

SUMMER PIANO FESTIVAL: MESSIAEN'S QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE, 6PM
DUKE'S HALL



Please be aware that many of our events are filmed and photographed for the Academy's archive and for promotional purposes. For more information, see our privacy policy at ram.ac.uk/privacy.

The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create. We are the meeting point between the traditions of the past and the talent of the future, seeking out and supporting the musicians today whose music will move the world tomorrow.

PATRON
HM The King

PRESIDENT
HRH The Duchess of Gloucester KG GCVO

PRINCIPAL
Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood CBE

All details are correct at time of publication.
Registered Charity No 310007. Royal Academy of Music ©2026. All rights reserved. V3.4



Olivier Messiaen (1908-92)

Quartet for the End of Time

Liturgie de cristal

Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du

Temps

Abîme des oiseaux

Intermède

Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus

Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes

Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

Cherry Ge piano

Elfida Su Turan violin

Stefan Bulyha clarinet

Tianao Pan cello

The 2026 Summer Piano Festival concludes with a performance of Messiaen's most visionary and universal work, *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Captured in May 1940, Messiaen was taken to a prisoner-of-war camp at Görlitz in Silesia and in the dead of winter wrote the quartet for the instruments on hand among the camp's inmates: violin, cello, clarinet, and - himself playing - piano. The first performance took place before a large audience of prisoners. Messiaen's beautiful, volcanic music paints the End of Time as the end of past and future, and the beginning of eternity.

It was his most ambitious work so far – a sequence of eight movements that spoke to this Biblical passage from Revelations: *'I saw a mighty angel descend from heaven, clad in mist; and a rainbow was upon his head. His face was like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire. He set his right foot on the sea, his left foot on the earth, and standing thus on sea and earth he lifted his hand to heaven and swore by Him who liveth for*

ever and ever, saying: There shall be time no longer; but on the day of the trumpet of the seventh angel, the mystery of God shall be finished. '

Messiaen wrote the following explanations of each movement:

I. *Liturgy of crystal*: between the morning hours of three and four, the awakening of the birds: a thrush or a nightingale soloist improvises, amid notes of shining sound and a halo of trills that lose themselves high in the trees. Transpose this to the religious plane: you will have the harmonious silence of heaven.

II. *Vocalise, for the angel who announces the end of Time*: the first and third parts (very short) evoke the power of that mighty angel, his hair a rainbow and his clothing mist, who places one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. Between these sections are the ineffable harmonies of heaven. From the piano, soft cascades of blue-orange chords, encircling with their distant carillon the plainchant-like *recitativo* of the violin and cello.

III. *Abyss of the birds* (clarinet solo): the abyss is Time, with its sadnesses and tedium. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and for jubilant outpourings of song!

IV. *Interlude* (scherzo - clarinet violin and cello): of a more outgoing character than the other movements but related to them, nonetheless, by various melodic references.

V. *Praise to the eternity of Jesus* (cello and piano): Jesus is here considered as one with the Word. A long phrase,

infinitely slow, by the cello expatiates with love and reverence on the everlastingness of the Word, mighty and dulcet, "which the years can in no way exhaust." Majestically the melody unfolds itself at a distance both intimate and awesome. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

VI. *Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets*: rhythmically the most idiosyncratic movement of the set. The four instruments in unison give the effect of gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the Apocalypse attend various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announces the consummation of the mystery of God). Use of extended note values, augmented or diminished rhythmic patterns, non-retrogradable rhythms – a systematic use of values which, read from left to right or from right to left, remain the same. Music of stone, formidable sonority; movement as irresistible as steel, as huge blocks of livid fury or ice-like frenzy. Listen particularly to the terrifying *fortissimo* of the theme in augmentation and with change of register of its different notes, toward the end of the piece.

VII. *Cluster of rainbows, for the angel who announces the end of Time*: here certain passages from the second movement return. The mighty angel appears, and in particular the rainbow that envelops him (the rainbow, symbol of peace, of wisdom, of every quiver of luminosity and sound). In my dreamings I hear and see ordered melodies and chords, familiar hues and forms; then, following this transitory stage I pass into the unreal and submit ecstatically to a vortex, a dizzying interpenetration of superhuman sounds and colors. These

fiery swords, these rivers of blue-orange lava, these sudden stars: Behold the cluster, behold the rainbow!

VIII. *Praise to the immortality of Jesus (violin and piano)*: expansive violin solo balancing the cello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second glorification? It addresses itself more specifically to the second aspect of Jesus – to Jesus the man, to the Word made flesh, raised up immortal from the dead so as to communicate His life to us. It is total love. Its slow rising to a supreme point is the ascension of man toward his God, of the Son of God toward his Father, of the mortal newly made divine toward paradise.

Cherry Ge

Cherry Ge is a second-year postgraduate pianist studying with Professor Christopher Elton. Her vivid artistry sits at the intersection of interpretation, collaboration, and social practice. Praised by The Straits Times (Singapore) for her 'keen sense for musical storytelling,' and expressive nuance, she is known for her communicative depth and emotional range. Since achieving the highest score in Singapore's Grade 8 ABRSM piano exams at just nine years old, she has performed at major venues including Wigmore Hall, the Borhuslava Martinů Hall, Southbank Centre, and Cadogan Hall- where she made her concerto debut with conductor Natalia Luis-Bassa- as well as at leading festivals such as Aldeburgh, Petworth and Chipping Campden. Recent highlights include a performance at Wigmore Hall as part of the Royal Academy of Music Soloist Ensemble under Jonathan Berman. Her forthcoming Wigmore Hall solo recital debut in November 2026 marks an exciting new chapter in her growing career.

Thank you for supporting the dedicated young pianists of the Academy. They really appreciate your support.

The Autumn Piano Festival is on 10 November 2026 and celebrates Janáček's visit to Duke's Hall in 1926, a hundred years ago. We're performing – complete - his passionate, utterly original solo piano music, his chamber duo music, and his witty pieces for piano solo and ensemble, Concertino and Capriccio. See you there!