

Musical allusionist: the English writer DH Lawrence

a withering evocation of a performance of *Aida* with a description of Aaron's sexual impact on the Marchesa del Torre as 'like the fire-music putting Brunnhild to sleep', though the Marchesa's own tastes, ironically, incline to the more plebeian eroticism of chanteuse Yvette Guilbert. In a London awash with Tosti-loving philistines, Aaron recovers from flu during the 1919 epidemic by practising Debussy's *Pelléas*, and after he has fled to Italy discovers the Baroque purity of Pergolesi and Corelli.

Aaron's British ex-pat admirers, however, remember him playing 'that divine bit of Scriabin' – an anachronistic reference to the latter's 1914 London concerts, when he performed his own *Prometheus* – and there's a big discussion of Beecham's 1913 Russian season at Covent Garden: Aaron dismisses Rimsky-Korsakov's *Maid of Pskov* as 'artificial' and announces that he finds Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, 'which is all mass music practically, gives me more satisfaction than any other opera'. Lawrence tactfully refrains from telling us whether he agrees.

- **Verdi Aida**  
Sols; Rome Opera Orchestra / Solti  
Decca
- **Wagner Die Walküre – Magic Fire Music**  
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karajan  
DG
- **Yvette Guilbert Elle était très bien**  
Yvette Guilbert *sng*  
EPM
- **Debussy Pelléas et Mélisande**  
Sols; Berlin Philharmonic / Karajan  
Warner Classics
- **Tosti Addio**  
Rosa Ponselle *sop*  
Naxos Historical

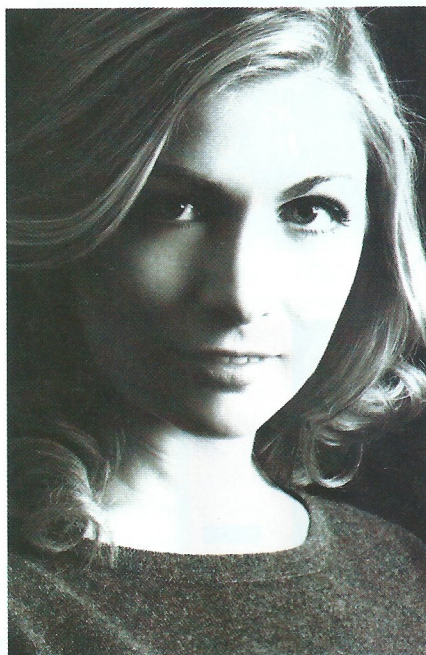
- **Pergolesi Flute Concerto in G major**  
Camillo Wanaussek *fl*  
Pro Musica Orchester Wien / Adler  
BnF
- **Corelli La folia**  
Michala Petri *rec* Mahan Esfahani *hpd*  
OUR Recordings
- **Scriabin Prometheus**  
Alexander Toradze *pf*  
Kirov Orchestra / Gergiev  
Philips
- **Rimsky-Korsakov The Maid of Pskov**  
Sols; Kirov Orchestra / Gergiev  
Philips
- **Mussorgsky Khovanshchina**  
Sols; Vienna State Opera Orchestra /  
Abbado  
DG

## Messiaen's world

### Pianist Cordelia Williams chooses 10 pieces by Olivier Messiaen

Since beginning my studies of Messiaen's great piano cycle *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, I have been blown away by the beauty and intricacy of this composer's writing. In addition to his deeply held Catholic faith, he combined many different musical layers: symbolism, theological concepts, works of literature and artistic images. These influences come together to create music which has an extraordinary range, both emotionally and acoustically.

From the *Vingt regards*, I have chosen three of my favourite movements. Each is a contemplation of the infant Jesus from a different perspective: Christmas Day



Blown away by Messiaen: pianist Cordelia Williams

itself, with clamouring bells announcing the birth; 'Silence', which meditates on the mystery of the Incarnation; and the 'Spirit of Joy', a wild and frenzied dance inspired by plainsong. I have been performing these pieces as part of my project 'Messiaen 2015: Between Heaven and the Clouds' ([messiaen2015.com](http://messiaen2015.com)).

*Visions de l'Amen*, for two pianos, is one of Messiaen's most exhilarating works to perform, not least for the charming imitation of birdsong. Like birdsong, the idea of 'liberation from time' is a recurring theme in Messiaen's compositions: the title of the *Quartet for the End of Time* refers to this idea. I also love the unbridled excitement of 'Dieu parmi nous', from the organ cycle *La Nativité du Seigneur*.

- **Eight Préludes – La colombe**  
Michel Béroff *pf*  
EMI
- **Turangalila-symphonie – Joie du sang des étoiles**  
CBSO / Rattle  
Warner Classics
- **Visions de l'Amen – Amen de la création**  
Maarten Bon, Reinbert de Leeuw *pfs*  
Naïve
- **O sacrum convivium!**  
Choir of St John's College,  
Cambridge / Guest  
Decca
- **Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus – Noël**  
Yvonne Loriod *pf*  
Apex
- **Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus – Regard de l'Esprit de joie**  
Yvonne Loriod *pf*  
Apex
- **L'Ascension – Alléluia sereins d'un âme qui désire le ciel**  
Thomas Trotter *org*  
Decca
- **La Nativité du Seigneur – Dieu parmi nous**  
Simon Preston *org*  
Decca
- **Quatuor pour la fin du Temps – Louange à l'éternité de Jésus**  
Alain Damiens *cl* Maryvonne Le Dizès *vn*  
Pierre Strauch *vc* Pierre-Laurent Aimard *pf*  
Decca
- **Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus – Regard du silence**  
Pierre-Laurent Aimard *pf*  
Teldec

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