

BBC
SCOTTISH SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
75TH ANNIVERSARY

James Dillon's Nine Rivers

World Premiere of complete work

Sunday, 14 November 2010

Glasgow City Halls and Old Fruitmarket

Glasgow's
Concert Halls
Glasgow Royal
Concert Hall
City Halls
Old Fruitmarket

BBC
RADIO

90 – 93FM



MEMBERS OF THE
BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BBC SINGERS

conducted by Simon Joly

LES PERCUSSIONS DE STRASBOURG

STEVEN SCHICK: solo percussion

CARL FAIA: software and sound design,
audio engineer (parts 6-9 *Nine Rivers*)

IAN DEARDEN/DAVID SHEPPARD
(of Sound Intermedia: sound projection)

ROSS KARRE: video design
(*La coupure*)

JAIME OLIVER: software and sound design,
audio engineer (*La coupure*)

STEVEN SCHICK
and JESSICA COTTIS,
conductors

(please note change to originally advertised artist;
Rolf Gupta who was scheduled to conduct is unwell)

with thanks also to:

William Brent: software and sound
design (*La coupure*) and Carl Faia/IRCAM
(for the original sound/video software *La coupure*)

Glasgow's Concert Halls and the BBC
SSO would like to thank Bell Percussion,
London for their assistance with
percussion instruments for this event.

Welcome to City Halls and to this afternoon's
landmark event, jointly-promoted by the BBC and
Glasgow's Concert Halls.

We are delighted to mark James Dillon's 60th birthday year
with this first ever complete performance of *Nine Rivers*,
his most ambitious work to date. All of today's event, except
the pre-concert introduction, is being recorded for future
broadcast on BBC Radio 3: bbc.co.uk/radio3

We hope you enjoy the afternoon.

Gavin Reid, Director BBC SSO
Svend Brown, Artistic Director Glasgow's Concert Halls

The performance of *Nine Rivers* is expected to finish at
approximately 6.15pm.

PLEASE ENSURE ALL MOBILE TELEPHONES AND
DIGITAL ALARMS ARE SWITCHED OFF.

Please keep coughs and sneezes well muffled ~ thank you.
The use of cameras, video or sound-recording equipment is
prohibited. Latecomers will be admitted at a suitable break
in performance.

Programme: complimentary.
Please note that all seating in both venues is unreserved.

James Dillon's Nine Rivers

RECITAL ROOM

12.30-c.1.10pm

Introduction to *Nine Rivers*

BBC Radio 3 presenter Tom Service in conversation
with composer James Dillon and Steven Schick
(free to ticket-holders).

GRAND HALL, 1.30pm

Part I (Leukosis)

1. East 11th St NY 10003 (1982) (c.20')
(for six percussionists)

"through the wild splash and the surging of the tides.
Last winter, deaf as a child's dark night,
I ran and ran! And the drifting peninsulas
Have never known such conquering delight!"

followed without a break by

2. L'ECRAN parfum (1988) (c.10')*
(for six violins and three percussion)

"Lulled by storms I drifted seaward from sleep"

followed without a break by

3. Viriditas (1993-1994) (c.17')
(for 16 solo voices: 4 sopranos; 4 altos; 4 tenors;
4 basses + two percussionists)

BBC Singers, conducted by Simon Joly

"I dreamed of green nights and glittering snow"

followed without a break by

4. La femme invisible (1989) (c.17')*
(for chamber ensemble)

"I remained like a woman kneeling . . ."

Interval (c.15')

Audience to move from the
Grand Hall to the Old Fruitmarket

OLD FRUITMARKET, c.3.10pm

Part II (Iosis)

5. La coupure (1989-2000) (c.60')
Steven Schick, percussion (and live electronics)

"I watched the lightning tear the sky apart"

Interval (c.15')

Audience to move from the
Old Fruitmarket to the Grand Hall

GRAND HALL, c.4.30pm

Part III (Melanosis)

6. L'œuvre au noir (1990) (c.11')+
(for chamber ensemble and live electronics)

"I have seen a low-lying sun stained with secret horrors
Lightning stained with congealed violet"

followed without a break by

7. Éileadh sguaipe (1990) (c.12')+
(for brass ensemble, percussion and live electronics)

"Eternal weaver of unmoving blues"

followed without a break by

8. Introitus (1989-1990) (c.28')+
(for twelve strings, computer-generated tape
and live electronics)

"Feverish skies where I was free to roam"

followed without a break by

9. Oceanos (1985-1996) (c.28')+
(for 16 voices (BBC Singers), chamber ensemble
and live electronics)

"Of all the waters of Europe – I only want
The black, cold puddle where, in the perfumed dusk;
A child full of sadness squats down to launch
A boat frail as a butterfly in May"

Steven Schick + Jessica Cottis *

NINE RIVERS

James Dillon (born 1950)

The largest of my cycles has the generic title of *Nine Rivers* and is a cycle of nine works interlinked by a series of 'tropes' to make an overall duration of around three and a half hours. I began work on the cycle in 1982 and for a number of reasons it was not finished until 1999, with the fifth work *La coupure* the last to be completed. The actual order of working on the cycle was dictated to some extent by the complex commissioning process and the demands of other more urgent commissions at the time.

The work employs a large ensemble of woodwind, brass, percussion, keyboards, harp, strings and electronics. *La coupure* is the fifth work, poised as a central pivot in the sequence, it is the only work for a solo performer and introduces electronics to the cycle: it 'cuts' into the acoustic sound world.

The starting point for *Nine Rivers* was a number of loosely connected themes, the first being the ancient idea of river as a metaphor for time. Perhaps the most famous use of the metaphor appears in the Heraclitus epigram "*no man steps into the same river twice*", which encapsulates what has been called his philosophy of flux or change. Lesser known is another of his epigrams on time where he curiously describes time as "*like a child playing chequers*" and invokes the role of chance in the universe. These two epigrams play both a conceptual and concrete role in the way I approach the cycle. The idea of flux or change captures the very fleeting essence of sound itself, musical form of course engages with memory and renders meaning to a set of emerging or fleeting properties.

"*the systematic derangement of the senses.*" Rimbaud

For a long time I was fascinated by Rimbaud's strange poem *Le Bateau Ivre* with its images of the freed boat crashing through rivers towards the ocean, and somehow the memory of this work attached itself to this project. In fact the project in the process of working on it also began to gather many other apparently unrelated cross-references, the drift of influences became an essential aspect of the work, for example, musical patterning and the interlacing techniques of Celtic knot symbols, current time speculation in quantum mechanics – for a while in the 1970s to subsidise my composition studies I worked on part of the CERN project at Imperial College in London. Like some medieval cathedral the idea for the project began to absorb and integrate ideas from different sources. These apparently unconnected ideas offered different conceptualities of time.

The number 'nine' is seen in most cultures as a mystical number and in classical mythology it was said there were nine rivers of hell. However the number nine in fact emerged organically as I began to make calculations (for a synopsis of the cycle) around the notion of a journey through timbral rivers. From the early grid-like organisation of *East 11th St.* to the measured chaotic organisation of *Oceanos* (the river of rivers) there are parallel transformations of figure, timbre and space. The synopsis for the cycle was completed whilst working on *East 11th St.* (1981-82). The nine works divide into three parts of proportionally equal time-lengths and each of these three parts represents a stage within a particular conceptualisation of timbre, identified in the original synopsis with the three principal stages in the alchemical transformation of matter:

'*leukosis*' - whitening

'*iosis*' - redenning

'*melanosis*' - blackening

Nine Rivers is a mythos of imagined waters, of fairies and snake-gods, a melancholy of flow, a requiem for poisoned rivers, an odyssey, a theatre of memory . . .

The etymology of the word river (in English) in fact contains a double and apparently contradictory history deriving from the French for both 'flow' and 'sever (or cut)'

River: (ME. – (O) Fr. *Riviere*)

1. A copious stream of water flowing in a channel towards the sea or ocean, a lake or another stream.

A copious stream or flow of (something).

Used euphemistically for the boundary between life and death - 1790

River: (f. *Rive*)

2. One who rives – who tears apart, or in pieces, who severs, divides or cleaves. To rend by means of shock, violent impact, or pressure.

(Shorter Oxford Dictionary)

and *Nine Rivers* as a project, and as I have already mentioned, has a number of overlapping themes, interrelated through this 'double' image of the river.

"*united as opposites*" Heraclitus

A principal theme examines and confronts differing conceptions of musical time. Time is simultaneously something that has an obvious reality, is 'concrete' but is also clearly constructed (in a cultural sense) and there will inevitably be a certain ambiguity between these differences. For example at a technical level how musical order and ideas of continuity or 'flow' may be influenced by analytic, philosophic or poetic import. The ancient mythic association of river with 'time' and 'memory' is combined here with a formal schemata derived from the physical sciences, where the analysis of fluid dynamics and pattern formation is 'crossed' with more poetic concerns to form an interlace.

Time is treated primarily both as continuous in the sense of musical 'flow' and discontinuous in the sense of 'interruption' ('the cut' of *La coupure*). These two extremes of organisation form an axis from which musical processes are derived. However in a musical work it should be emphasised that we primarily experience time as a space of intermittent glimpses, spontaneous flashes of order and disorder, resonances, tensions and release and it is within this 'fuzzy' domain that the spectre of any time-space-form continuum will lie. *Nine Rivers* is a '*speculum temporum*' a theatre of memory in the ancient sense of the idea, a connected symbolic space which contains a proliferation of references and cross references. Musical gesture, figures and ornaments run through and across the individual works.

One important aspect of my work during this period was the confrontation with electronics both as an extension of the soundscape and as a model for the re-imagination of acoustic music. Here I may take on board aspects of research into how an acoustic instrument might be examined beyond the realms of immediate perception. Secondly, how one might, metaphorically or otherwise, integrate electronic processes

such as attenuation, inter-modulation, and so on, or post-electronic temporality, into the fabric of musical construction. Working with computers, the artifice of fabrication (an accepted price of computer technology) has inevitably infected the strategies of composition; a certain 'feeling' arises from the technical apparatus. Much of my work in this field has been driven by the idea of turning the machines against themselves. Certainly when I originally worked at IRCAM in 1989 on *Introitus* (part 8) it was not a popular notion. I think 20 years later there is a maturity around the place which can imagine such approaches. My use of chaotic algorithms (from fluid mechanics) in the construction of *Introitus*, for example, involved their being applied to the very architecture of the sound sources.

Since *Nine Rivers*, the correspondence between 'matter' and 'energy' in my work has become, in some ways, more promiscuous, or at least has taken a number of sub-routes. This I see as part of a wider strategy; my need for long term projects is important here. A great deal of what I refer to is now operating at a conceptual level, bearing in mind the notion that language is not only a means of communication but an integral part of reason itself, and conceptualisation is an attempt 'to grasp' something. It could be argued that the attempt to translate, for example, 'electronic processes' into, for example, musical processes may be a case of simply transposing abstraction, however in effect it is quite concrete and this is important. Nature for me is the primary source of reference; however, I am extremely aware of what a loaded term "nature" is. What I refer to is the relationship between the structure of something and the forces to which that structure may be subject. A part of our experience of nature is abstract anyway. For example, if one admires the beauty of ripple patterns on the sand, when analysed they are merely the result of the ebb and flow of the tide in combination with the loose molecular structure of the beach. An interest in electronic processes can be both negative and positive from analysis to fabrication there is a kind of trans-substantiation. Musical form is a kind of growth process. If, however, one conceives of time as a set of fractured zones as I do in *La coupure*, for example, then what becomes of this process of growth? In some ways it may be seen as closer to filmic procedures. I want to some extent to play with the character of the material, its setting and re-setting suggests not a movement from one state to another, but a kind of floating point against which memory is constituted as a net of subjective interactions, what Joyce calls "*a merry go raum*". I refer here specifically to an example of how one branch of acoustics namely electronic music may stimulate a revision of musical practice. The task for me has always been to seek an utterance which does not act merely as a sign for ideas, but actually brings them into being through a kind of differentiation. Not a "mimetic" act, but an essential action.

Programme note and background material © James Dillon and kindly supplied by the composer's publisher, Edition Peters www.editionpeters.com

BIOGRAPHIES

JAMES DILLON

James Dillon's music is the product of a fertile creative imagination and a multi-faceted and independent musical personality. His work defies simple categorisation. During the 1970s and early '80s clearly touched by Varèse and Xenakis, works such as ... *Once Upon a Time and East 11th St. NY 10003* show a fascination with timbre and space. Some of these influences prevail in later works too, in the colossal orchestral *helle Nacht*, a work of obsessive intensity and hair-raising fierceness, and its immediate predecessor *Überschreiten* for 16 players commissioned by the London Sinfonietta. During much of the '80s and '90s he worked on his large scale cycle *Nine Rivers* a chain of nine compositions, over three hours of music which in exploring relationships between 'flow' and 'turbulence' draws inspiration from such diverse influences as complexity theory, renaissance alchemy, Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* and Celtic knot patterns. The organisation of works into 'cycles' or 'series' is a distinctive feature of Dillon's compositions. His work has been extensively recorded on CD and his complete works are published by Peters Edition, London and range through solos, chamber music, orchestral, concertos, electro-acoustic works and opera. Dillon's creativity reflects a restless curiosity and a singular vision.

Some indication of the esteem in which Dillon's music is held is given by the performers, festivals and institutions who have supported his music over many years, including the Arditti String Quartet, the BBC, IRCAM, the Huddersfield Festival, Réseau Varèse, Donaueschinger Musiktage, Casa da Musica and many others. He is the (unique) recipient of three Royal Philharmonic Society awards for composition, and two British Academy awards for composition. In 2007 Dillon took up the position of Professor of Composition at the University of Minnesota.

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STEVEN SCHICK

Percussionist, conductor and author Steven Schick was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For the past thirty years he has championed contemporary percussion music as a performer and teacher, by commissioning and premiering more than one hundred new works for percussion. Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego and a Consulting Artist in Percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. He was the percussionist of the Bang on a Can All-Stars of New York City from 1992-2002, and from 2000 to 2004 served as Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève in Geneva, Switzerland. Schick is founder and Artistic Director of the percussion group, "red fish blue fish," and director of "Roots and Rhizomes," a summer course on contemporary percussion music hosted at the Banff Centre for the Arts. In 2007 assumed the post of Music Director and conductor of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, and is the principal guest conductor of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE).

CARL FAIA

Carl Faia is an American composer, live electronics designer and performer. Born in 1962 he studied composition at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Florida State University, and the Royal Academy of Music in Denmark on a Fulbright grant. Since 1995 he has been active as a live electronics designer working at IRCAM in Paris, at the CIRM in Nice, where he was Studio Director, and since 2003 as a freelance composer and live electronics designer. He has collaborated with numerous composers including James Dillon, Jonathan Harvey, Harrison Birtwistle and Fausto Romitelli. As a performer, he has presented works with theremins, electric guitars or prepared piano, and live electronics. From September 2009 he has also held the post as lecturer in the School of Arts at Brunel University, London.

JESSICA COTTIS

Jessica Cottis is assistant conductor to Donald Runnicles at the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Fellow in Conducting at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. A first class honours graduate of the Australian National University, she continued her studies as an organist in Paris and also read law at the University of London after a hand injury halted her playing career. In 2009 she graduated with distinction in conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded the top prizes.

Jessica Cottis recently made her BBC Proms conducting debut at the James Dillon Composer Portrait event at the Royal College of Music. She works regularly as associate conductor of the Azalea Ensemble and as guest conductor of Red Note Ensemble. She recently conducted the London Sinfonietta for the Varèse Festival and has conducted opera premieres including Rory Boyle's *Kaspar Hauser* (RSAMD), and Anna Meredith's *Tarantula in Petrol Blue* (Aldeburgh Festival). For Bloomsbury Opera she has conducted *Die Zauberflöte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Fledermaus* and *Hansel and Gretel*. During the 2010-2011 season she will conduct the BBC SSO at its 'Our Planet' concerts, here at City Halls.

LES PERCUSSIONS DE STRASBOURG

In 1962, six percussionists co-founded the first Western percussion ensemble: Les Percussions de Strasbourg. Their commitment to new compositions inspired composers and audiences alike with a sense of urgency in the quest for innovative forms of musical expression. Pioneers in their field, they commissioned hundreds of works, founding the tradition of repertoire for classical percussion ensemble; today, their prodigious history includes 250 world premieres. Forty-five years later, Les Percussions de Strasbourg continues to demonstrate the exceptional longevity and energy of that vision. How should we now continue that vision? What is our role in social, as well as musical terms? What is our niche in the landscape of contemporary music? What is our vision for new musical creations today? Why six percussionists? The group continues to evolve: the current ensemble members share more than fifteen years of performing experience, standing proudly on the shoulders of the group founders.

For more information please visit:
www.percussionsdestrasbourg.com

François Papirer was born in 1970 in Mulhouse, France.
Keiko Nakamura was born in 1955 in Fukuoka, Japan.
Olaf Tzschoppe was born in 1962 in Kiel, Germany.
Bernard Lesage was born in 1968 in St Maur des Fossés, France.
Claude Ferrier was born in 1964 in Avignon, France.
Jean-Paul Bernard was born in 1957 in Toulon, France.

BBC SINGERS

Chief Conductor: David Hill

As a vital resource in the BBC's music output, the BBC Singers hold a unique position in British musical life. Performing everything from Byrd to Birtwistle, the versatility of this virtuoso 24-voice ensemble is second to none. The choir's unrivalled expertise in performing the latest contemporary scores has brought about creative relationships with some of the most important composers and conductors of the 20th and 21st centuries – including Poulenc, Britten and Boulez.

Equally at home on the concert platform and in the recording studio, this world-class ensemble is committed to sharing its enthusiasm and creative expertise through its nationwide outreach programme. This includes regular collaborations with schoolchildren, youth choirs and the amateur choral community, as well as with the professional composers, singers and conductors of tomorrow.

For more information please visit: bbc.co.uk/singers

Sopranos

Jennifer Adams-Barbaro
Margaret Feaviour
Micaela Haslam
Olivia Robinson

Altos

Margaret Cameron
Jacqueline Fox
Rebecca Lodge
Cherith Millburn-Fryer

Tenors

Christopher Bowen
Stephen Jeffes
Edward Goater
Neil MacKenzie

Basses

Stephen Charlesworth
Jamie W Hall
Adrian Peacock
Andrew Rupp

SIMON JOLY

Simon Joly conducted the premiere of James Dillon's *Viriditas* at the Ars Musica Festival Brussels in 1994, in a concert which included Brian Ferneyhough's *Missa Brevis*. His numerous premieres with the BBC Singers include works by Xenakis, Berio, Tavener, Maxwell Davies, Bryars, Knussen, Bedford (First Symphony), Mason, Bainbridge, Finnissy, Delz, Sawyer, Swayne and numerous other leading composers. BBC Proms performances include Steve Reich's *The Desert Music* and Giles Swayne's *Cry*.

Simon Joly also conducted Henze's *The Raft of the Medusa* in a concert with the BBC Singers and BBC Symphony Orchestra; and Birtwistle's *..agm...*, as well as later preparing it for Pierre Boulez.

MEMBERS OF THE BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violins

Clio Gould (guest)
Olivier Lemoine
Peter Cynfryn Jones
Jane Mackenzie
Christopher Latham
Elizabeth Flack

Violas

Scott Dickinson
Andrew Berridge

Cellos

Martin Storey
Sian Bell

Double Basses

Nicholas Bayley
Iain Crawford

Flutes

Rosemary Lock
Ewan Robertson

Oboes

Christopher Redgate (guest)
James Horan

Clarinets

Barry Deacon
Simon Butterworth

Soprano/Alto/Baritone Saxophone

Gareth Brady (guest)
Naomi Sullivan (guest)

Bassoon

Peter Wesley

Horns

Etienne Cutajar
Jeremy Bushell

Trumpets

Mark O'Keeffe
Hedley Benson

Trombone

Robert Holliday

Bass Trombone

Alan Mathison

Tuba

Andrew Duncan (guest)

Piano/Organ

Lynda Cochrane (guest)

Harp

Helen Thomson (guest)

Chief Conductor:

Donald Runnicles

Principal Guest Conductor:

Ilan Volkov

Associate Guest Conductor:

Andrew Manze

Artist-in-Association:

Matthias Pintscher

Conductor Laureate:

Jerzy Maksymiuk

Now in its 75th year, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is regarded by many as one of Europe's leading orchestras and enjoys its position as a cultural flagship for the BBC and for Scotland. It appears annually at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival, as well as at major festivals throughout the world. Based here at City Halls since 2006, the orchestra enjoys a busy schedule of concerts and broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Television. Donald Runnicles became the orchestra's Chief Conductor in 2009, succeeding Ilan Volkov, who is now Principal Guest Conductor.

A recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for best orchestra, the BBC SSO is Scotland's leading champion of new music, and has established strong links with local communities through its innovative learning programme. It also has many commercial recordings to its credit, many of which have been awarded prizes, including four *Gramophone Awards*. Among its recent activities are the UK's first complete cycle of Martinů Piano Concertos, a concert performance in Glasgow of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's opera *Taverner*, and last month's very successful tour of Austria and Germany with Chief Conductor Donald Runnicles.

For further information please visit: bbc.co.uk/bbcso

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