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THIERRY ESCAICH Biography

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 has composed in many genres and forms, always exploring new sound horizons. His catalogue numbers around 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*. In 2010 Escaich composed a ballet *The Lost Dancer*, premiered by the New York City Ballet, and 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 Cello Concerto for Emmanuelle Bertrand, a Concerto for Orchestra for the Orchestre de Paris performed at the inauguration of the new Philharmonie de Paris and a double concerto for Lisa Batiashvili and François Leleux co-commissioned by NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg and the New York Philharmonic.

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, 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.

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 2015/16 season include Escaich's debut performing with the Berliner Philharmoniker, and other concerto appearances with the Orchestra of the Mariinsky, Orchestre de Paris, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Cincinnati Symphony. As recitalist Escaich performs widely, including at the BBC Proms, Royal Festival Hall, San Francisco Symphony Hall, Mariinsky Theatre and performs improvisations to silent films at the Montreal Symphony Hall, the Philharmonie de Paris and Auditorium de Lyon. Premieres this season include a new orchestral work for the Cincinnati Symphony, a chamber work for the Great Mountains Music Festival and *Litanies pour un Jubilé*, a piece for choir, organ and ensemble for Strasbourg Cathedral.

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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