

SCHOLA

Cantorum of Oxford

STEVEN GRAHL

Conductor

LUKE MITCHELL

Conducting scholar

**THIERRY
ESCAICH**
Organ

Thierry Escaich

Messe Romane (UK Première)

Jehan L'héritier

Motets

with improvisations by Thierry Escaich

Tuesday 20th June, 7.30 pm

Exeter College Chapel

Oxford, OX1 3DP

From the Chairman of the Trustees



Welcome to the second summer concert given by Schola Cantorum of Oxford, the University's premier chamber choir. Schola Cantorum provides a great musical experience for its members, but also gives audiences in Oxford access to a wonderful range of choral repertoire – both sacred and secular. The choir sets out to challenge the best young singers from across the University to perform to the highest standards, and to provide an outstanding musical performance experience.

The choir has an enviable and unbroken 60-year history and has played a pivotal role in the development of an astonishing number of singers and choral conductors of the last six decades, building an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings.

If you would like to receive regular information about its concerts, please email us at admin@schola-cantorum.net or use the QR code below to sign up via our website at www.schola-cantorum.net.

We hope you enjoy tonight's programme which brings the choir back together with Thierry Escaich for the UK première of his *Messe Romane*.

*Dame Hilary Boulding DBE
Chair of the Trustees, Schola Cantorum of Oxford*

Schola Cantorum of Oxford would like to thank the Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Trust for their generous support throughout 2023.



PROGRAMME

Messe Romane Kyrie Gloria	Thierry Escaich (b. 1965)
Sub tuum presidium	Jehan L'Héritier (c.1480 - after 1551)
<i>Improvisation</i>	Thierry Escaich
Messe Romane Sanctus & Benedictus	Thierry Escaich
Alma redemptoris	Jehan L'Héritier
<i>Improvisation</i>	Thierry Escaich
Messe Romane Agnus Dei	Thierry Escaich
Surrexit pastor bonus	Jehan L'Héritier
<i>Improvisation</i>	Thierry Escaich

INTRODUCTION

Schola Cantorum of Oxford presents the UK première of the Messe Romane by Thierry Escaich, accompanied by the composer himself at the organ.

The movements of the mass will be interwoven with motets by the French Renaissance composer Jehan L'Héritier and with improvisations by Thierry Escaich on the only organ in Oxford to be designed in the style of the great French builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll.

Jehan L'Héritier was born in the Pas-de-Calais around 1480 and was a pupil of Josquin des Prez. In 1506 he travelled to Ferrara, where Antoine Brumel had just succeeded Jacob Obrecht as choirmaster. L'Héritier spent much of his life in Italy, working as a composer, *maestro di capella* and singer.

Thierry Escaich's biography can be found on page 8.

Thierry Escaich - Messe Romane

Written in 2014 and premiered at Notre Dame de Paris as part of a gathering of the Pueri Cantores, this mass is made up of 4 parts: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei.

It unfolds like a great paraphrase based on reminiscences of Gregorian phrases. The rather orchestral organ part is conceived not as an accompaniment to the choir, but as an extension of it. The double choir writing reinforces the idea of melodic elements circulating in the sound space.

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.

Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe altissime.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, goodwill
towards men.

We praise you, we bless you,
we worship you, we glorify you.

We give thanks to you
for your great glory.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father.

Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram
Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei
Patris.
Amen.

Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.
Who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Who takes away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Who sits at the right hand
of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are holy,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the most high,
Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit in the glory of
God the Father.
Amen.

Jehan L'Héritier - Sub tuum presidium

Sub tuum presidium confugimus,
Sancta Dei Genitrix;
nostras deprecationes ne despicias
in necessitatibus nostris,
sed a periculis cunctis
libera nos semper,
Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

We fly to thy patronage,
O holy Mother of God;
despise not our prayers
in our necessities,
but deliver us
from all dangers,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin.

Thierry Escaich - *Improvisation*

Messe Romane

Sanctus & Benedictus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra
gloria ejus.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of power and might.
Heaven and earth
are full of his glory,
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Jehan L'Héritier - Alma redemptoris mater

Alma Redemptoris Mater,
quae pervia caeli
porta manes,
et stella maris, succurre cadenti
surgere qui curat populo:
Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,
tuum sanctum Genitorem:
Virgo prius ac posterius,
Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave,
peccatorum miserere.

Loving Mother of the Redeemer,
who remains the gate by which
we mortals enter heaven,
and star of the sea, help your fallen
people who strive to rise:
You who gave birth, amazing
nature, to your sacred Creator:
Virgin prior and following, taking
from the mouth of Gabriel that Hail!
have mercy on our sins

Thierry Escaich - Improvisation

Messe Romane

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the
sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the
sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the
sins of the world, grant us peace.

Jehan L'Héritier - Surrexit pastor bonus

Surrexit pastor bonus
qui animam suam posuit
pro ovibus suis,
et pro grege suo mori dignatus est,
alleluia,

The good shepherd has arisen,
who laid down his life
for his sheep,
and for his flock deigned to die,
alleluia,

et enim pascha nostrum
immolatus est Christus.
Alleluia.
Et stetit in medio discipulorum
suorum et dixit: pax vobis.
Gavisi sunt discipuli
viso Domino,
alleluia.

And for our Passover
was sacrificed for us: Christ.
Alleluia.
And stood in the midst of his disciples
and said: Peace be with you.
The disciples were glad
when they saw the Lord.
Alleluia.

Thierry Escaich - Improvisation

BIOGRAPHIES

Steven Grahl (Conductor)



Steven Grahl is a sought-after conductor and keyboard player, and has been Conductor of Schola Cantorum of Oxford since 2017. He is also Organist and Tutor in Music at Christ Church, Oxford, an Associate Professor of Music at Oxford University, and Musical Director of Benson Choral Society.

Steven served as Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral from 2014 to 2018, where he was responsible for training the Cathedral Choir, and for the re-pitching of the Hill Organ, on which instrument he has recorded a solo CD. Peterborough Cathedral Choir's recording of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *EvenYouSong*, made under Steven's direction, was released to critical acclaim in December 2017. He also held positions as Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford, and as Organist and Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London.

Steven was an interpretation finalist in the International Organ Competitions at St Albans (UK) in 2011, and in Dudelange (Luxembourg) in 2013, and completed his term as President of the Incorporated Association of Organists in 2019. He is a prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Royal Academy of Music. He gained the top prizes in the FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion. In 2010, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

Luke Mitchell (Conducting Scholar)



Luke Mitchell is a second-year music student and Organ Scholar at The Queen's College, Oxford. He also holds scholarships with Schola Cantorum as a conductor, and with New Chamber Opera. As Organ Scholar at Queen's alongside accompanying and occasionally directing the choir, he has performed as a continuo player with the Academy of Ancient Music and Instruments of Time and Truth, as well as recently playing on BBC Radio 3 as an organist. Prior to this, he was Organ Scholar of Worcester Cathedral, where he became a prize-winning Associate of the

Royal College of Organists, and at Winchester College, where he gained an LTCL with distinction in harpsichord performance. In Oxford he is active as organist, harpsichordist and conductor, as a solo recitalist and collaborative keyboardist, having studied with George Castle, James McVinnie, Penelope Cave and Paul Spicer, and currently with Steven Farr and William Whitehead.

Thierry Escaich (Composer, Organ)

Organist in Residence, Dresden Philharmonie



Composer, organist and improviser Thierry Escaich is a unique figure in contemporary music and one of the most important French composers of his generation. The three elements of Escaich's artistry are inseparable, allowing him to express himself as a virtuosic performer, interpreter and creator at the highest level.

Thierry Escaich composes works in many genres and forms, including opera, symphonic and chamber music. His catalogue numbers over 100 works which, with their lyrical, rich harmonies and rhythmic energy, have attracted a wide audience. Drawing from the French line of composition of Ravel, Messiaen and Dutilleux, and imbued with references from contemporary, jazz, popular and spiritual music, the distinctive sound-world of Escaich's music is anchored by an obsessive rhythmic drive and compelling architecture.

This very personal style encompasses both intimate works and large-scale pieces, such as *Chaconne* for orchestra; oratorio *Le Dernier Évangile* and a double concerto for violin and cello, *Miroir d'ombres*. His first opera *Claude*, on a libretto by Robert Badinter after Victor Hugo's *Claude Gueux*, was premiered at the Opéra de Lyon in March 2013 to great acclaim. His most recent new works include the world premiere of a new opera, *Shirine*, by Opéra de Lyon, a new chamber opera, *Point d'orgue*, which received its commissioned premieres by Opéra National de Bordeaux and Opéra Théâtre de Saint-Étienne, and his Flute Concerto, which received its public world premiere by the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Thierry Escaich's works are performed by leading orchestras in Europe and North America and by musicians such as Joséphine Olech, Lisa Batiashvili and François Leleux, Valery Gergiev, Paavo Järvi, Alan Gilbert, Alain Altinoglu, Louis Langrée, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Emmanuelle Bertrand and Paul Meyer. His music has been honoured by five 'Victoires de la Musique' awards (2003, 2006, 2011, 2017 and 2022). Escaich continues to teach composition

and improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire, where he himself studied and obtained eight 'premiers prix'. In 2013 he received the honour of being appointed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris; in 2018 he took the prestigious role of Featured Composer at the Radio France *Présences* Festival in Paris.

Works for organ are an important feature of Escaich's music and they are performed by organists around the world, including solo and chamber works, three concerti and the symphonic poem *La Barque solaire* for organ and orchestra. Escaich's Organ Concerto No.1 has been performed by orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Orchestre National de Lyon, and was selected as a highlight of the organ concerto repertoire in Gramophone: "His concerto exploits the full sonic and colour ranges of orchestra and organ in this thrilling three-movement work, the second movement rising to an awe-inspiring climax only topped by the shattering coda of the finale."

Thierry Escaich's career as a composer is closely linked to his career as an organist. He is one of the ambassadors of the great French school of improvisation in the wake of Maurice Duruflé, whom he succeeded as organist of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris. He appears in recitals internationally, combining repertoire pieces with his own compositions and improvisations. His passion for cinema has led him to perform 'cineconcerts', improvised accompaniments on both the organ and piano for silent films such as *Phantom of the Opera* and *Metropolis*.

Major upcoming highlights this season include the World Premieres of his Piano Concerto by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and his Cello Concerto by Gewandhaus zu Leipzig in Leipzig and at Salzburg Easter Festival and by Boston Symphony Orchestra in Boston and at Carnegie Hall. Escaich is Organist and Composer in Residence for the 2022/23 season, most notably for the world premiere of his new commission for organ with string quartet, *Prana*, with the Tchalik Quartet.

Escaich make his debut with the Vienna Philharmonic and also appears with the Seattle Symphony, Concerto Budapest at Müpa, Orchestre et Choeur de Paris Sciences et Lettres and performs widely in recital including appearances at Dresdner Philharmonie, Cologne Philharmonie, Wiener Konzerthaus, Baurenkirche Iserlohn and Festival de Forets.

Many of Escaich's works have been recorded by Accord/Universal. Most recently the disc *Baroque Song* was released on Sony Classical to critical acclaim. His 2011 release *Les Nuits hallucinées* crowned his residency with the Orchestre National de Lyon, and received numerous distinctions, including a 'Choc de l'année' from *Classica* magazine as an outstanding release of the year. The first production of *Claude* was released on DVD (BelAir Classiques).

Intermusica represents Thierry Escaich worldwide
<https://intermusica.co.uk/artist/Thierry-Escaich>.

Schola Cantorum of Oxford

Schola Cantorum of Oxford is the University of Oxford's premier chamber choir. Schola's mission is to share the joy of choral music with our singers, our community of alumni and supporters, and with audiences in Oxford and around the world. We challenge ourselves to perform to the highest standards, providing outstanding musical training for young singers and conductors.

The choir was founded by László Heltay in 1960 at a point when there were few opportunities for men and women to sing together to a high standard. Times have changed and Schola's role has changed too. We've now built a reputation as Oxford's premier concert choir – engaging deeply with complex repertoire, and providing a space for performance outside religious services.

Schola has worked with many of the foremost musicians of the last six decades and has built an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings. We are proud of our alumni who have gone on to successful musical careers such as John Mark Ainsley, Emma Kirkby, Christine Rice, Susan Gritton, Ian Bostridge and Roderick Williams – many came to Oxford to study other subjects but developed their musical talents during their time in Schola.

Schola continued to function throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with projects ranging from a 'socially distanced' Christmas recording in 2020 to summer madrigals in the University Parks in 2021. In April 2022 the choir joined with c.100 alumni, including several founder members, for a belated 60th anniversary celebration culminating in an outstanding performance of J.S. Bach's *B Minor Mass with Instruments of Time & Truth* in Oxford Town Hall.



Schola Cantorum of Oxford

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Ashlynn Chan
Frances Mangina
Jemima Price
Verity Sawbridge
Anna Sutton
Jess Walters

Alto

Georgia Dunn
Olivia Earl
Beth 'Fitz' Fitzpatrick
Pen Hilder-Jarvis
Sòlas McDonald
Katie Rahr-Bohr

Tenor

Dara Collins
Håvard Damm-Johnsen
Jack Edis
Alfie Fardell

Bass

Bastian Bohrmann
Andre Chan
Andrew Hannaford
Giles Longstaff
Luke Mitchell

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OBE

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Schola Cantorum

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