



Classical MUSIC

DEADLINE FOR PREMIERES 24 JANUARY - 6 FEBRUARY: 18 DECEMBER *NOTE EARLY DEADLINE

PREMIERES

WORLD PREMIERES (UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED) IN THE UK AND IRELAND, 13 - 26 DECEMBER

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Premiere of the fortnight

American composer Augusta Reed Thomas will soon see the completion of her *Helios Choros* trilogy when the London Symphony Orchestra, under Daniel Harding, perform the second instalment on 14 December. It may seem strange that the trilogy's second part is premiered after the final section has already been played, but a brief look at the compositional process resolves this. 'You are often asked to write 15-minute pieces for orchestra to open a programme and I happened to have three requests come in at a similar time,' says Thomas. 'So I was very upfront and called the orchestras and asked if they would take a 15-minute movement of a larger work and they responded very positively.'

All three sections of the work were completed in 2006 and then the different calendars of each orchestra dictated that *Helios Choros I* was played by the Dallas Symphony, conducted by Andrew Davis in May 2007, *Helios III* by the Orchestra of Paris, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach in December 2007 and finally *Helios Choros II* this December.

The project has resulted in a large-scale orchestral work, and Thomas made a conscious decision to focus her energies at this stage in her career. 'At 40 I quit all my jobs and decided to devote myself to

composing full-time, which was a very scary thing to do. It felt like the right thing to do though, as in right with a capital R. The scale of *Helios* fitted in with this. It was something that I could give my complete devotion, centredness and soul to.'

Thomas's score aims for a pulsating energy, enhanced by a clarity that Ms Reed's describes as 'very crystal clear music, but never commercial, nor kitsch or shallow. The notes are clean even when a complex of ideas are overlapping.' This is displayed clearest in the large percussion section. Thomas almost exclusively uses tuned percussion. 'I hear pitch very precisely, so a cabasa or a vibraslap doesn't really fit my sound. The percussion is, put simply, mainly bell sounds. What you need for this work is excellent mallet players.' The scoring and clarity of Thomas's scores combine to give a vibrancy and rhythmic energy which is apt, as she sees all her work as potential ballets. 'I think all my music should be danced. I want it to feel like it has an inner drive, a self propelling rhythm that gives it life.' Following this premiere Thomas hopes to see the work given in full as a ballet.

Ben Crick

Augusta Reed Thomas' Helios Choros II will be premiered by the London Symphony Orchestra on 14 December at the Barbican, London. The concert begins at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £7-£32, box office tel 020 7638 8891. www.barbican.org.uk

14 DECEMBER

Augusta Reed Thomas *Helios Choros II* (London Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Harding, conductor, Barbican, London, 7.30pm)