

TIME, SPACE AND CHANGE

ED HUGHES

Sinfonia | Media Vita | Cuckmere: A Portrait



New Music Players
Orchestra of Sound and Light
Nicholas Smith | Ed Hughes

ED HUGHES (b.1968): TIME, SPACE AND CHANGE

Cuckmere: A Portrait (2016-18)

30:31

1	I.	Prelude	2:00
2	II.	Autumn	6:30
3	III.	Interlude I	1:30
4	IV.	Winter	6:30
5	V.	Interlude II	1:23
6	VI.	Spring	4:58
7	VII.	Interlude III	1:27
8	VIII.	Summer	6:15

Orchestra of Sound and Light conducted by **Ed Hughes**

9 Media Vita (1991)

10:34

New Music Players Piano Trio:

Susanne Stanzeleit (violin) | Joe Giddey (cello) | Richard Casey (piano)

Sinfonia (2018)

30:23

10	I.	Agincourt	2:32
11	II.	Stella Celi Extirpavit	2:54
12	III.	Veni Sancte Spiritus	7:07
13	IV.	In ieiunio et fletu	6:34
14	V.	Silver Swan	4:20
15	VI.	In Nomine	6:56

New Music Players conducted by **Nicholas Smith**

Total duration:

71:35

TIME, SPACE AND CHANGE

Time, space, change, immutability, the divine and the mortal, the sacred and the profane: these themes and the tensions between them are at the heart of Ed Hughes' rich and nuanced musical language. All three pieces on this CD – *Cuckmere: A Portrait*, *Media Vita*, and *Sinfonia* – traverse historical and geographical landscapes, exploring the perennial cycles of the natural world and illuminating those elements of the past that have been long obscured by assumed familiarity and the passage of time.

As the composer of scores for silent films (by Sergei Eisenstein and Yasujiro Ozu) Hughes is no stranger to the illustrative, but the immediacy in these three works is born of his intense musical curiosity in the complexities and contradictions of human experience and in our place, through time, in the natural world.

Cuckmere: A Portrait (2016-18), originally conceived as a live score for a film by Cesca Eaton, depicts a year in the life of the River Cuckmere and Haven, an area of undeveloped flood plain in East Sussex where the river winds towards the feet of the chalk cliffs known as The Seven Sisters, and out into the English Channel. Its chalk grasslands grazed by sheep and cattle, Cuckmere Haven is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. The river's oxbow lakes, their curves echoed by the Downs above them, have inspired many artists, including Eric Ravilious, whose well-known 1939 watercolour 'Cuckmere Haven' captured this iconic natural landscape at a moment of profound change.

Though there are fleeting moments of reflective stillness in Hughes' *Portrait*, the piece is about movement; movement across a landscape, movement within the landscape, and movement that is the unstoppable flow of the river, the passage

of time and the changing of the seasons. Scored for large chamber ensemble, the work comprises eight movements; one for each season – Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer, a prelude, and three interludes creating a dual sense of reflection and anticipation. In the final interlude Hughes gives us the musical equivalent of a close-up – an oystercatcher, perhaps, breaking its prey on a pebble, or a tuft of lambswool snagged in the blackthorn. The restlessness of the river, whose name, Cuckmere, derives from an Old English word meaning ‘fast-flowing’, is ever-present, as are its famous looping meanders, in phrases that repeat, loop, and mirror one another so that the music itself is always looking forwards and backwards, evoking the tension inherent in the landscape – the vibrant, vital relationship between endurance and mutability.

Media Vita (1991) is the earliest work here, written when Hughes was a young graduate, so it’s fitting that it should act as a hinge between these two longer, more recent pieces. Based on John Sheppard’s 16th century motet and scored for piano trio, *Media Vita* represents a formative, thematic stage on the musical journey that brings us back up to date with *Sinfonia*.

Scored for a large chamber ensemble of modern instruments, and comprising six movements, each inspired by English vocal music written between 1400 and 1600, *Sinfonia* (2018) is an expansive and exhilarating expression of Hughes’ deep love of compositional history and of his curiosity for human stories. As he says of the process, ‘I wanted this to be a creative response to English music of this period that would acknowledge my debt to the emotional life of this music, with its soaring lines (like cathedrals), its curious structures, its high culture (for chapels, courts) but with the popular or vernacular also sometimes reflected in the legacy of notated manuscripts, its balance between the sacred and the profane.’ So it is that we hear the arrows fly and the hatchets land in *Agincourt*, the fervent prayers of a populace threatened by plague in the deceptively

delicate *Stella Celi Extirpavit*. But visual culture, film, and modern music are essential elements in Hughes work, too, and *Sinfonia* ends with *In Nomine*, rooted in a chant tune based on town criers of the 16th century which Hughes in turn touts around 1930s London, taking in a lavender seller's song, a children's game and even a car horn.

Eleanor Knight

Eleanor Knight is a short story writer and librettist whose work has appeared in anthologies and been performed in numerous London settings, from the Royal Opera House to the Elephant & Castle roundabout.



THE MUSIC

Cuckmere: A Portrait (2016-18, world premiere)

Cesca Eaton's film *Cuckmere: A Portrait* with aerial photography by Fergus Kennedy, and my orchestral score, were commissioned for live cinema performance by the Brighton Festival. The project depicts a year in the life of the River Cuckmere, although it was planned, filmed and scored over a period of two years (2016-2018). Cesca and I decided to use moving images and music to create a kind of poetic, contemporary silent film with music, with two main themes: (1) changing seasons (time); (2) the river's journey from source to sea (space).

The music is inspired by the film's vision of unfolding terrain across land, river and towards the sea, and its sudden and dramatic changes (e.g. from the undulating shapes of downland to the chalky cliff edges). There are contrasts between delicate close-up ground shots, and dramatic aerial shots, which link horizontal with vertical perspectives on the natural world, and these are matched to some of the horizontal and vertical musical ideas (for example the wide intervals in the main theme for 'Winter').

Music also reflects the large-scale contrasts and moods of passing seasons. This is done with a structure in which four musical movements, using contrasting tempos, themes and harmonies, align with film sequences corresponding to the changing seasons of Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer.

An electronic prelude and three electronic interludes introduce and connect these four movements, so that the work weaves between sonic and immersive textures, and purely instrumental musical sequences.

Ed Hughes

To view the film please visit: <https://vimeo.com/edhughescomposer/cuckmere>

Media Vita (1991)

Media Vita was written for Andrew Toovey's ensemble Ixion and first performed by them at the Brighton Festival. The performers were the composer Michael Finnissy (piano), the violinist Charles Mutter and cellist/composer Zoë Martlew. It was inspired by the intense and powerful harmonies of 'Media vita', a motet by John Sheppard (1515-1558). It changes between an earthy, rhythmic character to passages which are more ecstatic and free of regular pulse.

Ed Hughes

Sinfonia (2018, world premiere)

Sinfonia was written for the New Music Players. These are world class musicians whose musical intelligence, instrumental skill and multiple interests produce amazingly vivid performances and premieres, and give the New Music Players its distinctive edge. *Sinfonia* reaches back into the world of fifteenth and sixteenth century English composers. Like my first composition teachers, Michael Finnissy and Robin Holloway, I have always been interested in musical history and indeed it is a love of music and curiosity about the practice of music that primarily motivates me as a composer.

Sinfonia is in six movements and scored for a large instrumental ensemble, but one that isn't as big as an orchestra. In essence, five of the movements are 'portraits' of pre-existing works by early English composers, with a sixth which is free-form. But these homages turn into something new and different. The originals were vocal compositions, written down in musical notation between about 1400 and 1600. My set of six portraits are for modern instruments, which is already a radical transformation of the originals. But the new pieces go further and incorporate modern twists and spins, reflecting all sorts of influences and interests, many derived from the influence of modern composers and some

from my work with film (thinking of rhythmic clashes in moving images, superimpositions, and sharp contrasts).

Sinfonia is the Italian word for symphony – the languages of Europe reflect shared cultures. It also means a small orchestra. However, in this context I am not writing a work that uses the forms of a traditional four movement symphony. Instead, I am interested in the word's connotation of 'agreement' or 'concord of sound' in the sense of a suite of short movements which are connected - not through shared musical themes, but rather to imply a journey through time and personal understanding of what it means to compose out of the historical.

The movements of *Sinfonia* are:

1. Agincourt

The *Agincourt Carol* is an anonymous English folk song, in verse and chorus form, written down some time in the early 15th Century – probably soon after the 1415 Battle of Agincourt where Henry V defeated Charles VI in the Pas-de-Calais region of France. It exists on the Trinity Carol Roll. It has been adapted and performed by many composers and artists including Maddy Prior and June Tabor, and the Californian folk band the Poxy Boggards (these are on Youtube).

The word 'carol' is derived from 'carole' (Old French) meaning circle dance. Initially popular as dance songs from 1150-1350, carols became processional songs to accompany religious mystery plays. So while modern English usage associates the carol with Christmas, this was not always the case. For me the dance-like quality of the *Agincourt Carol* is a reminder of the visceral function of the original - celebration of a victory, certainly, but perhaps even more so a palpable expression of relief in delivery from the trauma of battle. As a result, there is a quality of joy (not sentiment) in this material, a quality often found in

great music, including music of complexity. While the rhythm and tune of *Agincourt Carol* are incisive, is this a good moment to be appropriating a battle-hardened tune all about attacking continental Europe? Perhaps not. But modern folk adaptations and performances show that this is music which really transcends its origins to become something choreographic and timeless – all about dance and movement. And while it speaks vividly through the language of its own time, with buzzing syncopations and rich, crunchy, third-based harmonies, one realises that its characteristic English musical qualities owe a lot to *positive* engagement with continental developments. In my own composition, to create a sort of layered, fractured, coloristic effect, I have overlaid the basic 3/4 metre with material in 5/8 and 2/4, and for good measure thrown in a canon in three voices!

2. Stella Celi Extirpavit

John Cooke lived from c.1385 to 1442. His *Stella Celi Extirpavit* is a 'three-voice descant motet' in the Old Hall Manuscript. The parallel shapes and curious cadences are characteristic of the period – enriched with delicate touches of third-based harmonies in the middle of phrases rather than at their endings. Thus I was drawn to this rather beautiful little composition. But I realised my response was too abstract and 'aesthetic' when I read that this apparently opaque Latin text was a fervent prayer to the mother of God to save the population from the terrible effects of the plague. It was a monophonic chant in various versions before it became the subject of polyphonic composition for several 15th century composers, Cooke amongst the first. The scholar Christopher Macklin wrote an article¹ reflecting on the story of this text and its

¹ Macklin, C. (2010). Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the *Stella celi extirpavit*. *Early Music History*, 29, 1-31

associated chants and compositions and suggested that it is through these manuscripts we can glimpse the shadow of the plague under which so many lived. Further, Cooke was a member of Henry V's household chapel in 1413. Macklin states that Cooke travelled to Agincourt with the king and was present at the historic victory over the French in 1415. So this apparently remote and abstract Latin composition is the other side of the Agincourt coin, in the sense of its concern with deep human agony.

This is how I composed this movement of *Sinfonia*. I began by copying the original into shorthand notation:



I decided that this sketch would serve as the underlying structure for the new composition. I then decided to slow it down. This created space for things to happen between the notes. Gradual accretions and ornamentations that *almost* take over and occlude or transform the original, perhaps. I like generating new material out of the found material by creating a series – in this case a chromatic series which was suggested by the curious chromaticism in bar 1 of Cooke's tenor. I used this turning idea as the basis for my series, which follows the shape of Cooke's tune, but expands it to give the beginnings of fluid and endless melody. Working on this movement taught me that being interested in early English music is much more than just abstract appreciation of beautiful

polyphonic sounds in Gothic cathedrals. It leads you to stories that are messy, compromised, painful, vivid and political.

3. Veni Sancte Spiritus

Veni sancte spiritus is a sequence (a chant or hymn for the Christian Eucharist before the proclamation of the Gospel) which John Dunstaple (c.1390-1453) combined with the hymn *Veni creator spiritus* as the basis of a composed polyphonic motet. Studying this motet I could see the justly celebrated chords with thirds (the 'contenance angloise' was a phrase coined by the poet Martin le Franc to describe the rich harmonies of Dunstaple's music) but while these harmonies are vivid and lucid, they are not static. A change from C/G fifths and octaves to C/E/G with thirds is itself a change of harmony, not merely a colour/orchestration change. It is a moment of emphasis just as much as other more obvious harmonic changes in the piece. Throughout, Dunstaple's composition retains astonishing lucidity as the harmonies change, which helps to illuminate the densely layered texts. The piece I have written is genuinely a tribute to changing harmony in Dunstaple – a core background of 'diatonic' harmony overlaid by shifting chromatic lines with the overall shape of the piece determined by the structure of Dunstaple's work.

4. In iejunio et fletu

Tallis published *In iejunio et fletu* in *Cantiones Sacrae* (1575), a volume he edited with William Byrd that included some of Tallis's final and most expressive musical statements. This is a penitential text particularly suited to Ash Wednesday, with priests weeping at the altar and pleading for forgiveness for the people. I first developed this movement for the New Music Players in a five piece ensemble (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano) for The University of Sussex's Spring 2018 Tallis Festival. As I absorbed the strange and beautiful harmonies

the violin came forward in my mind – producing a new foreground that blurred the original. To this the piano added further decoration. For me, writing this music for modern ensemble became an exploration of the conversation between vocal and instrumental ensembles that was a feature of 16th/17th century practices in English music.

5. Silver Swan

The Silver Swan is the title of a madrigal by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625). In this piece there is the faintest outline of the original melody – tracing a line through textures. A thread around which extended triadic harmony expands and contracts; layers which obscure and reveal. The process enfolds the source – one in which the piano's fantasia-like embellishments bleed into a structure comprising slow loops and repetitions.

6. In Nomine

This final piece is different in that it has no specific source; instead it responds to the *In Nomine* genre. Many instrumental pieces were composed during the 16th and 17th centuries by English composers with the title 'In Nomine'. They were compositions devised using the plainchant *Gloria Tibi Trinitas*, and inspired by a section of the Benedictus from John Taverner's mass of the same name. One of my favourites is Christopher Tye's *In Nomine*, a very distinctive work because it departs entirely from the original religious mood and echoes the sound of mid-16th century London town criers. Learning from Christopher Tye, this final piece uses the "in nomine" chant tune as the anchor point of the composition, bridging a change from standard duple to the 'ecstatic' rhythms of compound metre. Thinking about Tye led me to the London Sound Survey (www.soundsurvey.org.uk) where one can explore actual recorded songs and calls of town criers and stall sellers active in London in the 1930s. I quoted the

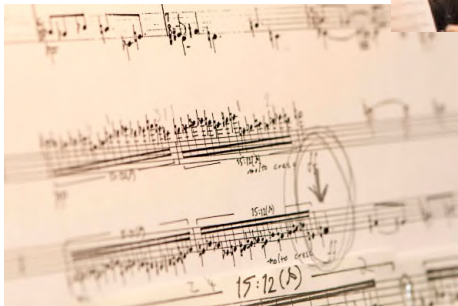
song of a lavender seller in London on 2 November 1938 and a children's game song called *The Muffin Man*, both specially recorded by the BBC. I added splashes of imaginary car horn sounds as a nod towards this more recent 'urban' environment.

Rather than arranging a series of found objects from the past, I wanted this to be a creative response to English music of this period that would acknowledge my debt to the emotional life of this music, with its soaring lines (like cathedrals); its curious structures; its high culture (for chapels/courts); but with the popular/vernacular also sometimes reflected in its legacy of notated manuscripts; its balance between the profane and sacred; its harmonic intensities; its *contenance angloise*; its harmonic progressions; its occupation and transformation of imaginative and actual spaces through the acts of composition and performance; and its gradual admission of instruments.

So the method was to adopt some of the early composers' methods and durational schemes and then write through them - a bit like deciding to use an archaic technique for mixing colours, or adopting an unusual approach to perspective, that one observes, or perhaps thinks one observes, in an early painting. There is complexity and clarity in the polyphony of early music – in some early music there is also a sense of language that is actively being forged, as in compositions today which refuse to be formulaic.

Ed Hughes





THE MUSICIANS

New Music Players was founded by Ed Hughes in 1990. This contemporary classical group comprises world-class musicians who individually perform a wide range of music, from jazz, to chamber, orchestral and experimental, to Wagner and Schumann, to authentic Baroque and other classical and early music styles. Their multiple interests produce amazingly vivid performances and premieres, and give the New Music Players its distinctive edge. The ensemble has been featured in festivals at the ICA, Huddersfield, Brighton and in many other concert series, performed and worked with students at York, Bristol, Sussex, Royal Holloway, Oxford, Nottingham and other universities and schools, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Projects have included UK tours featuring Ed Hughes's scores for Eisenstein's silent films *Battleship Potemkin* and *Strike* and a collaboration with the Imperial War Museum; a UK and European tour of works by Ligeti, Hughes and Harvey; Xenakis at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival; Hughes's opera *When the Flame Dies* at the Canterbury Festival; and concerts and workshops as part of the University of Oxford's New Music Week. New Music Players feature on five CD recordings including a world première recording of five New Music Players commissions on the London Independent Records label, a disc of works by Jo Kondo and three discs of music by Ed Hughes on Metier: 'Dark Formations', his opera with writer Roger Morris 'When the Flame Dies' and 'Symphonic Visions', a DVD of silent film scores. They perform Ed Hughes's scores for Eisenstein's films *Battleship Potemkin* and *Strike* on a DVD box set released by Tartan Video, and on several silent films by Japanese director Ozu as part of a series released by the BFI featuring new scores by Ed Hughes.

www.newmusicplayers.org.uk

The Orchestra of Sound and Light (OSL) was formed in 2015 by Ed Hughes and producer Liz Webb to explore and promote the experience of live music-making with film. Its players are leading professional musicians from Brighton and Sussex. OSL toured early silent film projects to schools and colleges in East Sussex in 2015. OSL performed the score to the silent film *Brighton: Symphony of a City*, created by Lizzie Thynne and Ed Hughes for the 2016 Brighton Festival, in Brighton Dome, alongside young musicians from Brighton and throughout the region. In 2018, OSL gave the premiere of *Cuckmere: A Portrait*, a live cinema event at the Brighton Festival.

www.orchsoundlight.org

Cesca Eaton studied at the Junior Royal College of Music and music at Lancaster University before pursuing a career as editor and director of documentaries and as editor of operas. Her work includes producing/directing, series producing and executive producing for BBC, ITV and C4 at some of the top UK Independent Production companies. Eaton created, series produced and directed a series for Twenty Twenty Television and BBC TWO 'Gareth Malone Goes to Glyndebourne', which won the 2011 International Emmy Award for Best Arts Programming.

Amongst her many other films, Eaton produced, directed and edited a 90 minute documentary for Wingspan Productions and BBC FOUR 'Angelic Voices: the choristers of Salisbury Cathedral', produced and directed a 90 minute documentary for Leopard Films and BBC TWO, presented by Sir John Eliot Gardner 'Bach: a Passionate Life', which won the Czech Crystal for best documentary, 50th Golden Prague International Television Festival, and produced, directed and edited a 60 minute documentary for BBC TWO '60 Years of Carols from King's'.

www.cescaeaton.co.uk

Ed Hughes studied composition at Cambridge with Robin Holloway and Alexander Goehr, and at Southampton with Michael Finnissy. Commissions include The Opera Group, London Sinfonietta, Glyndebourne/Photoworks, I Fagiolini, Mahogany, and, for the Brighton Festival, *Cuckmere* (2018), *Brighton: Symphony of a City* (2016), *Battleship Potemkin* (2005) and *Memory of Colour* (2004) which transferred to the Sydney Festival; performances include BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Orchestra and many ensembles and soloists. His choral work, *A Buried Flame* (2010), was selected for performance at the 2012 ISCM World Music Days in Antwerp by Aquarius. *The Birds*, an opera after Aristophanes with writer Glyn Maxwell, was premiered at the City of London Festival. *When the Flame Dies*, a chamber opera after Jean Cocteau with writer Roger Morris, was premiered at the 2012 Canterbury Festival. His work has been recorded on Metier Records, NMC and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and internationally. The New Music Players, an ensemble he founded and directs, recorded his original music to silent films by Sergei Eisenstein and Yasujiro Ozu for release by Tartan and BFI. He won a British Composer Award for *Chaconne* for Jonathan Harvey. He is Professor of Composition at the University of Sussex, www.edhughescomposer.com

Nicholas Smith OBE is the founder and artistic director of the Peking Sinfonietta and the International Festival Chorus, both based in Beijing, China. He has worked with many groups worldwide, including the Asia Philharmonic Orchestra, the China National Film Symphony Orchestra, the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, Les Percussions Claviers de Lyon, the Dunshan Symphonic Wind Orchestra and Teatro Lirico di Spoleto. Over the last 20 years, Nicholas Smith has conducted numerous concerts of significance to the development of western music in China, including PRC first performances of works ranging from Bach's *St John*

Passion to Elgar's *The Music Makers*, as well as the PRC's first ever fully staged Broadway musical *Lady in the Dark*. With the International Festival Chorus, Nicholas Smith recently made the first ever recording of Xian Xinghai's *Production Cantata*, China's first large-scale choral work with orchestra. In 2011, Nicholas Smith was made OBE in recognition of his services to music in China and Sino-British relations.

Ensemble personnel on this recording:

Cuckmere: A Portrait

(Tracks 1-8)

Orchestra of Sound and Light conducted by the composer

Helen Whitaker, *flute**

Clare Hoskins, *oboe*

Alison Hughes, *clarinet**

Susana Dias, *bassoon*

Richard Steggall, *horn*

Edward Maxwell, *trumpet*

Rachel Fryer, *piano**

Scott Bywater, *percussion*

Christina Woods*, *violin 1*

Anna Giddey, *violin 1*

Corey Wickens, *violin 1*

Hazel Correa, *violin 2*

Nikki Bates, *violin 2*

Ros Hanson, *viola*

Anna Cooper, *viola*

Joe Giddey*, *cello*

Sarah Davison, *cello*

Ben Russell, *double bass*

*core players

Media Vita

(Track 9)

New Music Players

Susanne Stanzeleit, *violin*

Joe Giddey, *cello*

Richard Casey, *piano*

Sinfonia

(Tracks 10-15)

New Music Players conducted by Nicholas Smith

Rowland Sutherland, *flute*

Clare Hoskins, *oboe*

Fiona Cross, *clarinet*

Emma Harding, *bassoon*

Roger Montgomery, *horn*

Edward Maxwell, *trumpet*

Tim Palmer, *percussion*

Richard Casey, *piano*

Susanne Stanzeleit, *violin 1 and leader*

Katie Stillman, *violin 1*

Anna Giddey, *violin 2*

Cecily Ward, *violin 2*

Bridget Carey, *viola*

Stephen Upshaw, *viola*

Joe Giddey, *cello*

Joseph Spooner, *cello*

Chris West, *double bass*

S Stella a- li ceptavit que lactavit dominum. Repetit jystem quia
plantavit pennis juvenis homi- num. Ipsi stella nunc dignetur fidem comperire
Quocumq; stella pletum rediit dux maris ul. et. re.

Recorded live at the Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, University of Sussex, 5 May 2018 as part of the Brighton Festival (Cuckmere: A Portrait), and at The Warehouse, Theed Street, London, 28 September 2018 (Media Vita, Sinfonia)

All recordings by Classical Media www.classicalmedia.co.uk

Recording Producer: Simon Weir

Recording Engineer: Morgan Roberts

Session photography by Katie Vandyck:

New Music Players (p.5); Ed Hughes & Liz Webb; Nicholas Smith; Susanne Stanzeleit (p.14),

New Music Players lower strings and wind sections and extract from *Media Vita* score (p.15)

Other photographs:

John Cooke: *Stella celi*. (p. 20): From The Old Hall Manuscript, c.1410-1420. MS 57950,

Collection of English polyphonic mass settings and motets ('The Old Hall Manuscript'):

British Library (Public Domain).

Cuckmere Haven (front cover) and River Cuckmere near Alfriston (back cover):

Cesca Eaton/Fergus Kennedy

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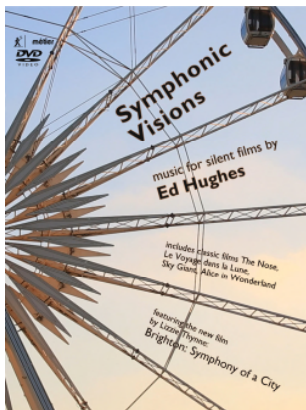
New Music Players

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New Music Players

Orchestra of Sound and Light

Richard Casey

Clare Hammond

Conductor: Ed Hughes

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