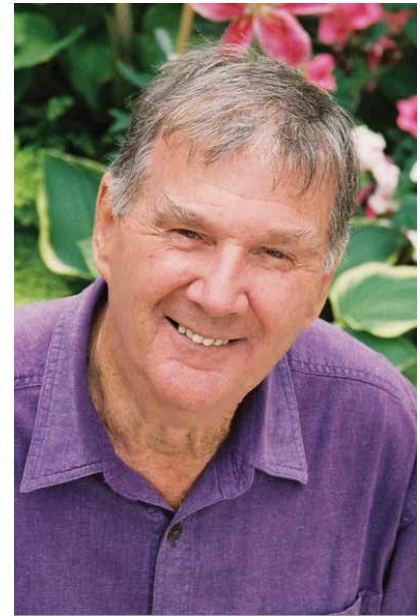


Olivier Messiaen catalogue d'oiseaux



Australian
premiere live
performance
by Michael
Kieran Harvey
of the complete
Catalogue of Birds

move



Peter Cundall
narrates
Messiaen's texts
that accompany
each tableau,
exploring the
environment and
sounds of 13 bird
species

CD-A

- 1 Peter Cundall introduction / part 1 2'53"
- 2 Narration and motifs 4'13"
- 3 I. The Alpine Chough 7'21"
- 4 Narration and motifs 3'08"
- 5 II. The Golden Oriole 7'33"
- 6 Narration and motifs 3'24"
- 7 III. The Blue Rock Thrush 13'02"
- 8 Narration and motifs 6'54"
- 9 IV. The Black-eared Wheatear 14'21"
- 10 Narration and motifs 2'00"
- 11 V. The Tawny Owl 5'48"

CD-B

- 1 Peter Cundall introduction / part 2 1'52"
- 2 Narration and motifs 1'42"
- 3 VI. The Woodlark 7'12"
- 4 Narration and motifs 10'57"
- 5 VII. The Reed Warbler 27'54"
- 6 Narration and motifs 2'22"
- 7 VIII. The Short-toed Lark 5'22"
- 8 Narration and motifs 5'57"
- 9 IX. Cetti's Warbler 10'33"

CD-C

- 1 Peter Cundall introduction / part 3 0'27"
- 2 Narration and motifs 5'16"
- 3 X. The Rock Thrush 16'33"
- 4 Narration and motifs 3'26"
- 5 XI. The Buzzard 9'43"
- 6 Narration and motifs 3'04"
- 7 XII. The Black Wheatear 8'01"
- 8 Narration and motifs 4'43"
- 9 XIII. The Curlew 12'14"

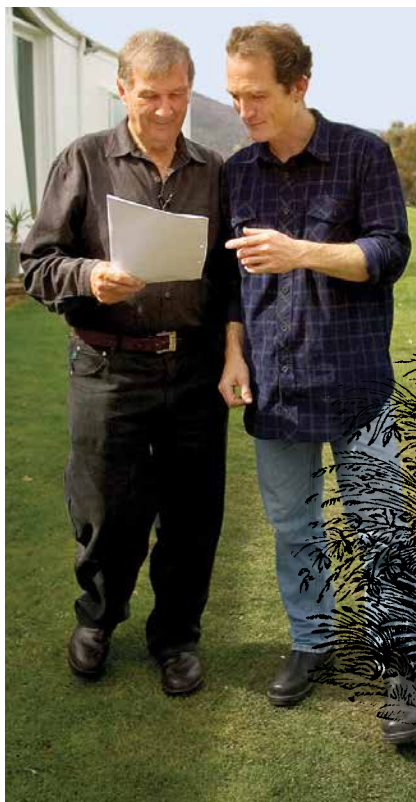
TOTAL PLAYING TIME 3 HOURS 30 MINUTES

Released 2005 by Move Records ...
for more information on recordings
by Michael Kieran Harvey,
move.com.au

"... *Catalogue d'oiseaux* is a work of prodigious dimensions, a phantasmagoria of sounds and forms, some airy and mysterious, others monumental, incandescent with emotion, framed by the composer to reveal with crystalline acuity the birdsong he recorded for years and the creatures' characters and habitats. ... The narrator, ABC gardening expert Peter Cundall, was, like Messiaen, a naturalist, bird-lover and prisoner of war in the 1940s. The empathic Harvey-Cundall partnership, and its championing of nature, was generous and sincere."

Lee Christofis, *The Australian*

This recording of the performance by Michael Kieran Harvey with narration by Peter Cundall of Messiaen's Catalogue d'oiseaux was presented by Ten Days on the Island over the 2nd and 3rd of April 2005 at Morrilla in Tasmania. The event was sponsored by Hydro Tasmania. For further details about Ten days on the Island visit their web site at tendays.org.au



move



gentle lament for the destruction of habitat became clear to me and gave the immense effort of performing it, and listening to it, powerful meaning. It seems we cannot change the course of global desertification because we cannot control ourselves, but some gifted individuals such as Olivier Messiaen can capture the disappearing species as music, which may live on a little longer.

Messiaen to me represents a lynchpin of the history of music, a direct link to the great genius and breadth of spirit of Bach, Beethoven, and Liszt. Recently it was proved scientifically through tracking mitochondrial DNA that 45 million years ago the ancestor of all the songbirds in the world migrated from Gondwana and spawned the 4600 species of songbirds in the world – Australia holds special significance as the crucible of the world's songbirds, and one could extrapolate, the birth of music itself. Written at the same time as *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, the harrowing vision of a world made silent by human's war on nature, the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* seems to be particularly pertinent to us now – a period of accelerating species extinctions – as a symbol of the diversity of life and a celebration of the real, the original musical virtuosos.

The types of music in the *Catalogue* are rarely heard these days, and are just as rare as the birdsongs portrayed. They require different ways of listening: different concepts of time, the 'universe in a nutshell' as it were. The central movement

for instance, *La Rousserole Effarvete*, describes a complete 27 hours in just half an hour. Like a fractal equation, even one chord of Messiaen presages a cosmos of creation. It is the complete antithesis of the 'easy listening' trend in much contemporary music, the outcome of the application of blinkered market strategies to an art form. Be courageous and open, and your patience will be rewarded, just as the heroic ornithologist must wait seemingly eons for the satisfaction of one glimpse, one snippet of glorious melody.

Michael Kieran Harvey

It was the brilliant Barrie Kosky who first put the idea of performing the entire *Catalogue d'oiseaux* in my head in the mid 90s, but at the time the prospect scared the daylights out of me – how could anyone perform these seven volumes at once, and more to the point why? Why subject an Australian audience and oneself to the most notoriously difficult, monumental and uncompromising French piano cycle ever written simply for the sake of a premiere?

I had first visited Tasmania in the late 1980s. After moving to Tasmania in 2003 and seeing first hand the effects of greed and stupidity on one of the most pristine environments in the world (as well as being almost run off the road several times by convoys of logging trucks), the idea of performing this cycle as a personal,

Each piece in the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* cycle follows a descriptive program, set out in prose by Olivier Messiaen as a preface to the score. The commentary is peppered with such gifts to the performer as 'ecstatic', 'explodes', 'mysterious' and 'jubilant'.

A1 Peter Cundall introduction

BOOK ONE

A2 Narration

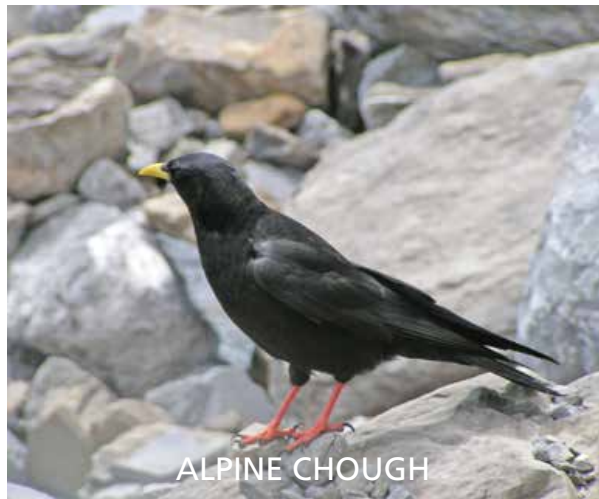
A3 I. *Le chocard des Alpes* / *The Alpine Chough* (*Coracia graculus*)

Strophe. The Alps of the Dauphiny, l'Oisans: the ascent towards the Meidje and its three glaciers.

First couplet. Near the Chancel refuge the lake of Puy-Vacher, marvellous landscape of summits, chasms and precipices.

An Alpine Chough, separated from its flock, calls as it crosses the precipice. Gliding, silent and majestic, the Golden Eagle, borne on currents of air. Raucous, ferocious cawings and snarlings of the Raven, lord of the high peaks. Varied cries of the Choughs, with their acrobatic flight (gliding, swooping, looping the loop) above the abyss. Antistrophe. Before St-Christophe-en-Oisans, the rocks of St-Christophe: a jumble of fallen slabs, boulders as if from Dante, heaped up by the giants of the Mountain.

Second couplet. An Alpine Chough surveys the landscape, hovering over the cliffs. The same calls and flights as in the first couplet. Epode. Les Ecrins: the amphitheatre of Bonne-Pierre, with its huge rocks lined up like giant phantoms ... or like the towers of a supernatural fortress!



A4 Narration

A5 II. *Le Lorient / The Golden Oriole* (*Oriolus oriolus*)

The end of June. Branderiaie de Gardépée (Charente), around 5.30 in the morning; Orgeval, around 6 o'clock: Les Maremberts (Loir et Cher) in midday sunlight. The Golden Oriole, yellowgold with black wings, twitters among the oak trees. Its song, flowing, golden, like the laughter of an exotic prince, evokes Africa or Asia, or some unknown world – filled with a rainbow light, the smiles of Leonardo da Vinci. In the woods and gardens, other birds: the rapid, decisive stanza of the Wren, the secretive caress of the Robin, the brio of the Blackbird, the long-short-long metre of the Black-throated Redstart, the ritual incantations of the Song Thrush. For a long while, tirelessly, the Garden Warblers pour forth their sweet virtuosity. The Chiffchaff adds its skipping droplets of water. Drowsy recollection of gold, of the rainbow the sun seemingly draws its light from the golden rays of the Oriole's song ...

A6 Narration

A7 III. *Le Merle bleu* / *The Blue Rock Thrush* (*Monticola solitarius*)

The month of June. Roussillon, the Vermilion Coast. Near Banyuls: Cap l'Abeille, Cap Rederis. Cliffs overhang the sea (Prussian-blue, sapphire-blue). Cries of Swifts; splashing water. The headlands stretch into theme-like crocodiles. Echoing in a rocky cleft, the Blue Rock Thrush sings. Its blue is in contrast to the sea: purple-blue, slate, satin, blue-black. Almost oriental, recalling music of Bali, its song merges with the sound of the waves. Also heard is the Thekla Lark which flutters in the sky above the vines and wild rosemary. Herring Gulls scream far out to sea. The cliffs are awesome. Arriving at their feet, the water breathes its last – a memory of the Blue Rock Thrush ('like a choir of women's voices in the distance ...').

BOOK TWO

A8 Narration

A9 IV. *Le Traquet Stapazin* / *The Black-eared Wheatear* (*Oenanthe hispanica*)

The end of June. Roussillon, the Vermilion Coast. Beyond Banyuls: Cap l'Abeille, Cap Rederis. Rocky cliffs, mountains, the sea, terraced vineyards. The vine-leaves are still green.

At the roadside. A Black-eared Wheatear.



Haughty, aristocratic, he struts on the stony ground in his finery of orange silk and black velvet - an inverted 'T' dividing the white of his tail, a mask of deep black covering his brow, cheeks and throat. A Spanish Grandee, one might say, on his way to a masked ball. His refrain is rapid, curt, abrupt. Nearby, among the vines, an Ortolan Bunting casts forth ecstatically its flute-toned repeated notes, with their mournful cadence. This is the 'garrigue': a wilderness filled with low prickly plants (gorse, rosemary, rock-rose, kermes oaks) from whence comes the exquisite song of an unseen Spectacled Warbler. Flying high and far out over the sea, the Herring Gulls can be heard: their cruel screeching, their dry, percussive sniggering. A trio of Ravens flies above the rocky cliffs with low, powerful cawings. A little Goldfinch sets its tiny bells tinkling.

Five o'clock in the morning. The red-gold disc of the sun rises from the sea and climbs into the sky. A golden halo spreads from the top of the disc, until the sun is entirely yellow-gold. The sun climbs higher. A band of light takes shape on the surface of the sea.

Nine in the morning. In the light and heat a succession of other voices: the Orphean Warbler, hidden in the cork-oaks, strikes its two flute-like notes; then the crystal fragments of the Corn Bunting, the demented gaiety of the Rock Bunting, the voluble Melodious Warbler – while, on the wing, the Thekla Lark: its song exultant, thrilling, mingled with shrill cries. Several

Black-eared Wheaters call to one another.
Nine in the evening. The sun, cloaked in blood and gold, sinks behind the mountains. The Albères mountains are covered in fire. The sea darkens. The sky turns from red to orange, then is stained a dream-like violet ... Final refrains of the Spectacled Warbler. In the darkening vines, three notes from the Ortolan Bunting. Harsh sniggers from a Herring Gull, miles out over the dark sea. Silence ...
Ten o'clock. Nightfall. A faint echo of the Spectacled Warbler.

BOOK THREE

A10 Narration

A11 **V. La Chouette Hulotte / The Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)**

Plumage flecked with brown and russet; huge facial discs; a look of solemnity, stamped with mystery, wisdom, the supernatural: and even more than its appearance, the voice of this nocturnal bird inspires terror. I have often heard it, in the depths of the night, towards two o'clock in the morning, in the woods of Orgeval, of St Germain en Laye, on the way from Petichet to Cholonge (Isère). Darkness, fear, a racing heartbeat, mewings and yelpings of the Little Owl, cries of the Long-eared Owl: and there - the call of the Tawny Owl: now cheerless and mournful, now vague and disquieting (with a strange shudder), now shouted in terror like the shriek of a murdered child! Silence. The



TAWNY OWL



WOODLARK

hooting is more distant, like a bell tolling from another world.

B1 Peter Cundall introduction 2

B2 Narration

B3 **VI. L'Alouette Lulu / The Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)**

From the col of the Grand Bois at St-Sauveur en Rue, in the mountains of the Forez. Pinewoods to the right of the road, meadows to the left. High in the sky; in the darkness, the Woodlark peel off two-by-two: a chromatic, fluid descent. Hidden in a thicket, in a clearing in the wood, a Nightingale responds, its biting tremolos set in contrast with the mysterious voice from on high. A Woodlark, invisible, draws near, fades. The trees and fields are dark and still. It is midnight.

BOOK FOUR

B4 Narration

B5 **VII. La Rousserolle Effarvatte / The Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)**

A great cycle, following 27 hours in the bird life of the reeds, lakes and marshes, and of the neighbouring woods and fields. The setting is the Sologne region, south of Orléans. **Midnight.** Music of the lakes, followed by a chorus of frogs, the booming notes of the Bittern.

3am. Along solo for the Reed Warbler, concealed among the reeds, rasping in timbre (like a xylophone, a squeaking cork, pizzicati on strings, a harp glissando), with something of that savage obsessiveness found only in reed birds. Cymbals, gongs and trombones - interspersed with a confusion of sounds from the marsh - mark the solemnity of night. Silence.

6am. Sunrise: pink, orange, mauve over the lake of the Waterlilies. A Blackbird duets joyfully with a Red-backed Shrike. A chuckling solo for the Redstart. The chords of sunrise intensify.

8am. The Yellow Irises. A medley of incisive calls: the raucous Pheasant, the Reed Bunting, weird laughter of the Green Woodpecker, the whistling glissando of the Starling, the Great Tit, nervous fluttering of the White Wagtail (exquisite in its garb of half-mourning).

Midday. The interminable insect trills of the Grasshopper Warbler.

5pm. Return of the Reed Warbler, alternating with the powerful tremolos of the Sedge Warbler, the harsh, obstinate call of the Great Reed Warbler, the singing harmonies of the Purple Foxgloves and the Waterlilies. The dry, flabby croak of a frog. A black-headed Gull gives chase. A Coot – black, its forehead marked with white – clucks sharply (a sound like stones dashed together), then tootles its little trumpet. A long, syncopated duet for two Reed, Warblers.

6pm. The Yellow Irises, and again the high trills of the Grasshopper Warbler. The



REED WARBLER



SHORT-TOED LARK

Skylark rockets heavenwards in jubilation, answered by the frogs in the lake. A Water Rail, unseen, screams like a strangled pig – falling, fading. Silence.

9pm. Sunset: red, orange, violet over the lake of the Irises. The Bittern booms, a solemn, awesome blast. The blood-coloured disc is mirrored in the lake: the sun merges with its reflection as it sinks into the water. The sky is a deep violet.

Midnight. The darkness is profound, like the resonance of a tam-tam. The Nightingale strikes up, its phrases by turn biting, mysterious. The confused sounds of the marsh ... a frog stirs ... the cymbals, gongs, trombones. **3am.** Another scherzo for the Reed Warbler. Chorus of frogs. The mysterious, brittle music of the ponds fades into the mist. The Bittern booms.

BOOK FIVE

B6 Narration

B7 VIII. L'Alouette
Calandrelle / The Short-
toed Lark (*Calandrella*
brachydactyla)

Provence in July. Les Baux, Les Alpilles: arid rocky terrain, with broom and cypress. The Crau, a stony wilderness. Fierce light and heat.

2pm. The piping call of the Short-toed Lark. Chorus of cicadas, the staccato alarm of the Kestrel, the dull long-short-long of the Quail. A two-part invention for the Short-toed Lark and the Crested Lark.

Silence. The cicadas, Kestrel, Quail.

4pm. Alone in the heat and solitude of mid-afternoon the brief phrases of the Short-toed Lark. **6pm.** The Skylark erupts into song, vehement, jubilant. Again the Short-toed Lark.

B8 Narration

B9 **IX. La Bouscarle /**
Cetti's Warbler (*Celtia telti*)

The last days of April. Saint-Brice, La Trache, Bourg-Charente, the banks of the Charente and of the Charenton, a small tributary. A sudden burst of violence: the enraged call of a Cetti's Warbler, hidden in the reeds and brambles. A Moorhen cackles. Sharp cries, then a flash of colour as a Kingfisher skims across the water. A fine day of light and shadow. The willows and poplars are reflected in the green of the water. Rich chords hymn the calm flow of the river: joyful fanfares of the Blackbird, the bluegreen shimmer of the Kingfisher, the pearly cascades of a Robin. Again the furious Cetti's Warbler. And what is this strange noise? – a saw? a scythe being sharpened? the scraping of a guero? It is the Corn Crake, repeating its iambic rhythm in the tall grasses of the meadow. The Song Thrush adds its fierce incantations. Accents and tremolos from the little Wren. The river continues calmly, its phrases interspersed with a medley of song. The Chaffinch exclaims in triumph. A Blackcap adds its flute-like descant. The muffled rhythm of the Hoopoe. A halo of



CETTI'S WARBLER



ROCK THRUSH

harmony (like a harpsichord blended with a gong), distant moonstruck chords and piercing flashes: the Nightingale. Nuptial flight of the Kingfisher, its colours spinning in the sunlight – forget-me-not, sapphire, emerald. Intense, nervous rustlings of the Sand Martin. A last cadence for the river, a gentle secretive cadenza for the Robin. The Yellow Wagtail, its head coloured ash-blue, steps elegantly along the bank. The Kingfisher dives; then arrows past in a jeweled blur. Silence. A final tirade from the Cetti's Warbler.

BOOK SIX

C1 Peter Cundall introduction 3

C2 Narration

C3 **X. Le Merle de roche /**
The Rock Thrush (*Monticola*
saxabilis)

Hérault in May. The cirque of Mourèze: dolomites, rocks jumbled into fantastic forms.

Night, moonlight. Looming overall, an immense hand of stone! Towards the end of night, the Eagle Owl utters its powerful and sombre hooting. The female responds with muffled accents, a sinister hilarity whose rhythm merges into the racing pulse of terror. Dawn breaks: the varied cries of Jackdaws. Then the Black Redstart sets up its monotonous chant, alternating with a noise like pearls raffling, paper being creased, or rustling silk. The rocks are

terrifying, stone, prehistoric creatures – Stegosaurus, Diplodocus – stand guard, a group by Max Ernst, a cortège of cowed ghosts in stone, bearing the corpse of a woman whose hair trails on the ground. Perched on a pinnacle, the Rock Thrush! How fine he is! Blue head, russet tail, black wings, vivid orange breast. He sings through the hours of the sun, warmth and light: ten in the morning, five in the afternoon – and his song is gleaming orange, like his plumage! The moments of silence are rhythmical, measured in long durations. The Black Redstart resumes its rustling. Last cries of the Jackdaws.

Dusk fades. The Eagle Owl hoots: its voice echoes among the rocks, heralding darkness and dread. There, still, is the giant hand, raised above the stone monsters, a magic sign!

BOOK SEVEN

C4 Narration

C5 **XI. La Buse variable / The Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)**

In the Dauphiny, la Matheysine. The broad open countryside of Petichet, at the end of Lake Laffrey, beneath the bald mountain of the Grand Serre.

Introduction. The cry of the Buzzard as it flies to and fro. It circles, the orbits of its flight covering the whole landscape. It descends slowly.

First couplet. Chaffinch, Yellow hammer. Mewing of the Buzzard. Refrain of the Mistle Thrush.



Second couplet. The same, with the Goldfinch also. Refrain of the Mistle Thrush.

Third couplet. The Swallows. A Red-backed Shrike gives the alarm. Combat: six Caffion Crows mob the Buzzard for its prey. Deep ferocious cawings from the one, grated fluttering and weird mewing from the other. Refrain of the Mistle Thrush. Hurried strophes of the Whitethroat.

Coda. The cry of the Buzzard; it circles slowly, soaring upwards.

C6 Narration

C7 **XII. La Traquet nieur / The Black Wheatear (*Oenanthe teucura*)**

The month of May. A fine Sunny morning. Cap Béar, beneath Port-Vendres (Roussillion). Rocky cliffs, garrigue, the sea woven with blue and sapphire-blue, silvered by the sunlight. The joy of the blue sea. The song of the Black Wheatear. Dialogue between a Blue Rock Thrush, more caressing, and the Black Wheatear, more exuberant, punctuated by the harking of the Herring Gull; the piercing screams of Swifts and the curt interjections of Black-eared Wheatears. Black, its tail white with black markings, the Black Wheatear is perched on a rocky pinnacle at the base of the cliff. A Spectacled Warbler is heard from the garrigue. A breeze ruffles the sea, ever blue and sapphire-blue, and silvered by the sunlight. The joy of the blue sea.

C8 Narration

C9 XIII. Le Courlis cendré
/ The Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

The island of Ushaint (Enez Eusa), off the west coast of Brittany. On the headland of Pern one can see a large bird with streaked plumage and russet markings, a grey-brown bird standing upright with a long beak curved like a sickle or yataghan: the Curlew! This is its song: sad, slow tremolos, chromatic accents, wild trills, and a mournful repeated glissando which expresses all the desolation of the seashore. On the headland of Feunteun-Velen, lashed by the noise of the waves, the circles of water birds: the cruel call of the Black-headed Gull, the rhythmic horn-calls of the Herring Gull, the fluted melody of the Redshank, the repeated notes of the Turnstone, the piping trills of the Oystercatcher, and others besides: the Little Ringed Plover, the Common Gull, the Guillemot, the Little Tern and the Sandwich Tern. The water extends as far as the eye can see. Little by little, fog and the night spread over the sea. All is dark and dreadful. From amidst the jagged rocks, the lighthouse of Créac'h lets out a dismal boom: it is the alarm! Again a number of bird calls, and the lament of the Curlew repeating as it flies faraway. Cold black night, the splash of the surf.



This narration as delivered by Peter Cundall and printed here, was translated by Peter Hill in 1988, from Olivier Messiaen's introduction to the printed scores.

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Olivier Messiaen
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Move Records,
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move.com.au

*The birds are the real artists –
they are the true originators of my pieces*

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908-1992)

Olivier Messiaen was unquestionably one of the 20th century's greatest composers and probably the century's most influential composition teacher. He wrote harmonically colourful, and rhythmically complex music, informed by a deep religious faith and a fascination for birdsong and the diversity of nature.

He began his musical studies at the Paris Conservatoire aged only eleven. An exceptional organist, he wrote many works for the instrument, and from 1931 until his death was organist at La Trinité in Paris. At the outbreak of World War II, Messiaen was mobilised as a soldier and, one year later, he was taken prisoner after the fall of France. He spent the next year in a POW camp in Silesia, in conditions of extreme cold and deprivation. While he was interned during 1941 he composed arguably his most famous work, *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time) to play with three fellow prisoners, a clarinetist, a violinist and a cellist.

As a teacher of analysis and composition in Paris, Messiaen attracted a group of young avant-garde students, which included Boulez, Stockhausen and Xenakis.

In 1961 he married Yvonne Loriod, a brilliant pianist who became a great exponent of, and inspiration for, much of his music.

A keen ornithologist, Messiaen went on many field expeditions collecting examples of birdsong, at all hours of the day and night. He transcribed the songs in meticulous detail and incorporated not only the birdsongs, but also the landscapes he encountered into the massive *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1956–58). In one interview he acknowledged that birdsong had become a refuge for him: 'in my darkest hours, when my uselessness is brutally revealed to me'.





Australian-based pianist **Michael Kieran Harvey** was born in Sydney and studied piano in Canberra with Alan Jenkins, at the Sydney Conservatorium under Gordon Watson, and at the Liszt Academy, Budapest, under the Director, Professor Sándor Falvai. His career has been notable for its consistent diversity and wide repertoire. Renowned for his performances of new music, he has especially promoted the works of Australian composers, internationally and within Australia. He has performed most of Messiaen's works

involving piano to high critical acclaim. Michael Kieran Harvey's distinctive pianism has been recognised by numerous national and international awards, including the Grand Prix in the Ivo Pogorelich Piano Competition, Pasadena (1993), the Debussy Medal, Paris (1986), four consecutive Australian 'Mo' awards for best classical artist (1997-2000), the Australian government's

Centenary Medal for services to Australian music (2002), and most recently he has been twice nominated for the Helpmann Award (2003-4). In 2005 the estate of the late Susan Remington established the Michael Kieran Harvey Scholarship in honour of his contribution to Australian music, and to encourage future directions in keyboard art music. He is currently artist-in-residence at the Victorian College of the Arts and Fellow of the Faculty of Music, Melbourne University.

Peter Cundall (narrator) has been gardening since he was a child during the 1930s. Born in Manchester England in 1927 he first started gardening after school and during holidays by laying turf lawns. Towards the end of World War II he was conscripted, joining the British Parachute Regiment and serving in Europe and the Middle East. After leaving the British army he continued with gardening activities in his spare time. Eventually he enlisted in the Australian army in 1950 as a means of getting to this country more quickly. After leaving the forces he worked full time as a self-employed gardener and landscaper in northern Tasmania. He started radio broadcasting in 1967 with one of the world's first gardening talkback programs from a Launceston commercial station. In 1969 he began making weekly television programs for ABC-TV called *It's Growing*, which provided practical gardening information. During this period he helped form the Organic Gardening and Farming Society, personally forming 20 branches in different parts of Tasmania during a two-year period. Today Peter is best known as the presenter of the nationwide *Gardening Australia* program on ABC TV. After experiencing three wars he continues to be actively involved with any anti-war movements, is deeply involved with environmental campaigns and is strongly opposed to any form of racial, religious, class, sexual or any other form of discrimination.

Catalogue d'oiseaux was composed for solo piano by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1958. The thirteen tableaux (sub-divided into seven books), which collectively comprise this work, form one of the great landmarks of 20th century piano literature. In broad terms it is an attempt to classify and record the sounds of birds in the same way naturalists like Audubon have catalogued their physical appearance. But it is not just the songs of birds that are projected through this music but also the intense colours of avian plumage, and the awe Messiaen felt for birds as being, 'like angels or resurrected souls, free in flight and at one with God'. Each piece explores the calls, and the environment of a single bird species, many of which were then endangered or on the point of extinction. Performances of the entire work are extremely rare and are recognised as a musical feat.

This live recording for *Ten Days on the Island* is an Australian Premiere played in three parts by Michael Kieran Harvey over one weekend in April 2005. To help explain the work, Tasmania's own naturalist and bird lover, Peter Cundall, lovingly narrates the composer's prose notes for each tableau.





