



messiaen's

# DESCANYONS AUX ÉTOILES...

(from the canyons to the stars...)

**June 2, 2022**

OC Tanner Amphitheater, Springdale, UT

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**UTAH SYMPHONY**  
THIERRY FISCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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# MESSIAEN'S DES CANYONS AUX ÉTOILES... (FROM THE CANYONS TO THE STARS...)

JUNE 2, 2022 / 8:30 PM  
O.C. TANNER AMPHITHEATER

**THIERRY FISCHER**, *conductor*

**JASON HARDINK**, *piano*

**STEFAN DOHR**, *horn*

**KEITH CARRICK**, *xyloimba*

**ERIC HOPKINS**, *glockenspiel*

**UTAH SYMPHONY**

## **PART 1:**

- I. Le désert
- II. Les Orioles
- III. Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles...
- IV. Le Cossyphé d'Heuglin
- V. Cedar Breaks et le Don de Crainte

## **PART 2:**

- VI. Appel interstellaire
- VII. Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange

## **PART 3:**

- VIII. Les ressuscités et le chant de l'étoile Aldébaran
- IX. Le Moqueur polyglotte
- X. La Grive des bois
- XI. Omao, Leiiothrix, Elepaio, Shama
- XII. Zion Park Et La Cité Céleste

Performance is approximately 93 minutes

There is no intermission

## ARTISTS' PROFILES



**Thierry Fischer**  
Conductor

Thierry Fischer is Music Director of the Utah Symphony and the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra. He has held the post with Utah Symphony since 2009 and will become Music Director Emeritus in Summer 2023.

In recent seasons he has conducted orchestras across the globe, notably the Boston, Cleveland, Atlanta and Cincinnati symphonies, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Maggio Musicale Firenze, Salzburg Mozarteumorchester, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and leading chamber orchestras such as Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Swedish Chamber, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and London Sinfonietta. He has performed and commissioned many world premieres.

Fischer was active throughout the pandemic conducting concerts for live and virtual audiences during his inaugural season in São Paulo including Stravinsky's ballets, Beethoven's symphonies and his *Missa Solemnis*. Other highlights of 20-21 included the London Philharmonic at the Royal Festival Hall and on Marquee TV, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. In November 2021 he conducted the Cleveland Orchestra for the second time, and was immediately reinvited, again in the main season. This season he also guests with the Polish Radio Katowice, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León in Valladolid, and returns to the Seoul Philharmonic and to the Brussels Philharmonic.

During his tenure in Utah Fischer led the orchestra's first appearance in Carnegie Hall in 40 years. He recorded for Reference Records a CD of newly commissioned works by Nico Muhly, Andrew Norman, and Augusta Read Thomas, and Mahler's Symphonies 1 and 8, the latter with the world-renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Most recently Hyperion Records have released the complete Saint-Saëns Symphonies with Fischer and the Utah Symphony, to critical acclaim; they also plan to record Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles...*

## ARTISTS' PROFILES



**Jason Hardink**

*Piano*

A fearless interpreter of large-scale piano works both modern and historical, Jason Hardink's recent repertoire includes the complete Michael Hersch *The Vanishing Pavilions*, Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, the Liszt *Transcendental Etudes* paired with the Boulez *Notations*, and Wolfgang Rihm's numbered *Klavierstücke*, all of which he performs from memory.

Recent performances include his debut at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music as soloist in the North American premiere of Gerald Barry's Piano Concerto with conductor Cristian Măcelaru, a performance of Michael Hersch's *The Vanishing Pavilions* at Wien Modern, the complete Liszt *Transcendental Etudes* performed on an 1852 Bösendorfer at Music in Context in Houston, and works by Shawn E. Okpeholo and Brittany J. Green as well as Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata for the NOVA Chamber Music Series.

Hardink resides in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he holds the position of Principal Keyboard with the Utah Symphony and serves on the piano faculty of Westminster College. He is married to pianist Kimi Kawashima, and they are parents of twin boys, Luc and Derek.



**Stefan Dohr**

*Horn*

Originally Stefan Dohr learned to play the viola. One day he was given a hunting horn, and, after hearing a concert by the famous horn player Hermann Baumann, he came to the conclusion: "That horn sounds better than my viola!" After studying in Essen and Cologne he became Principal Horn of the Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, and engagements followed with the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice, and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester of Berlin before, in 1993, he finally became a member of the Berliner Philharmoniker. As a soloist he has collaborated with such conductors as Daniel Barenboim, Bernard Haitink, Claudio Abbado, and Sir Simon Rattle.

Along with the Classical and Romantic horn repertoire, he is also interested in contemporary works by Ligeti, Knussen, and Kirchner. Dohr has premiered many horn concertos dedicated to him, including those by Herbert Willi (2008), Jorge E. López (2009), Johannes Wallmann (2010), Toshio Hosokawa (2011) and Wolfgang Rihm (2014). Dohr, who prefers to spend his free time with his family, has taught as a visiting professor at the Hanns Eisler School of Music Berlin and at the Orchestra Academy.

## ARTISTS' PROFILES



**Keith Carrick**

*Xylorimba*

Keith Carrick joined the Utah Symphony as Principal Percussionist in 2012. From 2007 to 2012, he was Principal Percussion of the Sarasota Orchestra, and appeared as guest soloist with the orchestra on several occasions. While in Sarasota, Carrick was also on faculty at the State College of Florida. Carrick has performed and taught extensively across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Originally from Mt. Airy, Maryland, Carrick began his musical studies at age 8 in the public schools and at age 15 honed his classical training through the National Symphony Orchestra's Youth Fellowship Program. He went on to graduate from Boston University as a student of Tim Genis, and the New England Conservatory as a student of Will Hudgins.

Carrick can be heard on Andrew Beall's album *Deliverance* available through BMP records, and as a performer on the premiere performances and premiere recordings of Joan Tower's *Splendid Wood* and Gunther Schuller's *Grand Concerto for Percussion and Keyboards* available through Naxos records. He has attended the Tanglewood Music Center, Verbier Festival, and the Music Academy of the West. When not performing with the Utah Symphony, Carrick enjoys travelling, hiking, kayaking, and rafting with his wife Kyra.



**Eric Hopkins**

*Glockenspiel*

Eric Hopkins plays the dual role of percussion and Associate Principal Timpani in the symphony. His passion lies in both roles equally. Hopkins won first place in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's 2012 Modern Snare Drum Competition and first place in the Young Artist Competition at Alliance for the Arts in Southwest Florida. He is the recipient of the Big Arts Classical Music Award, New Leaf Arts Scholarship, David G. Robinson Performing Arts Scholarship, Tallahassee Music Guild Award, and the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce Scholarship. While at Florida State University, Hopkins was awarded the prestigious Theodore Presser Award. He can be heard as a vibraphone soloist on the CD, FSU Percussion Ensemble Vol. 1.

At the time of his appointment in 2013 at the age of 24, he was the youngest member of the Utah Symphony | Utah Opera. Hopkins earned his Master of Music degree in 2013 from the Manhattan School of Music, where he also served as a teacher in the Pre-college division. He studied in the Orchestral Program with the life-changing faculty of Chris Lamb, Duncan Patton, and She-e Wu. Hopkins is currently a percussion professor at Utah Valley University.

By Michael Clive

## COMMENTARY AND OVERVIEW: OLIVIER MESSIAEN'S *DES CANYONS AUX ÉTOILES...*

**T**hrough most of Olivier Messiaen's music was not written specifically for religious settings, virtually all of it expresses religious feeling. A devout Roman Catholic, Messiaen found the divine presence everywhere in nature, most especially in the songs of birds. All of his compositions reflect the deeply held religious faith that he constantly refreshed in his observations of nature.

Musical "scene paintings" that depict the natural world—perhaps Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* is the most famous example—are not uncommon in classical music, but no composer approached Messiaen in combining direct imitation of the sounds of nature with metaphorical expressions of divine creation. Born in 1908, Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of 11. His wide-ranging musical influences span rhythmic patterns from classical Greek and Hindu sources and melodies based on modes of transposition he developed from his own early compositions; he also experimented with "total serialism," an almost epistemological application of 12-tone "rows," and with Eastern musical sources including Japan and Indonesia.

If all this sounds mystical, perhaps it is. But Messiaen's deepest musical influence—apart from his Roman Catholic faith—was almost certainly his devotion to nature and in particular his love of birds. He was an accomplished ornithologist, and as a composer took the time to transcribe bird songs as musical notation. He was devoted to the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. To Messiaen's admirers, his music and his life are inseparable; they seem to be the worldly evidence of a saintly life, and his music reveals a sincerity of expression that seems as simple as nature itself in the listening, regardless of the complexity of its sources.

Commissioned in 1971 by the American philanthropist and arts patron Alice Tully to celebrate the bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence, *Des canyons aux étoiles...* is a suite of twelve orchestral movements arranged in three groupings of five, two, and five. When all twelve are performed together, the movements are operatic in scope, spanning more than an hour and a half.

Like Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*, Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles...* is intimately connected to a particular place in the American Southwest—in

# HISTORY OF THE MUSIC

this case, the state of Utah. Messiaen took inspiration from the landscape and the birds of the Beehive State while composing this suite, and was particularly moved by visiting Bryce Canyon National Park. He composed *Des canyons aux étoiles...* based on his detailed notes from visits to Bryce Canyon and Zion Park, always listening intently to the sounds of nature and transcribing the melodies in his notebooks. At Cedar Breaks the composer regarded the “wild and colorful beauty—a vast amphitheater plunging into a deep gorge.” In his notebook, he wrote the words “immense solitude.”

## “LE DÉSERT” (“THE DESERT”)

In the first movement, Messiaen’s musical reflections on Utah grandeur witness the meanings he discerned “written in stars,” and the colors and forms he saw in the desert.

## “LES ORIOLES” (“THE ORIOLES”)

Olivier Messiaen’s musical evocation of the sounds of nature, such as the orioles in *Des canyons aux étoiles...*, stands apart from examples of scene-painting by other composers. A lifelong student of ornithology who heard the voice of God in the songs of birds, Messiaen listened to nature with the ear of a documentarian and a prophet as well as a composer. His work in transcribing bird songs in musical notation is unequaled in the history of composition. His dedication and his

reverence are evident in “Les Orioles.”

## “CE QUI EST ÉCRIT SUR LES ÉTOILES” (“WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE STARS”)

In sections like “Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles” that engage full orchestra, Messiaen’s instrumentation goes to unusual lengths to emulate nature—for example, in its unusually large percussion section, requiring five percussionists to take charge of a wind machine, a thunder sheet, various gongs, bells, maracas, whip, bass drum, triangle, wood block, crotales, reco reco, tumba, and an instrument of Messiaen’s own invention, the geophone—a large drum filled with thousands of lead pellets.

## “LE COSSYPHE D’HEUGLIN” (“THE WHITE-BROWED ROBIN-CHAT”)

At the other extreme, movement IV, “Le Cossyphe d’Heuglin” (The white-browed robin-chat) is for solo pianist. But it requires an instrumentalist who can achieve a practically trance-like communion with Messiaen’s recreation of a bird in the wild. Messiaen created this movement, like much of his piano music, for his wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod. The white-browed robin-chat, or Heuglin’s robin, is a beguiling songbird found mainly in Africa whose “chat” is a melodious and highly variable song heard at dawn and dusk.

## “CEDAR BREAKS ET LE DON DE

## **CRAINTE” (“CEDAR BREAKS AND THE GIFT OF AWE”)**

Messiaen considered the feelings of awe he expresses in the “Cedar Breaks” movement to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. In his notebook he described the area’s “wild and colorful beauty—a vast amphitheater plunging into a deep gorge.” He remarked on its “immense solitude.” Perhaps no other composer could have combined both a literal recreation of the sounds of nature with original, classically composed music. The influential British composer and conductor Oliver Knussen noted: “Certainly a fantastic rushing sound (‘development of the sound of the wind’) from the whole orchestra [in this movement] was a most effective stroke.”

## **“APPEL INTERSTELLAIRE” (“INTERSTELLAR CALL”)**

Composed in 1971, the “Interstellar Call” is the earliest of the suite’s 12 movements, and was originally created to memorialize Messiaen’s friend Jean-Pierre Guézec, a French composer who died that year at age 36. The sounds of the horn haunt us in this movement with a call that is somehow intimate yet infinitely distant.

## **“BRYCE CANYON ET LES ROCHERS ROUGE-ORANGE” (“BRYCE CANYON AND THE RED-ORANGE ROCKS”)**

During his time in Utah, Messiaen was

particularly moved by visiting Bryce Canyon National Park. The suite’s movements describe his experiences of Bryce as a divine creation. The cathedral-like grandeur of the park’s rock formations echoes through movement seven.

## **“LES RESSUSCITÉS ET LE CHANT DE L’ÉTOILE ALDÉBARAN” (“THE RESURRECTED AND THE SONG OF THE STAR ALDEBARAN”)**

In the eighth movement of the suite, what we hear is quite literally Messiaen’s rendering of the music of the stars: a song of resurrection and of the star Aldebaran. The brightest star in the constellation Taurus, Aldebaran glows red in the heavens and is the 14th-brightest star in the night sky. Messiaen’s starscape transports us from the suite’s intimate observation of the nature around us to the furthest reaches of the heavens, finding the unity of divine creation in both—our small, fragile earth and the infinity of space.

## **“LE MOQUEUR POLYGLOTTE” (“THE MOCKINGBIRD”)**

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh movements of *Des canyons aux étoiles...* showcase the music of birds, a sound that Messiaen evoked with a kind of inspired precision that no other composer has ever matched. Messiaen knew his birds, and in their song he quite literally heard the voice of God

## HISTORY OF THE MUSIC

and the glories of divine creation.

### **"LA GRIVE DES BOIS" ("THE WOOD THRUSH")**

In movement ten, "La Grive de bois," we hear the song of the wood thrush, a bird that may be found in southwestern American locations such as Bryce Canyon as well as Mexico and Central America.

### **"OMAO, LEIOTHRIX, ELEPAIO, SHAMA"**

In the 11th movement, Messiaen's horizon widens to include species that can only be heard far from Utah: the omao, leothrix, 'elepaio, and shama, indigenous to Africa and the Hawaiian Islands. All are small songbirds that physically resemble the wood thrush — but, clearly, Messiaen wants us to hear the differences.

### **"ZION PARK ET LA CITÉ CÉLESTE" ("ZION PARK AND THE CELESTIAL CITY")**

The consummation of Messiaen's vision is expressed in the 12th movement, "Zion Park and the Celestial City," a paean to the glory of all creation.



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## MESSIAEN AND SYNESTHESIA

**A**nyone familiar with Olivier Messiaen's music knows that his scores often contain names of colors. In his *Traité de rythme, de couleurs, et d'ornithologie*, the composer elaborates on how the colors correspond to scales and chords. Already as a young boy, Olivier Messiaen was fascinated by colors. At the tender age of 10, he marveled at the stained-glass windows at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris—a somehow mystical experience which “marked him for life.” A decade later, the experience of meeting the Swiss artist Charles Blanc-Gatti—who apparently painted the sounds he heard from an organ—made a profound impact and intensified Messiaen's earlier impressions of the connections between colors and sounds:

*“And I realized that I also connected colors to sounds, but intellectually, not with the eyes. In fact, when I hear or read music, I always see color complexes in my mind that go with the sound complexes.”*

Synesthesia is when you hear music, but you see shapes. Or you hear a word or a name and instantly see a color. Synesthesia is a fancy name for when you experience one of your senses through another. For example, you might hear the name “Alex” and see green. Or you might read the word “street” and taste citrus fruit. The word “synesthesia” has Greek roots. It translates to “perceive together.”

Other famous people that have this rare and mysterious ability include Duke Ellington, Billy Joel, Vincent Van Gogh, Franz Liszt, and Tori Amos.

*“When I hear music, I see corresponding colors. I think everyone possesses this sixth sense, but only a few discover it. I discovered this disease at a painter friend's place. I tried to put these colors into what I wrote. I don't ask the performers to see the same colors as I do myself—by the way, this is not possible—but to see colors, each in his own way.” ~Messiaen*

## ARTISTS' PROFILES



**Christina Eve**  
Artist

CHRISTINA EVE is a musician and visual artist based in North America. Her rare neurological condition, synesthesia, merges the senses, allowing her to see colors and shapes when she hears music. Much of her work translates what she hears into visual form so others may see the beauty of sound.

In addition to portraying music, Christina uses aurally-stimulated images to illustrate other invisible things like grief, despair, hope, and redemption. Her current focus is to give voice to the complex and inexpressible experiences of humanity as a way to offer empathy and compassion, and to encourage others to seek out light and color hidden in the dark.

“As a visual artist, musician, and synesthete, I am excited to create these twelve pieces to accompany the performance of Messien’s *Des canyons aux étoiles...*”

Painting the music of fellow synesthete Messiaen is a delight because the rich colors and textures so integral to his compositions give me beautiful visual material with which to work. As a former orchestral musician, I’m honored that the Utah Symphony has asked me to collaborate in this new way as a “visual musician.” It is a joy to bring the synesthetic aspects of Messiaen’s work to the eyes of the listener, and I hope those who view the artwork will have an enriched appreciation for *Des canyons aux étoiles...*”

Eve’s work is available for viewing and purchase on-site as well as at [www.christinaeveartist.com](http://www.christinaeveartist.com)

“Tonight, we are honored to present a collection of 12 original pieces by artist and musician Christina Eve. Each body of work is representative of how she visually experiences each movement of Messiaen’s *Des Canyons aux étoiles...*”

Eve’s work is available for viewing and purchase on-site as well as at [www.christinaeveartist.com](http://www.christinaeveartist.com)

Individual 12X12 painting: \$500 each  
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