Thierry Escaich

Composer, Organ

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 performer, creator and collaborator in a wide range of settings.

Escaich composes in many genres and forms, always exploring new sound horizons.　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, folk and spiritual music, the distinctive sound-world of Escaich’s music　is anchored by an obsessive rhythmic drive and an overarching sense of 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 a double concerto for　Lisa Batiashvili and Francois Leleux co-commissioned by NDR Sinfonieorchester　Hamburg and the New York Philharmonic, Psalmos, a concerto for orchestra,　premiered by Cincinnati Symphony, and Organ Concerto No.3 which receives its

world premiere by Escaich and Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa in 2017.

Escaich has composed many works for the organ including solo works, two 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.” Gramophone, September 2014.

His works are performed by leading orchestras in Europe and North America and by　musicians such as Lisa Batiashvili and François Leleux, Valery Gergiev, Lothar　Zagrosek, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Emmanuelle Bertrand, Paul Meyer, John　Mark Ainsley and the Quatuor Voce. Escaich has been Composer-in-Residence with　the Orchestre National de Lyon, Orchestre National de Lille and the Paris Chamber Orchestra and his music has been honoured by three ‘Victoires de la Musique’ awards　(2003, 2006 and 2011). Since 1992, Thierry Escaich has taught 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. He is Artistic Director of the Mariinsky International Organ　Festival.

Thierry Escaich’s career as a composer is closely linked to his career as an organist,　which has led him to be 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 ‘cine-concerts’, improvised accompaniments on both　the organ and piano for silent films such as Phantom of the Opera and Metropolis.

Highlights of the 2016/17 season include the World premiere of Organ Concerto No.3,　co-commissioned by Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, American Guild of Organists　and Orchestre National de Lyon. He appears at the Aix en Provence Easter Festival,　including the World premiere of a new Sextet and a composer-portrait concert　focusing on Escaich. Elsewhere this season Escaich performs recitals at Wiener　Konzerthaus, Münchner Orgelherbst, has engagements with the Orchestra of the　Mariinsky, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre d’Auvergne, Athens State

Orchestra, and performs improvisations to silent films at Auditorium de Lyon and　Radio France.

Many of Escaich’s works have been recorded by Accord/Universal. Most recently the　disc Les Nuits hallucinées (2011), which crowned his residence with the Orchestre　National de Lyon, received numerous distinctions, including a 'Choc de l’année' from　Classica magazine as an outstanding release of the year. Most recently a DVD was　released of his opera Claude from the world premiere at Opéra de Lyon conducted by　Jérémie Rhorer.

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