in 2005 he was featured on Classic FM's *The Guest List*.

Matthew's performances of the music of Olivier Messiaen have been met with superlative critical approval. His acclaimed solo recital at London's Southbank Centre in 2006 confirmed his status as the pre-eminent Messiaen interpreter of his generation in Britain. Following his performances at the age of twenty of *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* in Cambridge, he was invited in 2002 to perform at the Messiaen International Conference, where Christopher Dingle of *BBC Music Magazine* described one solo recital as 'a cherished memory for those privileged enough to experience it'.

During the 2008 Messiaen centenary, Matthew is involved in numerous performances of Messiaen's music. In the UK, he has been guest soloist in performances of *Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine* and *Turangalila-Symphonie*. He will also take part in the 'Festival Messiaen au Pays de la Meije' in France.

Other highlights of the 2008/09 season include appearances at the Hampstead and Highgate and the Three Choirs festivals, recitals around the UK and Ireland, and performances with the London Mozart Players.

'An excellent pianist and an excellent exponent. ... Accuracy, rhythm, sonority, technique, emotion ... everything is played as Messiaen wished it.'
Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen

www.matthewschellhorn.com

SOLOISTS OF THE PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

JAMES CLARK VIOLIN

James Clark's musical career, spanning over thirty years, encompasses a wide range of musical accomplishment. As a chorister at King's College Cambridge he sang as soloist at the famous 'Nine Lessons and Carols' on Christmas Eve and on many records under Sir David Willcocks. He went on to study both singing and violin at the Royal College of Music in London, winning major awards as a singer and prizes as a violinist.

In 1981 he was invited by Claudio Abbado to lead the European Youth Orchestra, and subsequently became the first leader of the newly formed Chamber Orchestra of Europe working with some of the world's greatest musicians including Solti, Pollini, Barenboim and Abbado.

As a member of the Endellion Quartet from 1984 chamber music became an increasingly important music activity. James was also active with the Raphael Ensemble, playing regularly on radio and producing several well received discs of Brahms and Dvořák Sextets.

For five years until 1990 James was leader of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and from 1990 to 1998, as leader, James took a major role in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's artistic development and high profile. Since 1999 James has been Concertmaster of the Philharmonia Orchestra, London, one of the world's finest and most recorded symphony orchestras. He also continues to be in demand as a guest leader and chamber musician across Britain and Europe.

In 2004 James was also appointed Leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, a post he holds in tandem with that of the Philharmonia.

PHILIPPE HONORÉ VIOLIN

Philippe is a French-born violinist who has been a regular recitalist in both France and the UK. He has performed widely in broadcast recitals on French radio and television. He studied violin at the Paris Conservatoire with Pierre Doukan and was awarded the Premier Prix as both soloist and chamber musician. Winning several awards and grants, he continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with György Pauk. In 1992 he received the honour Lauréat of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation of France and in 2001 was awarded Honorary Associateship by the Royal Academy of Music.

He took part in the Decca recording *An Equal Music*, containing the items mentioned in the Indian novelist Vikram Seth's book of the same name, playing solo Bach and chamber music. Philippe plays chamber music, recitals and solo works, as well as leading orchestras and currently holds the position of Principal Second Violin in the Philharmonia. His instrument is an Italian violin made by Thomas Eberle in 1786.

RACHEL ROBERTS VIOLA

Born in Huddersfield, Rachel Roberts was awarded full scholarships to Chetham's School of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. At the age of 19 she was appointed to the post of principal viola with the Manchester Camerata with whom she frequently performed as soloist. After further study, with David Takeno, Rachel Roberts was a finalist in the Royal Overseas League Competition and won the Philharmonia Orchestra's Trevor Snoad Memorial Prize for viola. This resulted in a concerto engagement at St John's, Smith Square, with the Philharmonia Orchestra who later awarded her the post of Principal Viola.

In her role as Principal Viola of the Philharmonia Rachel has performed in such prestigious venues as the Musikverein Vienna, the Tonhalle Zurich and Carnegie Hall New York under the batons of Ashkenazy, Maazel, Muti, Sanderling and Svetlanov. In 2000 she collaborated with Andras Schiff in his Brandenburg Series at the Royal Festival Hall performing the chamber music version of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6.

Having been a member of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, Rachel is much in demand as a chamber musician; in this role she has worked alongside Ivry Gitlis, Steven Isserlis, Pekka Kuusisto and Martin Lovett. As well as taking part in many BBC Radio 3 broadcasts from the Wigmore Hall, she recorded the world premiere of Beethoven's String Quintet in C minor Op. 104 on the Decca label.

DAVID COHEN CELLO

David Cohen was born in 1980 in Tournai, Belgium, into a family of musicians and started to play the cello when he was seven. In 1991 he won First Prize in the Young Soloist Competition and First Prize with Distinction in the Senior and the Junior international Competition in Wathrelos, France. He then went to the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles. In 1994 David joined the Yehudi Menuhin School for four years, thanks to a grant from the Menuhin Foundation, before going on to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Oleg Kogan.

David has won more than 25 international prizes and awards, including first prize at the Audi

International Competition in 1995 and the International Cello Competition in Douai.

David began an international career as a soloist aged just 11, performing with the Flemish Orchestra of Brussels, the Orchestra from Grenoble and the Polish Philharmonic Orchestra under Lord Menuhin's direction, and in 1996 he toured England and Scotland with the Symphonia of Warsaw. In 1997 he had a masterclass with Mstislav Rostropovich and after listening to David, Rostropovich asked him to play in his cello sextet. The same year he was also offered a tour in Germany with the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. David has also appeared at several international cello festivals including Kronberg (Germany), Manchester, Cambridge (UK), Beauvais (France) and the Gstaad Festival (Switzerland).

David was appointed Principal Cello of the Philharmonia Orchestra in March 2001 (the youngest cello principal ever) and currently teaches at the Royal Conservatoire de Musique de Mons in Belgium.

KENNETH SMITH FLUTE

Kenneth Smith has won and continues to win many admirers who follow the Philharmonia Orchestra on disc and on the concert platform throughout the world, his individual tone and superior quality of sound having developed under the guidance of such eminent musicians as Aurele Nicolet, James Galway and the almost legendary Marcel Moyse.

In 1983, after ten years with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Kenneth accepted the invitation to become principal flute with the Philharmonia Orchestra, which opened up an international career of performing and recording music at the highest level the world over.

Kenneth is now firmly established as one of Britain's leading flute players featuring on countless recordings from the symphonic and operatic repertoire with the Philharmonia and other leading Symphony Orchestras.

A steadily increasing solo discography includes Mozart's Concerto for flute and harp with the Philharmonia/Sinopoli for Deutsche Grammophon, Vivaldi concertos with the London Musici and

Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 with Maurice André and the Philharmonia/Muti for EMI; whilst his long established Duo partnership (with pianist Paul Rhodes) has already recorded seven albums of music for flute and piano - three of them devoted to music by British composers and the others embracing many of the major works in the flute repertoire along with several virtuoso show pieces, some neglected gems and a selection of these artists own colourful and frequently broadcast arrangements of classical favourites.

BARNABY ROBSON CLARINET

Barnaby Robson studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and as a Fulbright Scholar at The Juilliard School, where he was awarded the Concerto Prize. His subsequent Purcell Room debut was critically acclaimed.

As a chamber musician, Barnaby has performed and recorded much of the clarinet, violin and piano repertoire with the Zanfonia Trio, *BBC Music Magazine* praised their most recent recording as a 'fine disc ... leaving me hungry to hear more'. He also performs regularly with London Winds, Belcea Quartet, Thomas Adès, Conchord Ensemble, Artur Pizarro, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Wind Soloists, Endymion Ensemble and the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra. He has recorded chamber repertoire for ASV, BBC, Black Box and EMI, and broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

Barnaby has performed the Mozart Clarinet Concerto on both modern and period instruments. He recorded Spohr Clarinet Concertos as a soloist with the Philharmonia for the Miramax film *With or Without You*.

Barnaby has worked with orchestras including the Academy of Ancient Music, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, London Chamber Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Opera House Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He was appointed Joint Principal Clarinet of the Philharmonia Orchestra in 2000. He is Professor of Clarinet at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music.

www.philharmonia.co.uk

soloists of the philharmonia orchestra

James Clark: Tracks 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11
Philippe Honoré: Track 11
Rachel Roberts: Track 11

David Cohen: Tracks 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11
Kenneth Smith: Track 10
Barnaby Robson: Tracks 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8

Matthew Schellhorn wishes to thank his supporters.

Recorded at Potton Hall, Westleton, Suffolk, UK, 17 - 19 February 2008

Producer - Rachel Smith

Engineer - Peter Newble

Steinway piano prepared by John Eastoe

Cover Image - iStockphoto

Design and Artwork - Woven Design www.wovendesign.co.uk

© 2008 The copyright in this recording is owned by Signum Records Ltd.

© 2008 The copyright in this CD booklet, notes and design is owned by Signum Records Ltd.

Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording of Signum Compact Discs constitutes an infringement of copyright and will render the infringer liable to an action by law. Licences for public performances or broadcasting may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from Signum Records Ltd.

SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK

+44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com

www.signumrecords.com