

## About the Performer

Renowned organist and improviser, **Thierry Escaich** continues to play a prominent role in the creation of contemporary music. Since 1990, when he ended his studies at the Paris Conservatoire having received eight first prizes, his first works have been rewarded with the Franco-American Florence Blumenthal Foundation prize.

More prizes have followed - awarded by the French Institute and SACEM (including the *Grand Prix de la musique symphonique* in 2004) after he was awarded the *Grand Prix des Lycéens* in 2002 en route to receiving the 2003 Victoires de la Musique *Composer of the Year* award.

His musical universe has been described as one "of rare expressive density" (Télérama), "in which are combined breathless or impassioned elans and rhythmic motors that are often violent and obstinate, readily drawing from the sources of Gregorian plainchant" (Le Monde). This universe, "made up of dramatic frothing strained to exhaustion and the often-brutal confrontation of opposing sound worlds" (Grégoire Hetzel), is embodied in such works as *Le Chant des Ténèbres* (1992) and his *Organ Concerto* (1995) as well as *Résurgences* for trumpet and orchestra (2002) and his oratorio *Le Dernier Evangile* (2000).

His orchestral works feature in the repertoires of various leading European orchestras such as the Orchestra of the Beethovenhalle (Bonn), the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France (Paris) and l'Orchestre National de Lille where Thierry Escaich was in residence between 2003 and 2005. His vocal and chamber music is performed all over the globe by such ensembles as the BBC Singers, A Sei Voci, the Ludwig Quartet, Olivier Latry and the Wanderer Trio... His CD of orchestral works (Accord/Universal) was awarded the *Diapason d'Or de l'année* in 2002.

Organist at St-Etienne-du-Mont in Paris since 1997 (where he succeeded Maurice Duruflé), Thierry Escaich leads a parallel career as an international organist which has led to him becoming an ambassador of the great French organ school of improvisation. This is attested by his diverse recordings under the Chamade and Calliope labels which have been awarded numerous musical distinctions such as the *Grand Prix de la Nouvelle Académie du Disque* (1996) and the "Choc du Monde de la musique" (1998) for his interpretations of works by Brahms. The "incandescent breath and inexhaustible energy" (Diapason) of his improvisations make him a worthy successor to the grand masters such as G. Franck and CocherEAU.

Lastly, his passion for the cinema has motivated him to improvise on the piano and the organ, and to compose for silent film as demonstrated in his musical accompaniment of Frank Borzage's *L'Heure suprême*, commissioned by the Louvre in 1990.

Thierry Escaich has been professor of composition and improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire since 1992.

If you've enjoyed tonight's program, you might enjoy **Pipedreams**, a radio program for the King of Instruments. Tune into KSJN, 99.5 FM, Sunday evenings at 9:00 PM for *The Organ Calendar* and **Pipedreams**, hosted by Michael Barone of Minnesota Public Radio.

## Program

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Te Deum</i>  | Charles Tournemire<br>(1870-1939) |
| <i>Two Chorale Preludes</i><br>O gott, Du Fromer Gott<br>Hertzlich tut mir erfreuen | Johannes Brahms<br>(1833-1897)    |
| <i>Prelude and Fugue in G minor</i>   | Johannes Brahms                   |
| <i>Improvisation of a prelude and fugue in romantic style on a submitted theme</i>  |                                   |
| <i>Récitatif and Final from Sonata No 1 in F-minor</i>                              | Felix Mendelssohn<br>(1809-1847)  |
| INTERMISSION  |                                   |
| <i>"Joie et Clarté des Corps Glorieux"</i>  | Olivier Messiaen<br>(1908-1992)   |
| <i>III Poèmes for Orgue</i><br>Eaux Natales<br>Le Masque<br>Vers l'espérance        | Thierry Escaich<br>(b. 1965)      |
| <i>"The World awaiting the Saviour"</i><br>(from the <i>Symphonie Passion</i> )     | Marcel Dupré<br>(1886-1971)       |
| <i>Free Improvisation on a submitted theme</i>                                      |                                   |

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