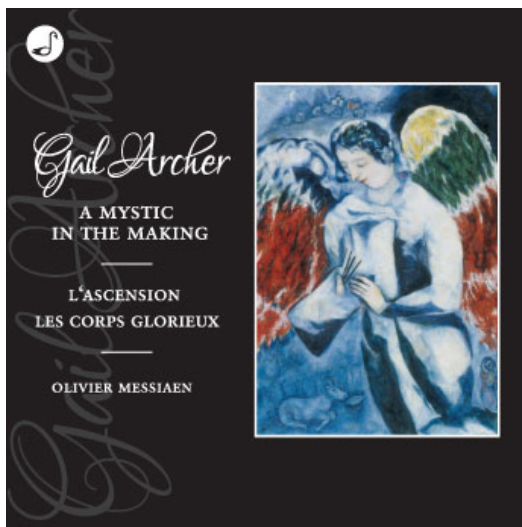


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American Record Guide

September/October 2007



MESSIAEN: *L'Ascension; Les Corps Glorieux*

Gail Archer, org – Meyer 2007– 69 minutes
(201-656-4242)

Archer is a concert organist who is also music director at Barnard College and a member of the Juilliard organ faculty. The program was recorded on the 4-94 Aeolian-Skinner (1908/1938/1962) in St Paul's Chapel, Columbia University. *L'Ascension* (1933) and *Les Corps* (1939) remain mainstays in organ literature, as important early compositions of Messiaen. They are still heard often in recital programs. Archer offers convincing interpretations of these pieces. She is a bit more relaxed in tempo than some of her competition, and that can be an asset in movements like 'L'Ange aux Parfums', but not in movements like 'Transports de Joie' when one really needs some urgency. But in general her tempos are mainstream to slightly quicker.

The organ has plenty of power and a marvelous Pedal division. The 32' stops heard in 'Le Mystere' (which concludes *Les Corps Glorieux*) will rattle all the glassware in your house. Archer certainly has the technique to master these challenging works. Messiaen lovers may wish to compare her interpretation with one by Weir (Priory 924, Jan/Feb 2005; Priory 923, March/April 2004) or Ericson (BIS 441). The performances of choice remain the 1995 collection of the complete organ works recorded in La Trinité (Jade 29491, July/Aug 1996).

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