

MEDIA RELEASE



David Robertson brings the wonder of the Utah desert to the Concert Hall in an international collaboration

Wed 9 Mar, 8pm; Fri 11 Mar, 8pm; Sat 12 Mar, 8pm
Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House



22 FEBRUARY 2016: The Sydney Opera House Concert Hall will be transformed by the sights and sounds of the Utah desert when SSO Chief Conductor David Robertson presents the Asia-Pacific premiere of a new realisation of Messiaen's monumental creation, *From the Canyons to the Stars*.

Award-winning American photographer and musician Deborah O'Grady followed in the footsteps of French composer Messiaen to capture the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Canyonlands National Park in Utah for this production. Her images will be projected behind the orchestra in this striking new presentation, co-commissioned by the SSO, St. Louis Symphony and several other organisations.

Robertson, who is embarking on his third year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the SSO, says he wanted to work with a video artist in order to add a visual component that illustrates the liveliness and colour of the landscape reflected in Messiaen's music.

"I wanted to convey not only the beauty of Messiaen's music, but also the almost magical place the composer found when he went to the Canyonlands" Robertson says. "Deborah O'Grady has a way of looking at the desert in the way that great artists do when they paint a landscape or a still life. I can hardly wait to share this multi-sensory experience with audiences, who will feel as though they have visited the Utah desert by the end of the concert."

Virtuosic pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard will perform what is perhaps the most difficult 'piano concerto' ever written when he joins the SSO on stage for this awe-inspiring music. The Lyon-born pianist won the 1973 Messiaen Competition at the age of 16 and was appointed three years later by Pierre Boulez as the first solo pianist for Ensemble InterContemporain (where Robertson was later Music Director 1992-2000).

Laurent is a leading interpreter of Messiaen's piano music, having known the composer and studied piano at the Paris Conservatoire with Yvonne Loriod (Messiaen's wife). Today Laurent is Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival and Artist in Residence with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra for the 2015-16 season.



Principal Partner



From the Canyons to the Stars began with a photograph: Messiaen came across a picture of the awe-inspiring Bryce Canyon in Utah and declared it the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. He visited in person and this ambitious evening-length creation was the result. Messiaen even invented his own earth percussion instrument – the geophone – to evoke the sounds of loose gravel delicately blown by the wind.

When this new presentation of *From the Canyons to the Stars* had its world premiere with St Louis Symphony and Robertson in January, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said “O’Grady’s projections were exceptionally well-done”: “Many of her images were breathtaking, with sculpted, striated rocks, the shadows of clouds moving like the ghosts of long-dead dinosaurs and dense fields of stars that burst from the blackness.” Alex Ross for *The New Yorker* said Robertson “shaped ‘Canyons’ with a sure hand”: “...he respected Messiaen’s meditateness, his silences”.

Head to the SSO’s No.1 destination for news and multimedia, Backstage News+, to [WATCH](#) a video of David Robertson discussing *From the Canyons to the Stars* and [GO](#) inside the studio of photographer Deborah O’Grady.

#ENDS#

CONCERT DETAILS

FROM THE CANYONS TO THE STARS

Wed 9 Mar, 8pm

Fri 11 Mar, 8pm

Sat 12 Mar, 8pm

Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall

David Robertson conductor

Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano

Robert Johnson horn

Rebecca Lagos xylorimba

Timothy Constable glockenspiel

Deborah O’Grady visual production

Seth Reiser scenic and lighting designer

MESSIAEN Des Canyons aux étoiles (From the Canyons to the Stars)
with visual production by Deborah O’Grady

Commissioned by the SSO in collaboration with St Louis Symphony, Cal Performances, The Los Angeles Philharmonic and Washington DC Performing Arts.

Bookings through Sydney Symphony Orchestra 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on 8215 4600 or select your own seat at: www.sydneysymphony.com

Image: St Louis Symphony performing From the Canyons to the Stars with David Robertson. Credit Steven Jarvi.

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Principal Partner

