

## NOT SO SILENT MOVIES

Sunday afternoons will never be the same again. Each month this autumn, top musicians will perform spontaneous soundtracks to the world's greatest silent films, as composer and cellist **Philip Sheppard** explains to Helen Wallace.

**There will be no rehearsals. None of the** musicians will have watched the films in advance. Improvisation before a live audience will begin as the film rolls... there must be a catch somewhere? Who would want to put themselves through it? Well, it seems Dame Evelyn Glennie and Roger Eno do, along with Guy Pratt, Pip Eastop, David Le Page, Elspeth Hanson, Geoff Dugmore, Julian Thornton and Robin Millar, who will all make guest appearances at different sessions. The films, to be shown on the first Sunday of the month, will include those of comic heroes Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd. The atmosphere will be relaxed, club-like and my guess is there'll be some very sophisticated mucking about.

Philip Sheppard, the engaging cellist and composer whose brainchild the project is, has something of track-record in collaboration, having worked with just about everyone from Jarvis Cocker, David Bowie and Scott Walker to Sylvie Guillem, Akram Khan and an array of classical music stars (he also finds time to be a professor of cello at the Royal Academy of Music). He's written award-winning film scores of his own, including *In the Shadow of the Moon* and Oscar-nominated feature *Sergio*. Familiar with exerting an intense level of control on those scores, how does he feel about letting it all go? 'I love throwing caution to the wind and creating a spontaneous composition, and I have absolute confidence that these musicians can pull it off. There'll be as much slap-stick on stage as on screen; we get such a buzz from taking the risk with no safety net – it's the adrenalin that makes it work, and when it's over you can't repeat it – it's a one-off!'

One senses that the bigger the challenge, the keener Sheppard is: he has, after all, just arranged and recorded all 205 national anthems of the world for the London 2012 Olympics; next stop is a collaboration with astronauts based on the International Space Station. He's also got his feet firmly on the ground in terms of giving an audience a good time: 'The great thing about *Not So Silent Movies* is that it will appeal to all ages, from kids to those who remember watching these films in their youth!'

### ***Not So Silent Movies***

2 October, 6 November, 4 December  
See Listings p51, p63, p71 for details



Harold Lloyd in  
*Safety Last* (1923)