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S. J. Dunbavand

'Orpheus the Explorer':  
'Harmony of Parts' and 'Charm of Colour'  
in the Performance of Olivier Messiaen's Organ Music

Folio submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MMus  
The University of Sheffield, 2013



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**Simon John Dunbavand**

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The University of Sheffield, Department of Music  
Supervisor: Dr George Nicholson

11<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

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## ABSTRACT

Simon John Dunbavand

### ‘Orpheus the Explorer’: ‘Harmony of Parts’ and ‘Charm of Colour’ in the Performance of Olivier Messiaen’s Organ Music

(Under the direction of Dr George Nicholson)

This project aims to assemble interpretative and analytical materials, cross-connections, comparisons, and theological insights in order to form a hermeneutic, holistic approach to performances of Messiaen’s organ music. Thus, research and interpretation lead to the recording on a suitable instrument of performances, which in turn illustrate theological and interpretative issues. Rather than investigating complete cycles, the development of a carefully constructed programme of individual pieces, interlinked and selected from Messiaen’s entire *œuvre*, will help us to draw out a sophisticated and consistent theological message, as well as comparing the use of different compositional techniques and recurring thematic resonances (both musical and Christian) throughout the composer’s development.

This interpretative work builds upon the approach and conclusions expressed in my dissertation: ‘In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*: Technique, Theology, and the Play of Harmonic Resonance in Olivier Messiaen’s *Vitrail Sonore*’. By forming the connections on both musical and theological levels between pieces from different periods and cycles, we can reveal fresh perspectives on the performance of Messiaen’s organ music. One aspect will be an understanding of Messiaen’s non-modal harmony: as ‘percée vers l’au-delà’, it becomes a foundation for dazzlement, and a conduit to the divine. How do these ‘accords spéciaux’ intersect with the theological subtext, and when identical chords are heard in different pieces, how does this intertextual play create new theological insight? Devising this programme in a framework exploring Messiaen’s compositional growth yields more fruitful insights than exploring just a single work, thus establishing connections across boundaries of work, genre and period, and linking Messiaen’s organ music to his wider output and to contemporary Catholic thought.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the three people who have, at times unwittingly, instilled in me the trinity of intellectual rigour required for academic success, the hard work and discipline needed in the development of an assured playing technique, and, ultimately, the inspiration required for creative practice:

To my dad, the jazz pianist John Dunbavand (1938-2008),  
to my mum, Miriam,  
and to Jonathan Owen.

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My thanks go to The University of Sheffield for awarding me the Charles Alan Bryars Organ Scholarship, without which, the successful completion of this research project would have proved impossible. The undertaking of any research degree depends crucially upon the fruitful relationship between supervisor and student, and in this respect I have been extraordinarily lucky: heartfelt thanks are due to Dr George Nicholson, for his thought-provoking perspectives, imaginative suggestions, stimulating supervisions, and generosity of time. I would also like to thank Clare Scott, Faculty Librarian (Arts and Humanities Liaison) at The University of Sheffield, for her help and advice on copyright issues, and Dr Tim Shephard and Dr Mary Dullea, Director of Performance at The University of Sheffield, for advice and suggestions. Thanks are also due to all the postgraduate students in the Department of Music at Sheffield, for their refreshing sense of community and purpose, as evidenced particularly on the Graduate Study Days. I also wish to express my thanks to Dr Tamsyn Rose-Steel of the University of Exeter, not only for introducing me to her inspired work on another ground-breaking French composer beginning with the letter 'M', but dating from another epoch, but also for her stimulating and collaborative approach to music-making. I am also very much indebted to Paul Drayton, who, as an interpreter of *Visions de l'amen*, always challenges me with insightful and pertinent questioning.

The selection of a suitable instrument for the recording of these pieces has been made especially easy, with the establishment of two recent organs in Cornwall under the supervision of Martin Palmer. His drive, vision, and inspiration have delivered to the county versatile musical instruments of national importance, including the Mander organ originally in the Chapel of Jesus College, Cambridge. Thanks also go to Lance Foy for his imaginative work in building the new organ for St. Michael the Archangel, Newquay, and for his flexibility, skill, and knowledge in the incorporation into the specification of stops, voicing, and mixture compositions suggested by me, and ideal for the music of Messiaen. Thanks are also due to the financial support and encouragement of the project at every stage by Sir David Willcocks and his family, without whom this venture would certainly have been impossible, and to the late Cherry Sheppard for making it all happen. For invaluable suggestions in complex French language translation, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Madame Aissa Rippingale. I should also like to thank the following people for their help in securing permissions to include printed music, texts, visual images, and audio in this project: Victoria Cooke, UMP; Mary Cross; Khol Dieu, OUP; Clara Ditz, Studio Arnulf Rainer; Rebecca Goldsmith, Hymns Ancient and Modern; Judith Irrgang, Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden; Kamila Kowalska, MCPS; Catherine Leroi, Château d'Angers; Sir Richard and Lady Mynors, Treago Castle; Cheryl Tipp, Curator (Natural Sounds) at The British Library; Keith Wakefield, Stainer & Bell; Katie Wood, UMP.

Special thanks should also go to my mum, for her help and support throughout the lengthy process of research and writing, and especially for her magnificent example of fortitude during her illness. Above all, my thanks go to Jonathan Owen, who not only takes me continually around the world on inspiring ethnographic explorations and spiritual encounters, from the natural wonders and colonial cities of South America, the rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia, the ghats of Varanasi and the temples of Angkor, to playing the gong in the Hindu watermelon ceremony on Maheskali Island in Bangladesh and listening to the bells of the pagodas of Kakku in Burma, but who also took me to Sheffield and made all of this possible.

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## NOTE ABOUT MUSICAL EXAMPLES AND ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY

In the citation of titles by Messiaen, his own practice of capitalization is used. Where inconsistencies exist, the practice of Christopher Dingle is normally followed,<sup>1</sup> with reference also to Vincent Benitez.<sup>2</sup> Other French titles, such as *L'orgue mystique* of Tournemire, follow the practice of capitalization as used by Nigel Simeone.<sup>3</sup>

The main titles of works by Messiaen are given in italics, for example:

*Livre du Saint Sacrement*

The titles of individual movements within works are given in normal type, for example:

'Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine'

When a work is cited in the examples for the first time, its full title is given, for example:

*Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, II 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ'

Subsequent citations make use of its shorter title, for example:

'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ'

Examples of works by Messiaen quoted in the text refer to the scores published either by Durand or Leduc, Paris (with the exceptions of *Cinq rechants*, published by Éditions Salabert, and *Cantéyodjayá*, published by Universal Edition), and are located by title of movement, page number, system number and bar number, for example:

'Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine', 77/1/1

Examples taken from works by other composers are located by title and bar number:

Jacques Boyvin, *Premier Livre d'orgue*: 'Duo' on the 5<sup>th</sup> tone, b. 1

Moments in CD recordings are identified by title, artist, and reference number, together with track number and timing (in minutes and seconds) where appropriate, for example:

*Couleurs de la cité céleste*, Pierre Boulez, ensemble intercontemporain  
- Montaigne MO 782131, Track 3 (9:19)

The analytical methodology devised for this research is simple: above most of the musical examples are two further staves which present the harmonies at work in the composition in their simplest possible form. This corresponds to the default spacing as used in the chord tables published in *Traité VII*. By this method it becomes possible to apprehend clearly Messiaen's harmonic intentions for any given chord, and, more importantly, to assess the contrasts between the juxtaposition of different chords. Where the colour symbolism and colour contrasts of the harmony are of importance, these are indicated in the musical examples, either by direct quotation from the chord tables of *Traité*, or in a suitable English translation. The beaming of notes and the use of slurs does not imply a Schenkerian interpretation, but is simply designed to demonstrate examples of the prolongation of certain chords throughout a passage, or the cadential function of a bass progression, or to highlight a more long range, directional motion. For a fuller explanation of the methodology of this harmonic analysis, the reader is directed to my accompanying dissertation: 'In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*: Technique, Theology, and the Play of Harmonic Resonance in Olivier Messiaen's *Vitrail Sonore*' (University of Sheffield, 2013), which should, ideally, be read prior to the consultation of the materials within this folio, since its analytical and interpretative position forms the foundation for these recorded performances and accompanying notes.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Dingle, 'List of Works and Discography', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by Peter Hill, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 536-565.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent P. Benitez, *Olivier Messiaen: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Nigel Simeone, *Paris: A Musical Gazetteer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 135, 169.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACD	Accompanying CD. This is to be found on the inner back cover, with the track listing presented on p. 17. Throughout the text, references to precise moments on this disc are given with track number and time expressed in minutes and seconds, for example: ACD2-2:16.
Art.	Article
CCR	<b><i>Accord à résonance contractée</i></b> (Chord of Contracted Resonance) To distinguish the difference between the two sets of chords, Messiaen refers to 1 <sup>st</sup> CCR and 2 <sup>nd</sup> CCR in Tome VII of <i>Traité</i> .
CD	<b><i>Accord sur dominante</i></b> (Chord on the dominant) or ‘compact disc’, depending upon the context.
CDA	<b><i>Accord sur dominante appoggiaturé</i></b> (Chord on the dominant with appoggiaturas) - Messiaen uses this term to describe the use of Chords of Transposed Inversions which subsequently resolve onto the Chord on the dominant: abbreviated to CDA.
cont.	continued
CR	<b><i>Accord de la résonance</i></b> (Chord of Resonance)
CTI	<b><i>Accord à renversements transposés sur la même note de bass</i></b> (Chord of Transposed Inversions on the Same Bass Note)
CTC	<b><i>Accord du total chromatique</i></b> (Chord of Total Chromaticism)
<i>Catalogue</i>	<b><i>Catalogue d’oiseaux</i></b>
<i>Couleurs</i>	<b><i>Couleurs de la cité céleste</i></b>
<i>Éclairs</i>	<b><i>Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...</i></b>
<i>Et exspecto</i>	<b><i>Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum</i></b>
Ex.	Example: used when referring to examples from <i>Technique de mon langage musical</i> .
<i>La Nativité</i>	<b><i>La Nativité du Seigneur</i></b>
<i>La Transfiguration</i>	<b><i>La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ</i></b>
l.h.	left hand
<i>Livre</i>	<b><i>Livre du Saint Sacrement</i></b>
<i>Méditations</i>	<b><i>Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité</i></b>

Q.	Question
r.h.	right hand
RN	rehearsal number
<i>Saint François</i>	<b><i>Saint François d'Assise</i></b>
ST	<b><i>Summa Theologiæ</i></b> of Saint Thomas Aquinas - references are in the form of Part/Question/Article, for example: <i>ST</i> I, Q. 12, Art. 5.
Sup.	Supplement to <i>Summa Theologiæ</i> of Saint Thomas Aquinas
TC	<b><i>Accords tournants</i></b> are referred to as Turning Chords and abbreviated to <b>TC</b> .
<i>Technique</i>	Messiaen's <b><i>Technique de mon langage musical</i></b> was originally published in two volumes by Leduc, Paris, in 1944, translated into English by John Satterfield and published in 1956 as <i>Technique of my Musical Language</i> . In 1999 a single volume French edition was published, and in 2001 this was published in English. References are given as ' <i>Technique</i> ', with volume and page numbers from the original 1956 translation, for example: <i>Technique</i> I, p. 13.
<i>Traité</i>	<b><i>Traité de rythme, de couleur et d'ornithologie</i></b> was published in seven volumes by Leduc, Paris, between 1994 and 2002. This is abbreviated to ' <i>Traité</i> ', and followed by the volume in roman numerals, together with the page reference, for example: <i>Traité</i> VII, p. 138.
<i>Trois petites liturgies</i>	<b><i>Trois petites liturgies de la Présence Divine</i></b>
<i>Un vitrail</i>	<b><i>Un vitrail et des oiseaux</i></b>
<i>Vingt regards</i>	<b><i>Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus</i></b>

## NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS

Where a standard English translation of a Messiaen source in French exists, I have chosen to use this. For example: Satterfield's translation of *Technique*, or Glasow's translations of the interviews with Claude Samuel are now standard texts. Where I have cited a less familiar Messiaen source in the original French, my own translation is provided in the footnotes, or conversely, where I have quoted from a Messiaen source or the secondary literature in my own translation, the original is provided in the footnotes. Occasionally I have worked with sources written in German: articles and chapters about Messiaen by musicologists and organists such as Ingrid Hohlfeld-Ufer and Almut Rößler, or the works of theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar in the original German, providing translations where appropriate. Where not otherwise credited, all translations are my own.

### NOTE ABOUT BIBLE REFERENCES

Biblical references in English are cited throughout from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless a particular point is being made with reference to an alternative translation. Biblical references in French conform to the version(s) used by Messiaen. Numbers of books are given in Roman numerals, whilst Arabic numerals are used for chapter and verse with a full point separation, for example: I John 4. 16.

### NOTE ABOUT *MÉDITATIONS SUR LE MYSTÈRE DE LA SAINTE TRINITÉ*

This folio uses the titles given in 1986 by Messiaen to the originally untitled nine movements of *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*.<sup>4</sup> Messiaen's own recording refers to each *Méditation* by Arabic numeral,<sup>5</sup> in his complete recording, Olivier Latry, however, opts to remain faithful to the original roman numeral designations for each meditation, paraphrasing Messiaen's words in the preface to the score for each piece.<sup>6</sup> The following movements are discussed in the text:

1. 'Le Père inengendré'  
I ('Le Père des étoiles')
2. 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ'  
II ('Dieu est Saint')
4. 'Je suis, je suis!'  
IV ('Dieu est')
5. 'Dieu est immense, immuable; Le souffle de l'Esprit; Dieu est amour'  
V ('Dieu est immense - Dieu est éternel - Dieu est immuable...')
6. 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière'  
VI ('Dans le Verbe était la Vie et la Vie était la Lumière')
8. 'Dieu est simple'  
VIII ('Dieu est simple – les trios sont un')
9. 'Je suis Celui qui Suis'  
IX ('Je suis Celui qui Suis')

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<sup>4</sup> Theo Hirsbrunner, *Olivier Messiaen: Leben und Werk* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1988), pp. 230-231.

<sup>5</sup> *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* – Erato 4509-92007-2.

<sup>6</sup> Deutsche Grammophon 471 480-2.





## INTRODUCTION: ORPHEUS THE EXPLORER

Within the complex symbolism of *Cinq rechants*, Olivier Messiaen weaves what was to become a migratory *idée fixe*, taken from 'Jardin du sommeil d'amour' in *Turangalîla-Symphonie*.<sup>2</sup> Here the text 'l'explorateur Orphée trouve son cœur dans la mort' echoes the Schopenhauerian consummation of desire in 'les amoureux s'envolent vers les étoiles de la mort'.<sup>3</sup> This transcendental, cosmic escape fuelled by love finds resonance in the Christian message of salvation, where the symbolism of love (for example, in the Song of Songs) describes the mystical bond between Christ and his bride, the eternal church,<sup>4</sup> 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'.<sup>5</sup> With the use of this theme in *Messe de la Pentecôte*, it is not death we find in the heart of Orpheus, but everlasting life within the sacred heart of Jesus.

In 'East Coker', T. S. Eliot had realized that 'old men ought to be explorers',<sup>6</sup> and as a composer Messiaen was certainly this: not just in his late works, but constantly seeking fresh expressions for his profound Christian beliefs. The communication of this theological message may be revealed through the performance of Messiaen's organ music, not only through an understanding of his 'musical language as praise',<sup>7</sup> but as a response of joy to the love of God,<sup>8</sup> in music which breathes a 'quasi sacramental dimension',<sup>9</sup> in 'cosmic liturgy'.<sup>10</sup> Interpretation of the organ music is enriched by placing it both in the context of Messiaen's wider compositional activities, and within his theological vision. The organist as interpreter is thus implored: 'Come down a little/From thy high seat',<sup>11</sup> to engage with a broad spectrum of influences. One feature of this project, inspired by the composer's synaesthesia and desire to create a musical equivalent of the light, colour, and theology of medieval stained glass, is to link (in the interpretation of this music) the sonic arts with the visual arts, by utilizing painting, tapestry, and mosaic from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Messiaen, text from *Cinq rechants* (Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1949): 'Orpheus the explorer finds his heart in death'.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed commentary on Messiaen's use of this theme and its attendant symbolism between 1946 and 1969, see PART FIVE, pp. 131-132, below.

<sup>3</sup> *Cinq rechants*: 'The lovers fly to the stars of death'.

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 19. 7: 'Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready'.

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 21. 2.

<sup>6</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker', in *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1944), and cited in Luke Berryman, 'Messiaen as Explorer in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by Andrew Shenton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 223-239 (p. 239).

<sup>7</sup> Judith Crispin, 'Introductory Note', in *Olivier Messiaen: The Centenary Papers*, ed. by Judith Crispin (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. xiv.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Rodolphe Kars, 'Olivier Messiaen – ein Musiker der Freude', *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, 33 (2004), 359-373, (p. 359), translated as 'Joy in the Compositions of Olivier Messiaen', *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 31:4 (Winter, 2004). Kars grounds his interpretation of Messiaen's 'Christian Joy' in 1 John 1. 1-4, which the composer cites as part of the superscription to 'Le Verbe'.

<sup>9</sup> Kars, 'Olivier Messiaen – ein Musiker der Freude', p. 360.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Rodolphe Kars, 'The works of Olivier Messiaen and the Catholic liturgy', in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. by Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 323-333 (p. 328).

<sup>11</sup> Alcuin (735-804), trans. by Helen Waddell (1889-1965), in *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* (London: Constable and Co, 1929), p. 93.

As folio rather than dissertation, the aim of this collection is to assemble disparate materials (including recorded performances) in the interpretation of a selection of organ pieces by Messiaen, where the performances attempt to amplify interpretative and analytical points made in the text. As folio rather than performance, the aim is to present analysis and interpretation with a practice-based component, where the performances function solely as audio examples, highlighting and bringing to life issues discussed in the text. Thus, notes (both written *and* musical) make cross-connections between pieces.

This folio commences with materials which explore Messiaen's personal 'vision of eternity', including ideas on interpretation and reception, together with detailed programme notes for ideal performances of eleven pieces selected from seven different works. The subsequent sections of the folio consist of case studies: the presentation of more in-depth research on the background and certain technical aspects of each specific piece, divided by theological themes: the light of Christ; timbre, technique, and theology in *Les corps glorieux*; Messiaen's view of the 'true temple'; intertextuality in *Messe de la Pentecôte*. Building our conclusion, we examine how these themes intersect.

Investigating the clarity of the resurrected body, Aquinas quotes from Augustine,<sup>12</sup> describing the perfection of the body's 'harmony of parts' and 'charm of colour'.<sup>13</sup> These qualities are perfectly reflected in the sophisticated music Messiaen devises for us to glimpse the above in a 'breakthrough towards the beyond':<sup>14</sup> a linear formal cohesion, vertical use of modal and resonance-based chordal structures, and the charm of *son-couleur* forming a 'theological rainbow'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the tenets of Christian faith proclaim the mystery of God, demanding a response thus grounded in mysticism.<sup>16</sup> Yet Messiaen was to favour technique and sound doctrine over the uncertainties of the mystical:<sup>17</sup> this progressive and complex musical language, rooted in theological conviction would ensure that Messiaen would escape being marginalized as an 'organist-composer',<sup>18</sup> typecast on both Parisian and global stages.

Messiaen the musician, like Orpheus, savours the power of divine music to charm, fulfilling the craving of his earth-bound listener as he sings of the magic of heavenly delights, for 'to be charmed is his only desire'.<sup>19</sup> Yet, unlike Orpheus on his journey into the light, Messiaen does not look back.

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<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Supplement), Question 85: 'The Endowment of Clarity' (henceforth *Summa Theologiae* is abbreviated to *ST*).

<sup>13</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxii, 19: 'the body's beauty is harmony of parts with a certain charm of colour'. Aquinas refers to these words of Augustine in *ST* Sup., Q. 85, Art. 1, ad. 3: [Accessed 19 March, 2013] <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5085.htm>>. Augustine's original appears both in Letter 3 (to Nebridius (cited in Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 28), and in *De Civitate Dei*, xxii, 19: 'Omnis enim corporis pulchritudo est partium congruentia cum quadam coloris suavitate' [Accessed 19 March, 2013] <<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/augustine/civ22.shtml>>.

<sup>14</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame: prononcée à Notre-Dame de Paris le 4 décembre 1977* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1978), p. 2: 'percée vers l'au-delà' (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. by John Satterfield, Two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1956), Volume I, p. 21 (henceforth: *Technique*).

<sup>16</sup> Rudolph Voderholzer, '„Herrlichkeit“: Ästhetische Parallelen zwischen dem theologischen Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars und der Musik Olivier Messiaens', in *Musik des Unsichtbaren: Der Komponist Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) am Schnittpunkt von Theologie und Musik*, ed. by Michaela Christine Hastetter (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2008), p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Almut Rößler, *Contributions to the Spiritual world of Olivier Messiaen* (Duisburg: Gilles & Francke, 1986), p. 89 (henceforth: Rößler, *Contributions*).

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Technique* I, p. 21.

...through these sensible things that they see they may be transported to the intelligible,  
which they do not see, as through signs to that which is signified.<sup>1</sup>

## PART ONE: A VISION OF ETERNITY

### 'MYSTIC PARTICIPATION':<sup>2</sup>

### PERFORMING MESSIAEN'S ORGAN MUSIC

This project aims to present research into the theological significance of Messiaen's organ music, where the results are expressed both through performance and accompanying textual materials. Thus, one result of creative practice as research is research-informed performance.

These performances aim at a fidelity to the composer's intentions as notated in the score, a sensitivity to the aesthetic of the Cavallé-Coll organ and the authentic sound-world inhabited by these works, as well as an awareness of the cultural *milieu* in which the works were conceived and knowledge of the theological background which inspired the composer. The objectives will include attempts to answer two fundamental questions:

- ~ How is a performance able to capture effectively the message of the 'signified' which lies behind the music, and how can this information be conveyed successfully to the listener?
- ~ To what extent should a performer's own creative practice be informed and influenced by other performances, whether recorded or live? More specifically, how important are Messiaen's own recordings of his organ works, in view of the fact that 'Messiaen's own interpretations ask more questions than they answer'?<sup>3</sup>

The composer once famously commented to Jennifer Bate: 'But that is how I play it on my records, and nobody plays Messiaen like that!'.<sup>4</sup> Andrew Shenton considers the role of a recorded performance as a musical text, which is able to 'enhance our comprehension of the piece',<sup>5</sup> and analysis of Messiaen's own recordings of his organ music, which present an interpretation of these recorded performances as a viable musical text, was undertaken in a review by Timothy Tikker.<sup>6</sup> John Milsom's analysis of Messiaen's own performance of 'Les eaux de la grâce' sheds important light on how the sonic reality of Messiaen's interpretation diverges from expectations raised in the score.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, discussing the birds: 'These creatures are exemplars, or rather illustrations offered to souls . . .' and cited in Arthur Hyman, James J. Walsh and Thomas Williams, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010), p. 425. This interest in sign and signification predates and anticipates the twentieth century interest in semiology.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase '*participation mystique*' is coined by Jonathan Harvey in 'Introduction', *Contemporary Music Review*, 14:3/4 (1996), p. 6, and Messiaen also uses the phrase 'I participate in the unfolding mystery', cited in Kars, 'The Works of Olivier Messiaen and the Catholic Liturgy', p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Sholl, 'The True Way', *The Musical Times*, 137:1839 (1996), 35-37 (p. 37). Attempted answers exist not just in the forthcoming chapters, but illustrated in the performances on the accompanying CD.

<sup>4</sup> Transcript of radio interview with Jennifer Bate [accessed 13 November 2012] <<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/legacy/programs/sunmorn/stories/s1401899.htm>>. Also cited in John Milsom, 'Organ Music I', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by Peter Hill (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 51-71 (p. 60).

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Shenton, 'Composer as performer, recording as text: notes towards a manner of realization' for Messiaen's music', in *Messiaen Studies*, ed. by Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 168-187 (p. 187).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Tikker, 'Messiaen Plays Messiaen', *The American Organist*, 42:11(2008), 58-62. Note 10 refers to the supplement detailing the composition of the mixture stops at La Trinité [accessed 12 November 2012] <<http://ttikker.com/wp-content/uploads/messiaenarticlesupplement.pdf>>.

<sup>7</sup> Milsom, 'Organ Music I', pp. 51-62.

Noteworthy performers who studied the organ music with the composer at La Trinité were Jennifer Bate, Jon Gillock, Olivier Latry, Hans Ola-Ericsson, Almut Rößler, and Thomas Daniel Schlee. Therefore the recordings of these organists come with a special *imprimatur*, although the creation of an individual interpretation must obviously avoid the imitation of these versions. To what extent should performers be encouraged to offer their own perspectives on a work, given Peter Hill's recollection of the notion of performers once being encouraged simply to 'serve the music'?<sup>8</sup> The interpretation of twentieth century French music is an area of particular notoriety, given Ravel's fiery exchange with Paul Wittgenstein: 'performers *are* slaves'.<sup>9</sup> For pianists directed to use plenty of sustaining pedal, and organists projecting a toccata on full organ, the temptation for impressionism must be fiercely resisted, for Messiaen demanded textural clarity in even the densest passages: 'I must hear every note'.<sup>10</sup>

As an example of the nature of some of the problems faced by an organist in building a satisfactory interpretation, we shall examine three particular issues: timbral, technical, and theological. Just as Tournemire was to associate certain registrations with a spiritual state, so Messiaen's experimentations at La Trinité led to the creation of certain colours which bring with them a theological implication to the music. Three times in *Livre du Saint Sacrement* does Messiaen weave the enchanting dialogue/echo between 16' and 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>' registers combined, on both *Grand Orgue* and *Positif*, whilst *Récit* is registered with undulating strings.<sup>11</sup> This colours both 'Prière avant la communion' (with additional registers) and 'Prière après la communion', and is anticipated throughout 'La Source de Vie'. This registration was first used by Messiaen in 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' (Example 1.1) where it is used to capture the love of Jesus for us in the Litany of the Holy Name and the Alleluia of the Dedication. When transferred to *Livre*, this registration certainly brings with it this rapt sense of devotion. The problem which needs to be addressed by interpreters is precisely how to create the piquancy of this balanced timbre on both manuals, where the required stops are often missing, or do not blend.

EXAMPLE 1.1:

*Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, II 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ', 24/4/1

R: gambe, voix céleste  
Pos: quintaton 16, nazard 2 2/3  
G: bourdon 16, quinte 2 2/3

(*Donnez-nous l'amour de votre Saint Nom!*) (litanies du Saint Nom de Jésus)

**Un peu lent**  
Pos:

*p* legato  
R: *pp* legato

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Next comes a technical problem concerning fingering and phrasing. We know that Messiaen was meticulous in the fingering of his piano and organ music, and in Example 1.2 from *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, how can the player communicate the *legato* of the over-arching phrase of the song thrush, when Messiaen (emphasizing the apex of the phrase) calls for a shift in hand position for both hands, by the repetition of fingers?

<sup>8</sup> Peter Hill, "'Authenticity' in Contemporary Music", *Tempo*, 159 (1986), 2-8 (p. 3).

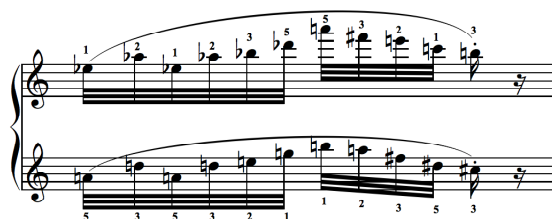
<sup>9</sup> Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 185.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Hill, 'For the Birds', *The Musical Times*, 135:1819 (1994), 552-555 (p. 552).

<sup>11</sup> Jon Gillock designates this as 'Messiaen's refrain registration' in Jon Gillock, *Performing Messiaen's Organ Music: 66 Masterclasses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 249, discussing this also on pp. 213-214; 233; 249-250; 324; 333.

When a similar phrase occurs at the close of 'La grive musicien' in *Petites esquisses d'oiseaux* IV, the fingering serves the phrasing more comfortably, assisted by sustaining pedal.

EXAMPLE 1.2: *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, 4/6/1



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Finally, we investigate a theological problem: the difficulty in conveying convincingly to the listener the theological nature of music such as that in Example 1.3, which demonstrates Messiaen's complex modal and rhythmic textural superposition of ideas in a counterpoint which suggests the contrast between earthly time and heavenly eternity.

EXAMPLE 1.3: *Les corps glorieux*, III 'L'ange aux parfums', 7/6/1

**Bien modéré**

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Listing scripture and the Church Fathers as being amongst the inspiration for his music commenting upon Christian mysteries, Messiaen adds:

I've tried to find *everything* which has to do with the subject I've chosen and then have tried to translate it into music – not just into notes, not just into sounds and rhythms, but into sound-colours [...] and, of course, *I require the interpreting artist to make a close study of all these things*, of all the ideas I want to express – indeed, I even ask that he *believe* in them to a certain extent, in order to be able to convey them to the listener.<sup>12</sup>

These performances are therefore supported by the assembly of appropriate analytical materials, cross-connections, comparisons, and theological insights, in order to form a hermeneutic, holistic approach to the interpretation of Messiaen's organ music. The programme explores Messiaen's compositional growth, and establishes connections across boundaries of work, genre and period, thus linking Messiaen's organ music to his wider output and to contemporary Catholic thought. By forming these connections on both musical and theological levels between pieces from different periods and cycles, we can reveal fresh perspectives on the performance of Messiaen's organ music. This will help to draw out a sophisticated and consistent theological message, as well as comparing the use of different compositional techniques and recurring thematic resonances (both musical and Christian) throughout the composer's development. One aspect will be an understanding of Messiaen's non-modal harmony: as 'percée vers l'au-delà',<sup>13</sup> it becomes

<sup>12</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 28 (my italics).

<sup>13</sup> Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*, p. 2.

a foundation for dazzlement, and a conduit to the divine. How do these accords spéciaux intersect with the theological subtext, and when identical chords are heard in different pieces, how does this intertextual play create new theological insight?

Building upon the work of *In Search of Musique Chatoyante*,<sup>14</sup> this research moves from theorizing and discussing Messiaen's music, to bringing alive its sound. Thus the theological message is created anew, since 'signification is constructed through the very act of performance':<sup>15</sup> the message behind this music comes alive *through the sound*. The moment in 'Transports de joie' of *L'Ascension*, when hands and feet finally combine in a frenzy of modal chords (recalled as the stars turn in 'Le Père inengendré', the opening movement of *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*), lifts not just the listener to a heightened state of exhilaration, but also the performer.

Erwin Stein's identification of 'tempo, dynamics and articulation' as the important features that any performer must draw out of an interpretation were to remain as the central factors in Wallace Berry's writings on performance studies.<sup>16</sup> The primary reason for this emphasis was the supremacy of a Schenkerian approach to the perception and articulation of large scale structural form as the overriding guiding principle of interpretation. In other words, the detection and communication of underlying long range formal cohesion and structural unity was central to the task of the performer, in an approach uniting both *Ursatz* and *Gestalt*, music and psychology, and echoing the assertion of Wertheimer: 'There are wholes, the behaviour of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole'.<sup>17</sup> However, Messiaen's music certainly does not operate like this, since the importance of surface features and the exquisite beauty of the moment certainly demand equal, if not more attention than the logic of traditional form.<sup>18</sup> This rift between analyst and listener may perhaps be best expressed in the apocryphal cry of Schoenberg in response to Schenker's *Eroica* graphs: 'but where are my favourite places?'.<sup>19</sup> That music is overwhelmingly about the emotion of the moment we are experiencing *now* essentially calls for a new approach to performance studies, which takes account of the effective projection of the beauty of the surface feature:

...music is made (sounded) and perceived locally, through those details of the musical surface that performers are able most precisely to modify and of which listeners are most aware. [...] music is controlled and perceived from moment to moment: long-term structures are theoretical, useful for composers, an invitation from analysts to imagine music in a particular way, but apparently not perceptible (save in the vaguest outline via memory).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Simon Dunbavand, 'In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*: Technique, Theology, and the Play of Harmonic Resonance in Olivier Messiaen's *Vitrail Sonore*' (unpublished MMus dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Cook, 'Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance', *Music Theory Online*, 7/2 (2001), 13 [accessed 4 December 2012]  
<[http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook\\_frames.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook_frames.html)>.

<sup>16</sup> Edward D. Latham, 'Analysis and Performance Studies: A Summary of Current Research', in *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 2-3/2 (2005) [accessed 7 November 2012]  
<<http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/521.aspx>>.

<sup>17</sup> Max Wertheimer, lecture *Über Gestalttheorie* at the Kant Society, Berlin, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1924, trans. by Willis D. Ellis, in *Source Book of Gestalt Psychology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1938), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Countering opinions of Messiaen's apparent lack of long-range cohesion is Christopher Dingle, who presents convincing evidence for the composer's exercise of control at the deepest levels of structure. See, for example, Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Milton Babbitt, 'A Composer's View', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, New Series 2/1 (1991), 123-132 (p. 131).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Compositions, Scores, Performances, Meanings', *Music Theory Online*, 18/1 (2012), 4.10 [accessed 27 November 2012]  
<<http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.12.18.1/mto.12.18.1.leech-wilkinson.php>>.

Thus, a shift in focus has taken place within the discipline of performance studies. There has also been an additional change in focus and style, not just of contemporary compositions, but also in their recorded interpretations. Changes in Messiaen's style, from *Chronochromie* to *Éclairs sur l'Au-Delà...*,<sup>21</sup> are matched, both by Boulez, and of equal significance, in the interpretative approach in commercially available recordings:

Recordings of modernist scores (Boulez and Schoenberg) between 1960 and 2000 show a major shift from a pointillistic to a melodic approach following on behind an identical change in compositional priorities in Boulez especially. Writing about the scores, away from matters of compositional technique towards an interest in effect, in turn follow the changes in performance.<sup>22</sup>

With this in mind, how might the interpretation of, for example, movements from *Livre du Saint Sacrement* differ from those of *Messe de la Pentecôte*? Indeed, how important is the legacy of twentieth-century composers as their own interpreters, when these interpretations have changed over time?

For a performer to avoid being 'intellectually disreputable',<sup>23</sup> as an interpreter he or she must take into account issues regarding historically aware performance practice as well as engaging with the score on an analytical and critical level. Peter Williams' ideal performer is 'the thinking organist',<sup>24</sup> melding concerns of musicianship and scholarship at the console. In the performance of the French symphonic and later repertoires, this is further focused by Williams' assertion that 'in the past lies the future of the organ',<sup>25</sup> which now extends to the faithful recreation of the Cavallé-Coll aesthetic in both Europe and North America. In the successful blending of these issues regarding faithful performance techniques and choice of instrument, the performer will strive to perceive the music not just as an 'object of delight',<sup>26</sup> but in the case of Messiaen, as religious act, engaging with the spirituality behind the music as part of creative practice. The intelligent performance of Messiaen's organ music, therefore, demands analytical and critical acumen coupled with historical and theological awareness, and, by aiming for a richer understanding than might be achieved from a purely historical or social perspective,<sup>27</sup> the formulation of a hermeneutical interpretation captures the essence of the work.<sup>28</sup>

Contemplating any successful performance, the appropriate choice of organ is essential, for Messiaen does not transfer comfortably to just *any* instrument, as the works of J. S. Bach easily do. For example, a plentiful array of flute mutations,<sup>29</sup> bright quint mixtures with the necessary compositions,<sup>30</sup> reeds rich in harmonics with a Gallic snarl: all are essential ingredients, to say nothing of the choice of acoustic. The search for the right instrument should be sensitive to the obvious need for Messiaen's music to be 'played in a church, taking for granted the resonance, the ambience, and even the echoing of

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<sup>21</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works*, p. 168, for example, detects a 'sophisticated elegance' in the chords of the opening movement of *Éclairs sur l'Au-Delà...*

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Musicology and performance', in *Music's Intellectual History: Founders, Followers and Fads*, ed. by Zdravko Blazekovic (New York: RILM, forthcoming) <<http://www.rilm.org/historiography/leech.pdf>> [accessed 6 November 2012].

<sup>23</sup> A term coined by Charles Rosen and cited in Joseph Kerman, *Musicology*, London, 1985, p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Williams, 'French Elements in Bach', in *L'Orgue à notre époque*, ed. by Donald Mackey (Montreal: McGill University, 1981), pp. 13-20 (p. 13).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* This proclamation celebrates the building of new instruments faithful to a much earlier aesthetic.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Mendel, 'Evidence and Explanation', in *Report of the Eighth Congress of the International Musicological Society, New York, 1961* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962), Vol. 2, pp. 2-18, (p. 4).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Kerman, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> Gillian Weir, 'Organ Music II', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by P. Hill, pp. 352-391 (pp. 373-374).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the supplement to Timothy Tikker, 'Messiaen Plays Messiaen'.



sounds that can be obtained in such a place'.<sup>31</sup> In the attempt to capture the numinous, 'works and places should complement each other'.<sup>32</sup> At Saint-Sulpice, Widor said to Albert Schweitzer: 'Organ playing [...] is the manifestation of a will filled with a vision of eternity'.<sup>33</sup> Messiaen believed strongly in this spiritual aspect of playing the organ, the primacy of the liturgical context, and the implications of divine inspiration and reverence when improvising before the 'real presence'. Discussing Tournemire, Messiaen writes:

But the improvisations were much more beautiful during Masses at Sainte-Clotilde, when he had the Blessed Sacrament in front of him. I think I resemble him somewhat in this respect. I improvise much better during a Service, on my organ at the Trinité.<sup>34</sup>

Messiaen upholds the supremacy of liturgical participation over concert performance:

I am [...] in complete harmony with that which is going on at the altar, almost like a priest... During the service I participate in the unfolding mystery, that which is held in the bread and the wine, that which is transubstantiation. The Holy Sacrament is present as I improvise and I know that in this situation, what I do is better here than in a concert.<sup>35</sup>

Or, to put it more succinctly, following diligent preparation of the readings and Gregorian propers: 'Je joue le dimanche'.<sup>36</sup> And in this mystic bond between music and scripture, in the transfigurative commentary upon the proclamation of the Gospel, Messiaen relates: 'I'm recognized as a co-messenger of the Word'.<sup>37</sup> This idea was amplified by Cardinal Lustiger:

I hear in Messiaen's music the inspiring power of the Word and the expression of a musician who has received the Word; I found [in his music], through the meditation expressed by the musician, aspects that helped me understand in a new way the Word he commented on.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst the act of composition may lack the spontaneity of improvisation, the quarrying of creative ideas remains constant to both processes: only the speed of presentation

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<sup>31</sup> Claude Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen: Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, trans. by E. Thomas Glasow (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1994), p. 142 (henceforth: Samuel, *Music and Color*).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Charles Rhind Joy, *Music in the Life of Albert Schweitzer* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), pp. 25, 168.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Messiaen to Felix Aprahamian, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1983, and reproduced in Nigel Simeone (ed. and trans.), *Bien Cher Félix...: Letters from Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod to Felix Aprahamian* (Cambridge: Mirage Press, 1998), p. 51, cited in Christopher Dingle, *The life of Messiaen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 181.

Mais les improvisations étaient beaucoup plus belles pendant les messes de Sainte-Clotilde, quand il avait le Saint Sacrement devant lui. Il me semble que je lui ressemble un peu sur ce point. J'improvise beaucoup mieux pendant l'Office, et sur mon orgue de la Trinité.

<sup>35</sup> Messiaen quoted in *Caecilia* (Diocese of Strasbourg), January-February, 1993, and cited in Père Jean-Rodolphe Kars, 'The Works of Olivier Messiaen and the Catholic Liturgy', in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. by C. Dingle and N. Simeone, p. 326.

<sup>36</sup> Meinrad Walter, 'Musik aus dem Geist der Theologie : zum Werk des Komponisten Olivier Messiaen', *Herder-Korrespondenz*, 61 (2007), 589-593, (p. 591): 'I play Sunday'.

<sup>37</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 137. Thus liturgical organ music becomes at least of equal stature to the homily.

<sup>38</sup> Karin Heller, 'Olivier Messiaen and Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger: Two Views of the Liturgical Reform according to the Second Vatican Council', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 63-82 (p. 77). She cites the interview of Lustiger by Jean-Michel Dieuaide, 'La Musique, Parole de Dieu prononcée par des voix humaines', *Voix Nouvelles*, 43 (2005), p. 10:

Il se trouve que j'ai été très touché par la musique de Messiaen. J'y entends ce que la Parole peut inspirer à un musicien et ce qu'un musicien peut exprimer d'une Parole reçue ; j'y ai trouvé, dans la méditation exprimée du musicien, des aspects qui m'ont aidé à comprendre la Parole neuve qu'il commentait...

differs, with composition achieving the added luxury of reflection. Thus similarities certainly exist between the thoughtful improvisation of the *messe basse* and the creation of a collection of meditations based upon scripture. Ingolf Dalferth discusses the compositional techniques at work in *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, perceiving ‘an enormously rich musical tapestry full of symbolic meaning at all levels of musical composition’ which remains undetectable to the casual listener,<sup>39</sup> and consequently, David Pitt therefore expresses the concern that the uninitiated listener will be unable to perceive the theological message.<sup>40</sup> Thus it is the function of the performer, through intelligent interpretation informed by theology and analysis, to attempt a painting in sound of these spiritual truths. For Umberto Eco, a post-structural reading of any work of art may involve the perception of ‘double coding’,<sup>41</sup> in which the intelligentsia or the initiated may be aware of multiple layers of meaning, irony or humour, whilst the casual observer may merely savour the effect of the surface features. The penetration of these layers of meaning, in other words, the decoding of specific references, leads to a deeper understanding both of the musical work and of its extra-musical message. Referring to the intertextuality of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Umberto Eco observes that it ‘requires pages and pages of notes to identify its references not only to the world of literature but also to history and cultural anthropology’.<sup>42</sup> The recognition of these many references are essential to a critical understanding of the text: the ignorance of them merely yields ‘a vague knowledge that there is something else there, and enjoying the text like someone eavesdropping at a half-open door, glimpsing only hints of a promising epiphany’.<sup>43</sup> This desire to be freed from the ignorance of missing essential yet hidden messages within a score is not just the preserve of the musicologist, but is the concern of the performer.

The constituent parts of Messiaen’s organ music form a ‘musical collage’,<sup>44</sup> ranging from harmonic and rhythmic factors, to issues of resonance and registration in order to build nothing less than a theological statement. Thus, performances of Messiaen’s scores demonstrate what Georgina Born would designate as a Deleuzian ‘musical assemblage’,<sup>45</sup> in which theology is a controlling factor in:

a series or network of relations between musical sounds, human and other subjects, practices, performances, cosmologies, discourses and representations, technologies, spaces, and social relations.<sup>46</sup>

The successful interpretation of music with such a spiritual dimension must therefore be able to take account of issues such as theology, genesis and historical studies, music analysis and the analysis of recordings, as well as comparison with other works, both similar and superficially disparate. The successful navigation of this enlightening ‘path from analysis to performance’ aims at creating sounds for the listener in a way as to render the musical message intelligible.<sup>47</sup> Here, the performer *is* the analyst; interpretation gives life to the system of signs which encode the ‘signified’. The true work surely does not (solely) reside on the printed page, and paraphrasing the theory of performance,

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<sup>39</sup> Ingolf U. Dalferth, ‘Representing God’s Presence’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 3:3 (2001), 237-256 (p. 252).

<sup>40</sup> David Pitt, ‘Incarnation and Eschaton in Olivier Messiaen’s *Le Verbe*’, *Logos: a Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 14/1 (2011), 15-37 (p. 16).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Eco, Umberto, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, Indiana: 1976), p. 231.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, p. 123.

<sup>45</sup> Georgina Born, ‘Listening, Mediation, Event: Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 135:S1 (2010), 79-89 (p. 87).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>47</sup> Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 10.

Nicholas Cook observes that 'there is no ontological distinction between the different modes of a work's existence, its different instantiations, because there is no original'.<sup>48</sup>

For Messiaen, Barthes' claims of the 'death of the author' were a great exaggeration:

We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.<sup>49</sup>

In the interpretation of Messiaen's spiritual message, however, there often *is* a single meaning, despite the fact that many of his greatest works consist of a texture of materials which 'blend and clash'.<sup>50</sup> In Messiaen, the force of authorial presence may be reduced, for example, by the use of external musical material such as Gregorian chant and birdsong; the portrayal of theological or spiritual concerns, together with scriptural narrative; the need for transcendence, achieved by the effect of *éblouissement*, designed to erase earthly concerns and focusing solely on 'the above'. Ironically, the use of many such techniques are unique to Messiaen's music, thereby reinforcing the voice of the composer, which partly helps to explain Alexander Goehr's problem: 'Why do birds sound like birds, but Messiaen's birds always sound like Messiaen?'.<sup>51</sup> In other words, 'Messiaen's birdsong is still unabashedly *Messiaen's* music'.<sup>52</sup> Obviously, Messiaen's authorial presence is certainly also enhanced by the use of unique material such as modes of limited transposition, colour-chords, and rhythmic formulae.

To a certain extent, with the surety of the fervent Catholicism expressed in his scores, the criticism levelled at Messiaen's 'monistic' explanations of his compositions,<sup>53</sup> not to mention his public pronouncements, deliberately ignores the composer's pressing need in countering the lethal quick sands of fashionable multiple meanings in post-war French intellectual thought. Messiaen was fighting against formidable opponents: denying any individuality of authorial presence, yet responsive to the nuances of originality, Barthes' understanding of the reductive straitjacketing of structural analysis would maintain that 'the text thereby loses its difference'.<sup>54</sup> This preservation of difference had led Derrida to assert that 'the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely',<sup>55</sup> which hardly represents a promising position for a devout Catholic eager to communicate the divine truths to his audience. Yet in the wake of the upheavals of the May 1968 *Événements* which surrounded the genesis of *La Transfiguration*, Julia Kristeva not only championed the notion of *l'altérité*, but unashamedly talked of the soul, of angels, and of Aquinas and the divine.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the climate in which Messiaen produced some of his most important masterpieces was not only progressive, but may have been open (and even receptive) to his message of joy.

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<sup>48</sup> Cook, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, trans. by Richard Howard [accessed 27 November 2012] <[http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death\\_authorbarthes.pdf](http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf)>, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text* (London: HarperCollins, 1977), p. 146.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Olivier Messiaen: Oiseaux Exotiques* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Rob Schultz, 'Melodic Contour and Nonretrogradable Structure in the Birdsong of Olivier Messiaen', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 30:1 (2008), 89-137 (p. 134), italics in the original.

<sup>53</sup> Arved Ashby, 'Intention and Meaning in Modernist Music', in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. by Arved Mark Ashby (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), trans. by Alan Bass as *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 354.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Griselda Pollock, 'Dialogue with Julia Kristeva', *Parallax*, 4:3 (1998), 5-16 (p. 10).

*For creatures of this visible world signify the invisible things of God.*<sup>1</sup>

*Windows magnify light, one of the things created by God, but the organ provides the church with something else, akin to light and yet surpassing it: a music of the invisible which is an opening on the hereafter.*<sup>2</sup>

## ‘MUSIC OF THE INVISIBLE’: LISTENING TO MESSIAEN’S ORGAN MUSIC

We listen to Messiaen to lift the veil on the invisible, but what do we hear? ‘Different listeners will obviously hear different things’,<sup>3</sup> where these different listeners might well be the same person engaged in repeated hearing of the same music: such is the complexity of Messiaen’s textures, it will often be impossible to take in every detail in one hearing. Or, as Leon Botstein puts it, in support of returning numerous times to the same work in live performance, rather than reliance upon a much-cherished recording: ‘Music as read text is realized from its notation each time anew, just as a novel might be, and is therefore heard differently by its reader’.<sup>4</sup> We now attempt to capture the essence of Messiaen’s art by addressing five aspects: music (as a medium for contemplating the divine); time; light and colour; the beauty of glory and truth. And all of these threads find themselves interlaced in Messiaen’s symbolic birdsongs, which, like the stars, appeal to our senses as they ‘prophesy our future resurrection’.<sup>5</sup>

### MUSIC AND THE DIVINE

Music is an excellent medium for us to approach the divine: the God we encounter in the mysteries of the sacrament. Describing the way in which we respond in music to God’s revelation to us of eternal truth, in *Saint François*, the Angel sings:

Dieu nous éblouit par excès de vérité. La musique nous porte à Dieu par défaut de vérité. Tu parles à Dieu en musique: Il va te répondre en musique. Connais la joie du bienheureux par suavité de couleur et de mélodie. Et que s’ouvrent pour toi les secrets, les secrets de la Gloire! Entends cette musique qui suspend la vie aux échelles du ciel. *Entends la musique de l’invisible...*<sup>6</sup>

Music constitutes our dialogue with God when we are dazzled by his brightness, and he communicates with sweetness of colour and melody. This two-way communion demands an active participation from the listener, in spiritual music as an act of faith touching earth and heaven: ‘une musique vraie, c’est-à-dire spirituelle, une musique qui soit un acte de foi, une musique qui touché à tous les sujets sans cesser de toucher à Dieu’.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bonaventure, cited in Hyman, Walsh and Williams, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Messiaen’s words as recalled by Olivier Glandaz, *An Ominous Recollection* [accessed 29 November 2012] <<http://www.timothypatterson.com/glandaz/messiaen.htm>> (trans. by Timothy Patterson).

<sup>3</sup> John Butt, ‘Do Musical Works Contain an Implied Listener? Towards a Theory of Musical Listening’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 135:S1 (2010), 5-18 (p. 7).

<sup>4</sup> Leon Botstein, ‘Recording and Reality: The Musical Subject’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 95:1 (2012), 1-14 (p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> Kars, ‘The works of Olivier Messiaen and the Catholic liturgy’, p. 329.

<sup>6</sup> *Saint François d’Assise*, Act II, Scene Five ‘L’ange musicien’ (my italics: ‘Hear the music of the invisible’). Messiaen as librettist paraphrases here the words of St. Thomas Aquinas (*ST* I-II, Q. 101, Art. 2, ad. 2.): ‘God dazzles us by excess of Truth. Music carries us to God in default of Truth. Thou speakest to God in music’ (trans. by Felix Aprahamian, and reproduced in the accompanying booklet to *Saint François d’Assise*, Kent Nagano, Hallé Orchestra – DG 445 176-2, p. 159).

<sup>7</sup> Francine Guiberteau, ‘Le *Saint François d’Assise* d’Olivier Messiaen: événement et avènement’, *L’Analyse Musicale*, 1 (November 1985), p. 62, and cited in Delphine Grivel, ‘L’inspiration denisienne dans le *Saint-François d’Assise* d’Olivier Messiaen’, in *Musique et arts plastiques: analogies et interférences*, ed. by Michèle Barbe (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006) pp. 201-209 (p. 208).

This places tremendous responsibility onto the listener. Or does it? Messiaen's advice on hearing his music focuses not on the precise detail, but on the bigger picture:

...arrive at the concert with an open mind [...] love nature, knowing how to appreciate it in all its manifestations, sounds as well as colours, colours as well as perfumes [...] allow yourself to realize that in this apparent disorder, a hidden order reigns, that in this lack of harmonic control, chordal colours are implied, and that in this lack of rhythm, thousands of superimposed rhythms blend into one great rhythm in blocks of duration.<sup>8</sup>

## TIME AND ETERNITY

'Imagine a shock which causes the whole universe to tremble. A shock: eternity beforehand, eternity afterwards. Before and after: this is the birth of time'.<sup>9</sup> The understanding of time and eternity presents numerous problems for musicians, especially regarding the temporality of music, which unfolds through time and with measurable duration:

A God enthroned beyond time in timeless eternity would have to renounce music [...] Are we to suppose that we mortals, in possessing such a wonder as music, are more privileged than God? Rather, to save music for him, we shall hold, with the Greeks, that God cannot go behind time. Otherwise, what would he be doing with all the choiring angels?<sup>10</sup>

The concept of time and eternity is central to Messiaen's personal philosophy, and the understanding of his unique approach to time in the play of rhythms within his compositions is an important factor in the interpretation of his body of work.<sup>11</sup> Messiaen attempts to make explicit that Deleuzian diagonal linking earthly appearance with the imperceptibility of the above, not least in his musical evocations of the Apocalypse, from *Quatuor* to *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà*.... Messiaen makes a detailed exploration of the iconoclastic views on time of Henri Bergson in *Traité*, and throughout his artistic career made attempts at a musical rendering of Balthasar's notion of *Überzeit* – the eternity of the 'beyond', in which our chronological grasp of time is completely shattered. This he achieved by means of numerous rhythmic breakthroughs within the play of durational layers: rhythmic superposition; rhythmic canon; non-retrogradable rhythm; *valeur ajoutée*; *personnages rythmiques*; the contrapuntal interactions between *deçà-tâlas*. These *deçà-tâlas* 'reach into the religious, philosophical, and cosmic realms'.<sup>12</sup>

In order to grasp successfully the rift between earthly time and heavenly eternity, we must attempt to understand what happens at that precise moment when both become fused. In his explanation of the implications of eternity, contrasting the chronology of our visible, earth-bound existence with the invisible eternity of the above, Balthasar concludes that 'the dead are immediately raised in the "super-time" of heaven'.<sup>13</sup> Ratzinger expands this idea that the soul's transition from *Weltzeit* into the infinite moment of the beatific vision is instantaneous:

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 133: Here Messiaen is talking about *Chronochromie* with Claude Samuel, setting out some rules of 'listening properly'.

<sup>9</sup> Messiaen's words for the lecture at the Conférence de Bruxelles, 1958, printed in *Melos* 12/25 p. 382, also cited in Hohlfeld-Ufer, p. 15 (my translation).

<sup>10</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 151, and cited in Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> See Gareth Healey, *Messiaen's Musical Techniques: The Composer's View and Beyond* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 37-41, for an explanation of Messiaen's ideas about time in relation to religion, science, and philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Hofer, OP, 'Balthasar's Eschatology on the Intermediate State: The Question of Knowability', *Logos*, 12:3 (2009), 148-172 (p. 159).

Death signifies leaving time for eternity with its single 'today.' Here the problem of the 'intermediate state' between death and resurrection turns out to be a problem only in seeming. The 'between' exists only in our perspective. In reality, 'the end of time' is timeless. The person who dies steps into the presence of the Last Day and of judgment, the Lord's resurrection and parousia.<sup>14</sup>

It is against this astonishing background of temporal shift that Messiaen understands both our place in eternity, and the eternal predestination of the Word as portrayed in 'Le Verbe' of *La Nativité du Seigneur*: 'Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendour; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you' (Psalm 109. 3).

## LIGHT AND COLOUR

Umberto Eco describes the play of light and colour in medieval ecclesiastical architecture, which evokes Messiaen's passion for the stained glass and colours of the gothic cathedral, and the music he composed in response:

[The Middle Ages] identified beauty with light and colour (as well as with proportion), and this colour was always a simple harmony of reds, blues, gold, silver, white and green, without shading or chiaroscuro, where splendour is generated by the harmony of the whole rather than being determined by light enveloping things from the outside, or making colour drip beyond the confines of the figures [...] light seems to radiate outwards from the objects.<sup>15</sup>

## THE BEAUTY OF GLORY AND TRUTH

Messiaen quotes John 8. 32, that through the Word, 'the truth will make you free',<sup>16</sup> marvelling that Rembrandt achieved his 'language of light [...] through his profound freedom'.<sup>17</sup> The joy of the Christian message is expressed through a *theologia gloria*,<sup>18</sup> which delights in the concept of beauty. In the words of Balthasar:

The beautiful is above all a form (*Gestalt*) and the light does not fall on this form from above and from outside, rather it breaks forth from the form's interior. Species and lumen in beauty are one, if the species truly merits that name (which does not designate any form whatever, but pleasing, radiant form). Visible form not only 'points' to an invisible, unfathomable mystery; form is the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while, naturally, at the same time protecting and veiling it. Both natural and artistic form has an exterior which appears and an interior depth, both of which, however, are not separable in the form itself. The content (*Gehalt*) does not lie behind the form (*Gestalt*), but within it. Whoever is not capable of seeing and 'reading' the form will, by the same token, fail to perceive the content. Whoever is not illumined by the form will see no light in the content either.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. by Aidan Nichols and Michael Waldstein (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), originally published as *Eschatologie – Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), pp. 107-108.

<sup>15</sup> Umberto Eco, *Umberto Eco on Literature* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2005), p. 18. For a full account of Messiaen's musical techniques in the portrayal of a theology of light, see Dunbavand, 'In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*', particularly Chapter VII, pp. 109-116 and Conclusions, pp. 117-121.

<sup>16</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Discours d'Olivier Messiaen, Praemium Erasmianum MCMLXXI, Amsterdam, 1971, and translated in Rößler, *Contributions*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Volume I: 'Seeing the Form', trans. by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. by Joseph Fessio, SJ and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), p. 151.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF BIRDSONG

In acknowledgement of the call of Dukas ('Study the birds. They are great masters'), Messiaen referred to birds as 'les corps enseignant'.<sup>20</sup> Why did birdsong assume such central importance in the music of Olivier Messiaen? On a technical level, it was to provide a 'way out' of the problems faced by Messiaen during the 1950s: serialism, electronic music, and the *avant garde* presented the composer with uncomfortable challenges, and he chose instead to forge an entirely new path. On a spiritual level, the birds were to provide an essential medium for his expression of freedom,<sup>21</sup> the timeless and divine. Resurrection joy was central to Messiaen's message, and the celebration of Easter coincides with the spring awakening of birdsong,<sup>22</sup> imitated by Gregorian chant:

On retrouve les arabesques des Merles, des Pinsons, des Fauvettes à tête noire, la trame jubilante de l'Alouette des champs et la caresse vocale du Rouge-gorge, dans l'enchevêtrement des neumes de Plain-chant.<sup>23</sup>

He realized that in the successful instrumental imitation of specific bird calls, the original model must both be slowed down and transposed downwards to fit the equally-tempered scale. Whilst much of this music is by necessity atonal, Messiaen also renders birdsong both modally and with colour-chords. The use of complex harmony to capture what in nature is, in fact, a monody, is a result of the desire to exploit resonance in the rendering of timbre. But what is the significance of the music of these birds, with their complex microtonal and rhythmic incantations? Messiaen perceived birds as the avatars of angels; birds as the musicians of creation, blissfully singing divine praises to their creator from nature's cathedral-like forests; birds unfettered by earthly concerns, soaring on high and reaching up to the heavens; birds as symbols of divine blessing, for example as the famous white dove settling benignly upon Fidel Castro's shoulder, or the lark remembered fondly by Benedict XVI:

At the solemn call on that radiant summer day [...] we responded 'Adsum', Here I am [...] at that moment when the elderly archbishop laid his hands on me, a little bird – perhaps a lark – flew up from the high altar in the cathedral and trilled a little joyful song. And I could not but see in this a reassurance from on high, as if I heard the words 'This is good, you are on the right way'.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, as Messiaen explains: 'Birdsong is purifying, pacifying, consoling'.<sup>25</sup> Messiaen viewed the birds not just as messengers, but as supreme musicians: 'In the domain of music, birds have discovered everything',<sup>26</sup> and consequently: 'Birdsong is the model and source of all music'.<sup>27</sup> Birds symbolize creation itself, and make tangible to us the elements of music. Psalm 8, for example, praises God through the birds of the air. Messiaen also remarked that 'the bird is the symbol of freedom',<sup>28</sup> more specifically: 'the bird, in its flight and song represents perfectly the mystical escape of religious joy and spiritual freedom'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', p. 370.

<sup>21</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de rythme, de couleur et d'ornithologie*, Seven volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1994-2002), *Tome III*, p. 192 (henceforth: *Traité*).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*: 'We find the arabesques [of birds] [...] in the tangle of plainchant's neumes'.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 99.

<sup>25</sup> *Traité III*, p. 192: 'Le chant d'oiseau est purifiant, pacifiant, consolant'. See also Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 32: 'Nature is indeed marvellously beautiful and pacifying, and, for me, ornithological work was not only an element of consolation in my pursuits of musical aesthetics, but also a factor of health'.

<sup>26</sup> *Traité V/1*, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Traité III*, p. 192: 'Le chant d'oiseau est le modèle, la source de toute musique'.

<sup>28</sup> Antoine Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: Julliard, 1960), p. 234.

<sup>29</sup> *Traité III*, p. 192: 'L'oiseau, par son vol, par son chant, symbolise à merveille l'évasion mystique, la joie religieuse, la liberté spirituelle'.

On a structural level, the original motivic gestures are subsumed into a purely musical form, which is controlled, not by the ‘little servants of immaterial joy’,<sup>30</sup> but by the composer himself. Messiaen’s critics accuse him of denying a fruitful and artistic representation of birds by resorting to mere imitation,<sup>31</sup> yet birds are used symbolically, idealized in the context of creation, freedom and joy: ‘Take the garden warbler [...] I’ve heard ten thousand warblers and only written one of them, the epitome of all the others. I’ve used the best passages of all the others’.<sup>32</sup>

How does Messiaen’s birdsong intersect with theology? One particular point of departure for the understanding of the incorporation of birdsong into theological music is provided by Paul Griffiths:

...the whole of nature, represented as usual by bird calls, is joined in celebration of [God]: the ignorance is the ignorance of innocence, the ignorance in nature of the fact that it manifests the divine.<sup>33</sup>

Messiaen himself also refers to the spiritual dimension of the birdsong in his music: ‘God is above us and still He comes to suffer with us. This is expressed by means of bird- and colour-themes’.<sup>34</sup> As an expression of the salvific consequence of this suffering, the music of birdsong is a ‘symbol of heavenly joy’,<sup>35</sup> where ‘the bird style embodied theology by representing nature’.<sup>36</sup> The symbolism of Messiaen’s birdsong style, this outpouring of joy in florid, extended arabesques, may even be perceived in instances where birdsong is not being specifically evoked, for example in movements such as ‘Force et agilité’ and ‘Joie et clarté’ of *Les corps glorieux*,<sup>37</sup> where the resurrected body moves with unfettered, bird-like freedom.

‘Prayer is accompanied by different musics: birdsong is one such – the most beautiful’.<sup>38</sup> Of course, this music is not merely the adjunct to prayer, it is the symbolic crystallization of prayer itself, where, in the ‘Sortie’ of *Messe de la Pentecôte*, the soaring skylarks lift our prayer upwards to the heavenly creator above a gust of wind, just as the incense of ‘L’ange aux parfums’ symbolizes the ascent of prayer. This outpouring of alleluatic joy in the Gregorian alleluia praising God in the highest, is mirrored by all creation:

Au dessus du grand portail, parmi les tuyaux du Grand Orgue, entre un arbre de Jessé, le lys d’une Annonciation, et la recitation de ce Psaume 148 qui convie toutes les créatures – depuis les armées d’étoiles jusqu’aux animaux sauvages et troupeaux de toute sorte – à louer Yahvéh dans les hauteurs, pourquoi ne pas admettre ces mélodies alleluiantes?<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Technique I*, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Fallon, ‘The record of realism in Messiaen’s bird style’, in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. by C. Dingle and N. Simeone, pp. 115-136 (p. 133).

<sup>32</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Entretien avec Claude Sammel: Réalisé à Paris en octobre 1988*, trans. by Stuart Walters, cd ECD75505, and cited in Robert Fallon, ‘The record of realism in Messiaen’s bird style’, p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 223.

<sup>34</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 140.

<sup>36</sup> Fallon, ‘The record of realism in Messiaen’s bird style’, p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> Sander van Maas, *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen’s Breakthrough Toward the Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 42.

<sup>38</sup> *Traité III* p. 193: ‘La prière s’accompagne de musiques: le chant d’oiseau en est une: la plus belle!’.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192:

Above the main portal, in the midst of the organ pipes and between a Tree of Jesse, lily of the Annunciation, and Psalm 148 which invites all creatures, from the army of stars to wildlife and all manner of herds, to praise Jehovah in the heights, why not give recognition to these alleluatic melodies?



Why confine this music to the trees? The forest is nature's cathedral, and cathedral embraces forest:

...colonnes et vitraux, les formes des branches et les dessins des feuilles, les couleurs du ciel, des fleurs, des papillons, toutes ces richesses de lumière et d'ombre habitent nos cathédrales.<sup>40</sup>

Messiaen brings the bird into the church, into the liturgy, with radiant symbolism:

L'Office lui offre un autre habitat: non plus la branche ou le buisson, non plus l'air libre et le soleil, mais les claviers de l'orgue et la forêt des tuyaux, mais la transformation de ces voix d'hommes et de femmes qui s'éraillent dans l'ombre, en un Rossignol symbolique, unique, et radieux.<sup>41</sup>

Not only does the skylark symbolize the outpouring of joy and praise in *alleluia*, but in combination with the rhythmic play of durations, lifts us up to heaven :

Le milieu mélange la chose la plus vivante, la plus libre qui soit: un chant d'Alouette avec une combinaison rythmique de la plus extrême rigueur. Quant au chant de l'Alouette, il est le symbole de l'alleluia, de la Joie du Saint-Esprit. C'est une vocalise en plein ciel, qui suit les phases du vol de l'oiseau.<sup>42</sup>

The preface to *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà*... provides the perfect summation of Messiaen's appropriation of birdsong: 'the bird is a symbol of joy and jubilation'.<sup>43</sup>

For the performer, grasping these complexities of musical language, and understanding that which is to be signified, are essential to the preparation of a hermeneutic interpretation. Yet listening to a live performance yields less information about musical techniques than perusing the score: one point of view differentiates between easily perceptible rhythmic features, and the symbolism of the complex processes gleaned from a close reading of the score.<sup>44</sup> For all these complexities, the goal of the sonic experience is purely 'the emotion derived from the beauty of the music and timbres'.<sup>45</sup> Messiaen removes from the audience all responsibility of a knowledge of the inner workings of the music, replacing this with '*charme des impossibilités*' and, ultimately, *éblouissement*:

Let us think now of the hearer of our modal and rhythmic music; he will not have time in the concert to inspect the non-transpositions and non-retrogradations, and, at that moment, these questions will not interest him further; to be charmed is his only desire. And that is precisely what will happen; in spite of himself he will submit to the strange charm of impossibilities [...] which will lead him progressively to that sort of theological rainbow which the musical language [...] attempts to be.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Traité* III p. 192: '...columns and stained glass, branch shapes and leaf designs, the colours of the sky, flowers, butterflies, all this wealth of light and shade inhabits our cathedrals?'

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193:

The Mass offers it another habitat: no longer branch or bush, nor the open air and sunshine, but the keyboards of the organ and its forest of pipes, and the transformation into a symbolic nightingale, unique and radiant, of mankind's hoarse voice in the shadows.

<sup>42</sup> Messiaen's description of 'Sortie' for his programme notes for the recording by Schwann records:

The middle [section] mixes that which is the most alive and free, a lark's song, with a rhythmic combination of the utmost rigour. The lark's song is the symbol of the Alleluia, the joy of the Holy Spirit. It is a vocalise of the sky, following the bird's flight.

<sup>43</sup> Yvonne Loriod, *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà*... (Paris, Alphonse Leduc, 1998), Première Partie, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Benedict Taylor, 'On Time and Eternity in Messiaen', in *Olivier Messiaen: The Centenary Papers*, ed. by J. Crispin, pp. 256-280 (p. 270). Messiaen discusses this in *Traité* I, p. 32, and based upon this, Taylor makes the bold assertion that 'Messiaen's ideal listener is the score reader' (p. 279, n. 46).

<sup>45</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 134. Messiaen also touched on emotion (and sincerity) in his preface and programme note to *La Nativité du Seigneur*.

<sup>46</sup> *Technique* I, p. 21.

## TRACK LISTING AND ORGAN SPECIFICATION (ACCOMPANYING CD)

### A VISION OF CHRIST

1. *Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...*, I ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’

### THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

2. *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, VI ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’
3. *La Nativité du Seigneur*, IV ‘Le Verbe’
4. *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, II ‘la Source de Vie’
5. *Les corps glorieux*, VI ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’

### LIVING STONES AND SOUNDING TEMPLES

6. *Les corps glorieux*, III ‘L’ange aux parfums’
7. *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*
8. *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, II ‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’
9. *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, XIV ‘Prière avant la communion’

### ‘FORGOTTEN, RECOVERED, AND REPEATED’

10. *Messe de la Pentecôte*, ‘Communion (Les oiseaux et les sources)’
11. *Messe de la Pentecôte*, ‘Sortie (Le vent de l’Esprit)’

Recorded on 22 May, 2013, in 24-bit/96 kHz digital stereo using two large diaphragm condenser microphones (one inverted) in a figure-of-eight pattern (‘Blumlein Pair’), and mastered for CD format in BiasPeak 4, using the new organ of St. Michael the Archangel, Newquay, Cornwall (Lance Foy, 2013).

Great	Choir (enclosed)	Swell (enclosed)	Pedal
Double Diapason 16	Viole de Gambe 8	Open Diapason 8	Subbass 32
Open Diapason I 8	Rohr Flute 8	Gedackt 8	Open Diapason 16
Open Diapason II 8	Lieblich Flute 4	Salicional 8	Contra Bass 16
Stopped Diapason 8	Piccolo 2	Voix Celestes 8	Bourdon 16
Principal 4	Sesquialtera II 12-17	Principal 4	Echo Bourdon 16
Harmonic flute 4	Clarinet 8	Gedackt Flöte 4	Principal 8
Twelfth 2½	Posaune 8	Flageolet 2	Flute 8
Fifteenth 2	Tromba 8	Mixture III 15-19-22	Fifteenth 4
Mixture III 19-22-26	Posaune Clarion 4	Contra Fagotto 16	Octave Flute 4
Posaune 8	Tremulant	Oboe 8	Ophicleide 16
Tromba 8	Choir Octave	Cornopean 8	Contra Fagotto 16
Posaune Clarion 4	Choir Sub-Octave	Tremulant	Tromba 8
Tromba Clarion 4	Choir Unison Off	Swell Octave	Fagotto 4
Choir to Great	Swell to Choir	Swell Sub-Octave	Choir to Pedal
Swell to Great	thumb pistons 0-8	Swell Unison Off	Great to Pedal
thumb pistons 0-8	Ch/Ped (reversible)	thumb pistons 0-8	Swell to Pedal
Gt/Ped(reversible)	Sw/Ch (reversible)	Sw/Ped (reversible)	8 toe pistons
Sw/Gt (reversible)	Generals 1-8, stepper	toe pistons 1-8	Gt & Pedal combs.
Ch/Gt (reversible)	256 channels	Generals on Sw toes	Gt/Ped (reversible)

## TRACK COMMENTARY AND OBSERVATIONS (ACCOMPANYING CD)

The accompanying CD is to be found on the inner back cover.<sup>1</sup>

**Track 2.** With two sets of Great reeds, the Tromba is used at ACD2-2:16 and 5:27. In his recording of *Très modéré* (54/1/1), Messiaen plays at ♩ = 84, slowing at the end of each of the first three phrases, elongating the final notes and adding the comma.<sup>2</sup> Weir's solution is more rhythmic, playing at ♩ = 92, reducing the duration of the final chord of each phrase by a semiquaver, and adding a semiquaver for the comma.<sup>3</sup> Faster again, at ♩ = 112, Latry reduces the chord at the end of each phrase by a semiquaver, playing straight on, 'in time': the reverberation is consistently denied.<sup>4</sup> My interpretation attempts to address each issue: Messiaen's use of *valeur ajoutée* demands precision, with each phrase commencing in the correct 'rhythmic slot'. The phrasing away onto the final crotchets of 54/1/2 and 54/1/4 (and the corresponding moments on p. 58) reduces these chords by two semiquavers, allowing the acoustic to carry the chord and represent the comma.

**Track 3.** Messiaen commented to Almut Rößler: 'The first groups of 32<sup>nd</sup>-notes should start off slowly, then gradually get very fast. The section marked *extrêmement lent* is to be played with an unbelievable tranquillity'.<sup>5</sup>

**Track 4.** Messiaen's direction for *Positif* 16'<sup>2</sup>+2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>' is replaced by 8'+*Sesquialtera*.

**Track 5.** In his own recording, at 13/4/2 Messiaen slows down considerably,<sup>6</sup> also directing Almut Rößler: 'all chords very broad; the first with a fermata, the following ones becoming gradually somewhat shorter'.<sup>7</sup> My interpretation notes the *tenuto* marks.

**Track 6.** In the absence of an independent *Nazard*, the opening *Clarinete* melody is coloured instead with a flute 4'. In the absence of a quiet 16', at 10/4/1 (ACD6-3:55) the l.h. plays with 8'+2', and at 14/2/4 with the same registration one octave lower.

**Track 7.** The opening Gregorian phrase is taken from *Solesmes 1010-2010 - Le Millénaire*, Chants de la Dédicace d'une église (Fr. Yves-Marie Lelièvre) SAB02, Track 7. The concluding Song thrush was recorded in Norfolk, April 1978 by Keith Betton.<sup>8</sup> © The British Library Board, reproduced with permission.

**Track 8.** The opening Garden Warbler was recorded in Gloucestershire, May 1972, and the concluding Blackcap in Worcestershire, May 1970 by Ray Goodwin.<sup>9</sup> © The British Library Board, reproduced with permission.

**Track 9.** The *Positif* 16' tone is created by the sub-octave use of the Swell 8' flute.

**Track 10.** At 18/1/1 (ACD10-1:00) the l.h. plays with 8'+2' one octave lower. With no *Piccolo* 1', at 21/4/1, the r.h. plays at 2' pitch, rather than following the assertion that 'the piece ought not to be played...'.<sup>10</sup> This track deliberately links *attacca* to Track 11.

**Track 11.** The concluding Skylark was recorded in Surrey, April 1978 by Keith Betton.<sup>11</sup> © The British Library Board, reproduced with permission.

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<sup>1</sup> The accompanying CD is henceforth referred to as ACD, with references given by track and timings.

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* – Erato 4509-92007-2, Disc 2, Track 4 (2:36).

<sup>3</sup> Gillian Weir, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* – Priory PRCD 923, Track 6 (2:21).

<sup>4</sup> Olivier Latry, (the complete organ works of Olivier Messiaen) Deutsche Grammophon 471 480-2, Disc 3, Track 6 (2:23).

<sup>5</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même* - (4 cds) EMI CZS 7 67400 2, Disc 3, Track 6 (5:39). See Example 3.7, p. 70, below, for more detailed harmonic analysis of this bar.

<sup>7</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>8</sup> *British Bird Sounds on CD*, NSACD 1-2, Disc 2, Track 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Disc 2, Tracks 36, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *British Bird Sounds on CD*, Disc 2, Track 2.

## PROGRAMME NOTES (ACCOMPANYING CD)

This recording project presents a collection of pieces examining three themes: the Light of Christ, the ‘True’ temple, and the meaning of material, which, for Messiaen, was ‘forgotten, recovered, and repeated’.<sup>1</sup> Musical and theological links between these pieces are significant, and following musical analysis and theological interpretation, what becomes important is the *sound*: making interpretative ideas come to life as music, with the preservation of these performances as recordings. Contrary to Saint-Saëns’ belief in the primacy of the score, the recording has now become the most ideal representation of the music itself.<sup>2</sup> In creating this ‘ideal’ on the quest for the ‘perfect’ performance, there is a danger of losing the spontaneity, pacing and control of a live concert. Therefore there has been little editing in these recordings, in order to preserve the projection of Messiaen’s over-arching theological meditations, reflecting Nicholas Cook’s ideas:

The recording [...] purports to be the trace of a performance (process), but is in reality usually the composite product of multiple takes and more or less elaborate sound processing - in other words, less a trace than the representation of a performance that never actually existed.<sup>3</sup>

Rhythmician, musical colourist and synaesthete, ornithologist, theologian, *titulaire* of the historic Cavaillé-Coll organ of La Trinité, Paris from 1931, composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) developed a complex musical language able to create the dazzle of *éblouissement* (reminiscent of the spiritual power of mediaeval stained glass) in his communication of the joy of the Christian message. This compilation explores the interactions between pieces which describe aspects of the Christian faith, drawing upon the theology of Messiaen’s three most important influences: St Thomas Aquinas, Dom Columba Marmion, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Aquinas’ descriptions of the life of the resurrected feature in *Les corps glorieux* (1939), and his investigations of Trinitarian belief inform Messiaen’s masterpiece, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (1969). The aspects of the Incarnation portrayed in Messiaen’s *La Nativité du Seigneur* (1935) draw upon the writings of Marmion, whilst *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (1984) provides a detailed understanding of Christ hidden in the Eucharist as outlined by Balthasar. In conclusion, the close of the experimental and symbolist *Messe de la Pentecôte* (1950) is influenced both by Charles Tournemire, and by Messiaen’s rhythmic achievements of the period.

### A VISION OF CHRIST (TRACK 1)

In 1934 Messiaen had transcribed for organ the orchestral ‘Majesté du Christ demandant sa gloire de son Père’ from *L’Ascension*, giving the organ premier of *L’Ascension* at St. Antoine-des-Quinze-Vingts early in 1935.<sup>4</sup> This brass and woodwind chorale sets John 17. 1: “‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you’”.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere Messiaen had also produced transcriptions in both directions, from the piano reduction of *Les offrandes oubliées* of 1930, to the orchestral expansion of *Poèmes pour Mi* in 1936. Despite the fact that organ transcriptions have dramatically fallen out of fashion, in realizing here ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’ for organ, the spirit in which Messiaen transferred ‘Majesté du Christ’ has been preserved: identical in style, both pieces depict

<sup>1</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 83: ‘...toujours oubliée, toujours retrouvée, toujours répétée...’

<sup>2</sup> Botstein, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 54 (henceforth: Hill and Simeone). See p. 51 for the dating of the transcription; the work was composed in Paris/Neussargues in 1932, and orchestrated in Monaco in 1933. See also Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>5</sup> This text commences the Gospel of the Vigil of the Ascension (John 17. 1-11), as observed by Marmion, p. 307. Motivically, there are some strong similarities between ‘Majesté du Christ’ and the *Victimae paschali*, and Anne Le Forestier, in *Cahiers d’analyse et de formation musicale 1: Olivier Messiaen – L’Ascension* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1984), p. 3, even presents a version of the melody notated in neumes.

the glory of Christ in stately phrases of opaque wind textures which transfer magnificently to the organ, in scoring which ‘recalls the broad and luminous work of the master glassmakers in our cathedrals’.<sup>6</sup> As the opening of *Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...*, ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’ represents the vision of Christ in Revelation which Messiaen was able to witness at first hand in the ambulatory glass at Bourges cathedral:<sup>7</sup>

I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force (Revelation 1. 13-16).

This unfolding melody is an adaptation of the Alleluia of Christ the King, *Potestas eius*, which sets the vision of Daniel 7. 14, anticipating that in Revelation: ‘His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed’, with its jubilus identical to that of *Christus resurgens*.<sup>8</sup> Combining the colours of modal and resonance-based harmony, our theological trajectory opens in phrases which move synaesthetically from the blue of heaven, to the red of Christ’s glory at Bourges.

### THE LIGHT OF CHRIST (TRACKS 2-5)

The following four pieces constitute a musical investigation of the Divine Light: the ‘uncreated energies of God’.<sup>9</sup> Both illuminating and guiding throughout the bible, ‘God is Light’.<sup>10</sup> These pieces demonstrate Messiaen’s courage in confronting the astonishing ‘Truths of the Faith, [...] in turn mysterious, harrowing, glorious and sometimes terrifying, always based on a luminous, unchanging Reality’.<sup>11</sup> Like that moment of the Easter Vigil, our journey explodes in the Light of Christ with **‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’**. This piece assembles a tapestry of five quotations from scripture to portray the luminescence of Jesus the Word, two of which are cited directly as superscriptions in the score, whilst three are present by implication, being the texts which accompany Messiaen’s direct quotations from the Gregorian propers for the feast of the Epiphany. This combination yields a profound theology, creating music *as* liturgy, where our worship is an offering to the King of kings, the life-giving light of Christ the Word, whose glory is that of the Father and manifested by the shining of the star. The work commences with the superscription from John 1. 4: ‘Dans le Verbe était la Vie et la Vie était la Lumière...’ (‘in him was life, and the life was the light of all people’), which accompanies the Offertory *Reges Tharsis*, setting Psalm 72. 10-11: ‘May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service’. Messiaen follows with the verse *Surge, et illuminare Ierusalem* (Isaiah 60. 1) from the Gradual of the Epiphany: ‘Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you’. The triumphant, fanfare-like presentation of the Alleluia of the Epiphany *Vidimus stellam*

<sup>6</sup> Félix Raugel, ‘L’Ascension: Quatre Méditations symphoniques par Olivier Messiaen’, *Le Monde musical* (28 February, 1935), 48-49, cited in Hill and Simeone, p. 55. Both pieces involve slow *tempo*: ‘Majesté du Christ’ at quaver = 48 (orchestral version), and ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’ at semiquaver = 44, whilst both pieces are directed to be played *majestueux*. The orchestration of ‘Majesté du Christ’ evokes an organ-like texture, rendering its transcription perfectly ‘natural’ (Le Forestier, p. 6). See Appendix, p. 140.

<sup>7</sup> The provisional title was *Prélude à l’Apocalypse*: see Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, p. 232.

<sup>8</sup> Julian Christoph Töle, *Olivier Messiaen: Éclairs sur l’au-delà...: Die christlich-eschatologische Dimension des Opus ultimum* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 54. *Christus resurgens* reminds us of the immortality of Christ. See Appendix, p. 142 for a comparison of *Potestas eius* and the melody of ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’.

<sup>9</sup> Solrunn Nes, *The Uncreated Light: An Iconographical Study of the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church*, trans. by Arlene Moi (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Samuel, *Permanences d’Olivier Messiaen: Dialogues et commentaires* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1999), p. 29.

*eius*, which sets the words of the Magi in Matthew 2. 2: “For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage”, is combined with the superscription from Hebrews 1. 3: ‘le Fils, resplendissement de la gloire du Père’ (‘He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being’). Such thematic use of multiple quotations from Gregorian chant is in direct imitation of the technique used by Charles Tournemire in the *pièce terminale* from each suite of *L’orgue mystique*. The two panels of this diptych outline a jubilant perfect cadence in C major, with colour chords using a palette of vivid gold and yellow, and modal harmony which refers to *La Transfiguration*.

The diptych of ‘**Le Verbe**’ explores Christ the Eternal Word. Aspects of light are significant features in *La Nativité du Seigneur*, not least in the Star of Bethlehem portrayed in ‘Les mages’. In ‘Dieu parmi nous’, the Light of the World is Word made flesh, dwelling under the tent of humanity, whilst in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, this invisible God becomes present for us now, in the Eucharist. The Uncreated Light shining out from the dawn of creation features in the opening section of ‘Le Verbe’, which commences with a flourish: ‘Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendour; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you’ (Psalm 109. 3), and ‘what was from the beginning [...] the word of life’ (I John 1). Beneath the shimmering white with golden reflections from inversions of the *accord sur dominante*, Messiaen depicts the descent of the Word of God, not as the Word made flesh at the Incarnation, but as our judge at the Parousia, with the awesome angel trumpeters of Michelangelo’s ‘Last Judgment’:

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. (Revelation 19. 11-15).

A rhythmic canon depicts the Son as the mirror image of the Father: ‘For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness’ (Wisdom 7. 26), the same idea as we read in Hebrews 1. 3. The superposition of the two Hindu *deçî-tâlas*, *turangalîla* above *sârasa*, symbolizes the mingling of humanity and divinity, earthly time with heavenly eternity: as Word, Jesus is begotten in the ‘today’ of eternity, and as Son, he is begotten at the Incarnation. ‘I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you”’ (Psalm 2. 7). The serene closing section of ‘Le Verbe’ presents a highly ornamented version of the Easter Sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*, showing us at once the journey from Bethlehem to Golgotha, and beyond, to the eschaton. Thus contained within the Word is the joy of salvation, and whilst *La Nativité du Seigneur* serves as a musical exploration of the beginning of Christ’s earthly life, that historical moment when the eternal God entered into earthly time, ‘Le Verbe’ forms part of Messiaen’s explanation as to *why* this was necessary, creating for us a meditation not on Jesus the man, but on Christ Pantocrator.

Messiaen explains that ‘**La Source de Vie**’ ‘expresses the thirst for grace given through the Holy Sacrament’, using words from the Prayer of St. Bonaventure, a prayer at thanksgiving after mass: ‘Que toujours mon coeur ait soif de vous, ô fontaine de vie, source de l’éternelle lumière! (‘O may my heart ever thirst for you, O fountain of life, and source of eternal light!’). In Messiaen’s original plan for *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘la Source de Vie’ immediately preceded ‘Les ressuscités et la lumière de Vie’:<sup>12</sup> both pieces explore

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<sup>12</sup> Hill and Simeone, pp. 348-9.

the light of life in John 1. 4. Here a gently spiced melody, using two of the composer's most highly favoured solo combinations, is suspended above a sequence of Messiaen's special colour chords: 'chords of transposed inversions' and 'chords of contracted resonance'. Gillian Weir interprets these chords as 'drifting from one to the next like light floating down dust beams from a stained-glass window'.<sup>13</sup>

With musical 'reflections of gold and flame',<sup>14</sup> the joy and brightness which issues forth from the resurrected body is portrayed by Messiaen in **Joie et clarté des corps glorieux**: 'Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (Matthew 13. 43). Columba Marmion links this to the Transfiguration, in which our own clarity is prefigured: 'Their bodies will be glorious like unto Christ's body [...] it is the same glory which shines upon the Humanity of the Incarnate Word that will transfigure our bodies'.<sup>15</sup> This piece develops a musical response to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, specifically writing in the Supplement to *Summa Theologiae* (ST Sup., Q. 85, Art. 1). Here Aquinas cites Augustine: 'the body's beauty is harmony of parts with a certain charm of colour'; Wisdom 3. 7: 'The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds', and I Corinthians 15. 43: 'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory'. Aquinas compares the brightness of the resurrected to 'the clarity of the stars', concluding that 'the bodies of the saints will be lightsome'. Discussing his own interpretation, Messiaen writes: 'La vie des ressuscités est libre, pure, lumineuse, colorée. Les timbres de l'orgue reflèteront ces caractères',<sup>16</sup> and this astonishing music of extended trumpet arabesques picks up where its superscription from Matthew 13. 43 leaves off: 'Let anyone with ears listen!'

### THE 'TRUE' TEMPLE (TRACKS 6-9)

In 'Miyajima et le torii dans la mer' of *Sept haïkai*, the temple at Miyajima reminded Messiaen of the heavenly city,<sup>17</sup> who responded by uniting Christian symbolism with Shinto shrine in rainbow-like harmony.<sup>18</sup> By looking away from Itsukushima, through the torii and across to sea and sky, Messiaen was able to contemplate the 'true temple'.<sup>19</sup> His use elsewhere of the Gregorian Alleluia *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum* brings with it the text of Psalm 138. 2: 'I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name'. These four pieces investigate this 'true temple', from the angel of the celestial city:

Thou wert seen in the Temple of God,  
A censer of gold in thy hands,  
And the smoke of it fragrant with spices  
Rose up till it came before God.<sup>20</sup>

to the prophecy of Haggai 2. 9: 'The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former', the words of Jesus in John 2. 19: "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'", and the temple of our soul in I Peter 2. 5: 'like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house'.

<sup>13</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', p. 381.

<sup>14</sup> Gillock, p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> Dom Columba Marmion, *Christ in His Mysteries*, trans. by Mother M. St. Thomas (London: Sands and Co., 1939), p. 241 (henceforth: Marmion).

<sup>16</sup> Messiaen's words quoted by Michel Roubinet in the programme notes to *Messiaen par lui meme*.

<sup>17</sup> Wai-Ling Cheong, 'Plainchants as coloured time in Messiaen's "Couleurs de la cité céleste"', *Tempo* 64:254 (2010), 20-37 (p. 22).

<sup>18</sup> Wai-Ling Cheong, 'Buddhist Temple, Shinto Shrine and the Invisible God of *Sept Haïkai*', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 241-260 (p. 257).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.: Messiaen writes this both in the preface to *Sept haïkai*, and in *Traité V/2*, p. 506.

<sup>20</sup> Alcuin, trans. by H. Waddell, in *Medieval Latin Lyrics*, p. 91.

The Offertory *Stetit angelus* is appointed for the Feast of Dedication, with a text from Revelation 8. 4: ‘And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel’, which also forms the basis for Messiaen’s **‘L’ange aux parfums’**. From the Hindu *jāti* known as *Shādji*, Messiaen creates a haunting monody, which, in its melodic shapes and rhythms forms a hypnotic anticipation of ‘Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes’. Two complex sections of rhythmic and modal superposition, which develop the technique of ‘reflection’ heard in ‘Le Verbe’, fulfil the prayer ‘enfoncez votre image dans la durée de mes jours’:<sup>21</sup> the right hand mode 2 ostinato combines *catustāla* and *rāgavardhana* (which in Sanskrit means ‘increasing in colour’), above the left hand mode 3 ostinato in rhythmic canon *cancrizans*, whilst the whole tone pedal plays a non-retrogradable rhythm, partly *rāgavardhana*, with *valeur ajouté*. The monody is transferred to sing out in the pedal with a bell-like, crystal clear registration, garlanded with a halo of colour chords made up of the *accord sur dominante appoggiaturé*, together with inversions of the chord of resonance, whilst the incense is vividly evoked in swirls of intermingled semiquavers which intone the *jāti* motive.

The Alleluia for the Feast of Dedication, *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum* forms the musical basis for ***Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace***, in which Gregorian chant coexists with birdsong. Echoing the registration of ‘L’ange aux parfums’, the chant is distorted to fit Messiaen’s mode 3, as well as being harmonized (with colour chords), fragmented and developed, but during the course of the piece we hear the Gregorian Alleluia in its entirety, and the use of this magnificent chant subsequently fired Messiaen’s imagination to produce *Couleurs de la cité céleste*. We hear two extended solos for the song thrush, which, with its rich musical repertoire of incantations and arresting calls, also makes significant appearances in *Livre d’orgue*, *Réveil des oiseaux*, *Catalogue d’oiseaux*, *Chronochromie*, and *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*. Here in *Verset*, Messiaen transfers to the keyboard the complex harmonics of the song thrush from *Chronochromie*. As the opening chant fragments into resonant, fluty harmony, we hear the haunting call of the curlew.

The diptych of **‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’** is in a form beloved of Messiaen, in which the second panel presents essentially the same music, with new and different insights. ‘God is Holy’ is portrayed with the Alleluia *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum*, and at the close, the litany ‘Grant us the love of your Holy Name’. ‘Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Iesu Christe’ from the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is portrayed with colour chords and the ‘Theme of God’, together with dense clusters in mode 3 and concluding with E major: the red of Christ’s blood in the Eucharist. Six birds sing their praises to the divine creator: wren, blackbird, and chaffinch, with two extended monodic toccatas sung by the garden warbler and incorporating the ‘Theme of the Son’, whilst the melodious blackcap is harmonized in heavenly blue. Finally, the yellowhammer concludes the piece with its haunting cadence.

**‘Prière avant la communion’** is an exploration of the meaning of the Eucharist, with the subtitle taken from Matthew 8. 8: ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof’, and alluded to by Jan van Ruusbroec in his portrayal of God within us: ‘Come down quickly, for today I must dwell in thy house’.<sup>22</sup> Messiaen was touched by Ruusbroec’s gloss on I John 4. 16: ‘By the immersion of the created image within the uncreated, we live in God, and God lives in us’,<sup>23</sup> and Balthasar shows that these

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Pickstock, ‘Messiaen and Deleuze: The Musico-theological Critique of Modernism and Postmodernism’, in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25 (2008), 173-199, p. 185.

<sup>22</sup> Ruusbroec, Opera Omnia III, a836-851, cited in Paul Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience: The Role of the Humanity of Jesus* (Louvain: Peeters, 2003), p. 235.

<sup>23</sup> *Traité VII*, p. 316.



‘formulae of indwelling become reciprocal’.<sup>24</sup> At the Eucharist, ‘the believers have become the *true temple* of God, both as the Church and as individuals’,<sup>25</sup> depicted musically with the use once more of the Alleluia *Adorabo*, together with *Lauda Sion*, Sequence for Corpus Christi, and again the Gradual of the Epiphany: ‘Arise, shine; for your light has come’. Messiaen’s use here of chords of transposed inversions on G recalls their symbolism in ‘l’apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine’, where they harmonize Jesus’ words in John 20. 17: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”. Jesus’ real presence here with Mary Magdalene is as real as his presence for us now, and Balthasar reminds us that Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is his representational form between Ascension and Parousia. The piece closes with modal harmonies which find their way into ‘Le merle noir’ of *Petites esquisses d’oiseaux*.

### ‘FORGOTTEN, RECOVERED, AND REPEATED’ (TRACKS 10 AND 11)

In ‘East Coker’, T. S. Eliot writes: ‘There is only the fight to recover what has been lost/ And found and lost again and again’.<sup>26</sup> Messiaen had created *Messe de la Pentecôte* partly as a notated account of his improvisations at La Trinité, which always recalled and repeated previous ideas.<sup>27</sup> He described the content of this improvisation as ‘always forgotten, always found again, and always repeated’,<sup>28</sup> which also applies to the mosaic-like form Messiaen brings in ‘Communion’ and ‘Sortie’ to the ‘musical collage’.<sup>29</sup>

One of the appointed prayers of thanksgiving after mass is the canticle of Ananias, Misaël and Azarias, who give thanks for their protection in the burning, fiery furnace. Messiaen believed that ‘angels, stars, atmospheric phenomena, beings who inhabit the earth, unite with them in praise of the Lord’,<sup>30</sup> using as the superscription for ‘**Communion**’ Daniel 3. 77, 80: ‘Sources d’eau bénissez le Seigneur; oiseaux du ciel, bénissez le Seigneur’. At the opening, the call of an idealized bird heralding spring is quoted from *Technique de mon langage musical*, together with chords which quote from *Harawi* and *Visions de l’amen*. We also hear the cuckoo, and a nightingale from *Turangalila*. Central to the piece are birdcalls and water droplets, reusing material from *Technique* and the blackbird from ‘Île de feu 1’, with the trickling water being noted at Petichet.<sup>31</sup> Here the dense and highly complex rhythmic notation is designed to reflect the fluidity and freedom of the composer’s practice in liturgical improvisation.<sup>32</sup> Using the beautiful *Gambe* and *Voix céleste*, the final section makes use of modal harmony, chords of contracted resonance, and chords of transposed inversions. Messiaen develops the music of ‘tous les philtres sont bus ce soir’ from *Cinq rechantés*, but here in ‘Communion’, the potion is not that of Tristan and Isolde, but the blood of Christ in the Eucharist,<sup>33</sup> and this ‘love’ music also features in a play upon Yvonne Loriod’s name in ‘Le loriot’.<sup>34</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Volume VII: ‘Theology: The New Covenant’, trans. by Brian McNeil, ed. by John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), pp. 308-309.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309 (my italics).

<sup>26</sup> T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*.

<sup>27</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: This particular translation is by Nigel Simeone, in “‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’: Messiaen’s appointment at the Trinité”, *The Musical Times*, 145:1889 (2004), 36-53 (p.48), and subsequently cited in his programme notes to the recording of *Messe de la Pentecôte* by Timothy Byram-Wigfield, on Delphian DCD34078 (2009).

<sup>29</sup> Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, p. 123.

<sup>30</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup> John Butt, ‘Performance on Paper: Rewriting the Story of Notational Progress’, in *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*, ed. by Mark Franko and Annette Richards (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), p. 147.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (London: J. M. Dent, 1976), p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, p. 129, and Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 183.

hushed conclusion of the piece (using the symmetry of the diminished 7<sup>th</sup>) exploits the lowest and highest pitches of the instrument. Messiaen had in mind three quotations which capture this atmosphere: ‘Nacht, stille Nacht, in die verwoben sind/ganz weiße Dinge, rote, bunte Dinge’ (Rilke),<sup>35</sup> ‘Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep?’ (Keats),<sup>36</sup> and ‘invisible dans le silence’ (Paul Éluard).<sup>37</sup> The last note of ‘Communion’ links to the first phrase of ‘Sortie’ in the *idée fixe* heard in *Cinq rechant*s: ‘explorateur Orphée trouve son cœur dans la mort’. Messiaen describes this as ‘an abrupt, sudden and formidable gust of wind, a tempest representing the irresistible power of spiritual life and the eruption of the force from above’.<sup>38</sup> In this piece Messiaen captures the celestial aspect in *personages rythmiques* with a chorus of skylarks (*Grand Orgue*) above a rhythmic game, contrasting chronological time with eternity in decreasing (*Récit*) and increasing (*Pédale*) durations. Preceding the closing toccata, ‘the pedal part, *ff* evokes those immense trumpets with terrifyingly deep sounds, several metres long and dragging along the ground, hauled by the Tibetan priests during religious ceremonies in the lamaseries’.<sup>39</sup> Messiaen’s description of the concluding chord of resonance (‘on dirait que l’orgue éclate!...’)<sup>40</sup> leads Robert Fallon to interpret this as a ‘nuclear holocaust’.<sup>41</sup>

At least four further theological concerns knit this programme together: on his journey towards *Chronochromie*, Messiaen consistently developed complex rhythmic structures to convey a Bergsonian grasp of time contrasting earth and eternity, which we hear evolving in ‘Le Verbe’, ‘L’ange aux parfums’, and ‘Sortie’. The Christian symbolism of birdsong is prefigured in the melodic freedom of ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’, crystallized in *Messe de la Pentecôte*, and reaches its mature voice in *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace* and ‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’. ‘La Source de Vie’ and ‘Communion’ are both musical versions of the thanksgiving prayers recited after communion, whilst the Last Judgment implicit in ‘Le Verbe’ is described in Matthew 13. 41: ‘The Son of Man will send his angels...’, which anticipates the superscription of ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’.

In summary, for all Messiaen’s manipulation of rhythm and harmony, his overriding concern, however, is for the listener simply to surrender to the effects of dazzlement:

...arrive at the concert with an open mind [...] love nature, knowing how to appreciate it in all its manifestations, sounds as well as colours, colours as well as perfumes...<sup>42</sup>

Describing in *Saint François* the way in which we respond in music to God’s revelation to us of eternal truths, *L’ange musicien* sings: ‘Know the joy of the Blessed by gentleness of colour and melody. And may there be opened for thee the secrets of Glory!’.<sup>43</sup> Through this *éblouissement* we will be touched by the message of the theology, and transformed by the numinous, for as listeners, technical issues become irrelevant as we ‘submit to the strange charm of impossibilities’ on our journey into Messiaen’s ‘theological rainbow’.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Gebet*.

<sup>36</sup> John Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*, 8/80.

<sup>37</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 113.

<sup>38</sup> Messiaen’s words describing ‘Sortie’ in his programme notes for Schwann records (my translation).

<sup>39</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 122 (my translation).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124: ‘one would say that the organ explodes’.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Fallon, ‘Birds, Beasts and Bombs in Messiaen’s Cold War Mass’, *The Journal of Musicology*, 26:2 (2009), 175-204 (p. 202).

<sup>42</sup> Messiaen talking about *Chronochromie* with Claude Samuel in Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 133.

<sup>43</sup> *Saint François d’Assise*, Act Two, Scene Five, trans. by Felix Aprahamian: ‘Connais la joie des bienheureux par suavité de couleur et de mélodie. Et que s’ouvrent pour toi les secrets de la Gloire’. Messiaen as librettist paraphrases here the words of St. Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>44</sup> *Technique I*, p. 21.

*Should you hear them singing among stars  
or whispering secrets of a wiser world,  
do not imagine ardent, fledgeling children;  
they are intelligences, old as sunrise,  
that never learned right from left, before from after,  
knowing but one direction, into God,  
but one duration, now.*

*Their melody strides not from bar to bar,  
but, like a painting hangs there entire,  
one chord of limitless communication.  
You have heard it in the rhythms of the hills,  
the spiralling turn of the dance, the fall of words,  
the touch of fingers at the rare right moment,  
and these were holy, holy.<sup>1</sup>*

## ADDITIONAL TEXTS

Assembled here in support of each section of the CD recording is additional poetry, hymnody and prayer, shedding further light on the theological themes. Taylor's *The Angels* beautifully encapsulates Messiaen's musical attempts to capture eternity, whilst powerful hymns take us through the components of the recital as a means of meditating upon the meaning of the pieces.

### A VISION OF CHRIST

You, living Christ, our eyes behold  
Amid your church appearing,  
All girt about your breast with gold  
And bright apparel wearing;  
Your countenance is burning bright,  
A sun resplendent in its might:  
Lord Christ, we see your glory.

Your glorious feet have sought and found  
Your sons of every nation;  
With everlasting voice you sound  
The call of our salvation;  
Your eyes of flame still search and scan  
The whole outspreading realm of man:  
Lord Christ, we see your glory.

O risen Christ, today alive,  
Amid your Church abiding,  
Who now your risen body give,  
New life and strength providing,  
We join in heavenly company  
To sing your praise triumphantly:  
For we have seen your glory.

Edmund Morgan (1888-1979), Bishop of Truro  
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<sup>1</sup> John V. Taylor (1914-2001), Bishop of Winchester, *The Angels*. Set to music by Jonathan Harvey (London: Faber Music Ltd, 1995).

## THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Light of the minds that know him,  
may Christ be light to mine!  
my sun in risen splendour,  
my light of truth divine;  
my guide in doubt and darkness,  
my true and living way,  
my clear light ever shining,  
my dawn of heaven's day.

Life of the souls that love him,  
may Christ be ours indeed!  
the living bread from heaven  
on whom our spirits feed;  
who died for love of sinners  
to bear our guilty load,  
and make of life's brief journey  
a new Emmaus road.

Strength of the wills that serve him,  
may Christ be strength to me,  
who stilled the storm and tempest,  
who calmed the tossing sea;  
his Spirit's power to move me,  
his will to master mine,  
his cross to carry daily  
and conquer in his sign.

May it be ours to know him  
that we may truly love,  
and loving, fully serve him  
as serve the saints above;  
till in that home of glory  
with fadeless splendour bright,  
we serve in perfect freedom  
our strength, our life, our light.

Based on a prayer of St. Augustine; Timothy Dudley-Smith, Bishop of Thetford

'Light of the minds that know him' by Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926) is © Timothy Dudley-Smith in Europe and Africa. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. IP: 5005915; FP: 7026704.

Sing Alleluia forth, ye saints on high,  
And let the Church on earth make glad reply:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him who is both Word of God and Son,  
Who, out of love, our nature did put on:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him who, born of Mary, shared our life,  
And in our manhood triumphed in the strife:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him who did for all our sins atone,  
In naked majesty on Calvary's throne:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him who rose victorious from the dead,  
And reigns on high, his people's Lord and Head:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him who sent the Holy Spirit's grace,  
To bear the Father's love to every race:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

To him, the universal Saviour, now  
Let every knee in adoration bow:  
*To Christ the King, sing Alleluia!*

George Boorne Timms (1910-1997), Priest

#### PRAYER OF ST. BONAVENTURE

Pierce, O most Sweet Lord Jesus, my inmost soul with the most joyous and healthful wound of Thy love, with true, serene, and most holy apostolic charity, that my soul may ever languish and melt with love and longing for Thee, that it may yearn for Thee and faint for Thy courts, and long to be dissolved and to be with Thee.

Grant that my soul may hunger after Thee, the bread of angels, the refreshment of holy souls, our daily and supersubstantial bread, having all sweetness and savour and every delight of taste; let my heart ever hunger after and feed upon Thee, upon whom the angels desire to look, and may my inmost soul be filled with the sweetness of Thy savour; may it ever thirst after Thee, the fountain of life, the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, the fountain of eternal light, the torrent of pleasure, the richness of the house of God.

May it ever compass Thee, seek Thee, find Thee, run to Thee, attain Thee, meditate upon Thee, speak of Thee, and do all things to the praise and glory of Thy name, with humility and discretion, with love and delight, with ease and affection, and with perseverance unto the end; may Thou alone be ever my hope, my entire assurance, my riches, my delight, my pleasure, my joy, my rest and tranquillity, my peace, my sweetness, my fragrance, my sweet savour, my food, my refreshment, my refuge, my help, my wisdom, my portion, my possession and my treasure, in whom may my mind and my heart be fixed and firmly rooted immovably henceforth and for ever. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R., (ed.), *Praying to Our Lord Jesus Christ: Prayers and Meditations Through the Centuries* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 76.

## LIVING STONES AND SOUNDING TEMPLES

Ye that know the Lord is gracious,  
ye for whom a cornerstone  
stands, of God elect and precious,  
laid that ye may build thereon,  
see that on that sure foundation  
ye a living temple raise,  
towers that may tell forth salvation,  
walls that may re-echo praise.

Living stones, by God appointed  
each to his allotted place,  
kings and priests, by God anointed,  
shall ye not declare his grace?  
Ye, a royal generation,  
tell the tidings of your birth,  
tidings of a new creation  
to an old and weary earth.

Tell the praise of him who called you  
out of darkness into light,  
broke the fetters that enthralled you,  
gave you freedom, peace and sight:  
tell the tale of sins forgiven,  
strength renewed and hope restored,  
till the earth, in tune with heaven,  
praise and magnify the Lord.

Cyril A. Alington (1872-1955), Priest  
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## ‘FORGOTTEN, RECOVERED, AND REPEATED’: PENTECOST

Holy Spirit, ever dwelling  
in the holiest realms of light;  
Holy Spirit, ever brooding  
o’er a world of gloom and night;  
Holy Spirit, ever raising  
earthbound souls to glory high;  
Living, life-imparting Spirit,  
you we praise and magnify.

Holy Spirit, ever breathing  
on the church the breath of life;  
Holy Spirit, ever striving  
through your people’s ceaseless strife;  
Holy Spirit, ever forming  
in the church the mind of Christ;  
In our worship we will praise you  
for your fruit and gifts unpriced.

Holy Spirit, ever working  
through the church's ministry;  
Quickening, strengthening, and absolving,  
setting captive sinners free;  
Holy Spirit, ever binding  
age to age and soul to soul,  
In community unending –  
you we worship and extol.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939), Bishop of Llandaff

Father, Lord of all Creation,  
Ground of Being, Life and Love;  
height and depth beyond description  
only life in you can prove:  
you are mortal life's dependence:  
thought, speech, sight are ours by grace;  
yours is every hour's existence,  
sovereign Lord of time and space.

Jesus Christ, the Man for Others,  
we, your people, make our prayer:  
help us love – as sisters, brothers –  
all whose burdens we can share.  
Where your name binds us together  
you, Lord Christ, will surely be;  
where no selfishness can sever  
there your love the world may see.

Holy Spirit, rushing, burning  
wind and flame of Pentecost,  
fire our hearts afresh with yearning  
to regain what we have lost.  
May your love unite our action,  
nevermore to speak alone:  
God, in us abolish faction,  
God, through us your love make known.

Stewart Cross (1928-1989), Bishop of Blackburn

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## THE ORGAN OF LA TRINITÉ

The building of the west gallery organ of La Trinité was commenced by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll in 1868, although not finally completed until 1871 since the work was delayed by the violence of the *Commune*. The original scheme submitted by Cavaillé-Coll was to have consisted of thirty-six stops, yet his frequent revision of plans meant that the instrument was eventually completed with forty-six speaking stops, and as early as 1872 Cavaillé-Coll had already replaced the *Doublette 2'* on the *Grand Orgue* with a *Quinte 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>'*. It has been claimed that the instrument's second *titulaire*, Alexandre Guilmant, resigned in 1901 over the disastrous rebuild which had taken place which was referred to as the 'scandal of La Trinité' by Louis Vierne.<sup>1</sup> Charles Mutin, the successor to Cavaillé-Coll, and Guilmant's preferred organ builder, was passed over whilst Guilmant was absent in favour of *Société Merkelin*, seemingly purely on financial grounds. The voicing of the *Gambes* was fortified; the particularly distinctive feature of the Cavaillé-Coll sound, the *Flûte harmonique* stops,<sup>2</sup> were desecrated with tuning notches; the power of the *anches* was augmented considerably. Enraged, Guilmant refused to endorse this work. Eventually Charles Quef signed, but, according to Vierne, became 'the target for general reprobation'.<sup>3</sup> Mutin relates this scandal in a different light, writing in his obituary of Guilmant:

The organ of Sainte-Trinité, the masterpiece of Cavaillé-Coll, was maintained with jealous care by the builder and played with love by the organist. [...] Guilmant was promised an augmentation of his organ and the discussions involved the addition of a respectable number of stops and some modern additions, which would make this instrument one of the most beautiful and most complete of Paris. [...] The competitors watched and knew very cleverly - treacherously I should say - to act with the priest to render Guilmant's situation absolutely impossible. I accompanied him to the sacristy when visiting M. Lemaître, the priest at the time, asking for an explanation. By the few words we exchanged, and with the harsh and hurtful words we heard, Guilmant realized he had already been replaced.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst the original instrument contained no mutations on the *Positif* and possessed mixtures on neither *Récit* nor *Positif*, its reputation throughout Paris was clearly very high, due both to the magnificent artistry of its builder and to the glorious acoustic of the church. Table 1.1 shows the organ's original specification, as it was played by Guilmant.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in the programme notes to *Messiaen par lui même* by Michel Roubinet (trans. by Denis Ogan), EMI CZS 7 67400 2. Simeone also maintains that Guilmant himself resigned, in Nigel Simeone, *Paris: A Musical Gazetteer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Kerala J. Snyder, 'Organs as Historical and Aesthetic Mirrors', in *The Organ as a Mirror of Its Time: North European Reflections, 1610-2000*, ed. by Kerala J. Snyder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-21 (p. 19).

<sup>3</sup> Roubinet, *Messiaen par lui même*.

<sup>4</sup> Obituary written by Charles Mutin and published in S.I.M., *Revue Musicale Mensuelle*, Vol.7 (1911) nr.5, 37-40 (pp. 39-40), my translation; also partly translated by Piet Bron, May 2004, on [www.guilmant.nl](http://www.guilmant.nl)

L'Orgue de Sainte-Trinité, chef-d'œuvre de Cavaillé-Coll, était entretenu avec un soin jaloux par le facteur et joué avec amour par l'organiste [...] on avait promis à Guilmant d'augmenter son orgue et les pourparlers étaient engagés pour l'addition d'un nombre respectable de jeux et quelques adjonctions modernes, qui devaient faire de cet instrument un des plus beaux et des plus complets de Paris. [...] La concurrence veillait et on sut très adroitement - perfidement devrais-je dire - agir auprès du Curé pour rendre la situation de Guilmant absolument impossible. Je m'accompagnai à la Sacristie lorsqu'il rendit visite à M. Lemaître, le Curé d'alors, pour lui demander des explications. Aux quelques paroles que nous échangeâmes, aux mots durs et blessants que nous entendîmes, Guilmant comprit qu'il était déjà remplacés [sic].



TABLE 1.1: The organ of La Trinité, Paris: Cavallé-Coll, 1869/1871

Grand Orgue	Positif	Récit expressif	Pédale
Montre 16	Quintaton 16	Flûte traversière 8	Soubasse 32
Bourdon 16	Flûte harmonique 8	Voix céleste 8	Contrebasse 16
Montre 8	Salicional 8	Bourdon 8	Soubasse 16
Gambe 8	Unda Maris 8	Basson-Hautbois 8	Violoncelle 8
Flûte harmonique 8	Prestant 4	Voix humaine 8	Flûte 8
Bourdon 8	Flûte douce 4		Bourdon 8
Prestant 4			Octave 4
<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>	<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>	<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>	<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>
Flûte octaviante 4	Doublette 2	Viole de Gambe 8	Bombarde 16
Doublette 2	Piccolo 1	Flûte 4	Trompette 8
(became Quinte 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ in 1872)	Cornet harmonique II-V	Octavin 2	Clairon 4
Plein-Jeu V	Basson 16	Trompette 8	
Cornet V	Trompette 8	Clairon 4	
Bombarde 16	Clarinette 8		
Trompette 8			
Clairon 4			

During the 1930s a number of the great Parisian organs from the *atelier* of Cavallé-Coll were overhauled and cleaned, partly due to the accumulation of sixty years of candle smoke, incense, and heavy use (although the supreme craftsmanship and attention to detail of Aristide Cavallé-Coll meant that these instruments were essentially sound) but partly due to the evolution of tastes and a gradual development of a fashionable neo-classicism.

At Notre Dame in 1932 Beuchet put into practice Vierne's request for a brightening of the *Récit* by the addition of a *Cymbale* in place of the *Nazard*, which was then moved to the *Positif* to replace the *Piccolo* 1'. Shortly afterwards, in 1933, Tournemire specified some important changes to the organ of Sainte-Clotilde. The *Positif* received the *Piccolo* 1' which Tournemire desired to bring the instrument into line with the other major Parisian instruments: Notre Dame (which retained its *Piccolo* 1' on the *Grand Chœur*), La Trinité, and Saint-Sulpice. The pedal at Sainte-Clotilde achieved a greater degree of flexibility with the addition of a flute 4', yet it was the *Récit* which was the focus of the work. César Franck's original *Récit* was relatively small: only ten stops tightly enclosed and yielding a hushed *pianissimo*. Tournemire had added two mutations, a *Plein Jeu* and a powerful *Bombarde* 16', thereby enhancing the possibilities of the division, but the reconstruction of the expression box permanently compromised the special *pianissimo*.

Appointed *titulaire* at La Trinité in 1931, in the wake of these tonal changes Messiaen also sought, in 1934, to upgrade his instrument and had added seven new stops and installed a Barker Lever on the *Positif*, which otherwise was almost unplayable with the *Récit* coupled. These new additions included two new 8' stops on the *Positif*: a *Principal* and a *Cor de nuit*. The main focus of the work, however, was an addition of colour and a brightening of the two secondary divisions: individual *Nazard* and *Tierce* ranks on the *Positif* and the addition of a *Nazard* and a three rank *Cymbale* to the *Récit*. Finally, the *Récit* which originally was without sub-octave tone, received a *Bourdon* 16'. For this important rebuild, the work was carried out this time by the Pleyel-Cavallé-Coll company.

The action was also completely overhauled and the pipe-work cleaned. The stops affected by Merklin's work were revoiced to return them to their original *timbre*. To allow greater flexibility, two 4' flutes, the *Flûte* of the *Récit* and the *Flûte octavante* of the *Grand Orgue* were moved from the *laye des anches* to the *laye des fonds*. Some sources doubt the presence of the *Flûte octavante* prior to 1934, yet Messiaen himself cites the moving of flutes (i.e. more than one register) to different chests, and Coignet,<sup>5</sup> quoting the specification of the organ in 1927 as given by Raugel believes that the *Grand Orgue* originally possessed a flute at 4' pitch. Increasing the available playing aids, new pedals were added, including *Octaves Graves* and *Introduction*, allowing greater registrational flexibility. Table 1.2 shows the specification by 1935:

TABLE 1.2: The rebuilt organ of La Trinité: Pleyel-Cavaillé-Coll, 1935

Grand Orgue		Positif		Récit expressif		Pédale	
Montre	16	Quintaton	16	Bourdon	16	Soubasse	32
Bourdon	16	Principal	8	Flûte traversière	8	Contrebasse	16
Montre	8	Flûte harmonique	8	Voix céleste	8	Soubasse	16
Gambe	8	Salicional	8	Bourdon	8	Violoncelle	8
Flûte harmonique	8	Unda Maris	8	Flûte	4	Flûte	8
Bourdon	8	Cor de Nuit	8	Basson-Hautbois	8	Bourdon	8
Prestant	4	Prestant	4	Voix humaine	8	Octave	4
Flûte octavante	4	Flûte douce	4				
<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>		<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>		<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>		<i>Jeu de combinaison</i>	
Quinte	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Viole de Gambe	8	Bombarde	16
Plein-Jeu	III-VI	Doublette	2	Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Trompette	8
Cornet	V	Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$	Octavin	2	Clairon	4
Bombarde	16	Piccolo	1	Cymbale	III		
Trompette	8	Cornet	II-V	Trompette	8		
Clairon	4	Basson	16	Clairon	4		
		Trompette	8				
		Clarinete	8				

During the 1950s the instrument had become unreliable, which may be heard on the complete recording of his own works made by Messiaen in that decade. The subsequent rebuild during the 1960s was therefore more substantial and far-reaching.<sup>6</sup> The electrification of the action offered the possibility of a new console, together with the addition of further registers. Fruit of this was the return to significant composition for his own instrument, with *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*. Table 1.3 indicates the final specification as played by Messiaen after the Beuchet-Debierre rebuild commenced in 1965,<sup>7</sup> whilst Table 1.4 gives a chronological list of the instrument's *Titulaires*.

<sup>5</sup> See Jean-Louis Coignet, 'Appendix: The Organ at La Sainte Trinité, Paris', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by P. Hill, pp. 526-527.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of the history of this organ in English, together with a full description of the instrument's playing aids, see Gillock, pp. 353-378.

<sup>7</sup> The final specification of the organ of La Trinité, reflecting the work undertaken by Olivier Glandaz in 1993, is to be found at <<http://www.quebec.ca/musique/orgues/france/strinitep.html>> [accessed 2 February 2013].

TABLE 1.3: The rebuilt organ of La Trinité: Beuchet-Debierre, 1965

Grand Orgue	Positif	Récit expressif	Pédale
	Quintaton 16		
Montre 16	Principal 8	Bourdon 16	Soubasse 32
Bourdon 16	Salicional 8	Flûte traversière 8	Contrebasse 16
Montre 8	Unda Maris 8	Gambe 8	Soubasse 16
Gambe 8	Flûte harmonique 8	Voix céleste 8	Violoncelle 8
Flûte harmonique 8	Prestant 4	Bourdon 8	Flûte 8
Bourdon 8	Doublette 2	Flûte octaviane 4	Bourdon 8
Prestant 4	Cornet harmonique V	Nazard 2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Flûte 4
Flûte octaviane 4	Fourniture IV	Octavin 2	Plein Jeu IV
Quinte 2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Basson 16	Tierce 1 $\frac{3}{5}$	Bombarde 16
Doublette 2	Trompette 8	Cymbale III	Trompette 8
Cornet V	Clairon 4	Hautbois 8	Clairon 4
Plein Jeu V	<b>Positif expressif</b>	Bombarde 8/16	
Cymbale IV	Cor de Nuit 8	Voix humaine 8	
Bombarde 16	Flûte douce 4	Trompette 8	
Trompette 8	Nazard 2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Clairon 4	
Clairon 4	Flageolet 2	Voix humaine 8	
	Tierce 1 $\frac{3}{5}$		
	Piccolo 1		
	Clarinette 8		

TABLE 1.4: *Titulaires* of La Trinité (*Grandes orgues*)<sup>8</sup>

1869-1871	Alexis Chauvet
1871-1911	Alexandre Guilmant (assisted unofficially by Saint-Saëns)
1911-1931	Charles Quef
1931-1992	Olivier Messiaen (assisted by Jean Bonfils, 1948-1997)
1993-2008	Naji Hakim
1999-2011	Maxime Patet
2011-	Loïc Mallié (assisted by Thomas Lacôte and Jean-François Hatton)

<sup>8</sup> Information compiled in consultation with <<http://latriniteparis.com/Les-organistes.html>> [accessed 2 March 2013].

PART TWO, CASE-STUDIES:  
*LUMEN CHRISTI*  
INTRODUCTION: THE LIGHT OF CHRIST



ILLUSTRATION 2.1: Theophanes the Greek (c. 1340-c. 1410),  
*The Transfiguration of Our Lord* (Преображение Господне)  
(c. 1403): tempera on wood, 184 x 134 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

In Byzantine art, the special property of gold representing the ‘sent light’ of internal illumination replaces natural blues of the sky, transcending normal terrestrial concerns.<sup>1</sup> Following his assertion ‘God is Light’, Gregory of Nazianus preaches the association, both of the Star of Bethlehem and the cloud at the Transfiguration, with divine appearances in both Old and New Testaments:<sup>2</sup> God is the light which illuminated Moses’ face, the fire of the Burning Bush and which guided Israel in the wilderness; Elijah’s chariot of fire, the light shining on the shepherds and from the star guiding the magi; the light at the Transfiguration and the conversion of St. Paul.<sup>3</sup> These ‘uncreated energies of God’,<sup>4</sup> in ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’ from *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, are Son and Word combined, with Messiaen uniting Epiphany and Transfiguration. This may be summarized in the words of Dionysius:

The Transcendent is clothed in the terms of being, with shape and form on things which have neither, and numerous symbols are employed to convey the varied attributes of what is an imageless and supra-natural simplicity [...] When we are incorruptible and immortal, when we have come at last to the blessed inheritance of being like Christ [...] we shall be ever filled with the sight of God shining gloriously around us as once it shone for the disciples at the divine transfiguration.<sup>5</sup>

‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’ was recorded by Messiaen in 1972.<sup>6</sup> Messiaen’s tempo of the chant quotations exceeds the interpretations of Solesmes,<sup>7</sup> creating a virtuoso unison toccata. The rhythmic insistence of the tristropha in *Reges Tharsis* may be heard in Tournemire’s office for Epiphany, as recorded by Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet-Hakim.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Tournemire’s example inspired Messiaen. Messiaen’s own recording of ‘Le Verbe’ projects the long-range contrast: drama versus stasis, with the incredibly slow tempo of the second section interpreting *Victimae paschali* as an improvisatory arabesque, in which it is possible to discern the haunting voice of a distant muezzin calling us to prayer. Messiaen’s directions for *Mixtures* on the *Positif* are also clarified here, making use of the mutations, or *Petites mixtures*.<sup>9</sup> Concerning ‘la Source de Vie’ and ‘Prière avant la communion’, both are generally only available on complete recordings of *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. Jennifer Bate’s recording demonstrates the unique contrasts between 16’ and 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>’ registers on *Grand Orgue* and *Positif*, available *only* at La Trinité, and recorded with vivid clarity,<sup>10</sup> and Naji Hakim demonstrates the special quality of this dialogue in ‘Prière après la communion’.<sup>11</sup> Messiaen’s recording of ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’ demonstrates the importance of the rapid closing of the *Récit* expression box before the sustained chord, together with the careful balancing of *Petites mixtures* with *anches*, where specific registers were unavailable at La Trinité.<sup>12</sup> This gives an indication as to how an interpretation must glisten without submerging the fundamental, whilst the flexibility of his r.h. solos demonstrates the improvisatory freedom required to project this piece.

<sup>1</sup> Nes, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Nazianus: ‘On the Holy Baptism’, cited in Sirarpie Der Nersessian, ‘The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianus, Paris Gr. 510: A Study of the Connections between Text and Images’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 16 (1962), p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Nes, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* - Erato 4509-92007-2. See also Hill and Simeone, p. 292.

<sup>7</sup> For example, on *Gregorian Sampler*, Dom Jean Claire – Solesmes S.829.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Tournemire, *L’orgue mystique* 7, Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet - Priory PRCD 328, Track 5, 6:12.

<sup>9</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même*, Disc 2, Track 4.

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Bate, *Livre du Saint Sacrement* - Regis RRC 2052, Disc 2, Tracks 6 and 8.

<sup>11</sup> Naji Hakim, *Canticum*, French Organ Music - EMI 7243 5 72272 2 3, Track 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même*, Disc 3, Track 6. See also Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 164.

*The glory of Him who moves all things rays forth  
through all the universe, and is reflected  
from each thing in proportion to its worth.<sup>1</sup>*

## TRACK 2

### CHRISTUS JESUS, SPLENDOR PATRIS: 'LE FILS, VERBE ET LUMIÈRE' AS REPRESENTATION OF EPIPHANY AND TRANSFIGURATION

*Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* explores nine attributes of the divine:<sup>2</sup> that which God *is*, based upon Messiaen's reading of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas and his awareness of these theological concepts dating back to *De Trinitate* of Augustine and beyond. Concepts such as simplicity, immutability and eternity form part of the gradual unfolding of Christian thought, firmly grounding church teaching about the nature of God,<sup>3</sup> and with *Trois petites liturgies* Messiaen had already addressed the Thomistic ideas of infinity, immutability and eternity.<sup>4</sup> Thomistic thought, as well as informing the subject matter of three pieces of *Les corps glorieux*, also links its final movement with *Méditations*.<sup>5</sup>

In the sixth movement of *Méditations*, the Epiphany represents the divine light made manifest.<sup>6</sup> In his choice of superscription from John 1. 4, Messiaen links this piece to 'Le Verbe', and in the use of the Gradual of Epiphany it links to 'Prière avant la communion'. Through the reference to Hebrews 1. 3, the piece is also linked to the third movement of *La Transfiguration*,<sup>7</sup> and in the Orthodox tradition, Hebrews 1. 3 is used liturgically in celebration of the Transfiguration:<sup>8</sup> Christ ascended Tabor in order to demonstrate 'that He was the radiance of the Father',<sup>9</sup> depicted in Illustration 2.1.

'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière' describes the light of Christ primarily by modal and Gregorian means, yet in Example 2.1, the drive towards the 'transcendent'<sup>10</sup> climax switches to colour-chords: CR, CCR and CTI,<sup>11</sup> all of which glisten with gold, before the final chord with its brilliant, white and gold light of C major.<sup>12</sup> In response to 'accords lumineux' closing the first panel, Messiaen describes the chords of Example 2.1 as 'plus lumineux encore',<sup>13</sup> which 'develops into an ever-increasing light [...] expressing the future triumph of Christ'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Paradiso* I, 1-3, cited in Robert Fallon, 'Dante as Guide to Messiaen's Gothic Spirituality', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 127-144 (p. 137). See also I Corinthians 15. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Unengendered; holy; immense; eternal; immutable; Father Almighty; Our Father; love; simple.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Van Roo, *Telling about God, Volume III: Understanding* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1987), p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1973), p. 50 (henceforth: *Méditations*).

<sup>7</sup> Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity*, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 489.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, III.ii.19, p. 78, and cited in Nes, p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Weir, programme notes to Priory PRCD 922 (2003).

<sup>11</sup> See 'List of Abbreviations', above, pp. xiv-xv, and for a full account of the definition of these chords, see Simon Dunbavand, 'In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*: Technique, Theology, and the Play of Harmonic Resonance in Olivier Messiaen's *Vitrail Sonore*' (unpublished MMus dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2013), Chapter One, 'A Glistening Music: Definitions of *Accords Spéciaux*', pp. 9-34.

<sup>12</sup> *Méditations*, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: these original 'luminous chords' are transformed into an 'even more luminous' conclusion.

<sup>14</sup> Sander van Maas, 'The Reception of Aquinas in the Music of Olivier Messiaen', in *Aquinas as Authority: A Collection of Studies Presented at the Second Conference of the Thomas Instituut Te Utrecht*, ed. by Paul van Geest, Harm Goris, Carlo Leget (Utrecht: Peeters, 2002), pp. 317-331 (p. 326).

EXAMPLE 2.1: *Méditations*, VI, 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière', 58/3/3 (ACD2-5:47)

or brillant à reflets rouges, avec du jaune pâle,  
du bleu de prusse très clair,  
et du cristal transparent - éclat adamantin!

or jaune éclatant

cristaux: terre brûlée, violet améthyste, bleu  
de prusse clair, marron chaud et rougeâtre  
- avec des étoiles d'or.

CR  
root posn. 2nd. inv.

1st CCR 12 A B 1 10 B CTI 3B

Mode 3/2 Mode 3/3

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Note especially the use of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 12 towards the close of 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière', which with its C major triad in the treble of chord B, prolongs the C major chord closing the preceding bar, and links to the final, climactic chord. This use of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 12 finds resonance in other movements of *Méditations* as well as at key moments in *La Transfiguration*, and this bright yellow is anticipated in Example 2.2 by the richer TC 10.

EXAMPLE 2.2: 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière', 51/2/2 (ACD2-0:14)

TC 10: JAUNE, NOIR, ORANGÉ

B C

gris d'acier jaune et noir  
pointillé de rouge

rose et gris orangé rouge  
très chaud

Lent

R | *f* legato *pp*

*legato f* *pp*

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CR at the primary transposition level of *Technique* Ex. 209-210 also bring their sparkle and theological symbolism to the texture of Example 2.3.

EXAMPLE 2.3: 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière', 52/1/1 (ACD2-0:56)

Mode 3 CR

root posn. 2nd. inv.

Très modéré rall. rall. molto Très lent

*mf* legato *cresc.* *ff* *p* *pp*

*ff* *p* *pp*

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In *La Transfiguration*, the ‘higher light’ of the third movement, ‘Christus Jesus, splendor Patris’, is evoked by the lightening of Psalm 77 and the proclamation in Hebrews: ‘Christ Jesus, glory of the Father’,<sup>15</sup> where the opening chords portray Christ’s majesty.<sup>16</sup> The same concept is treated in the sixth movement of *Méditations*: ‘it’s luminous, a very colourful piece’,<sup>17</sup> which explores the idea of ‘Dei verbum, splendor Patris’.<sup>18</sup> Messiaen does not underestimate the significance of this epistle text, and referring to Hebrews 1:3, Balthasar acknowledges Jesus as ‘imprint of the substance of God’:<sup>19</sup> ‘The pre-existent Son who has gone through abasement, is characterized as *the* appearing of the divinity of God in the cosmos’.<sup>20</sup>

Note in Example 2.3 that the opening three chords are transformed in reverse in Example 2.4 setting the word ‘Jesus’. Note, also, that both are in mode 3: In the fifth movement of *Méditations*, the immutability of God uses the Third Mode and Hindu rhythms to symbolize beauty and peace.<sup>21</sup> Thus ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’ unites the Epiphany with the Transfiguration in the interpretation of the symbolic light. The missal’s use of the same Post Communion prayer also links Epiphany with Transfiguration: *Ut mysteria quae solemniter celebramus officio, purificatae mentis intelligentia consequamur*. The very act of Communion will ‘give us the right apprehension of the virtue proper to each mystery so that we may be penetrated by it and live thereby’.<sup>22</sup>

EXAMPLE 2.4: *La Transfiguration*, III ‘Christus Jesus, splendor Patris’, R27, 92/1/1  
orchestral and choral reduction

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Considering creation and eternity, Messiaen turns to Ruusbroec, whose prime concern was ‘the birth of the Word in the soul’,<sup>23</sup> expressed by the immanent mysticism of natural contemplation,<sup>24</sup> with implications for the interpretation of pieces such as ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’, ‘Le Verbe’ and ‘La parole toute-puissante’. Towards the close of *Traité VII*, Messiaen cites Ruusbroec’s reference to I John 4. 16:

<sup>15</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 147.

<sup>16</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1969), preface to score, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> Millard Meiss, ‘Light as Form and Symbol in Some Fifteenth-Century Paintings’, *The Art Bulletin*, 27:3 (September 1945), 175-181 (p. 176n), citing the quotation of St. Bernard in Anselm Salzer, *Die Sinnbilder und Beinorte Mariens in der deutschen Literatur und lateinischen Hymnenpoesie des Mittelalters* (Linz: K.u.K. Hofbuchdruckerei J. Feichtingers Erben, im Selbstverlag des K.K. Ober-gymnasiums, 1893), p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, p. 280.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369 (italics in the original).

<sup>21</sup> *Méditations*, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Marmion, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Edmund Colledge and J. C. Marler, “‘Poverty of the Will’: Ruusbroec, Eckhart and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*”, in *Jan Van Ruusbroec: the Sources, Content, and Sequels of His Mysticism*, ed. by Paul Mommaers and Norbert de Paepe, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Toine van den Hoogen, *A Taste of God: On Spirituality and Reframing Foundational Theology* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), p. 16.



‘Notre vie créée dépend totalement et directement de la vie incréée de Dieu en nous.  
Par cette immersion de l’image créée dans l’image incréée, nous vivons en Dieu et  
Dieu vit en nous’.<sup>25</sup>

This idea is repeated by the Angel in *Saint François*, Scene 3, to ‘intimate Francis’s sacramental essence’: ‘But God, but God, but God is all Love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God in him!’<sup>26</sup> Describing these ‘double formulae of immanence’, Balthasar writes: ‘The believer remains and dwells in Christ and in God only because Christ and God dwell in him and remain in him, the formulae of indwelling become reciprocal’.<sup>27</sup> The overwhelming effects of gold, yellow and white throughout ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’ reinforce this notion of divine filiation with reference to the glistening colours used by Messiaen at key moments in *La Transfiguration*. In addition, the insistent repetitions of the *strophicus* of the Offertory of the Epiphany *Reges Tharsis* (with its exciting, multiple use of the *tristrophica*) which open this piece are cited by Messiaen in *Traité*, drawing parallels with ancient Hindu technique, Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, and virtuosic birdsong as a means of articulating praise for divine grace.<sup>28</sup>

Annotating the lines ‘He does not seek what is his own in anything, neither in God nor in creatures, for he dwells in God and God dwells in him’ of *In diebus suis placuit deo*, Meister Eckhart cites ‘In simplicitate cordis querite illum’ of Wisdom 1. 1.<sup>29</sup> With the conclusion of ‘Dieu est simple’, Messiaen summarizes this simplicity of heart with reference to the wings of the dove (Psalm 54). ‘While the human climbs up, God comes down, so that a mutual indwelling takes place’,<sup>30</sup> and concerning the seventh movement of *Éclairs*, ‘Et Dieu essuiera toute larme de leurs yeux...’, Dingle argues that here, ‘humanity has been raised up to intimacy with God’.<sup>31</sup> Viewed in the light of Ruusbroec’s two way idea, this notion explores afresh the quotation of I John 4. 16 (‘Dieu est amour, et celui qui demeure dans l’amour, demeure en Dieu et Dieu en lui’) which informs the ‘handful of closely related chords’ of the fifth movement, ‘Demeurer dans l’Amour’.<sup>32</sup>

Ruusbroec alludes to Matthew 8. 8 in his portrayal of God within us: ‘Come down quickly, for today I must dwell in thy house’,<sup>33</sup> which resonates both with the words of the centurion forming the superscription of ‘Prière avant la communion’ (*Livre du Saint Sacrement*) and the superscription from Ecclesiastes 24. 8 in ‘Dieu parmi nous’. Here Incarnation and Eucharist are united, both for Ruusbroec and Messiaen. ‘Prière avant la communion’ represents Messiaen’s final use of the chant *Adorabo ad templum*, and now in this Eucharistic context, ‘the believers have become the true temple of God, both as the Church and as individuals’.<sup>34</sup> In both ‘Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière’ and ‘Prière avant la communion’, Messiaen makes telling use of the Gradual of the Epiphany, *Surge, et illuminare Jerusalem*. This light is again the uncreated light; the light that shone from the Burning Bush and from Christ himself at the Transfiguration.

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<sup>25</sup> *Traité* VII, p. 316.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Sholl, ‘The Shock of the Positive: Olivier Messiaen, St. Francis, and Redemption through Modernity’, in *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology*, ed. by Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), pp. 162-189 (pp. 177-178).

<sup>27</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, pp. 308-309.

<sup>28</sup> *Traité* IV, pp. 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Colledge and Marler, pp. 45-46.

<sup>30</sup> Mommaers, p. 262.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Dingle, ‘Understated charm: style and technique in the last works of Olivier Messiaen’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2000), p. 240.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> Ruusbroec, *Opera Omnia* III, a836-851, cited in Mommaers, p. 235.

<sup>34</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, p. 309.

*At the round earth's imagined corners blow  
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise  
From death, you numberless infinities  
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go.<sup>1</sup>*

### TRACK 3

#### MICHELANGELO, LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY, AND THE *VICTIMAE PASCHALIN* IN 'LE VERBE'

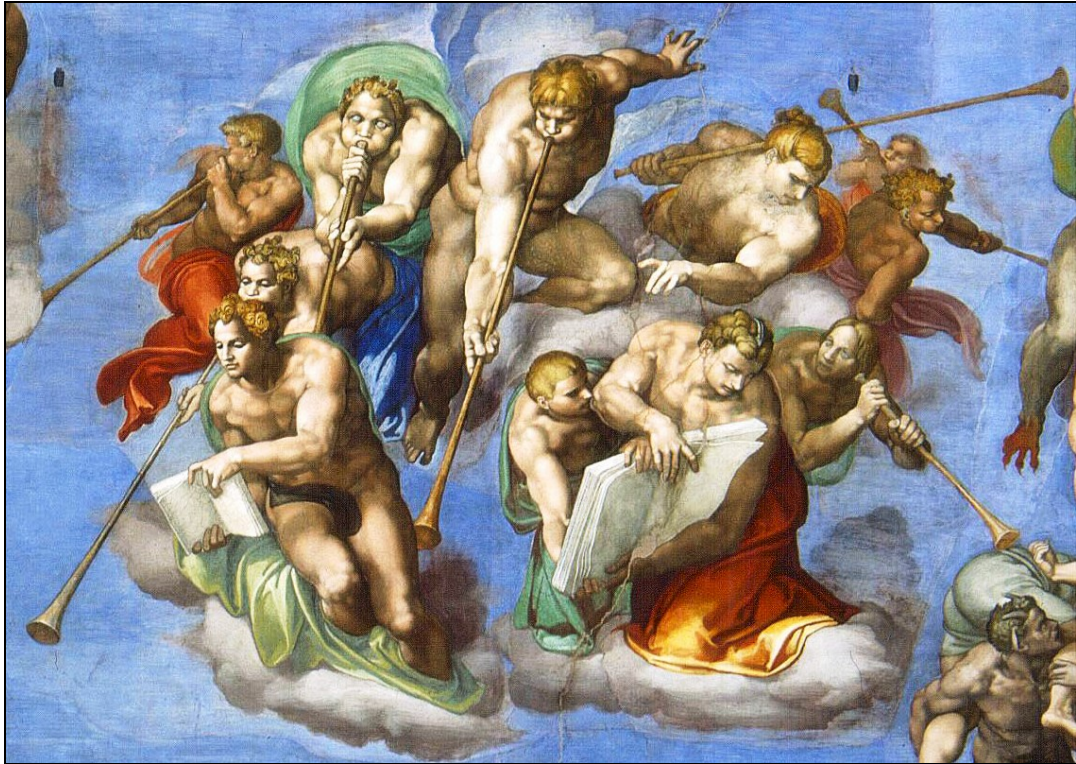


ILLUSTRATION 2.2: Michelangelo (1475-1564), *Il Giudizio Universale*  
(detail: *Annuncio della fine dei tempi*),  
1536-1541: fresco, 1370 x 1200 cm, *Cappella Sistina*, Vatican

Reminiscent of Wotan's Spear,<sup>2</sup> Messiaen evokes the descent of the Word of God in the descending pedal motif of 'Le Verbe' in *La Nativité du Seigneur* as 'the terrible fortissimo of the long trumpets of Michelangelo's Last Judgment' (Illustration 2.2).<sup>3</sup> Messiaen expresses a similar awe in *Vingt regards*, where 'Regard des anges' depicts a Michelangelo-like vision of astonished angels,<sup>4</sup> whose tremendous trombones and mounting amazement that God chose not them, but mankind at the Incarnation,<sup>5</sup> drives towards a climax suggestive of 'Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes' of *Quatuor*. This apocalyptic nature of the Word, both awesome and terrible in its power, is also the dimension Messiaen elects to explore in the fearsome monody of 'La parole toute-

<sup>1</sup> John Donne, *Holy Sonnets*, VII.

<sup>2</sup> Messiaen's programme notes refer to Wagner's trombones, cited in Gillock, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Olivier Messiaen, 'Olivier Messiaen analyse ses oeuvres', in *Olivier Messiaen homme de foi: Regard sur son oeuvre d'orgue* (Paris: Trinité Média Communication, 1995), p. 37, and trans. in Pitt, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Contemplations of Covenant and Incarnation: Musical Symbols of Faith in the Two Great Piano Cycles of the 1940s* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2007), p. 216.

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (Paris: Durand, 1947), note de l'auteur, p. iii/p. 98.

puissante' of *Vingt regards*. Again displaying some stylistic affinity with 'Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes', Messiaen makes clear in the boldness of the wide-stepping monody and aggressive percussive attacks, that the infant Jesus embodies the eschatological nature of the Word: 'Cet enfant est le Verbe qui soutient toutes choses par la puissance de sa parole...'.<sup>6</sup>

The tangible presence of God's Word in his world is not the reason for Jesus' Incarnation, but instead, to 'draw the created world back to its creator in the eschaton'.<sup>7</sup> Thus the Word of which we read in John 1 is also central in Revelation, in which a sword comes from the mouth both of the apparition of Christ in Glory in 'A Vision of Christ' (Revelation 1. 9-20), and of 'The Rider on the White Horse', whose name is 'The Word of God' (Revelation 19. 11-16). These aspects of the Word are set by Messiaen in 'Apparition du Christ glorieux' of *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà...* (Revelation 1. 14-16), and 'Regard de l'unction terrible' of *Vingt regards* (Revelation 19. 11-16). Thus, in 'Le Verbe', the Word is heralded by the awesome angel-trumpeters of the Last Judgment.

Marmion makes a feature throughout *Christ in His Mysteries* of Jesus as the Word of God: 'He is the Eternal Word'.<sup>8</sup> Marmion's reading of John 17 demonstrates one aspect of the importance of Jesus as the Son of God: at the Last Supper, Jesus 'raises a corner of the veil which hides the Divine life from our sight', by asking God to reveal to us 'the eternal Sonship', so that all may "see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world".<sup>9</sup> Messiaen must have been struck by Marmion's presentation of these ideas, for they feature not just in his response to the incarnation narrative with *La Nativité du Seigneur*, but form a consistent theological message running through to *La Transfiguration*, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, and the works of his final creative period. Selecting appropriate texts for his subtitle to 'Le Verbe', Messiaen was clearly guided by Marmion's understanding of Jesus both as Son and as Word: 'The Son is equal in all things to the Father; He is the adequate expression, the perfect image of the Father'.<sup>10</sup> Nothing could be clearer than the proclamations by the voice of God himself: 'Thou art My Son, My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased'.<sup>11</sup> This revelation by God is referred to often by Marmion. The notion of 'son' here finds resonance in both Psalm 2 and 109. In Psalm 2 'the Father proclaims His ineffable fecundity',<sup>12</sup> whilst in Psalm 109, God proclaims the eternity of Jesus as Word: 'From the bosom of My Divinity, before the creation of light, I communicated life to Thee'.<sup>13</sup> In the words of Jesus himself: 'before Abraham was, I am' (John 8. 58). All these ideas find resonance in the superscription of 'Le Verbe', for which Messiaen assembles four sources to develop his theological message:

The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son. From his breast, before the dawn existed, He begat me. From the beginning, I am the image of the goodness of God, I am the Word of Life.<sup>14</sup>

'Le Seigneur m'a dit: Tu es mon Fils' ('I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you"') (Psalm 2. 7).

<sup>6</sup> *Vingt regards*, note de l'auteur, p. iii/p. 84: 'This child is the Word that sustains all things, by the power of his word'.

<sup>7</sup> Pitt, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Marmion, p. 246.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 84. This final passage alludes to the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 109, with its certainty that the Son – the Eternal Word – has existed in perpetuity.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 3. 22, and cited in Marmion, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> Marmion, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> Gillock, p. 66.

‘De son sein, avant que l’aurore existât, il m’a engendré’ (‘From the womb before the day star I begot thee’) (Psalm 109. 3, Douay-Rheims).

‘Je suis l’image de la bonté de Dieu’ (‘For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness’) (Wisdom 7. 26).

‘Je suis le Verbe de vie, dès le commencement’ (‘We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life’) (I John 1).

The propers for each of the Christmastide masses emphasize a different aspect of the Incarnation, and seeking his inspiration for the narrative of ‘Le Verbe’, it is to the scriptural texts of the Gregorian propers of Midnight Mass that Messiaen turned. The Introit *Dominus dixit ad me* and Alleluia set the text ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you’ (Psalm 2); the Gradual *Tecum principium* and Communion *In splendoribus sanctorum* set the text ‘Amidst the splendours of the heavenly sanctuary, from the womb, before the morning star I have begotten you’ (Psalm 109). Whilst it is true that in ‘Le Verbe’ Messiaen does not paraphrase the Gregorian melodies of Midnight Mass, in direct imitation the true spirit of Tournemire’s *L’orgue mystique*, he weaves a musical commentary upon their texts.

#### OPENING SECTION: *Modéré; Lent et puissant*

Returning to the descending pedal motif heard during the first section of ‘Le Verbe’ (ACD3-0:27), it becomes clear that there is some link between this and the similar descending pedal theme used in ‘Dieu parmi nous’ (compare, for example, ‘Le Verbe’ 1/2/5-8 *Lent et puissant* with ‘Dieu parmi nous’ 1/1/2-3 *Lent et puissant*). In order to understand the theological linkage which accompanies the stylistic affinity, we must examine the superscription of ‘Dieu parmi nous’, assembled, like ‘Le Verbe’, from numerous scriptural sources to form a theological network of ideas:

‘Celui qui m’a créé a repose dans ma tente’ (Ecclesiastes 24. 8).

‘Le Verbe s’est fait chair et il a habité en moi’ (John 1. 14).

‘Mon âme glorifie le Seigneur, mon esprit a tressailli d’allégresse en Dieu mon Sauveur’ (Luke 1. 46-47).

The eschatological, Eternal Word heard in ‘Le Verbe’, in ‘Dieu parmi nous’ becomes the incarnational Word-made-flesh, dwelling within humanity in the person of Jesus, and existing from the very instant of the Incarnation within the womb of Mary. Messiaen explains this idea more thoroughly in his description of ‘Première communion de la Vierge’ of *Vingt regards*, where the *Magnificat* is an outpouring of Mary’s joy at God within her: ‘- Après l’Annonciation, Marie adore Jésus en elle [...] mon Dieu, mon fils, mon Magnificat! - mon amour sans bruit de paroles’.<sup>15</sup> This communion with God is directly paralleled in the Eucharist:

... la Vierge est représentée à genoux, repliée sur elle-même dans la nuit – une aureole lumineuse surplombe ses entrailles. Les yeux fermés, elle adore le fruit cache en elle. Ceci se passé entre l’Annonciation et la Nativité: c’est la première et la plus grande de toutes les communions.<sup>16</sup>

Henri de Lubac reminds us that ‘one can say that “the Word of God has been incarnated in two ways”, since [...] it is one and the same unique Word of God who descends into the letter of Scripture and into the flesh of our humanity’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Vingt regards*, note de l’auteur, p. iii.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. by Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998–2009), Vol. 2, pp. 60-61, which quotes from

'Le Verbe' demonstrates one of the earliest examples of Messiaen devising rhythmically complex textures in order to amplify a theological point. In his organ music, there are further examples of this textural rhythmic 'play' to be found in 'L'ange aux parfums' and 'Sortie', whilst in the orchestral music this technique takes on particularly complex forms in *Chronochromie* and 'Les élus marqués du sceau' in *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà*.... In 'Le Verbe', the rhythmic section (*Modéré*, 2/3/1 ACD3-1:46) shows Jesus as mirror to the Father, where the use of a rhythmic canon implies the mirroring of the Father by the Son in an affirmation of 'Logos Christology'.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent rhythmic superposition of two *deçà-tâlas* (*Plus vif*, 2/4/2 ACD3-2:05) creates an isorhythmic combination of rhythm and harmony, which prefigures the opening of the piano part of 'Liturgie de Cristal'. In the right hand, Messiaen's Mussorgsky-motive sounds to *turangalîla*, whilst the left hand projects six chords onto *sârasa*.<sup>19</sup> This early example of complex rhythmic layering represents the interaction between humanity and the eternity of God.<sup>20</sup> In *Éclairs sur l'au-Delà*..., 'La constellation du Sagittaire' makes use of this *Boris* theme ('a more assuaging fragment') within a rhythmically canonic texture,<sup>21</sup> invoking a similarly spiritual message.

#### CLOSING SECTION: *Extrêmement lent et solennel* (3/4/1)

The composer alludes to having been influenced by the form of the plainchant sequence, in a section which he suggests incorporates Gregorian form, *râga*-like style, Bachian ornamentation, Messiaen's mode 2 and plainchant mode VII.<sup>22</sup> This unusual combination of the modes of limited transposition with the church modes is of particular interest to Messiaen: 'in paragraph 8 of Chapter XII [of *Technique*], example 182 ('le Verbe') mixes the second mode of limited transpositions (the song) with tonal harmonies and seventh mode of plainchant or the mode on G'.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning Gregorian melodies, Messiaen writes: 'We shall make use of them, forgetting their modes and rhythms for the use of ours [...] More than to the melodic contours of plainchant, we shall apply ourselves to its forms'.<sup>24</sup> Messiaen was particularly drawn to the simple form of the sequence:

The sequence is a canticle of popular style. Each period in it is heard twice, either consecutively or alternately; all end on the same note. In 'Le Verbe' (fourth part of my *Nativité du Seigneur*), I used a very special form which simultaneously holds to the sequence through its divisions, to the Hindu ragas through its character, to the ornamented chorales of J. S. Bach through its expressive and austere arabesques which overload the solemn, long, slow melody. In it each repetition of a period is varied, provided with a new ornamentation; G, the final of each period, is in the course of the sentence harmonized in nine different ways.<sup>25</sup>

Messiaen seems to suggest that he merely appropriates the general format of Gregorian sequences, yet Johnson detects a more specific similarity with the Easter sequence, since both motivic shape and formal layout derive directly from the Gregorian sequence

Iohannes Scotus Eriugena. This is cited in William M. Wright IV, 'The Literal Sense of Scripture According to Henri de Lubac: Insights from Patristic Exegesis of the Transfiguration', *Modern Theology*, 28:2 (2012), 253-277 (p. 257).

<sup>18</sup> Pitt, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Paul Griffiths, 'Éclairs sur l'au-delà', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by P. Hill, pp. 510-525 (pp. 518-519).

<sup>22</sup> This stylistic mixture is cited in Messiaen, *Olivier Messiaen homme de foi*, p. 37; Clyde Barrington Holloway, 'The Organ Works of Olivier Messiaen and Their Importance in his Total Oeuvre' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1974), p. 495; Gillock, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> *Technique* I, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

*Victimae paschali laudes*.<sup>26</sup> Paul Griffiths supposes it to be too deeply submerged to be discernable,<sup>27</sup> and Johnson implies that only the opening of the melody is paraphrased by Messiaen. Shenton perpetuates this belief of loose association, detecting ‘influence of the forms of chant in his music, such as the repeated *périodes* (sections) of the sequence used, for example, in ‘Le Verbe’, the fourth movement of *La Nativité*’.<sup>28</sup> Shenton continues:

Clearly, for Messiaen, there is both musical and symbolic value in plainchant; however, only for the first of the uses [...] does chant have real semiotic value.’ [The first symbolic use here being ‘direct reference to a specific chant’.] For the fourth [i.e. Influence of the forms], chant is merely a source of inspiration.<sup>29</sup>

Yet this whole passage (ACD3-3:10) is a *choral orné* paraphrasing the entire chant *Victimae paschali*. So ‘Le Verbe’ indeed makes ‘direct reference to a specific chant’, but how might this affect our interpretation? Despite this ‘hesitation of musicologists to affirm such a claim’,<sup>30</sup> Pitt demonstrates in his Figure 4 (expanded to form Example 2.5, below, which includes both the entire sequence, and Messiaen’s ornamentation) that not only is this plausible,<sup>31</sup> but by the rules of the *choral orné* style not just of Bach, but of Nivers and de Grigny, it becomes obvious to detect in even the most florid passages. ‘Le Verbe’ therefore explores multiple aspects of the Word: ‘...both Jesus’ humanity and the letter of Scripture embody, veil, and disclose the divine mystery of the Logos’.<sup>32</sup> The second section makes explicit that ‘the Christmas crib lies under the shadow of the Cross’.<sup>33</sup>

The Incarnation foreshadows the paschal mystery, and the proper human response to the divine offer of salvation is participation in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ. The entirety of *Le Verbe* can be considered, therefore, to have as its theological and musical focus the marrying of the largely intangible divine with the tangible human in the person of the Word, Jesus Christ, for the purpose of redeeming humanity through death and resurrection, and restoring the created order to communion with the creator in the eschaton.<sup>34</sup>

These ideas find their most eloquent expression in the words of Marmion:

It is from the Crib that He inaugurates this life of suffering such as He willed to live for our salvation, this life of which the term is at Golgotha, and that, in destroying sin, is to restore to us the friendship of His Father. The Crib is certainly only the first stage, *but it radically contains all the others*.<sup>35</sup>

Within ten years of composing ‘Le Verbe’, Messiaen had thought again about these theological concerns, uniting Star and Cross as identical shapes which measure Jesus’ earthly life in *Vingt regards*, underscoring the indissoluble bond between Nativity and Passion, Bethlehem and Golgotha:<sup>36</sup> begotten before the dawn in Psalm 109, and resurrected for eternity in the *Victimae paschali*, ‘Le Verbe’ depicts the eternity of the Word on either side of Jesus’ earthly form.

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<sup>26</sup> Diane Luchese, ‘Olivier Messiaen’s Slow Music: Glimpses of Eternity in Time’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1998), p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Shenton, *Olivier Messiaen’s System of Signs: Notes Towards Understanding His Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p.59.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Pitt, p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 27, Fig. 4.

<sup>32</sup> William M. Wright, p. 258.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Reading the Gospels with the Church From Christmas Through Easter* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996), p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Pitt, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> Marmion, p. 127 (my italics).

<sup>36</sup> Siglind Bruhn, ‘The Spiritual Layout in Messiaen’s Contemplations of the Manger’, in *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love*, ed. by Siglind Bruhn (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 249.

EXAMPLE 2.5: *La Nativité du Seigneur*, 'Le Verbe' 3/4/1 ACD3-3:10. Decoration of the Gregorian sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*. Organ part © Alphonse Leduc, Paris, reproduced with permission under licence.

Vic - ti - mae pas - cha - li lau - des im - mo - lent Chri - sti - a - ni.

3/4/1 Extrêmement lent et solennel  
P: cornet

*mf legato*  
R: Fonds doux 8

*pp*  
Péd: 16, 8

Ag - nus re - de - mit o - ves: Chri - stus in - no - cens Pa - tri

re - con - ci - li - a - vit pec - ca - to - res. Mors et vi - ta du - el - lo con -

fli - xe - re mi - ran - do: dux vi - tae mor - tu - us, reg - nat vi - vus.

EXAMPLE 2.5, cont.

Dic no - bis Ma - ri - a, quid vi - dis - ti in vi - a?

Se - pul - crum Chri - sti vi - ven - tis, et glo - ri - am vi - di re - sur - gen - tis:

An - ge - li - cos tes - tes, su - da - ri - um, et ves - tes.

Sur - re - xit Chris - tus spes me - a:



EXAMPLE 2.5, cont.

prae - ce - - det su - os in Ga - li - lae - am.

Sci - mus Chris - - tum sur - - - rex - - is - se

a mor - tu - - is ve - re:

tu no - bis, vic - tor Rex, mi - se - re - re. Al - le - lu - ia.

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*Light, fire and life, divine and immortal, joined to our nature you have brought forth  
That to the glory of God the Father, heaven and earth might be restored.*<sup>1</sup>

#### TRACK 4

#### LIGHT AND LIFE: 'LA SOURCE DE VIE'

The quotation Messiaen selects supporting 'La Source de Vie' cites the Prayer of St. Bonaventure: 'Que toujours mon coeur ait soif de vous, ô fontaine de vie, source de l'éternelle lumière!'.<sup>2</sup> St. Bonaventure, a Doctor of the Church, amplified specific ideas and writings of Aquinas, and is portrayed in Illustration 2.3. This fountain of eternal light is expressed by a piece consisting entirely of colour chords: CTI 2 progressions, punctuated by CCR.



ILLUSTRATION 2.3: Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664),  
*The Lying-in-State of St Bonaventura*,  
1629: oil on canvas, 250 x 225 cm,  
*Musée du Louvre, Paris*

<sup>1</sup> Greek Orthodox hymn to the Theotokos, translated by the sisters of Malling Abbey, and reproduced in *Celebrating Night Prayer* (London: Mowbray, 1994), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1973), p. 10.

In Example 2.6, the dynamic unfolding of CTI, which usually drives towards the root position major triad at the base of chord D, is here delayed and sounded only three times in the piece: lack of harmonic closure projects a sense of eternity.

EXAMPLE 2.6: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'la Source de Vie'

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The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the CTI 2 structure with sections A, B, A, C, A, and B. The second system shows CTI 2 with sections A, C, A, B, C, D, A, B, C, followed by 2nd CCR with sections 1 A, B and 2 A, B, and 1st CCR 7 with sections A and B. The third system shows CTI 2 with sections A, B, C, D, C, D, C, followed by 1st CCR 7 with sections A and B, 1st CCR 5 with section B, and CTI 2 with sections A, B, A, B, C. The score includes a piano part with a melodic line and a bass line, and an organ part with a similar melodic line and a bass line. The tempo is 'Très modéré, un peu lent' and the dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*. The bass line is marked 'legato pp (N.B.: Dans toute cette pièce, la pédale doit sonner une octave plus haut que la notation.)'.

The use of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 7 with its A $\flat$  bass (ACD4-1:09) provides a tritone polarity with the D $\sharp$  bass of CTI 2, and the relative avoidance of F $\sharp$  as a major third within CTI 2D is balanced by its use as the bass of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 5B (ACD4-1:35). Thus, harmony governs everything: the principal melodic notes are generated from the upper resonance of the colour-chords, and this effect of shifting harmonies is described by Weir as 'drifting from one to the next like light floating down dust beams from a stained-glass window'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', p. 381.

Prior to Messiaen's revisions of December 1984, 'la Source de Vie' immediately preceded 'Les ressuscités et la lumière de Vie',<sup>4</sup> with both pieces exploring the light of life in John 1. 4. The drive to the harmonic climax of 'Les ressuscités et la lumière de Vie' involves the shifting colours of CCR, TC and CTC beneath two melodic ascents: a whole tone ascent, followed by a scalic approach to the highest note of the organ of La Trinité (Example 2.7). One feature in Messiaen's later music is the removal of some of the notes of contracted resonance from the foundation of CCR; often these notes are implied and sounded in the subsequent chord. The splash of the final added-6<sup>th</sup> chord may be explained by the fact that the missing note of the previous, CR-based 11-note aggregate, A, is then sounded as an added note to the C major chord at the climax.

This concluding chord, together with the integrated use of colour-chords throughout the passage, reinforces the proclamation of Jesus in John 8. 12 cited by Messiaen: 'He who follows me walks not in darkness but will have the light of life',<sup>5</sup> whilst Messiaen's reference to John 6. 54 underlines the link between Eucharist and resurrection of John 6. 51 referred to in 'la manne et la Pain de Vie'.

EXAMPLE 2.7: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'Les ressuscités et la lumière de Vie', 51/1/1

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The light of these two pieces was captured by Messiaen in the paraphrase of I Corinthians at the close of *Saint François*:

Autre est l'éclat de la lune, autre est l'éclat du soleil, Alleluia! Autres sont les corps terrestres, autres sont les corps célestes, Alleluia! Même, une étoile diffère en éclat d'une autre étoile. Ainsi en va-t-il de la résurrection des morts, Alleluia! Alleluia!<sup>6</sup>

The fourth movement of *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* also takes up this description of resurrection (first handled in *Les corps glorieux*), with words from I Corinthians 15. 43, Revelation 2. 17 and Job 38. 7: 'Ils ressusciteront, glorieux, avec un nom nouveau - dans le concert joyeux des étoiles et les acclamations des fils du ciel'. Bonaventure's gloss upon this places Jesus as the fountain of life and the source of eternal light, which is portrayed musically by Messiaen in 'La Source de Vie' solely by means of colour-chords.

<sup>4</sup> Hill and Simeone, pp. 348-9.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Saint François d'Assise* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1988), Scene 8, which paraphrases I Corinthians 15. 41-42.



*Dies ist keine organistische Registrierung, dies ist eine theologische Registrierung.*<sup>1</sup>

## PART THREE, CASE STUDIES: MESSIAEN AS PERFORMER AND MUSICAL PREACHER

### INTRODUCTION: TIMBRE, TECHNIQUE AND THEOLOGY IN *LES CORPS GLORIEUX*



ILLUSTRATION 3.1: Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664),  
*The Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1631: oil, 486 x 385 cm,  
Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville

<sup>1</sup> Messiaen's words to Almut Rößler concerning 'Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité' from *Les corps glorieux* and cited in Ingrid Hohlfeld-Ufer and Almut Rößler, *Die musikalische Sprache Olivier Messiaens dargestellt an dem Orgelzyklus „Die Pfingstmesse“*. Zur Interpretation der Orgelwerke Messiaens (Duisburg: Gilles & Francke, 1978), p. 46, n. 1: 'This isn't an organist's registration, this is a theological registration'.

## TIMBRE: EXPERIMENTAL ORGAN TEXTURES

Messiaen put the new ranks he had specified in 1934 to immediate use in his next major organ cycle, *La Nativité du Seigneur*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed one may talk of an inextricable link between these new ranks and the creation of the subsequent organ music: the separate mutations and *Récit* mixture allowed a thorough emancipation of the pedal, only previously hinted at in ‘Alleluias sereins’ (*L’Ascension*). Which came first: the new organ colours or the original compositional ideas? The changes specified by Messiaen to his organ in 1934 were a direct result of this young and experimental composer’s constant striving for new colours and effects. Yet one of his favourite textures at the organ, that of pitching the pedal line higher than the accompanying manual parts, dates back to *Le Banquet céleste* of 1928, being also a favourite device in liturgical improvisation.

It was during the summer of 1934 that Messiaen concluded writing his organ version of *L’Ascension*, and by the time he had returned to Paris, the organ of La Trinité was already being put out of action for the restoration project, which lasted until May 1935.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this, the premiere of this work took place at the *Quinze-Vingts*, and when *L’Ascension* eventually was played in its entirety at La Trinité, on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1935, it was played by the composer as part of the inauguration of the restored organ, complete with its new stops. In the same recital, Marcel Dupré played *Le Banquet céleste*.<sup>4</sup> It would seem inconceivable that the new opportunities afforded by the additional brightness of the new stops on the *Positif* when coupled to the pedal would not have been made use of by these two performers in both ‘Alleluias sereins’ and *Le Banquet céleste*. This would mean that the possibilities inherent in this music, music which predates the rebuilding of the organ, may well have driven Messiaen’s desire for clarity and colour. In other words, whilst it became fashionable for Parisian organs to gain classical mutations, it is the imagination and innovation of the composer which motivated the alteration and expansion of the organ of La Trinité. Stemming from this, one of Messiaen’s important contributions to the development of registration is the use of the pedal as 4’ melody.

Although *Le Banquet céleste* was composed before Messiaen became organist of La Trinité and therefore could not have been conceived with that instrument in mind, one of the most important and specific timbral effects is the use of the pedal to play high-pitched manual sonorities. The reprinted edition of *Le Banquet* from 1960 makes use of the *Nazard* on the *Positif* and the 16’ *Bourdon* on the *Récit*, which were both added almost eight years after the piece was composed. The bright, melodic quality of the pedal here, however, resembles three other pieces written by Messiaen prior to 1939.

‘Alleluia sereins’ has a passage in which 4’ flute alone in the pedal outlines a second inversion dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord on F $\sharp$ , similar to the whole tone scale played by the pedal in ‘Les eaux de la grâce’, and the final section of this piece has a pedal melody on 4’ flute coupled to stops at 4’ and 1’ pitches, above which are heard chords and figuration. It would be fascinating to know which registration was used by Messiaen at the recital in May 1935. It is tempting to believe that he may have departed from the directions in the already published score, instead making use of the new sonorities. Gillian Weir cites this passage herself, relating her astonishment that Messiaen wished to make a radical departure to the registration of the right hand part in one of her performances in order to achieve clarity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See pp. 32-33 for details of the specification.

<sup>3</sup> Simeone, ‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Weir, ‘Organ Music II’, p. 373. This flexibility was also the experience of Almut Rößler, working on the interpretation of Messiaen’s organ music with the composer in Düsseldorf (Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 150).

In *La Nativité*, two pieces are important for their use of a pedal part which is not the usual bass of the texture: 'La Vierge et l'Enfant' contains the texture of pedal 4' coupled to *Positif* 4' with *Nazard*, *Tierce* and *Piccolo*, accompanied by *Céleste* chords on *Récit* together with 16' tone on *Grand Orgue*. Subsequently, 'Les Mages' almost replicates this texture with pedal registered at 4' pitch coupled to *Positif* 4', with *Nazard* and *Tierce*, whilst *Récit* also has string tone and *Grand Orgue* 16' tone.

In *Les corps glorieux*, Messiaen takes two specific techniques directly from *La Nativité*. Writing in the preface to *La Nativité* he describes the pedal as 'registered rarely with 16' and 8', but instead with 4' and mixture without 8', it sings in the soprano [...] or decorates the manuals with gentle bells'.<sup>6</sup> Three years later, composing *Les corps glorieux*, the same techniques apply: the pedal melody sings in the soprano in the third section of 'L'ange aux parfums', echoing the exotic texture of 'Les Mages', whilst the carillon effect of 'La Vierge et l'Enfant' is taken up in 'Les eaux de la grâce' and the second section of 'L'ange aux parfums'. Yet the use of the pedal division as a melody is not specifically an innovation of the youthful Messiaen. In the *Grand Siècle* the pedal was used *en taille* for the intonation of a plainchant *cantus firmus*, and Tournemire had also begun to use the pedal with 4' registration as a melodic voice. Messiaen's simple innovation was the realization that the coupling of the *Positif* to the pedal afforded the use of much brighter, higher pitched sonorities, freeing the pedal from its usual rôle as ponderous bass.

In *Les corps glorieux* Messiaen's registration directions occasionally overstep the possibilities of his organ of La Trinité, in contrast to the specific directions for works such as *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, containing a plan and description of the organ, together with the required combination settings. Yet Messiaen writes that *Messe de la Pentecôte* was his only work written entirely for the organ of La Trinité and that it exploits all of its registers.<sup>7</sup> The case of *Les corps glorieux* is particularly fascinating, since there is evidence to suggest that some movements were registered for a different instrument entirely. Andrew Thomson's review of Nigel Simeone's catalogue of works by Messiaen stated that *Les corps glorieux* received its first performance by Messiaen in November 1943, in three concerts at La Trinité.<sup>8</sup> In response, Jennifer Bate contested that in a letter to her, Messiaen had claimed that the premiere did not take place until 15<sup>th</sup> April 1945 at the Palais de Chaillot, which would help to explain the registration anomalies in the published score.<sup>9</sup> Thomson's reply cited the publicity as clear evidence for the performance at La Trinité in 1943, and suggested that Messiaen had confused his dates in correspondence with Jennifer Bate.<sup>10</sup> As clarification, Simeone confirmed that the work was published on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1942, citing three sources of evidence: the publisher Leduc, the copy lodged at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, and a letter from Messiaen to Felix Arahamian. Loriod herself had also confirmed the first performance as 1943. However, Simeone does not believe that the published registrations were intended specifically for the Palais de Chaillot.<sup>11</sup> Table 3.1 sets out the specification of the organ at Palais de Chaillot, highlighting in bold the registers from the published score which were absent from La Trinité.

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<sup>6</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *La Nativité du Seigneur* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1936), Note de l'auteur: 'Rarement enregistrée 16, 8, souvent 4 pieds et mixture sans 8, elle chant en soprano[...] ou enguirlande les mains de légers carillons'.

<sup>7</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Thomson, review of Nigel Simeone, *Olivier Messiaen: a bibliographical catalogue of Messiaen's works*, in *The Musical Times*, 140:1868 (1999), 69-70 (p. 69).

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Bate, letter to *The Musical Times*, 140:1869 (1999), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Thomson, letter to *The Musical Times*, 141:1870 (2000), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Nigel Simeone, letter to *The Musical Times*, 141:1871 (2000), 3-4.



TABLE 3.1: Organ of the Palais du Chaillot: Victor Gonzalez - 1939<sup>12</sup> (formerly in the Palais du Trocadéro: Cavaillé-Coll - 1878;<sup>13</sup> latterly in the Auditorium Maurice Ravel (Lyon): Danion-Gonzalez - 1977)

<p><b>Grand Orgue</b></p> <p>Montre 16 Bourdon 16 Montre 8 Violoncelle 8 Flûte Harmonique 8 Bourdon 8 Prestant 4 Flûte Douce 4 Doublette 2 Nasard 2<math>\frac{2}{3}</math> Tierce 1<math>\frac{3}{5}</math> Plein Jeu V Dessus de Cornet V Bombarde 16 Trompette 8 Clairon 4</p>	<p><b>Positif</b></p> <p>Bourdon 16 Principal 8 Flûte à fuseau 8 Salicional 8 Unda Maris 8 Flûte Octaviane 4 Prestant 4 Quinte 2<math>\frac{2}{3}</math> Tierce 1<math>\frac{3}{5}</math> Quarte de Nasard 2 Plein Jeu V Basson 8 Trompette 8 <b>Cromorne</b> 8 Chalumeau 4</p>	<p><b>Récit</b></p> <p><b>Quintaton</b> 16 Flûte Harmonique 8 Cor de Nuit 8 Gambe 8 Voix Céleste 8 Flûte Octaviane 4 Viole 4 Octavin 2 Nasard 2<math>\frac{2}{3}</math> <b>Tierce</b> 1<math>\frac{3}{5}</math> <b>Piccolo</b> 1 Plein Jeu V Cymbale IV Dessus de Cornet V Bombarde 16 Trompette 8 Clairon 4 Basson-Hautbois 8 Voix Humaine 8</p>
<p><b>Solo</b></p> <p>Bourdon 16 Flûte Harmonique 8 <b>Diapason</b> 8 Violoncelle 8 Principal 4 Octavin 2 Plein Jeu V Tuba Magna 16 Trompette 8 Clairon 4 Clarinette 8</p>	<p><b>Pédale</b></p> <p>Principal 32 metal Principal 32 wood Flûte 16 Contrebasse 16 Violonbasse 16 Soubasse 16 Violoncelle 8 Flûte 8 Bourdon 8 Octave 4 Flûte 4 Mixture IV <b>Contrebombarde</b> 32 Bombarde 16 Trompette 8 Clairon 4 Basson 16 Basson 8 Baryton 4</p>	<p>The entire instrument was movable on the concert platform and the console was also mobile.</p> <p>Registers marked in bold are those specifically mentioned by Messiaen in the score of <i>Les corps glorieux</i> which did not exist at La Trinité.</p>

<sup>12</sup> This specification is given in Robert Lee Moore, 'Litanies and *Trois Danses* for Organ by Jehan Alain' (unpublished MMus dissertation, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1949), pp. 88-89, which cites Norbert Dufourcq, *Le Grand Orgue du Palais de Chaillot* (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1943).

<sup>13</sup> More information on the original specification of the Cavaillé-Coll organ of the Palais du Trocadéro may be found in Rollin Smith, 'The Organ of the Trocadéro and Its Players', in *French Organ Music From the Revolution to Franck and Widor* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), pp. 281-284.

Messiaen stated that *Les corps glorieux* was completed before the outbreak of war, giving the date of completion as 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1939, as it was ‘the last work I composed as a civilian. It was just being finished when I was called up’.<sup>14</sup> Note Messiaen’s words: not ‘completed’, but ‘being finished’, and by November 1939 he had described his dreadful conditions to Jean Langlais, mentioning: ‘I left a work *unfinished* when I was mobilized’, which refers to *Les corps glorieux*,<sup>15</sup> and in 1940, Messiaen had chronicled his experiences in the journal *L’Orgue*:

I often find myself singing certain melodies, certain favourite rhythms, and going over in my head the most important parts of my latest organ work, interrupted by the war [...] Whether it was a presentiment or a painful irony, I don’t know – but it deals with the Resurrection of the bodies. Will I ever be able to complete it?<sup>16</sup>

By May 1941 Messiaen was back in Paris, yet on 26<sup>th</sup> June he wrote that he had still been unable to play through *Les corps glorieux* on the organ of La Trinité.<sup>17</sup> The music was finally heard in his own church on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, when Messiaen invited his pupils to a private performance,<sup>18</sup> and following this rendition of *Les corps glorieux*, Messiaen was to play two of the pieces as a premiere away from La Trinité, at a concert on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1941 at the Palais de Chaillot. Whilst Messiaen does not directly mention the fourth manual available at the Chaillot instrument in his published registrations, the use of its registers is implied.

In ‘Subtilité des corps glorieux’ Messiaen specifies *Cornet* tone on all three manuals, yet in 1939 the organ of La Trinité possessed no *Cornet* on the *Récit*, therefore making a faithful interpretation of this work at La Trinité impossible, even in the summer of 1956 when Messiaen recorded his complete organ music. From the outset of *Les corps glorieux*, therefore, the composer conceives his sonorities idealistically rather than specifically. Yet as we can see, *Cornet* tone is available on the three manuals of the organ at the Palais de Chaillot, France’s most important concert-hall organ of the time.

In ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’ the composer uses the terms *fonds et anches* 16, 8, 4, *Plein Jeu* for the *Récit*, which in 1939 did not possess a reed at 16’ pitch, and the mixture is a three rank *Cymbale*. It is possible that Messiaen was using a registration direction here which would be understood as *tutti* by performers interpreting the work on different instruments, since a similar direction occurs in ‘Le Verbe’. Messiaen also requires the *Positif* to include a *Plein Jeu*, yet the *Positif* at La Trinité did not acquire its mixture until the work undertaken by Beuchet-Debierre in 1965, which was then called *Fourmiture*. The climax of the first section of this piece also asks for a pedal reed at 32’ pitch, a stop which Messiaen had requested from Olivier Glandaz shortly before the composer’s death. Again, these registration directions make perfect sense at the Chaillot instrument.

The second section of ‘Combat’ makes use of the left hand combination of *Unda Maris* and *Salicional*, placed almost uniformly by Cavallé-Coll on the *Positif* of all his major instruments, yet Messiaen specifies this to be played on the *Récit*, whilst the harmonic flutes of the *Grand-Orgue* and *Positif* alternate. Such a disposition is almost certainly impossible on most instruments, and therefore confirms Messiaen’s thinking in terms of abstract organ colours, away from the organ loft. The unusual and original specification

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<sup>14</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 85, which translates Brigitte Massin, *Olivier Messiaen, une poésie du merveilleux* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989), p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Hill and Simeone, pp. 86-87 (my italics), which cites Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais, *Ombre et lumière: Jean Langlais, 1907-1991* (Paris: Combre, 1995), p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

of the organ of the Sacré-Coeur, however, places *Unda Maris* registers on both *Positif* and *Récit*, so this was *just* possible, somewhere in Paris at that time.

In ‘Force et agilité des corps glorieux’ Messiaen describes diapason tone specifically as *Montre*, requiring *Montres* on the *Positif* at 16, 8, 4 and 2’ pitches, and also on the *Grand-Orgue* with the addition of the *Plein Jeu*. The use of the term *Montre* as opposed to *fonds* indicates the clarity of sound Messiaen requires, without the use of flutes or *gambes*, yet the organ of La Trinité did not possess a *Montre* at 16’ pitch on the *Positif*, and the 2’ register on the *Grande-Orgue* had been changed by Guilmant to 2½’ shortly after the instrument was inaugurated.

The greatest number of registration directions impossible at the organ of La Trinité occurs in ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’ (Table 3.2). Here Messiaen asks for *Montre* 16’ on the *Positif*, for *Cromborne* on the *Positif*, for *Tierce* and *Piccolo* on the *Récit*. Perhaps, as he was composing away from Paris, he had in mind specific colours, without tying these to his organ. Why, then, did Messiaen not make amendments to the published score if it were intended to reflect performances at La Trinité?

TABLE 3.2: ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’: registers unavailable by name at La Trinité

Grand Orgue	Positif	Récit
Diapason 8	Montre 16 Bourdon 16 Cromborne 8	Quintaton 16 Viole 8 Tierce 1 3/5 (added 1962-5) Piccolo 1

Was this piece, perhaps, composed separately from the rest of the cycle? Its more tonal style also hints at the possibility of an earlier date of composition.<sup>19</sup> Why does Messiaen here ask specifically for *Diapason* rather than *Montre*? Why does he confuse the name of the 16’ stop of the *Récit* with that of the *Quintaton* of the *Positif* of La Trinité? Why does he request the combination on the *Récit* of *Hautbois* together with *Tierce* and *Piccolo*, which were instead to be found on the *Positif*, the *Tierce* of the *Récit* being added only in the 1960s? Why does Messiaen request the neo-classical *Cromborne* rather than the *Clarinette* to which he was accustomed? And finally, why does he refer to the string register of the *Récit* as *Viole*, a term used infrequently by Cavaillé-Coll, unless Messiaen is possibly abbreviating the full name of the stop *Viole de gambe*?

The new organ of 1937-1938 built by Victor Gonzales for Rheims Cathedral is unusual in that the *Récit* division has both *Tierce* and *Piccolo* ranks and the sub-octave flute is called *Quintaton*. It is also interesting that the main 8’ rank on the *Grand Orgue* is also called *Diapason* and that the *Positif* contained a *Cromborne*. Apart from the *Positif* lacking the *Montre* 16’, this is one of the few French organs of the time able to perform this piece as the composer has registered it in the published score. Messiaen’s performance of two movements from *Les corps glorieux* on an instrument by Gonzalez six months prior to the work’s publication is a lasting testament to the timbral influence of Gonzalez organs in Messiaen’s imagination, making Jennifer Bate’s choice of the organ at Beauvais for her *intégrale* all the more appropriate. Reviewing Messiaen’s 1941 concert at the Palais de Chaillot, and by implication, the two pieces from *Les corps glorieux* which were receiving

<sup>19</sup> Milsom, ‘Organ Music I’, p. 69, also believes that ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’ sounds as if it may just as easily belong to an earlier cycle.

their first public performance, Norbert Dufourcq wrote: 'It is through his continual experiments into the opposition of ideas and of the clash of different moods that Olivier Messiaen attains the power to move us'.<sup>20</sup>

The two pieces performed at this concert were perhaps the two most suitable to hearing out of the context of the entire cycle: 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' and 'Combat de la mort et de la vie'. These are the two pieces which have the most confusing published registration directions. Early in 1942 Messiaen visited Leduc concerning the proofs for the entire work and we must assume that he was satisfied with the publisher's efforts. The work was first published in June 1942,<sup>21</sup> and subsequently first performed in full by Messiaen at la Trinité on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1943.<sup>22</sup> Messiaen himself confirmed this early date of publication (some three years before the second complete performance of *Les corps glorieux* on 15 April 1945 at the Palais de Chaillot) in a letter to Felix Aprahamian: 'J'ai publié chez Leduc un nouveau volume pour orgue [...]: *Les corps glorieux*'.<sup>23</sup>

It became a standard feature of the work of Gonzalez on larger instruments that the *Récit* division was to contain certain unusual voices. Thus the organ built for Studio 104 of Radio France (*salle Olivier Messiaen*, since transferred to Notre Dame de Lille) between 1957 and 1966 contains *Quintaton* 16; *Tierce harmonique* 13/5; *Piccolo* 1. The *Positif*, in addition, has a *Cromborne*. Clearly Messiaen's published registrations for 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' were intended for an instrument designed by Victor Gonzalez. The use of the stop name *Diapason* is rare on French organs. Yet rather than merely an indication of the sound quality or clarity Messiaen was striving for, the Chaillot organ has a *Diapason* 8' on the solo division. This points to the fact that Messiaen was able to make full use of this fourth manual in 1941. Messiaen's use of the fourth manual in 'Joie et clarté' is therefore explicit in his registration. It is also *implicit* in his treatment of the second section of 'Combat de la mort et de la vie'. The *Unda Maris* is on the *Positif* as expected, not on the *Récit* as Messiaen indicates, and so the alternation of flute solos would need to take place between *Grand Orgue* and *Solo*, a perfectly feasible solution here at the Palais du Chaillot. Perhaps Messiaen completed his registration of this piece from memory, away from the console, for he confuses the location of the *Montre* 16'. The *Bourdon* 16' and the *Cromborne* 8' he asks for are indeed to be found on the *Positif* of the Chaillot organ. On the *Récit*, Cavallé-Coll originally named the eight-foot string rank *Viola de gambe* and Gonzalez retains the name *Viola* for the four-foot string, so here Messiaen was correct in referring to the sound quality as *Viola* rather than the more usual *Gambe*.

Thus impossible at La Trinité, this unusual Palais du Chaillot *Récit* combination of *Quintaton*, *Tierce* and *Piccolo* matches Messiaen's prescription exactly. Here, surely, is the ideal organ for an authentic performance of 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' and 'Combat de la mort et de la vie'. Armed with this background information on timbre, we now turn to Messiaen's harmonic technique in the year 1939.

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<sup>20</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Nigel Simeone, *Olivier Messiaen: A bibliographical catalogue* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1998), pp. 64-67.

<sup>22</sup> Confirmed by Loriod from Messiaen's pocket diaries for 1943, and cited in Hill and Simeone, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Simeone, *Bien cher Felix*, pp. 27-28. Messiaen's letter is dated 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1944.

## TECHNIQUE: USE OF CR IN *LES CORPS GLORIEUX*

CR is used in four consecutive pieces in *Les corps glorieux*: ‘L’ange aux parfums’, ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’, ‘Force et agilité des corps glorieux’, and ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’. The pieces which do not use non-modal colour chords are the monodic ‘Subtilité des corps glorieux’, the exclusively modal ‘Les eaux de la grâce’, and the trio of ‘Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité’. The first appearance of CR in the cycle takes place as a means of harmonizing the repeated C♯s of the melody of ‘L’ange aux parfums’, preceded by extended CTI (Example 3.1).

EXAMPLE 3.1: ‘L’ange aux parfums’ 8/3/3 ACD6-2:12

The musical score for Example 3.1 shows a melody in the upper voice and piano accompaniment. The upper voice begins with a CTI (extended) chord (3B 1B) and then moves to CR chords in 1st and 2nd inversions. The piano accompaniment is marked 'p staccato' and 'mf legato'.

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Gillian Weir captures the opening of ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’: ‘Death enters, snarling as he pursues his prey’,<sup>24</sup> noting that in the second section ‘the death theme is seen to have been transformed’,<sup>25</sup> amplifying Felix Aprahamian’s interpretation of the theme, that ‘at first, representing Death, it stalks in the bass in C minor’.<sup>26</sup> The opposite reading, however, is supported by Jean-Rodolphe Kars, who labels the opening music as ‘Thème de la vie’ and the tumultuous chords as ‘les ténèbres’.<sup>27</sup> The Chord of Resonance is used in five different transpositions as the battle reaches its climax (Example 3.2). Here the bass returns three times to C♯ (the bass of the stained glass inversions of *Technique* Ex. 209 and ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’ 2/4/2), whilst the manual harmonies refuse.

EXAMPLE 3.2: *Les corps glorieux*, IV ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’ 6/3/1

The musical score for Example 3.2 shows a melody in the upper voice and piano accompaniment. The upper voice starts with a CR chord (B) and then moves to A, D, C, and B chords. The piano accompaniment is marked 'fff stacc.'.

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<sup>24</sup> Weir, programme notes for Priory PRCD 923.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Programme notes for Jennifer Bate’s recording of *Les corps glorieux*, 1988 DKP(C)9004/RRC1087.

<sup>27</sup> Père Jean-Rodolphe Kars, ‘Quelques réflexions sur la structure trinitaire dans la seconde partie de *Combat de la mort et de la vie* d’Olivier Messiaen’, in *Musik des Unsichtbaren*, ed. by M. C. Hastetter, p. 149.

Writing about this piece in *Technique*, Messiaen clearly indicates the use of CR harmonies at this point.<sup>28</sup> We hear all inversions of CR (A, B, C and D), yet at different transpositions, fractured from *effet de vitrail* and working in harmonic opposition to the pedal. Jon Gillock perceives this toccata as part of the Stations of the Cross, portraying the sufferings of Jesus,<sup>29</sup> yet the subtitle of the piece clearly amplifies the title: *La mort et la vie ont engagé un stupéfiant combat* (from the *Victima Paschali*). The terror of the opening two bars clearly evokes death, and the use of Chords of Resonance here in the toccata figuration opposing this suggests the light of life.

In a piece such as ‘Force et agilité des corps glorieux’, which is overwhelmingly monophonic, it comes as a shock to hear dense chords in the closing eight bars. Beneath the repeated inverted pedal E<sub>4</sub>, eight ascending chords in mode 2<sup>2</sup> lead into the *fff* presentation beneath the prolonged E<sub>4</sub> in the top voice of two inversions of CR (Example 3.3), the bass descending by semitone (and by extension, to the implied root of the final E major chord). The following piece, ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’, also makes a significant use of CR (Example 3.7), thus linking these pieces harmonically, and also theologically by the writings of Aquinas, to which we now turn.

EXAMPLE 3.3: *Les corps glorieux*, V ‘Force et agilité des corps glorieux’, 6/5/2

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## THEOLOGY: *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*, ‘SUPPLEMENTUM TERTIÆ PARTIS’

In ‘Supplementum Tertiae Partis’ of *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas describes the qualities of the resurrected body: impassibility, subtlety, agility and clarity,<sup>30</sup> and in the selection of the titles of three of the pieces of *Les corps glorieux*, Messiaen draws his theological inspiration from these bodily endowments as outlined by Aquinas. Building upon this theological examination of the resurrection by Aquinas, Ludolph of Saxony writes:

Jesus Christ rose from the dead with a body which possessed the four most important principles of Grace: Clarity, agility, subtlety and impassivity [...] The Saviour’s Resurrection was not destruction but transformation of his adored flesh; its substance was not another, but the same, perfected [...] This worshiped body, now subtle, agile, immortal and bright to the highest degree is the perfect example of the glory which surrounds the bodies of those chosen to be resurrected....<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Technique* I, p. 35, and II, Ex. 122-123, pp. 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> Gillock, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> *ST* Sup., Q. 82-85, and discussed in Siglind Bruhn, ‘Traces of a Thomistic *De musica* in the Compositions of Olivier Messiaen’, *Logos*, 11:4 (2008), 16-56, (p. 31).

<sup>31</sup> From the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, and cited in Pantxika Béguerie, *The Issenbeim Altar* (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 1991), p. 27.

Aquinas' examination of this nature of the resurrected bodies is described between Questions 82-85.<sup>32</sup>

### QUESTION 82: THE ENDOWMENT OF IMPASSABILITY

This places the resurrected bodies beyond the reach of pain and inconvenience. Here Aquinas cites St. Augustine, who writes in *De Civitas Dei*:

We feel an indescribable love for the blessed martyrs so as to desire to see in that kingdom the scars of the wounds in their bodies, which they bore for Christ's name. Perchance indeed we shall see them for this will not make them less comely but more glorious. A certain beauty will shine in them, a beauty though in the body, yet not of the body but of virtue.<sup>33</sup>

### QUESTION 83: THE ENDOWMENT OF SUBTLETY

Aquinas cites I Corinthians, 15. 44, which Messiaen uses as the superscription of his first piece: 'It is sown a corruptible body, it shall rise a spiritual'.

### QUESTION 84: THE ENDOWMENT OF AGILITY

The agility of corporeal resurrection frees the body from its slowness of motion, endowed with the capability of moving with the utmost facility and quickness wherever the soul pleases. Aquinas cites I Corinthians, 15. 43, which Messiaen uses as the superscription of his fifth piece: 'It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power'.

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<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Question 85, see below, pp. 66-67.

<sup>33</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxii, 19. Cited in *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1922), Vol. 19, p. 161.

*Jesus Christ rose from the dead with a body which possessed the four most important principles of Grace: Clarity, agility, subtility and impassivity...*<sup>1</sup>

## TRACK 5

### ‘THE BODIES OF THE SAINTS WILL BE LIGHTSOME’:<sup>2</sup> THEOLOGY IN THE RHYTHM AND HARMONY OF ‘JOIE ET CLARTÉ DES CORPS GLORIEUX’

In a chance remark to Claude Samuel whilst discussing the topographical features which inspired *Des canyons aux étoiles...*, Messiaen revealed his hope to be able to witness the beauty of distant planets after his resurrection: he referred to ‘landscapes like those we’ll probably see after our death, if we then have the chance to visit other planets’.<sup>3</sup> This cosmic exploration features in Lurçat’s ‘La Conquete de l’Espace’ (Illustration 3.2), and in *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, the transcendental ‘Joie du sang des étoiles’ builds upon the achievements of ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’, with its unfettered freedom of the resurrected body, both pieces being linked by a common tonality and an exciting vitality of rhythmic abandon.



ILLUSTRATION 3.2: Jean Lurçat (1892-1966), *Le Chant du Monde*:  
‘La Conquete de l’Espace’, 1960 (tapestry), Musée Jean Lurçat, Angers, France

‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’ explores the two qualities of joy and brightness. Joy is both an expression of wonder at God’s profound love for us, expressed through Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection, and the cry of delight by the resurrected themselves. Balthasar places this joy in the context of our own transcendence:

The most unyielding categorical imperative of self-transcendence must coincide with the most blissful inclination of love. And this is only possible in Christianity, where God is not ‘thought thinking itself’ and ‘absolute knowledge’ but triune love—a love that comes to us from its origin in the shape of the incarnate Son, taking upon himself, on his Cross, our ultimate failure and hence our loss of joy, and in himself transforming our attempts to go beyond ourselves into new joy through ‘a hope that does not deceive’.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, and cited in Béguerie, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *ST Sup.*, Q. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘Joy and the Cross’, trans. by Graham Harrison, *Communio*, 31 (2004), 332-344 (p. 338).



The second quality, that of brightness and clarity, is linked to the Transfiguration. Messiaen's choice of superscription from Matthew 13. 43 for 'Joie et clarté' is cited by Marmion to demonstrate that the Transfiguration prefigures our bodily resurrection:

*Tunc justi fulgebunt sicut sol in regno Patris eorum.* Their bodies will be glorious like unto Christ's body upon Thabor [sic]; it is the same glory which shines upon the Humanity of the Incarnate Word that will transfigure our bodies.<sup>5</sup>

The brightness of the Transfiguration contained within it both the demonstration of the filiation of the Son, and the promise of our adoptive filiation in our relationship with God:

We shall attain perfection when, after we have been perseveringly faithful, our adoption comes to its fruition in glory: *Si filii et heredes, heredes quidem Dei, coheredes autem Christi* (Romans 8. 17). In the Transfiguration we see, in fact, the revelation of our future greatness.<sup>6</sup>

For Messiaen, this light is both a representation of eternal life, and a sign of the part we are able to play in it:

In this mystery of the Transfiguration, God's Providence has laid a solid foundation for the hope of the church; so that the whole body of Christ may know what a transformation will be granted to it, and that the members may be assured that they will be sharers in the glory which shone forth in their Head.<sup>7</sup>

Marmion makes clear that the Transfiguration is also a revelation to the disciples of the importance of the λόγος: 'At the Transfiguration, the Word gave full liberty to His eternal glory: He allowed it to throw its splendour upon the humanity which He had taken'.<sup>8</sup> This clarity is described in terms of its blinding brightness: 'His countenance shines like the sun, His raiment becomes white as snow'.<sup>9</sup> Bruhn assesses Messiaen's approach to the Theology of the Transfiguration as not so much describing the nature of corporeal resurrection, but as a celebration of the light which promises our share in the eternal Glory:

Christ unveiled to his three closest disciples, for an instant there on Mount Tabor, the glory of his divine soul shining through his human body. As this brilliance is essentially related to the splendour that will be a permanent quality of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, the overall theological message of Messiaen's *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ* may be considered a direct continuation of the contemplations inspiring *Les corps glorieux* and *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. What interests Messiaen here is no longer the quality of the resurrected body but the spiritual relationship of the resurrected being with God. The Transfiguration event is thus seen in the light of its significance for the human position as adopted children of God.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Marmion, p. 241 (see note 11, below, for a fuller citation of this passage).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 240-241.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 241-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>10</sup> Bruhn, 'Traces of a Thomistic *De musica* in the Compositions of Olivier Messiaen', pp. 34-35.

But before all this becomes possible, judgment must take place. This is the Judgment of Revelation 19. 11-16, when the Word of God, as described by Messiaen in ‘Regard de l’onction terrible’, sits upon a white horse and wields a two-edged sword. Here Marmion again makes explicit reference to Matthew 13. 43:

Here below, by grace, we are God’s children; but it hath not yet appeared what we shall be one day in consequence of this adoption. ‘That day will come when the lightnings having enlightened the world, and the voice of judgment having made the earth to shake and tremble to its foundations’ the just, according to the words of Jesus himself, shall ‘shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father’: Their bodies will be glorious like unto Christ’s body upon Thabor; it is the same glory which shines you the humanity of the incarnate Word that all transform our bodies.<sup>11</sup>



ILLUSTRATION 3.3: *La tenture de l’Apocalypse*, Sixième pièce: ‘Le Verbe de Dieu charge les Bêtes’ (c. 1382), Jean Bondol and Nicholas Bataille, Château d’Angers, France

This image is depicted in Illustration 3.3, the tapestry which originally inspired Messiaen in ‘Regard de l’onction terrible’. The scene describes Revelation 19. 11-16:

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Marmion, p. 241.

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 19. 11-16.

Citing *Summa Theologiae*,<sup>13</sup> Siglind Bruhn highlights the three essential aspects of good quality music according to Aquinas:

For music to be good and beautiful, it has to meet three conditions: ‘integrity’ or ‘perfection’ since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due ‘proportion’ or ‘harmony’; and lastly, ‘brightness’ or ‘clarity’, whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color. Integrity implies nothing is missing, the expression is complete and in that respect, perfect. Proportion is essential in music as it defines melody (in its individual intervals as well as its overall contours), rhythm (in its individual durations as well as its changing density), harmony (in the degree of consonance achieved by means of arithmetically related vibrations), and overall structure (in its balance, correspondences, symmetries, etc.). Clarity is perhaps most important of all. Thomas uses the term in a dual sense, speaking of physical and metaphysical clarity. Besides the external and visible brightness and splendour (which Messiaen celebrates in his *Transfiguration*), Thomas posits a kind of clarity that is noncorporeal in nature, the quality that makes a thing accessible to the intellect.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in addition to the qualities of integrity and proportion, music must also exhibit ‘clarity’. This clarity forms the remaining bodily endowment in *Summa Theologiae*.

#### QUESTION 85: THE ENDOWMENT OF CLARITY

Light sparkles in the biblical superscription of ‘Joie et clarté’; Aquinas and Messiaen both quote Matthew 13. 43: ‘The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father’. To describe the nature of this clarity, Aquinas quotes from Augustine, which even hints at the style of music Messiaen was to compose to illustrate this concept: ‘The body's beauty is harmony of parts with a certain charm of colour’.<sup>15</sup> Aquinas goes on to quote from Wisdom: ‘The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds’.<sup>16</sup> In the context of clarity, Aquinas also refers to a passage from St. Paul, which Messiaen himself uses in the final scene of *Saint François d'Assise*: ‘There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory’ (1 Corinthians 15. 41-42).

Aquinas’ main point in Question 85 is that ‘the bodies of the Saints will be lightsome’.<sup>17</sup> Concerning this piece, Messiaen writes: ‘La vie des ressuscités est libre, pure, lumineuse, colorée. Les timbres de l’orgue reflèteront ces caractères’.<sup>18</sup> He concludes: “‘Radiance’”: that’s the light which radiates from the transfigured bodies; they no longer need either sun or stars, they’re their own light.<sup>19</sup> Thus the spicy music Messiaen devises demonstrates ‘reflections of gold and flame’.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *STI*, Q. 39, Art. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Bruhn, ‘Traces of a Thomistic *De musica*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* xxii, 19, see Introduction, p. 2, n. 13, above.

<sup>16</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible, Wisdom 3. 7. Here the more usual ‘stubble’ is translated as ‘reeds’. Whilst there is no reason to assume that Messiaen was aware of this play on words, a post-structural reading of the work cannot fail to delight in this happy association in a piece which makes a feature of the organ’s reed stops. Five different types of reed stop (*Voix humaine*, *Clairon*, *Trompette*, *Cromborne*, and *Hautbois*) are employed in the piece, each accompanied by the sparkling upperwork of either mixtures or mutations.

<sup>17</sup> *ST Sup.*, Q. 85.

<sup>18</sup> Messiaen’s words quoted by Michel Roubinet in the programme notes to *Messiaen par lui meme*: ‘Resurrected life is free, pure, luminous and coloured. The organ’s colours reflect these characteristics’.

<sup>19</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Gillock, p. 128.

The importance of Wisdom 3 for this piece goes further than the allusion of brightness, however, for ‘Les âmes des justes sont dans la main de Dieu’,<sup>21</sup> of verse one, clearly prefigures Matthew 13. 43, whilst verse six links both to the furnace of Matthew 13 and to Revelation 8: ‘Comme l’or au creuset, il les a éprouvés, comme un parfait holocauste, il les a agréés’.<sup>22</sup> This furnace also gains further significance to Messiaen in ‘Communion’ of *Messe de la Pentecôte*, with the burning, fiery furnace of Daniel. Finally, Wisdom 3. 8 points forward to the portrayal of the King of Heaven: ‘Ils jugeront les nations et domineront sur les peuples, et le Seigneur régnera sur eux à jamais’.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the Book of Wisdom foreshadows Matthew 13. 43, which then continues: ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear’. This particular text clearly inspired Messiaen into creating responsive music, for the piece certainly arrests our attention with its use of *Trompette*, a stop exploited in the *Grand Siècle* to portray the *Rex Coelistis*, the King of Heaven, whilst the very combination of *Trompette* with *Cornet* is an allusion to the *Grands Jeux* and its associated gravitas, of the classical French organ. The accompanying chords in this piece are however an entirely new departure in terms of organ colour. Tournemire’s use of the *Voix humaine* is normally accompanied with *Bourdon* and tremulant, in homage to the practice of the masters of the *Grand Siècle*, and is associated with moments of rapt mysticism. Here, however, the *Voix humaine* is coloured with the brightness of *Cymbale* and *Clairon*, without tremulant. Tournemire’s rapture has been transformed into Messiaen’s joy.

## RHYTHM AS ETERNITY

Messiaen was able to devise rhythmic gestures which symbolize the temporal contrasts between the here-and-now and that which lies on either side: ‘poised between future and past, as Augustine so agonisingly sensed, lies the seemingly durationless ‘present’, perilously insecure, midway between ungraspable past and unfathomable future’.<sup>24</sup> The manipulation of rhythm and duration to create a theology of time was a concern of Messiaen’s throughout his life, developing music which describes the difference between earthly time and eternity, a difference summarized by Jeremy Begbie:

The temporal modes are experienced as alienated from one another, in contradiction and strife, they are not in mutual peace: ‘beginning, middle and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present and future’ [...] such is the time Jesus of Nazareth shared: the Son of God inhabits this time with us as one of us, as part of God’s determination to reconcile our time to his eternity.<sup>25</sup>

The use of ancient Greek rhythmic formulae is absent from *Technique*, and the systematic use of such figures commenced only with the *Messe de la Pentecôte* of 1949-1950. The simple peonic or *Cretic* rhythm of duration two-one-two, or long-short-long is subjected to varying levels of duration by Messiaen in ‘Joie et clarté’. The rhythm of the opening bar is subjected to augmentation and diminution, also featuring in the left hand chords in the *Plus lent* sections and forging a rhythmic link with ‘Force et agilité des corps glorieux’.

<sup>21</sup> French Jerusalem Bible, Wisdom 3. 1: ‘The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God’.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Wisdom 3. 6: ‘like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt-offering he accepted them’.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Wisdom 3. 8: ‘They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever’.

<sup>24</sup> Begbie, p. 148.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

This rhythm holds two symbolic properties. Firstly, aside from it being traceable to the metres of ancient Greek poetry, it also belongs in the medieval table of Śārīngadēva’s one-hundred and twenty *deçî-tâlas*. This rhythm of long-short-long is there referred to as *Dhenkî* and is rhythm number 58 (Example 3.4).

EXAMPLE 3.4: *Dhenkî*



The two outer values correspond to the Hindu duration *guru* whilst the central duration corresponds to the Hindu *laghu*. Thus the rhythm consists of five *mâtras*, the Hindu units for counting rhythms.<sup>26</sup> Five, of course, is also the number of the god *Shiva* and the fingers of the hand.<sup>27</sup> Messiaen’s fascination with this rhythm is as a result of its property of being a non-retrogradable rhythm. The same both forwards and backwards, he was later to use the idea of non-retrogradation to portray the divinity of God.<sup>28</sup> Messiaen describes the rhythm thus:

Dhenkî is a Bengali word designating a device for the shelling of rice. This device is generally manoeuvred by two women, the one on the right, the other on the left, the device between them, just as here the laghu is placed between the two gurus. Our tâla maybe also reproduces the movement imparted to the device by the two women during the shelling.... It is without doubt very old, like all the rhythms based on the number five, the number of fingers of the hand. The Dhenkî [...] is the oldest, the simplest, and the most natural of the non-retrogradable rhythms.<sup>29</sup>

In Example 3.5, Messiaen drives towards the climax, incessantly repeating the *Dhenkî*.

EXAMPLE 3.5: *Les corps glorieux*, VI ‘Joie et clarté des corps glorieux’, 14/1/1 ACD5-4:43

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This magical symmetry of all which is non-retrogradable was eventually to become for Messiaen a symbol of eternity: ‘this moment which I live, this thought which crosses my mind, this movement which I accomplish, this time which I beat, before and after lies eternity: it is a non-retrogradable rhythm’.<sup>30</sup>

## HARMONY AS COLOUR

In addition to monody and modality, Messiaen makes a feature of the use of colour chords at structural moments in *Les corps glorieux*, at times with an explosion of *son-couleur* and often using CR and CTI-based progressions within the same passage. In Example 3.6, the tumultuous chords of ‘Combat de la mort et de la vie’ combine the use of CR (both in its minor third progression and *effet de vitrail* progression as cited in *Technique*), revoiced CDA, and an ascending progression of revoiced CTI.

<sup>26</sup> Jean Marie Wu, ‘Mystical Symbols of Faith: Olivier Messiaen’s Charm of Impossibilities’, in *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love*, ed. by S. Bruhn, pp. 85-120 (p. 96).

<sup>27</sup> Messiaen’s words, cited in Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Ian Darbyshire, ‘Messiaen and the Representation of the Theological of Illusion of Time’, in *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love*, ed. by S. Bruhn, pp. 33-51 (p. 38).

<sup>29</sup> *Traité I*, pp. 288-289. *Dhenkî* is also discussed in Healey, *Messiaen’s Musical Techniques*, p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 77.

EXAMPLE 3.6: 'Combat de la mort et de la vie', 2/4/2 (manual parts)

The musical score for 'Combat de la mort et de la vie' (manual parts) is presented in three systems. The first system features vocal parts with markings for 'Technique Ex. 210' and 'Technique Ex. 209', and piano accompaniment with the instruction 'Plus vif, agité et tumultueux' and 'staccato'. The second system shows piano accompaniment with 'CTI (top voices inverted)' and 'whole tone ascent' markings. The third system shows piano accompaniment with 'transitional chords' and 'CDA' markings. The score is annotated with various chord symbols and voicings, including 9<sup>D</sup>, 6<sup>D</sup>, 8<sup>C</sup>, 11<sup>B</sup>, 1<sup>R</sup>, 3<sup>B</sup>, 5<sup>B</sup>, and 7<sup>A</sup>.

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CTI also feature in two further pieces from *Les corps glorieux*: 'L'ange aux parfums' and 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux'. Example 3.7 takes the chords Messiaen cites in *Technique Ex. 205-206*, which conflate CD with CTI appoggiaturas, and extends the sequence downwards with two inversions of CR. The first two chords of Example 3.7 are first heard in *Les corps glorieux* as a halo above the melody of 'L'ange aux parfums' which portrays Revelation 8. 4: 'And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand'. This fire of the altar in Revelation is prefigured in Matthew 13. 41-42, where the 'Parable of the Good Seed' anticipates the polarity of the Apocalypse: 'The son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and which do them iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire'.<sup>31</sup> Thus Messiaen links both pieces with these coloured harmonies.

This quotation and extension of a recognizable harmonic sequence towards the close of 'Joie et clarté' in Example 3.7 also has the simple musical function of the recapitulation of earlier material, binding the cycle together by the deliberate linking of pieces. Yet *why* are these pieces thus linked together? Thematic quotation here is used to deliberate theological effect: 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' takes up the peonic rhythm from the preceding 'Force et agilité des corps glorieux' as if to demonstrate how the power of the Resurrection is turned into the joy of the righteous in the light of the Father, whilst the *jâti* of 'L'ange aux parfums' which ultimately represents the ascent of prayer, becomes transformed as an ascent of corporeal resurrection in 'Force et agilité des corps glorieux'. The reference to colour-chords in 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' goes some way toward the implication of supplicatory prayer of 'L'ange aux parfums' being transformed into the boundless joy of the Resurrection: the ascending prayers, carried upwards by the incense have arrived at their heavenly destination.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 13. 41-42.

EXAMPLE 3.7: 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux', 13/4/2 ACD5-4:37

CTI revoiced  
with added note from the CD  
(see *Technique* Examples 205-206, p. 37)

Inversions of  
CR (mode 3/3)

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line with notes and rests, and a piano accompaniment with chords. The second system shows a piano accompaniment with chords and a staccato marking. Above the score, there are labels for CTI revoicing and inversions of CR (mode 3/3).

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Augustine believed that our future resurrection makes us partakers of Christ's eternal glory as revealed in the Transfiguration:<sup>32</sup> 'Now all of us will be shining as splendidly as the sun at the end of the ages, and that is the splendour that the Lord displayed in himself. His members will shine as the head has shone'.<sup>33</sup> This idea was to find subsequent resonance with Messiaen, both in *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* (movement IV) and *Saint François d'Assise*, Scene VIII 'La mort et la nouvelle vie':

'Ils ressusciteront, glorieux, avec un nom nouveau ~ dans le concert joyeux des étoiles et les acclamations des fils du ciel'.<sup>34</sup>

Autre est l'éclat de la lune, autre est l'éclat du soleil, Alleluia!  
Autres sont les corps terrestres, autres sont les corps célestes, Alleluia!  
Même, une étoile diffère en éclat d'une autre étoile!  
Ainsi en va-t-il de la résurrection des morts, Alleluia! Alleluia!<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> William M. Wright, p. 267.

<sup>33</sup> St. Augustine, Sermon 79A.1, reproduced in *Sermons III: 51–94 on the New Testament*, trans. by Edmund Hill, O.P., (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), p. 347.

<sup>34</sup> I Corinthians 15. 43; Revelation 2. 17; Job 38. 7 (*Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* IV).

<sup>35</sup> *Saint François*, VIII 'La mort et la nouvelle vie'.

*Thou wert seen in the Temple of God,  
A censer of gold in thy hands,  
And the smoke of it fragrant with spices  
Rose up till it came before God.<sup>1</sup>*

## TRACK 6

### SMOKE OF INCENSE AND SAINTLY PRAYERS:<sup>2</sup> ‘L’ANGE AUX PARFUMS’



ILLUSTRATION 3.4: Hans Memling (c. 1430-1494), *St John Altarpiece* (right panel, detail), 1474-1479: oil on wood, 176 x 78.9 cm, *Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges*

Portraying the angel of Revelation 8. 3-4 (Illustration 3.4), ‘L’ange aux parfums’ has been interpreted as the pictorial evocation of something hypnotic and otherworldly, which is achieved by Messiaen in this piece by texture, registration and fragmentation:

For all that the music beguiles and delights, it is also music calculated to confuse, beckoning us as it does into a world peopled by ghostly presences and disconcerting unfamiliarity.<sup>3</sup>

Messiaen’s mosaic-like treatment of the material ultimately underlines the impression that in this piece, all separate ideas are being sounded simultaneously in an eternal heterophony, which for several minutes in our present is permitted to become reality,

<sup>1</sup> Alcuin, trans. by Waddell, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, p. 91. Additionally, Waddell provides a biography of Alcuin on pp. 304-306. See also Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Notes to Poems*, ed. by Harry Vredeveld (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Vol. 86, p. 513, n. 30-6. Here the original text reads as follows:

Tu in templo Dei turibulum aureum visus es habuisse manibus.  
Inde scandens vapor aromate plurimo pervenit ante conspectum Dei.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 8. 4: ‘And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.’

<sup>3</sup> Milsom, ‘Organ Music I’, p. 68.



partitioned into layers and presented successively rather than concurrently, in which individual ideas break the surface for fleeting glimpses:

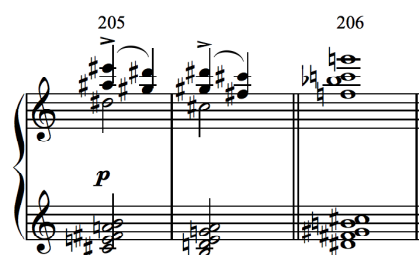
...for the listener the magical atmosphere of this movement, its interweaving sections painting a picture of shadowy figures glimpsed through the exquisite curtain of slowly rising clouds of incense, is what will settle in the memory.<sup>4</sup>

Yet underlying this exotic impressionism is a mighty and progressive compositional technique.

The evocation of the plainchant *Salve Regina* in the monodic opening movement ‘Subtilité des corps glorieux’ here gives way to the more exotic invocation of the Indian *Rāga* in ‘L’ange aux parfums’. The monody which opens the movement is an altered quotation of the Indian *jāti* known as *Shādji*: ‘a theme in which the added value [...] and Hindu melodic colour are united’.<sup>5</sup> In the same way that Messiaen’s quotations of Gregorian chant deliberately distort the original melodic pattern by manipulating the size of the intervals, Messiaen makes a melodic change to the shape of the Indian motif by stretching the semitone A-B $\flat$ , to become a whole tone A-B $\natural$ .

The absence of harmony fixes our ear on the composer’s use of melody, of rhythmic devices such as irregular metre and *valeur ajoutée*, and of course on the unusual timbre of the registrations: *Cornet* tone on all manuals for ‘Subtilité des corps glorieux’ and the pungency of *Clarinette* and *Nazard* alone at the outset of ‘L’ange aux parfums’. Both pieces are also linked on a theological level: in affording us glimpses of the nature of resurrected life, the opening piece of the cycle clearly sets out the descriptive concerns of these pieces as a whole. Firstly, eternity is going to be a spiritual existence, quoting I Corinthians 15. 44, and secondly, pointing us towards Matthew 22. 30, where Jesus himself likens the existence of the resurrected souls to that of the angels of God in Heaven: ‘Et ils seront purs comme les anges de Dieu dans le ciel’.<sup>6</sup> It is this angelic host which is described in the third piece of the cycle, ‘L’ange aux parfums’, again commencing in a hypnotic monody, categorized by Joanny Grosset as mode 23 of the 72 Karnatic modes.<sup>7</sup> The subsequent harmonization of this haunting *jāti* melody transfers it to a brightly registered 4’ pedal, surrounded by a halo of chords on the *Récit* which derives from a revoicing of CDA described in *Technique* (Example 3.8).

EXAMPLE 3.8: *Technique de mon langage musical*, Volume II: *Exemples musicaux*, p. 37



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This halo may be interpreted as two individual CTI (in this case CTI 3B followed by CTI 1B), expanded by the addition of one resonance note from each of the corresponding CD (Example 3.9).

<sup>4</sup> Weir, programme notes to Priory PRCD 923, Vol. 3 (2003), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Technique* I, p. 33, and II, Ex. 113, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> The second part of Messiaen’s superscription for ‘Subtilité des corps glorieux’, which is a quotation of Matthew 22. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Reproduced in Naji Hakim, *The Improvisation Companion* (London: UMP, 2000), pp. 77-78.

EXAMPLE 3.9: 'L'ange aux parfums', 8/3/1 ACD6-2:11

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These 'halo' chords feature again in the much later work *Saint François d'Assise*, where with the harmonic song of the skylark, just as in the example from 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' (Example 3.7), the sequence moves from CTI 3B and 1B, to chords of mode 3<sup>3</sup> (Example 3.10).

EXAMPLE 3.10: *Saint François d'Assise*, Scene 1: La Croix RN66, 6 - Skylark II

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With *Les corps glorieux* Messiaen achieved the separation of the appoggiatura CTI from CD for the first time, allowing the appoggiatura to stand alone as a harmony in its own right. In other words, CDA is successfully replaced by free-standing CTI. Yet this early sequence is not quite complete, for with the C inversion, the expected theoretical G# is replaced by F#, and the final inversion reverts to its CD form (Example 3.11).

EXAMPLE 3.11: 'L'ange aux parfums', 9/2/2 ACD6-2:43

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Some bars later, in Example 3.12, Messiaen dwells on the first inversion CTI on E: CTI 4B. This is the earliest published appearance of this chord in his music and will subsequently be heard at significant moments in many of his later works, bringing with it the colour-associations of the purity of God in white and gold.

EXAMPLE 3.12: 'L'ange aux parfums', 9/4/2 ACD6-3:19

The musical score for 'L'ange aux parfums' is presented in a three-staff system. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics '2A B 4A B 5C' above it. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The score features complex chordal textures and a 9/4/2 time signature. Above the vocal staff, there are labels for chord types: CTI, CD, and D.

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The white and gold of CTI 4B is to be heard at the climax of the eighth movement of *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (Example 3.13), where, in portrayal of the subtitle 'Dieu est simple', Messiaen colours the dove of the psalmist: 'Qui me donnera des ailes, comme à la colombe? Je m'envolerai et me reposerai...'.<sup>8</sup>

EXAMPLE 3.13: *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, VIII 'Dieu est simple', 75/1/2

The musical score for 'Dieu est simple' is presented in a three-staff system. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'blanc et or.' above it. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The score features complex chordal textures and a 75/1/2 time signature. Above the vocal staff, there are labels for chord types: Mode 3/1, 3/3, 3/2, 7D, 9B, 11D, 1B, 4B, and Mode 3/1. Performance markings include 'rall.', 'rall. molto', 'Un peu plus lent', 'mf', and 'f'.

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The expanded form of CD which Messiaen cited in *Technique* (see Example 3.8),<sup>9</sup> became an important structural sonority in four songs of *Chants de terre et de ciel*. 'Bail avec Mi' colours the phrase 'Étoile de silence' with expanded CD based first on C# and then B $\flat$ , in which star and silence are symbols of the heavenly realm.<sup>10</sup>

EXAMPLE 3.14: *Chants de terre et de ciel*, I 'Bail avec Mi', 2/3/2

The musical score for 'Bail avec Mi' is presented in a three-staff system. The top staff is a Soprano vocal line with lyrics 'E toi le de si len - ce' below it. The middle and bottom staves are Piano accompaniment. The score features complex chordal textures and a 2/3/2 time signature. Performance markings include 'Plus lent', 'p expressif', and 'p'.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 55. 6, cited in *Méditations*, p. 74: 'O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest'.

<sup>9</sup> *Technique*, II, Ex. 205, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, p. 58, and p. 60n, citing Revelation 8. 1.

This sequence recurs in ‘Danse du bébé-Pilule’, transposed and extended, setting the weightless shimmer of halos of earth and water (Example 3.15).

EXAMPLE 3.15: *Chants de terre et de ciel*, III ‘Danse du bébé-Pilule’, 9/3/2

This progression is recapitulated with semiquaver figuration: ‘sing to the horizon, the blue of the sky, the stars’ (Example 3.16), finally reaching its climax with a whole-tone descent in a cackle of laughter (16/3/1).

EXAMPLE 3.16: ‘Danse du bébé-Pilule’, 12/3/2

‘Minuit pile et face’, with its ‘nocturnal bells’,<sup>11</sup> separates the C# and B<sub>4</sub>-based harmonies with a dramatic major-ninth descent, which dramatizes the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb (Example 3.17).

EXAMPLE 3.17: *Chants de terre et de ciel*, V ‘Minuit pile et face’, 23/3/2

<sup>11</sup> Olivier Messiaen, ‘Autour d’une parution’, *Le Monde musical* (30<sup>th</sup> April 1939), p. 126, and cited in Hill and Simeone, p. 81.

During the winter of 1940-41 Messiaen's captivity in Stalag VIII caused him to reflect on the rainbow of the angel of Revelation 10, who announces there would be no more time before the completion of God's purposes. He must certainly have had his earlier organ cycle firmly in his mind as he worked on the *Quatuor*, for some of the experimental ideas of *Les corps glorieux* are expanded and developed in the quartet. In *Petite théorie de mon langage rythmique*,<sup>12</sup> Messiaen even demonstrates a table of complex augmentations and diminutions of the same peonic, *Dhenkê* rhythm which had been originally developed in 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux'.

The canonic sections of 'L'ange aux parfums' (ACD6-1:40/4:47), with the layering of a non-retrogradable *ostinato* beneath complex interlocking chord sequences, provide a preparatory study for the yet more complex isorhythmic balancing of *talea* and *color* of 'Liturgie de cristal'. This same idea was to be developed further by Messiaen in 'Sortie' of *Messe de la Pentecôte*, and most impressively in *Livre d'orgue*. The rhythmic *talea* of 'Liturgie de cristal' itself derives from the pedal part of 'Le mystère de la Sainte Trinité', suggesting that Messiaen may have worked on quartet and organ work simultaneously.

Note especially how this rhythmic breakthrough forms the basis for the complex rhythmic experiment in 'Sortie' of the *Messe*: 'besides its curious mixture of timbres, it superposes different rhythms and modes, combining thus polymodality and polyrhythm'.<sup>13</sup> In particular, this passage experiments with the 'superposition of a rhythm upon its retrograde'.<sup>14</sup> In the right hand an *ostinato* of eight chords in mode 2<sup>1</sup> combines *catustâla* and *râgavardhana*, although the final duration of *râgavardhana* has been amended to two thirds of its theoretical length. *Râga* means both colour and love in Sanskrit, whereas *vardhana* means increasing or growing. This right hand part has the rhythmic control of the texture, for its statements are complete, and the last appearance even concludes with a crotchet rest, which is the duration originally subtracted from the *râgavardhana* model. This determines the cut off point for the other *ostinati*.

The left hand presents an *ostinato* of eight chords in mode 3<sup>3</sup> in rhythmic canon *cancrizans* at a distance of one crotchet. In other words, the rhythm of the right hand part is played here in retrograde in the left hand. This crotchet delay may also be viewed as the missing value which has been subtracted by Messiaen from the right hand statements of *râgavardhana*, for in the left hand version this extra crotchet remains an integral part of the left hand rhythm. As a result of this, for the second and third statements of the sequence, the distance between *dux* and *comes* widens each time:

There is, then, a superposition of a rhythm upon its retrograde, the combination taking place several times consecutively and occurring each time with the elements an eighth-note farther apart than the preceding time.<sup>15</sup>

The left hand chord sequence is in mode 3, whilst, as in 'Les eaux de la grâce', the pedal line is in mode 1, the whole-tone scale. 'There is, then, a superposition of three modes of limited transpositions'.<sup>16</sup> The pedal sounds a non-retrogradable rhythm of a sequence of nine durations. One of Messiaen's favourite manifestations of the rhythm *râgavardhana* is in its retrograde form, with the held duration subdivided into three pulses. In this pedal melody, the opening three notes of *râgavardhana*, with the *valeur ajouté* on the middle

<sup>12</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Paris: Durand, 1942), Préface.

<sup>13</sup> *Technique* I, p. 23, which describes this section of 'L'ange aux parfums'.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

duration, are isolated for development, first as crotchets, then as quavers. Concerning the theological use of this non-retrogradable rhythm, Catherine Pickstock writes:

In *Les corps glorieux*, Messiaen uses this device to suggest the raising up of temporal bodies to the 'winged' character of angels at the resurrection. Here and elsewhere he employs this device to represent the substantive relations of the Trinity: the Son in receiving all of the Father 'reverses' him to form one symmetrical and non-reversible event which the Holy Spirit can only affirm and offer. In this way, Messiaen's music hopes to fulfil the prayer 'enfoncez votre image dans la durée de mes jours'.<sup>17</sup>

The greatest technical challenge in 'L'ange aux parfums' lies in finding the correct tempo for the rising incense of the *Presque très vif* sections (ACD6-3:55/5:37). The five versions in Table 3.3 range from Thiry's gentle undulations to Weir's virtuosic swirls.

TABLE 3.3: 'L'ange aux parfums': interpretations of tempo in *Presque très vif*, 10/4/1

Performance	Approximate Tempo
Louis Thiry - Calliope CAL. 9926, Track 3 (3:48-4:46)	♩ = 84
Olivier Messiaen - EMI CZS 7 67400 2, Disc 3, Track 3 (4:56-5:48)	♩ = 88
Jennifer Bate - Regis RRC 1087, Track 7 (4:40-5:33)	♩ = 96
Olivier Latry - Deutsche Grammophon 471480-2, Disc 2, Track 6 (5:03-5:52)	♩ = 100
Gillian Weir - Priory PRCD 923, Track 3 (6:04-6:53)	♩ = 104

'L'ange aux parfums' was fresh in the composer's mind as he commenced the composition his next work, *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, which again refers to the angels of Revelation. In three movements of this work, CTI are systematically developed in portrayal of the text from Revelation 10, and cited by Messiaen in the score:<sup>18</sup>

And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud: with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.<sup>19</sup>

'Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes' takes the *jâti* theme of 'L'ange aux parfums' and 'Force et agilité des corps glorieux' and extends this idea of monody into a whirling dance, where the peonic rhythm is again developed. Here the first bar of 'L'ange aux parfums' is quoted as the *Shâdji* motive in bar six of 'Danse de la fureur', whilst the contours and rhythm of the seventh bar of 'L'ange aux parfums' are quoted by Messiaen in the fifth bar of 'Danse' (Example 3.18).<sup>20</sup>

EXAMPLE 3.18: Thematic links between *Les corps glorieux* and *Quatuor*

'L'ange aux parfums', bars 1, 2 and 7:



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'Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes', bars 5 and 6:



<sup>17</sup> Pickstock, p. 185.

<sup>18</sup> *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, Préface.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 10. 1.

<sup>20</sup> This is also observed in Anthony Pople, *Messiaen, Quatuor Pour la Fin du Temps* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 67.

The vivid verse from Revelation which is used to preface ‘L’ange aux parfums’ is to be found in the particularly beautiful and complex offertory chant *Stetit angelus* (Example 3.19),<sup>21</sup> which sets Revelation 8. 3-4. Whilst in the Tridentine liturgy this chant is the Offertory of Michaelmas, in the post Vatican II Missal it is the Offertory of the Feast of Dedication, and amongst the many themes and interpretations of the intentions of this feast, we are constantly reminded of the Church not as edifice, but as a community united by the Eucharist. And it is to this Feast of Dedication that we now turn.

EXAMPLE 3.19: Gregorian Offertory *Stetit angelus*

Offert. 1.

**S** Té- tit \* Ange- lus juxta á-  
ram tém- pli, há- bens thu-ríbu- lum áu-  
re- um in mánu sú- a : et dá- ta sunt é- i  
incénsa múl- ta : et ascén-  
dit fú- mus a- ró- ma- tum in conspéctu Dé- i,  
alle- lú- ia.

<sup>21</sup> *Liber Usualis* (Tournai: Desclée, 1961), pp. 1656-1657.

*The believers have become the true temple of God*<sup>1</sup>

## PART FOUR, CASE STUDIES: LIVING STONES AND SOUNDING TEMPLES

### INTRODUCTION

#### ADORABO AD TEMPLUM SANCTUM TUUM: MESSIAEN'S VIEW OF THE 'TRUE' TEMPLE

The 1960s saw Messiaen creating multiple references to temples in sound. In *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, inspired by the use of colour-chords and *Grive musicienne* from *Chronochromie*, Messiaen first used the plainchant *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum*, which was later to be heard in *Couleurs de la cité céleste*.<sup>2</sup> Messiaen was then to return to this same chant in *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, and *Livre du Saint Sacrement*:

I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name [for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything] (Psalm 138. 2).

Gillock interprets this as appropriate for Eastertide,<sup>3</sup> as here the Gradual *Locus iste* is replaced by the Alleluia *Adorabo*,<sup>4</sup> but other sources confirm that *Adorabo ad templum* is used at any time of the year outside Lent.<sup>5</sup> The *Liber Usualis* clarifies the practice: following *Septuagesima* and in Lent, the Alleluia *Adorabo* is replaced by the tract, whilst during Paschal time, *Adorabo* replaces the Gradual *Locus iste* and the further Alleluia *Bene fundata est* is sung prior to the Gospel.<sup>6</sup> Between 1960 and 1984 Messiaen returned to the plainchant *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum* no fewer than four times, and on each occasion presents us with a different interpretation of the Alleluia for the Feast of Dedication. Firstly, in the *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, a competition piece written for the Paris Conservatoire in December 1960, this chant is placed alongside two extended virtuoso sections making use of the music of the song thrush. Secondly, inspired by his original use of this beautiful melody, Messiaen set about incorporating it in a more readily tangible way into *Couleurs de la cité céleste*. Thirdly, this chant sings out unadorned and unaltered, *fortissimo* at the start of 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ', whilst finally the melody also reappears in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, interacting with two further plainchant themes to form a theological statement.

For Messiaen, this chant brings multiple meanings to the musical and theological argument, its melodic beauty wedded to a complex spiritual resonance: this is the Alleluia for the Dedication of a Church (Example 4.1),<sup>7</sup> a festival recalling the original Feast of

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<sup>1</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Messiaen writes lyrically about the melody of this *Alleluia*, which is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful of all, and describes it in detail, for example, in *Traité IV*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Gillock, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> *The Divine Office for the Use of the Laity*, Vol. 2, ed. by the Reverend B. Rayment, (Manchester: T. Haydock, 1806), p. lxxvii.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Craig Wright, *Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris, 500-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> *Liber Usualis*, p. 1252.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1251-1252. This Alleluia was first intended for the Purification, with its 'adoration and praise' (programme notes for *Solesmes 1010-2010 - Le Millénaire*, Chants de la Dédicace d'une église, Fr. Yves-Marie Lelièvre – SAB02, p. 8).



Dedication: Hanukkah, the festival of lights, celebrating the purification and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem following the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians. In John 10. 22-24, as Jesus was in the temple during this feast he was asked: ‘If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly’. The prophecy in Haggai 2. 9, ‘The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former’, was fulfilled, for the ‘Light of the World’ had come into the temple at the Festival of Lights, filling it with glory. In John 2. 19, Jesus says: ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’. The use of *Adorabo* once more in ‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’ from *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, and in combination with the *Quoniam tu solus sanctus* of the *Gloria* from the mass, amplifies this aspect. With the use of *Adorabo* in *Livre du Saint Sacrement* we realize that in I Peter 2. 5, the temple means not just edifice but spiritual community, ‘like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house’. This building is simply a tangible sign of grace within: we are individually living temples, ‘the locus of God’s presence’,<sup>8</sup> the meeting place of the soul with the divine. Messiaen refers to the ‘living stones of the spiritual edifice’ in his description of the earlier organ work *Apparition de l’Église éternelle*.<sup>9</sup>

EXAMPLE 4.1: Gregorian Alleluia *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum*

7. **A** L-le- lú- ia. \* ij. ¶. Ad-  
o-rá- bo ad témplum sán- ctum tú-  
um : et confité-  
bor \* nómini tú- o.

In *Sept haïkai*, when the chorale of ‘Miyajima et le torii dans la mer’ is harmonized by means of CTI,<sup>10</sup> there is evidence that ‘the Shinto temple of Miyajima was pivotal in pointing Messiaen towards the celestial city of Jerusalem’.<sup>11</sup> Thus a Christian aspect to *Sept haïkai* exists: viewing through the torii in reverse, outwards towards the water and sky, reveals to Messiaen the ‘true temple’.<sup>12</sup> Describing the view from the torii, Messiaen also notes the overwhelming presence of two important colours – significant both in the artistry of medieval stained glass, and in the colour symbolism of Messiaen’s own music:

[The torii] is red, a very characteristic, vermillion red. And it opens onto the blue sea and the blue sky, onto an infinite space, the invisible - that is to say, *onto the true temple*. The Shinto temple is only the outward manifestation of another dimension, of the inward, immense, heavenly sanctuary, hidden from view, with the colours of the ineffable. It is to this second temple that the torii should lead us, if we know how to hear the language of the colours of the beyond...<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p. 281, which refers to Jesus as ‘the supreme “Bethel”’.

<sup>9</sup> Gillock, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Cheong, ‘Plainchants as coloured time’, pp. 34-35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: Messiaen writes this in the preface to *Sept haïkai*, and in *Traité V*/2, p. 506.

<sup>13</sup> *Traité VII*, p. 22 (my italics):

Accompanying the chorale, TC6 in standard format and played *vibrato*, are accompanied by piano and bells playing the complement of each chord in a 'layer of percussive tetrachords in pursuit of his cherished notion of 12-tone complementation'.<sup>14</sup> Messiaen even marks the colours in the score.<sup>15</sup> This TC progression with complementary chords 'resonates with Christian and not just Shinto symbolism',<sup>16</sup> not least as they 'tie in well with the Christian imagery of a rainbow':<sup>17</sup> the rainbow around the throne of Revelation 4:3, and the rainbow around the angel's head of Revelation 10:1.<sup>18</sup>

In *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, by combining the temple of the *Adorabo* chant with the New Jerusalem of the Alleluia *Magnus Dominus*, Messiaen not only looks forward to *La Transfiguration*, but makes clear that this temple of Psalm 138 is also the eternal temple of the celestial city. In Example 4.2, beneath the *ff* percussive attack of the Alleluia chant *Magnus Dominus* in the piano, the *Adorabo* chant rings out in clarinets, D trumpet and horns (without the earlier transposition of *Verset* into mode 3<sup>1</sup>), all harmonized by the chords of CTI 4, here commencing on inversion D to yield a descending whole-tone scale in the top voice (1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet) and grounding the harmony firmly in the red of E major. Characteristically, with the use of CTI there is a powerful visual effect: 'L'ensemble doit donner l'impression des couleurs foisonnantes d'un vitrail ensoleillé'.<sup>19</sup>

EXAMPLE 4.2: *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, 50/1/1 RN69 (excluding piano and percussion)

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.2. At the top, it is labeled 'CTI 4' with a diagram showing four chords: D, A, B, and C. Below this, there are two staves for piano accompaniment. The main score consists of four staves: Clarinets, D Trumpet, Horns, and Brass. The tempo is marked 'Un peu vif (♩=120)'. The Clarinets, D Trumpet, and Horns parts are marked with a forte 'f' dynamic. The Brass part is marked with a pianissimo 'pp' dynamic. The score shows a descending whole-tone scale in the top voice of the D Trumpet and a grounding harmony in the red of E major.

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Il est rouge, un rouge vermillon, très caractéristique. Et il ouvre sur la mer bleue, sur le ciel bleu, sur un espace infini, sur l'invisible – c'est-à-dire sur le vrai temple. Le temple Shintô n'est que la manifestation extérieure d'une autre dimension, du sanctuaire céleste, intérieur, immense, caché aux regards, avec les couleurs de l'ineffable. C'est vers ce second temple que le torii doit nous conduire, si nous savons entendre le langage des couleurs de l'au-delà...

In 'Buddhist Temple, Shinto Shrine', p. 259, Cheong cites this passage, which is also to be found in *Traité V/2*, pp. 506-7.

<sup>14</sup> Cheong, 'Buddhist Temple, Shinto Shrine', p. 251.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Couleurs de la cité céleste* (Paris: 1966/1994), p. 50: 'Everything should give the impression of the abundant colours of an illuminated stained glass window'.

The successful juxtaposition of Gregorian chant and birdsong in *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, knit together by the use of the non-modal coloured chords in a highly coloured framework, was to provide Messiaen with a versatile formula for his subsequent work. In *Couleurs*, exotic birdsong, particularly that embedded within the piano cadenzas, is also used to inject a multicoloured fizz into the texture, recalling the piano writing of *Catalogue* and the song thrush harmonies of *Verset*. Acting as a structural upbeat to moments of chant or *son-couleur* depicting the texts of Revelation, the colour-chords function by adding resonance to two Venezuelan birdsongs in *Couleurs*. The song of the *Troglodyte barré* uses both TC and 1<sup>st</sup> CCR in Example 4.3.

EXAMPLE 4.3: *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, 2/1/2 RN3 (piano)

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The song of the *Moqueur des Tropiques* contains both a complete and ordered CTI sequence (Example 4.4),<sup>20</sup> and the primary transposition of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR, recalling 'Les mains de l'abîme' in its omission of the notes of contracted resonance from chord B (see Example 5.23), and repeats Messiaen's familiar 'harmonic litany' on G-F, concealed here beneath the extra resonance of an added B $\sharp$  in the repeated characteristic tritone fall of the bird's call (Example 4.5).

EXAMPLE 4.4: *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, 66/1/3 - RN86+2 (piano)

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<sup>20</sup> Messiaen uses the name *Moqueur des Tropiques* in *Traité VII*, p. 219, but in the score writes *Moqueur du Venezuela* (*Couleurs*, p. 66, RN86).

EXAMPLE 4.5: *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, 66/2/3 (piano)

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The symbolism of these *objets trouvés* in *Couleurs* relates directly to the expressions of the colours of the New Jerusalem:

Alleluias de plain-chant, rythmes hindous et grecs, permutations de durées, chants d'oiseaux de différents pays: tous ces matériaux accumulés sont mis au service de la couleur et des combinaisons de sons...<sup>21</sup>

These dazzling colours are themselves symbols of the light of the divine glory, for reflecting this, in Messiaen's temples the birds sing with unfettered joy:

Les sons-couleurs sont à leur tour symbole de la 'Cité céleste' et de 'Celui' qui l'habite [...] dans une lumière sans lumière [...] Ce que l'Apocalypse, plus terrifiante encore dans son humilité que dans ses visions de gloire, désigne seulement par un éblouissement de couleurs...<sup>22</sup>

The varied moods of Messiaen's differing treatments of *Adorabo* find their roots in such music as the rhythmically and harmonically shifting interpretations of the chant *Haec dies* in Widor's *Symphonie-Romane*, performed, for example, on the Cavallé-Coll at Sainte-Sulpice by Daniel Roth.<sup>23</sup> Roth contrasts the rhythmic freedom of the unadorned chant at the outset with the more metrical sections in which it finds a dense harmonization. The use of *Adorabo* in the recording of *Couleurs de la cité céleste* by Pierre Boulez and ensemble intercontemporain (9:19) stresses the stratification of the complex texture, with bright, almost oriental percussion, pitted against lush CII and the quasi-organum of horns and D trumpet with added resonance from clarinets.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Traité* VII, p. 218. 'Plainchant alleluias, Hindu and Greek rhythms, permutations of durations, birdsong from different countries: all this accumulated material serves the colour and combinations of sounds...'

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*:

'The sound-colours are in turn a symbol of the Heavenly City and of Him who dwells there [...] in a light without light [...] Which the Apocalypse, more terrifying in its humility than in its visions of glory, shows only by a dazzlement of colours...'

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Roth, 'Charles-Marie Widor, *Symphonie Nr. 10, Romane* – Motette CD 11141, Tracks 6-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, Pierre Boulez, ensemble intercontemporain - Montaigne MO 782131, Track 3.

In *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, Olivier Latry's choice of tempo for the opening melody shows deep awareness of the Solesmes style of performance,<sup>25</sup> whilst Jennifer Bate's slow, nasal *Cromborne* at Beauvais demonstrates a distinctly measured interpretation of the score's *Modéré*.<sup>26</sup> Latry captures the virtuosity of the song thrush in *Verset* (1:43) and (5:20),<sup>27</sup> which recalls the complexity of the woodwind writing of the song thrush in Boulez' recording of *Chronochromie* ('Antistrophe' I and II), with equal power and purpose.<sup>28</sup>

Messiaen's pulse at the opening of 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' is ♩ = 160 (approx.),<sup>29</sup> which is matched almost exactly by Latry at the start of *Verset*. 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' is marked *Presque vif* and **ff**, whilst *Verset* is marked *Modéré* and only **f**, but the difference in the weight of registration makes the dynamic variance much more significant. Why is the tempo virtually identical in these recordings? Here we turn also to vocal renditions of the same chant such as those by Nova Schola Gregoriana,<sup>30</sup> or Schola Cantorum Riga.<sup>31</sup> Latry thus follows Messiaen's example in the rendering of this chant on the organ *as if it were being sung*. Gillian Weir also adopts a similar tempo for her recording of 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ'.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, whilst Messiaen's dynamic, notation, use of semiquavers/quavers, rhythm and tempo directions for each of his four interpretations of *Adorabo* differ widely, the results in performance come very close to the actual vocal renditions as practised at Solesmes. The most recent recording of this chant from Solesmes (2009) has a flowing sense of purpose and structure, with that certain throaty and nasal Gallic method of voice production which Messiaen attempted to capture in his registrations of 'L'ange aux parfums', *neumes plainchantesque* of 'Consécration' in *Messe de la Pentecôte*, and *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Olivier Latry - (6 cds) Deutsche Grammophon 471 480-2, Disc 4, Track 2. An example of the general tempo of delivery in the Solesmes style of performance may be heard on *Gregorian Sampler*, Dom Jean Claire – Solesmes S.829. The early Solesmes recording of *Adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum* was released on *Lumière de Noël*, A L'Écoute des Moines de Solesmes, Dom Joseph Gajard – Musidisc, Disc 2, Track 11. The most concise introduction to the Solesmes philosophy regarding the vocal performance of Gregorian chant is to be found in Dom Joseph Gajard, *The Solesmes Method: Its Fundamental Principles and Practical Rules of Interpretation*, trans. by R. Cecile Gabain (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1960).

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Bate - (2 cds) Regis RRC 2052, Disc 1, Track 2. The main work on this recording is the complete *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, recorded in the presence of Messiaen at La Trinité, but *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace* recorded on the Gonzales at Beauvais is included as a filler.

<sup>27</sup> Olivier Latry - DG 471 480-2, Disc 4, Track 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Chronochromie*, Pierre Boulez, The Cleveland Orchestra - DG 445 872-2, Tracks 3 and 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* - Erato 4509-92007-2, Disc 1, Track 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Adorate Deum*, Alberto Turco, Nova Schola Gregoriana - Naxos 8.550711, Track 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Medieval Chants and Improvisations*, Guntars Pranis, Schola Cantorum Riga – Centaur CRC 2456, Track 5.

<sup>32</sup> Gillian Weir - Priory PRCD 922, Track 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Solesmes 1010-2010 - Le Millénaire*, Track 7.

At once a voice arose among  
 The bleak twigs overhead  
 In a full-hearted evensong  
 Of joy illimited;  
 An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,  
 In blast-beruffled plume,  
 Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
 Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
 Of such ecstatic sound  
 Was written on terrestrial things  
 Afar or nigh around,  
 That I could think there trembled through  
 His happy good-night air  
 Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
 And I was unaware.<sup>1</sup>

## TRACK 7

### ‘JOY ILLIMITED’: PLAINSONG AND SONG THRUSH IN *VERSET POUR LA FÊTE DE LA DÉDICACE*

Composed in December, 1960 for the annual organ *concours*, *Verset* was first performed on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1961 at the Paris Conservatoire: *premiers prix* were awarded unanimously to Raffi Ourgandjian and Christian Manen; Yves Devernay and Francine Guiberteau also took *premiers prix*,<sup>2</sup> when at least ten students competed.<sup>3</sup> Messiaen makes use of two strands of musical material: the Gregorian Alleluia *Adorabo*, and the calls of the song thrush, where ‘both are symbols of joy’.<sup>4</sup> A convincing performance of *Verset* must show sensitivity in balancing Messiaen’s tempo markings against the vocal tempo of the plainchant *Adorabo*, the tempo of *Grive musicienne* solos in *Chronochromie* and *Catalogue*, and the mood relating to other moments in *Catalogue* to which the piece makes oblique references. Awareness, also, of Messiaen’s subsequent works which also make use of the Alleluia *Adorabo* or the music of the song thrush, will only strengthen the player’s interpretative vision. The unusually high compass of the Conservatoire organ is exploited in the manual writing, which, although characteristically rigorous, must be projected as if improvisatory.

The importance of *Verset* is often overlooked, dismissed as a ‘short organ piece’,<sup>5</sup> or ‘organ voluntary’.<sup>6</sup> Yet Griffiths perceives *Verset* as a catalyst to Messiaen’s imagination of the numinous: ‘Possibly the experience of writing this work played some part in reopening the composer to a direct invocation of the sacred’.<sup>7</sup> Bringing the realistic depiction of birdsong from *Catalogue* and *Chronochromie* (especially the mighty harmonies of the song thrush) to a reawakening of religious music, sets Messiaen’s new agenda for

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Darkling Thrush* (1900).

<sup>2</sup> Vincent Benitez, *Olivier Messiaen: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 289-290.

<sup>3</sup> See Simeone, *A biographical catalogue*, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Messiaen’s comment in *La Recherche Artistique présente hommage à Olivier Messiaen*, ed. by Claude Samuel, (Paris: La Recherche Artistique, November – December, 1978), and cited in Gillock, p. 193.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Nichols, *Messiaen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 201.

the 1960s. The spiritual colouring of *Voix céleste* returns to Messiaen's palette, ushering in a renewed interest in Gregorian chant as thematic material. Birdsong and Gregorian chant become fused towards the close of the piece, as the penultimate bar of the birdsong recalls the repercussive *strophicus* of the chant. This melding of birdsong and plainchant also becomes one of the most important structural ingredients in *Couleurs de la cité céleste*. Messiaen also brings ideas from *Messe de la Pentecôte*, where the registration of *neumes plainchantesque* of 'Consécration' makes use of *Clarinette* and *Nazard* in pungently coloured monody in the tenor register, evoking the similar registration in 'L'ange aux parfums' and here at the opening of *Verset*. 'Consécration' also anticipates *Verset* with the modal distortion of Gregorian chant: in the case of 'Consécration', the Alleluia of Pentecost generally retains the shape of the neumes, whilst stretching the intervals.<sup>8</sup>

The chant is treated in four distinct ways (Example 4.6):<sup>9</sup> a mode 3<sup>1</sup> monody of neumes 'in the low register – with a feeling of reverence' (ACD7-0:08); 'enrobed with [...] shimmering chords' (ACD7-0:49); in a 'vocalise of ecstasy and consolation' (ACD7-1:22); in 'expressive development' in mode 3, which 'insists and pleads' (ACD7-4:53).<sup>10</sup> As Gillock observes, the entire chant is paraphrased, although we hear the phrases of *Adorabo* in a rearranged order (following the practice of Tournemire).<sup>11</sup> There are musical reasons for this, such as the development of the *strophicus* and the formal balance,<sup>12</sup> yet the theological concerns are more powerful: the joy of 'Alleluia' and song thrush contrasts with the colour-chord harmonization of 'ad templum sanctum tuum' and 'nomine tuo', whilst the 'iridescent' sections on *Bourdons*, the 'source of comfort',<sup>13</sup> Messiaen reserves for the verbs: 'adorabo', and 'confitebor'. Thus the hushed and ecstatic conclusion leaves us with this statement of faith: 'I will confess' (ACD7-8:15).

EXAMPLE 4.6: Plainchant paraphrase of Alleluia *Adorabo* in *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*

<sup>8</sup> See *Traité IV*, pp. 108-109, in which Messiaen compares the Gregorian notation of the Alleluia of Pentecost with the melody of 'Consécration' in *Messe de la Pentecôte*.

<sup>9</sup> Following the Solesmes 'method', Messiaen's 'modern notation' transcription in *Traité IV*, p. 20, demonstrates that there is no repetition, but rather a doubling in note value, in the case of *pressus* with added *punctum*, and an elongation in value for dotted notes.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel, *La Recherche Artistique présente hommage à Olivier Messiaen*, cited in Gillock, p. 193.

<sup>11</sup> Gillock, pp. 194, 198.

<sup>12</sup> See *Traité IV*, p. 11 for Messiaen's description of the *Distropha* and *Tristropha* repercussions in chant.

<sup>13</sup> Gillock, pp. 194-195.

Thus in the opening monody, the Alleluia and *jubilus* is stated in mode 3, whilst (forming the climax of the piece) the incessant development of the *strophicus* is heard in *la supplication* (7/3/1), predominantly by turning the harmony through successive transpositions of mode 3. Similar to *la supplication*, in ‘La Transsubstantiation’ of *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, the chant motive is isolated and developed, this time with colour-chords, but recalling the similar texture and registration in *Verset* at ACD7-4:53 (Example 4.7).

EXAMPLE 4.7: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘la Transsubstantiation’, 89/3/1, 90/3/1 & 91/1/1

The image displays three systems of musical notation for 'la Transsubstantiation'. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff).  
 - The first system (89/3/1) features a vocal line with notes and rests, and a piano accompaniment with dense chordal textures. Labels above the vocal line include 'CTI 10', '1st CCR 1', '2nd CCR', and '1st CCR 1'.  
 - The second system (90/3/1) continues the vocal and piano parts. Labels include 'CTI', '8A', 'B', '5A', 'B', '1A', 'CDA', 'B', and 'C'. The piano part has a dynamic marking of 'più f'.  
 - The third system (90/5/1 and 91/1/1) shows further development. Labels include '2nd CCR', '3A', 'B', '11A', 'B', '7A', 'B', '91/1/1', 'CTI', '2B', 'C', '10B', 'TC 10', 'A', 'C', and '1st CCR 9'. The piano part has dynamic markings of 'più f' and 'f'.

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At the close of the opening monody of *Verset* (ACD7-0:39), the final note of the melody is decorated with the upper resonance of fluty undulation (Example 4.8). Whilst this closing chord may be heard as a resonance-based harmonization of the low C (in the manner of the treatment of mode 3<sup>1</sup> resonance in ‘Sortie’ from *Messe de la Pentecôte*, ACD11-0:14), the style here has further connotations in Messiaen’s earlier Music: in ‘Cloches d’angoisse et larmes d’adieu’, a flurry of exquisite chords demonstrates the composer’s perception of the upper partials present in the granite-like lower chords (Example 4.9); in ‘Neumes rythmiques’, the vibrations dissipating from a left-hand brassy attack are spelt out in the treble (Example 4.10); similar figuration to that of *Verset* imitates the cry of the curlew in ‘Le courlis cendré’ (Example 4.11).



EXAMPLE 4.8: *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace*, 2/4/1 ACD7-0:39

Musical score for Example 4.8, 'Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace'. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three staves. The top staff is the treble clef, the middle is the right-hand piano part, and the bottom is the bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) for the right hand and 'p' (piano) for the left hand. The piece features a melodic line in the right hand with a series of eighth notes and a bass line with a few notes.

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EXAMPLE 4.9: *Préludes*, VI 'Cloches d'angoisse et larmes d'adieu', 29/2/2

Musical score for Example 4.9, 'Préludes, VI 'Cloches d'angoisse et larmes d'adieu''. The score is in 9/8 time and consists of three staves. The tempo is marked 'Très lent' (Very slow). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piece features a complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand, marked 'ppp' (pianississimo), and a bass line marked 'f' (forte). The score includes a '8va' marking indicating an octave shift.

EXAMPLE 4.10: *Quatre études de rythme*, III 'Neumes rythmiques', 9/1/1, *Traité III*, p. 162

Musical score for Example 4.10, 'Quatre études de rythme, III 'Neumes rythmiques''. The score is in 9/16 time and consists of two staves. The tempo is marked 'Vif' (Allegretto). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piece features a rhythmic pattern in the right hand, marked 'ppp' (pianississimo), and a bass line marked 'mf (cuivré)' (mezzo-forte, brass-like). The score includes a '8va' marking indicating an octave shift.

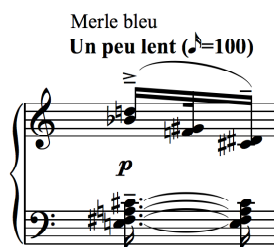
EXAMPLE 4.11: *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, Book 7, XIII 'Le courlis cendré', 1/1/1

Musical score for Example 4.11, 'Catalogue d'oiseaux, Book 7, XIII 'Le courlis cendré''. The score is in 1/1 time and consists of three staves. The tempo is marked 'Modéré (♩=120)' (Moderato). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piece features a melodic line in the right hand, marked 'mf (fluté, triste)' (mezzo-forte, flute-like, sad), and a bass line marked 'p' (piano). The score includes a '8va' marking indicating an octave shift and a '\*' symbol at the end of the piece.

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The joy of a plainsong alleluia in *Verset* receives an added dimension: that of colour. In *Catalogue*, the joy of creation finds its expression in music: ‘joie de la mer bleue’,<sup>14</sup> where this joy is manifested in blue-coloured harmony. The closing *extatique* section of *Verset* ACD7-8:15 (11/5/1) draws upon the tonality of a second inversion A major with added sixth beneath higher resonance, such as is heard in Example 4.12 from ‘Le traquet rieur’.

EXAMPLE 4.12: *Catalogue d’oiseaux*, Book 7, XII ‘Le traquet rieur’, 3/4/1



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*Verset* thus ends with a second inversion A major with added sixth, which recalls the technique in ‘Le merle de roche’, placing this tetrad as a point of cadential repose within CTI sequences (Example 4.13).

EXAMPLE 4.13: *Catalogue d’oiseaux*, Book 6, X ‘Le merle de roche’, 10/3/1

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*Comme une consolation*, ACD7-1:22 (3/3/1) also draws upon ideas from ‘Le traquet rieur’ (such as Example 4.14), in which the right hand spices the upper voices of chords with the accidentals and decoration of birdsong, which in *Verset* becomes Gregorian chant.

Example 4.15 shows the first instance in the organ music of TC, CTI and CCR being integrated within the same passage: Messiaen’s ‘shimmering chords’. Here the transposition level is based upon a prevailing tonal centre of A major (for example, in the bass of TC 12C), bringing specific colour associations to the manual chords: ‘the key which appears most frequently in my music is A major and it’s blue.’<sup>15</sup> Beneath this, the pedals sing a modally inflected version of the chant phrase ‘ad templum sanctum tuum’. Thus the temple is both illuminated and coloured by the choice of harmony. Opposing the opening phrases of the chant in mode 3<sup>1</sup>, TC 12 is predominantly blue, including

<sup>14</sup> Kars, ‘Olivier Messiaen – ein Musiker der Freude’, p. 368, in which Kars cites Messiaen’s description in the score of ‘Le traquet rieur’.

<sup>15</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 118.

EXAMPLE 4.14: CTI harmonies in the birdsong of 'Le traquet rieur', 1/2/2

The score for 'Le traquet rieur' is divided into two sections. The first section, 'Modéré (♩=168)', features a piano accompaniment with chords labeled 1<sup>A</sup> 4 C, 6 D, 1<sup>D</sup>, 4 D, 1<sup>B</sup>, and 1<sup>A</sup>. The piano part includes dynamic markings like *f*, *ff*, and *ff*, and performance instructions such as '(éclatant)' and 'Ped'. The second section, 'Bien modéré (♩=132)', has chords labeled 4 D, 4<sup>A</sup>, 4 B, 4 C, and 1<sup>A</sup>. It includes dynamic markings like *ff*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, and performance instructions like '(éclatant)' and '(Ped. sempre)'. The piano part in the second section features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes.

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bleu de Chartres, whilst CTI 9 moves from orange and pale blue to emerald green. CTI 9D (tantalizingly missing from this progression) would have provided the most obvious riot of blues, although 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8 moves from pink and mauve to blue and violet. The A major triad with added second in the bass of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8A makes up for the absence of the A major triad Messiaen avoids in CTI 9D: Messiaen sounds for us the blue of heaven.

EXAMPLE 4.15: Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace, 2/5/1 ACD7-0:49

The score for 'Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace' is in 2/5/1 time and marked 'legato p' and 'Lent, berceur (Alleluia de la Dédicace)'. The piano accompaniment features chords labeled TC, 12<sup>A</sup>, B, C<sup>1</sup>, CTI, 9<sup>A</sup>, B, C<sup>1</sup>, and TC. The piano part includes dynamic markings like *f* and *p*, and performance instructions like 'legato p' and 'R'. The score also includes a section with chords labeled 1<sup>st</sup> CCR, 8 A, and B. The piano part in this section features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes.

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This transition from the predominant orange of mode 3<sup>1</sup> of the opening monody,<sup>16</sup> to the subsequent blue of the harmony is inherent in Messiaen's use of CTI 9. In *Catalogue* - the final appearance of the *Merle de roche* - a complete and ordered CTI sequence on A creates a paean to Messiaen's idealized Rock Thrush, colouring both its song and its plumage with complementary orange and blue (Example 4.16: note the expansion of the final chord to include the three extra notes of the composer's favoured F# major).

EXAMPLE 4.16: 'Le merle de roche', 19/3/1

•Merle de roche idéalisé. Glorification de l'orangé - bleu de son chant et de son plumage.

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The spiritual use of the blues of TC 12 may be detected in other works. Firstly, to confirm the colouration we turn to *Saint François*. In 'Le prêche aux oiseaux' (Example 4.17),<sup>17</sup> François sings 'la où la mer change du vert au bleu', initiating a predominantly A major-based progression from TC, through CTI to CTC, where the dominant colour association of each chord-type indicated in the chord tables of *Traité* is blue.<sup>18</sup>

EXAMPLE 4.17: *Saint François*, 'Le prêche aux oiseaux' R54: 16-18 (140/1/3)

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Secondly, in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, the use of blocks of TC in groups falling by step in 'Acte de Foi' (Example 4.18), contrasts with the other harmonic areas, whilst the arrival of the blues of TC 12 forms the goal of the sequential progressions and matches the blue of CTC 2 used elsewhere in the piece (and throughout *Livre* as a whole).

<sup>16</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, pp. 42-43: mode 3<sup>1</sup> is 'orange with red and green pigments, [...] specks of gold, [...] milky white with iridescent, opaline reflections'.

<sup>17</sup> This passage is analyzed harmonically by Vincent Benitez, although he deals only with the concluding CTC. See Vincent Benitez, 'Aspects of Harmony in Messiaen's Later Music: An Examination of the Chords of Transposed Inversions on the Same Bass Note', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 23:2 (2004), 187-226 (Ex. 19, p. 224).

<sup>18</sup> See *Traité* VII, pp. 142-190.

EXAMPLE 4.18: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, TC in ‘Acte de Foi’, 21/3/1, 22/5/1 & 24/3/1

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Messiaen renders the music of the song thrush (ACD7-1:42/5:42) as *transports de joie*: outpourings of joy. In Charente, he noted that ‘the most striking thing in its song is the instant repetition of motives, a minimum of twice, a maximum of five times, usually three times, which gives it a magical, incantational aspect’.<sup>19</sup> This style, ‘à la manière d’une incantation’,<sup>20</sup> sharpens the purpose of the music, heralding and underscoring its spiritual aspect. Orchestrated in *Chronochromie* to capture the bird’s extraordinary timbre, Messiaen imbues the monodic song with a harmonic dimension: ‘each note is provided with a different chord and different colours, so there is a multitude of chords’.<sup>21</sup> This amplifies the aspect of joy: ‘the colored complexes move and change very quickly, adding again to the bird’s joy’.<sup>22</sup>

The song thrush in *Verset* makes use of astonishing registration and startling harmony:

The strange timbral jubilation is rendered by 4<sup>3</sup> flute and *Tierce* alone, by sub- and super-octave couplers, and by the fact that both hands are never doubled in the same way or with the same intervals: the artificial and symmetrical timbral harmonics are constantly opposed to the more natural harmonics, which always change in the manual writing.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Traité* III, p. 91:

Le plus frappant dans son chant, c’est la répétition instantanée des motifs, de 2 fois minimum à 5 fois maximum – le plus souvent 3 fois, ce qui lui donne un aspect magique, incantatoire.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81: ‘in the manner of an incantation’.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80: ‘Chaque note est pourvue d’un accord différent, de coloration différente. Il y a donc une multitude d’accords’.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92: Les complexes colorés se meuvent et changent très rapidement, ajoutant encore à la joie de l’oiseau.

<sup>23</sup> Messiaen, programme notes on *Verset* for the Schwann recording:

Messiaen's choice of song thrush is able to render the bird's sophisticated musical gestures as a form of alleluiatic praise, the embodiment of joy:

The song thrush is one of the most brilliant birds, and although each individual thrush has its own invention, the song is still quite recognizable. It's an incantatory sort of song with strophes generally repeated three times. But! These strophes are never identical, which is to say, the bird invents a strophe, repeats it three times, then invents another, also repeated three times, and the next day it'll invent another dozen of them, all repeated thrice, but after the three repetitions, it's over; the thrush invents a new strophe, repeated in its turn. Moreover, within these strophes, the rhythms are excessively pronounced and varied, and they accompany melodies of timbres.<sup>24</sup>

Prior to composing *Verset*, Messiaen had already made considerable use of the song thrush. Its first acknowledged appearance is in 'Chants d'oiseaux' of *Livre d'orgue*, and it also makes a significant appearance in *Reveil des Oiseaux*.<sup>25</sup> The monodic song thrush of 'Chants d'oiseaux' was notated in the forest of Saint Germain en Laye,<sup>26</sup> and the piercing combination of *Plein jeu* and *Clairon* helps to create the character of *autoritaire* (Example 4.19). Messiaen writes:

The song thrush sings from the first days of March and pours out solos, admirable by their magical and incantational character, by the invention, the unexpectedness of their rhythms and of their melodic turn, by the clear, luminous sumptuousness of *timbre* - like this until the end of June.<sup>27</sup>

EXAMPLE 4.19: *Livre d'orgue*, 'Chants d'oiseaux', 13/4/4



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In *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, the texture and style of the *Grive musicienne* sections of 'Le loriod' are direct predecessors of the two song thrush solos in *Verset* (for example 'Le loriod' 10/3/2 *Vif: actif, incantatoire, bien prononcé*), whilst the song thrush writing in *Chronochromie* became a direct catalyst for Messiaen's definitive *style oiseau* rendered in terms of organ texture and timbre.

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...la jubilation étrange du timbre est rendue par flûte 4 et tierce seules, par la doublure en 16 et 4, et par le fait que les deux mains ne se doublent jamais de la même façon et avec les mêmes intervalles: les harmoniques artificiels et symétriques des timbres étant constamment contraires par les harmoniques plus naturels et toujours changeants de l'écriture manuelle.

This passage is also cited and translated in Gillock, p. 193.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, pp. 89-90, and cited in Fung Chiat Loo, 'Olivier Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*: A Performer's Perspective' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2005), p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 173, and Malcolm Troup, 'Orchestral Music of the 1950s and 1960s' in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by P. Hill, pp. 392-447 (p. 399).

<sup>26</sup> *Traité III* p. 193.

<sup>27</sup> *Traité III* p. 192:

La Grive-musicienne chante dès les premiers jours de mars, et se répand en solos admirables par leur caractère magique, incantatoire, par l'invention, l'imprévu de leurs rythmes et de leur tour mélodique, par la somptuosité claire, lumineuse, du timbre, et cela jusqu'à la fin juin.

Nine years after writing *Verset*, Messiaen returned to the use of song thrush solos in the depiction of the presence of the divine. In the fourth of the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, 'Je suis, je suis!', Messiaen sets Moses encounter with God in the forests of the Vosges, Alpes Dauphinoises, and Jura,<sup>28</sup> where the birdsong functions as a cleansing, atmospheric preparation for the vision of God: 'I've noticed in the Jura an especially gifted song thrush, whose song was absolutely brilliant when the sunset was very beautiful with magnificent red and violet lighting'.<sup>29</sup> The beauty of the thrush's music at dusk, captured by Thomas Hardy, is also that which inspired Messiaen: '...most beautiful of all, the free song which salutes the dawning or dying light',<sup>30</sup> and here, for Messiaen, is the musical embodiment of that 'joy illimited':

...the most memorable of all: that of the forêt de la Frasse in the Jura! This song is very dear to me because it reminds me of that absolutely brilliant, wonderful solo thrush heard on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1964, from six until 7.15 pm. Large, dense, sombre green spruce, branches hanging down; mossy slopes covered with very white, powdery snow; a magnificent red and orange sunset; blue and purple shadows of spruces on the snow: all this made for an amazing scene enveloped in silence. It was into this total silence that the voice of the thrush rose up. Inspired by the landscape and the solemnity of the moment, she sang for an hour and a quarter with an absolutely extraordinary power of invention, oppositions of timbre, tempo, rhythm, melodic patterns, taking only her breath between verses and different motifs. By combining the best of her solo passages, trying to render the timbre by registrations, attacks, and chords, I formed in 1969 (five years later), an ideal song thrush in the fourth piece of my *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Méditations*, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Traité V/2*, p. 593:

Et enfin la plus inoubliable de toutes: celle de la forêt de la Frasse dans le Jura! Ce chant m'est très cher car il me rappelle cet admirable solo d'une Grive musicienne absolument géniale, entendue le 3 avril 1964, de 18h à 19h15. De grands épicéas touffus, vert sombre, don't les branches traînaient à terre, des pentes moussues couvertes d'une neige poudreuse, très blanche, un magnifique soleil couchant rouge et orange, les ombres bleues et violettes des épicéas sur la neige, tout cela constituait un décor prodigieux tout enveloppe de silence. C'est dans ce silence total que la voix de la Grive musicienne s'est élevée. Inspirée par le paysage et la solennité du moment, elle a chanté avec une puissance d'invention, des oppositions de timbre, de tempo, de rythme, de dessin mélodique, absolument inhabituels, et cela pendant une heure un quart, reprenant à peine son soufflé entre les strophes et les différents motifs. En combinant les plus beaux passages de son solo, en essayant d'en rendre les timbres par des registrations, des attaques, des accords, j'ai construit, en 1969 (5 ans après), une Grive musicienne idéale qui figure dans la 4e pièce de mes *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*.

*The plovers that dwell on the beach at Shio-no-yama  
Are calling to affirm an everlasting life.<sup>1</sup>*

*God is beyond words, thoughts, concepts, beyond our earth and our sun, beyond the thousands of stars which circle around us, above and beyond time and space, beyond all these things which are somehow linked to him. He alone knows Himself by His Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ. And when musical painting, colored music, sound-color magnify it by bedazzlement, they participate in this fine praise of the Gloria which speaks to God and to Christ: 'Only Thou art Holy, Thou alone art the Most-High!'*<sup>2</sup>

## TRACK 8

### HOLINESS AND SIMPLICITY: 'LA SAINTETÉ DE JÉSUS-CHRIST'

Within the 'symmetrical structure' of *Méditations*,<sup>3</sup> two pieces which explore the properties of God feature Gregorian Alleluias:<sup>4</sup> the second (holiness), and the penultimate (simplicity). The change in focus from the title 'Dieu est saint' to 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' of the second meditation is reflected by Messiaen's comment: 'I wasn't thinking only of God the Father, but also of Christ, of the human God who was the holiest and most perfect of all men'.<sup>5</sup> Messiaen later returned to this holiness of God with the Trisagion: Ἄγιος ὁ Θεός, in 'Cedar Breaks et le don de crainte', where the window of adoration opens by replacing fear with awe.<sup>6</sup>

The composer's published introduction to each meditation gives a full account of the content and intentions of the music. Here Messiaen describes the second meditation:

It is in two sections like the panels of a diptych with a coda, expressing the holiness of God. The first section commences with the Alleluia of the Dedication. Colour chords portray the otherness of inviolable sacred purity which we find in Christ, using the words of the Gloria of the mass: Tu solus sanctus, Tu solus altissimus Jesu Christe. These colour chords are [CTI] and [CCR], resolving in simple light on a first inversion major chord. Song of the wren. Theme of Christ in semi-clusters making use of modes 3<sup>1</sup> and 3<sup>2</sup>, finishing in the calmer light of a dominant seventh. Blackbird. Chaffinch with characteristic acceleration, central trill and assertive codetta. Long and virtuosic solo of the garden warbler. Sorrowful call of the blackcap in a luminous A major. The second section presents the same elements in the same order but with different music. Coda: Alleluia, first fortissimo then pianissimo and harmonized in 'mode of G' transposed, with an emphasis on the distropha of the jubilus. Donnez-nous l'amour de votre Saint Nom from the Litanies du Saint Nom de Jesus. Far away, very high, the naive repeated notes of the yellowhammer with its higher ending.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Japanese poem [accessed 10 January 2013] <<http://www.eaglesweb.com/audio/gloria.htm>>. The plover's call sounds like 千代、千代, which means 'thousands of generations' (cf. Psalm 105. 8: 'He is mindful of his covenant for ever, of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations', which also informs 'Abraham et semini eius in saecula' of the *Magnificat*). The original poem reads in translation: 'the plovers on the jutting crags beneath briny Shio Mountain cry out "May the years of your life number eight thousand and more", in *Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, trans. by Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius (Boston: Cheng and Tsui, 1996), p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*, trans. by Timothy Tikker and reproduced in Almut Rößler, *Contributions to the Spiritual world of Olivier Messiaen* (Duisburg: Gilles & Francke, 1986) pp. 57-66 (p. 14).

<sup>3</sup> Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 125. Theo Hirsbrunner, *Olivier Messiaen: Leben und Werk* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1988), pp. 230-231 documents the new titles.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Hello, *Paroles de Dieu: réflexions sur quelques textes sacrés* (Paris: V. Palmé, 1877), cited by Messiaen in the preface to *Des canyons aux étoiles...* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1978), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Méditations*, p. 15, translated by Conrad Bernier in programme notes to *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité* - Erato 4509-92007-2 (p. 41), and translated in Gillock, p. 210.



The image of the Son described here by means of Gregorian chant, coloured harmony, and birdsong, is that of Christ in Glory (Illustration 4.1), which Messiaen would certainly have seen in 1972 as he gave the first performance of *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* in Washington.



ILLUSTRATION 4.1: Jan Henryk de Rosen (1891-1982),  
*Christ in Majesty* (1959): mosaic,  
Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington D. C.

For the first time in Messiaen's organ music, plainchant is quoted virtually unaltered (ACD8-0:14).<sup>8</sup> This melody remained undistorted, of course, in *Couleurs de la cité Céleste*, yet received a densely coloured harmonization, and the previous allusions to plainchant in Messiaen's earlier organ music are 'as though seen through a prism or stained glass'.<sup>9</sup> Griffiths draws attention to Messiaen's varied treatment of this plainchant fragment as a gauge of 'the different processes of melodic and harmonic alteration [...] within Messiaen's output'.<sup>10</sup> His treatment of this specific *objet trouvé* remained dynamic and constantly shifting, dependent upon both context and theological statement.

#### HOLINESS IN BIRDSONG

The superscription 'Dieu est Saint' offers the opportunity for birdsong launching praise to the creator, for example with the call of the blackcap (ACD8-3:37, imitating calls such as ACD8-9:39). Supported by the bass of CTI 1B, embedded within the melody of the *Fauvette à tête noire* are all the remaining notes of upper resonance. This passage has a structural function: not merely anchoring the tonality within A major, but confirming the overwhelming presence of blues within CTI 1B, and sealing the entire work with its cyclic recurrence.<sup>11</sup> Example 4.20 shows this idea of the song of the *Fauvette à tête noire* transferred to the final three bars of the entire work, and rounded off with the song of

<sup>8</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', p. 376.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>11</sup> Nichols, p. 77.

the yellowhammer (located here in the pedal). One of the best singers, the blackcap loves light and heat, its song resembling plainchant:

A bright, flute-timbered, very clear and pure, *fortissimo* refrain consists of groups of sounds juxtaposed like neumes, where a joyful and luminous character dominates, in the major mode, with a major third.<sup>12</sup>

EXAMPLE 4.20: *Méditations IX*, 'Je suis Celui qui suis', 89/6/2

CTI 1B

large nappe de bleu saphir, cerclée de bleus moins intenses (fluorine bleue, bleu clair de Chartres) et recerclée de violet.

(Fauvette à tête noire)  
Bien modéré    rall.    rall. molto    Bien modéré

(Ped: flûte 4 seule) **P** (Bruant jaune)

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The use of CTI 1B as a defining, structural sonority may also be discerned at the opening of *La fauvette des jardins* (1/1/4), and the first inversion A major triad with added sixth confirms the overwhelming blue of the Lac de Laffrey (*le grand lac bleu*, 47/4/2). Two settings of 'Le rouge-gorge' in *Petites esquisses d'oiseaux* commence with CTI 1B (I and III), whilst it also occurs in the third robin sketch (V, 35/3/2), in addition to its use in 'Le merle noir' (12/3/1). In *Méditations* CTI 1B sounds the blue of Heaven, here united with the song of the blackcap. This bird held a special significance for Messiaen, featuring in many of his works from the 1950s onwards. It is used in works such as *Réveil des oiseaux*, 'La bouscarle', *Chronochromie*, *La Transfiguration*, *La fauvette des Jardins*, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Saint Trinité*, *Saint François d'Assise*, *Un vitrail et des oiseaux*.<sup>13</sup> Messiaen's most important blackcap transcription took place at Petichet in 1980, and is quoted in full as his idealized version of the bird's song in *Traité*,<sup>14</sup> capturing many of its nuances and defining features.

For Gillian Weir the song of the yellowhammer has a magical effect: 'A yellowhammer's song floats from the distance, holding the music in suspense, poised in eternity'.<sup>15</sup> Nichols also comments on the incorporation of the song of the yellowhammer as a unifying feature within the cycle: 'The song of the yellowhammer [...] is not squandered but carefully reserved as a seal to be set on four of the work's nine movements'.<sup>16</sup> This magical coda to four of the work's nine movements was first formulated by Messiaen for a series of improvisations he gave in 1967 called *Le Mystère de Dieu*. As part of the

<sup>12</sup> *Traité* III, p. 90. Messiaen is discussing here the characteristics of the birdsong in *Chronochromie*.

Un refrain fortissimo, éclatant, de timbre flûté, très clair et très pur, compose de quelques groupes de sons juxtaposés comme des neumes, où domine le caractère joyeux, lumineux, du mode majeur et de la tierce majeure.

<sup>13</sup> Loo, p. 147.

<sup>14</sup> *Traité* V, p. 314.

<sup>15</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', pp. 377-378.

<sup>16</sup> Nichols, p. 77.

centenary celebrations of La Trinité, Messiaen was to improvise meditations based upon the preaching of Monsignor Charles of the Sacré-Cœur. He said to the priest: ‘I will finish each improvisation with the song of the yellowhammer: seven repeated notes, followed by a long held note, which you’ll recognize easily’.<sup>17</sup> Thus material from these improvisations, performed some two years before the *Méditations* were completed, was incorporated into the finished composition. The final section of this piece alludes to the *Litanies du Saint Nom de Jésus* in a beautiful development of the plainchant theme. The repercussions of the distropha here actually *become* the call of the yellowhammer (ACD8-9:22) in the same way that in *Verset*, bird and plainchant are united.

Concerning this intermingling of plainchant with birdsong, Messiaen observed: ‘the Garden Warbler, the Black-Cap, the Song-Thrush [...] all sing neumes’.<sup>18</sup> On a more specific level, the extended song of the garden warbler makes use of the ascending motive of a tone followed by a major seventh, which itself forms the opening gesture of Messiaen’s theme for the Son.<sup>19</sup> The two lengthy refrains of the garden warbler (ACD8-2:43/6:44, imitating the calls at ACD8-0:01) make frequent reference to both *Père* and *Fils* motives at various levels of transposition. Here, the garden warbler is able to sing specific praises to its creator. These two extended solos for *La fauvette des jardins* within ‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’ were to inspire Messiaen to make use of this bird throughout his mature works. He devoted, in the following year, an extended piano piece to it as a supplement to *Catalogue*, and made further theological use of its call in works such as *Un vitrail et des oiseaux* and *La ville d’En-Haut*, where its cadenza-like passage work is harmonized by means of colour-chords in both works (Examples 4.21 and 4.22). Whilst Messiaen’s musical language was constantly evolving, it is also true that with the composition of *Verset* in 1960, the ‘recipe’ had now become fixed for the remainder of his artistic output. In a wider perspective, a chord taken from the primary transposition level of CTI could equally have been conceived in the 1940s or the 1990s. The dense harmony of the birdsong in the later style particularly became a vehicle for the use of all types of non-modal chords, drawing on a similar practice first attempted in *Catalogue*. The difference lies in the greater development of colour-associations. In *Un vitrail et des oiseaux*, the rich colours of CTI 1C evolve into the hues of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 5A in a portrayal of Messiaen’s beloved garden warbler (Example 4.21).

EXAMPLE 4.21: *Un vitrail et des oiseaux*, RN21: 46/1/1, (piano)

The image shows a musical score for piano. At the top, two chords are identified: CTI 1C and 1st CCR 5A. Below these are two staves of piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'orangé, avec des bandes jaune pâle, rouge, et or.' and 'jaune rabattu par le noir, brun verdâtre.' Below the lyrics, the tempo is marked 'Modéré, un peu vif (♩=96)' and the piece is identified as '(au signe du chef) (Fauvette des jardins)'. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in two staves (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part features complex, dense chords and textures.

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<sup>17</sup> Hill and Simeone, pp. 275-276.

<sup>18</sup> Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre Dame*, trans. by T. Tikker in Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 223.

The piano textures of the late *La ville d'En-Haut* summarize the consistent mini-toccatà or cadenza-like nature of the virtuosic music assigned to the garden warbler throughout Messiaen's output, not only capturing the bird's extended and florid style, but imbuing this with the urgency of loquacious praise (Example 4.22).

EXAMPLE 4.22: *La ville d'En-Haut*, R14, (piano solo)

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## HOLINESS IN COLOURED HARMONY

In 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' the holiness of Christ is captured both in the song of the *Fauvette des jardins*, and presented by a 'theme of colours' using CTI and CCR,<sup>20</sup> which on its first appearance, makes use of the first three notes of the transposed retrograde *thème de Dieu*. Example 4.23 shows the varied repetition of this theme, indicating the colour progression. Within the CTI sequence there is a transition from an E bass to C#, which is handled by maintaining identical blue hues between CTI 4C and 1B: chords which contain the same seven notes. Whilst sapphire and Chartres blue are central to the progression, by enclosing the sequence with symmetrical combinations of green and red, the harmony commences with 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 2 and finishes with CTI 2B.

The piece exhibits a consistency of harmonic coloration across its diptych division, running from the blues of the luminous A major and TC 12 of Example 4.25 to the blues central to Example 4.23. The first inversion A major harmony with added 6<sup>th</sup> and added resonance of Examples 4.20 and 4.23 is the defining tonality of the entire work, recurring throughout the composer's mature *œuvre*, representing the symbolism of the blue of medieval windows such as Chartres. Capturing our silent awe at the presence of the Saviour in *Vingt regards*, 'Regard du silence' introduces an early, yet integrated use of Messiaen's special colour-chords. This is in combination with the symbolism of the rainbow and the explicit links between music and colour:

Silence dans la main, arc-en-ciel renversé... chaque silence de la crèche révèle musiques et couleurs qui sont les mystères de Jésus-Christ... accords spéciaux... musique multicolore.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Méditations*, p. 15: The second section (*Presque lent*) sets the words of the *Gloria* of the mass: *Vous êtes le seul Saint, le seul Seigneur, le seul Très-Haut: Jésus-Christ*. Messiaen writes that this idea is:

...exprimé par un theme de couleurs: accords à renversement transposé et à résonance contracté, qui se résolvent en lumière simple par l'accord de sixte de la majeur.

<sup>21</sup> *Vingt regards*, note de l'auteur, p. iii.

EXAMPLE 4.23: 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ', 20/4/1 ACD8-4:12

large manteau **bleu saphir** intense  
- dans les plis: des reflets violet Parme  
et **bleu de Chartres**.

vert clair, gris clair, rouge.

bandes verticales: vert, violettes, bleu foncé.

blanc et or.

large nappe de **bleu saphir**, cerclée de bleus moins intenses (fluorine bleue, **bleu clair de Chartres**) et recerclée de violet.

bandes rouges, grises, et vert pâle.

1st CCR 2  
A B

4A B C

CTI

1B 2A B

(*Vous êtes le seul Saint, le seul Seigneur, le seul Très-Haut: Jésus-Christ.*)

**Presque lent**

*f legato*

*f legato*

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Thus, 'Regard du silence' contains harmonies described as 'colours which are the mysteries of Jesus',<sup>22</sup> and Messiaen refers to this passage as being 'en litany harmonique sur les notes sol, fa' (Example 4.24):<sup>23</sup>

A 'harmonic litany' on the notes G and F. This section includes 'chords of transposed inversions', 'chords of contracted resonance', a concentrated version of the 'Theme of Chords' (all the notes being sounded simultaneously).<sup>24</sup>

In 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ', these same colour chords portray the otherness of inviolable sacred purity found in Christ (CTI 8 and 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 1, Example 4.25).<sup>25</sup> Both works make use of the same transpositions of CTI and CCR, and 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' extends the harmonic litany from the original appearance of the theme of colours. By the use of identical harmonies in both 'Regard du silence' and 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ', it is possible to discern how 'colours which are the mysteries of Jesus' become the colours of 'inviolable sacred purity' in the second work.

<sup>22</sup> *Vingt regards*, note de l'auteur, p. iii.

<sup>23</sup> The term 'harmonic litany' is defined by Messiaen in *Technique I*, p. 53. Messiaen's programme notes for *Regard du silence* are cited by Matthew Hill, in 'Faith, Silence and Darkness Entwined in Messiaen's *Regard du silence*', in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, ed. by Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 37-52 (p. 46).

<sup>24</sup> From Messiaen's second preface to *Vingt regards*, cited in Caroline Atherton, 'Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt regards* sur l'Enfant Jésus: the Catholic perspective' (unpublished MMus thesis, University of Sheffield, 1998), p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Méditations*, p. 15.

EXAMPLE 4.24: *Vingt regards*, XVII ‘Regard du silence’, 129/4/1

EXAMPLE 4.25: ‘La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ’, 17/3/1 ACD8-1:23

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The use of the concentrated version of the ‘Theme of Chords’ in Example 4.24 leads into a more complex chordal passage (Example 4.26), which is a technical exploration of Messiaen’s association of rainbow-symbolism with harmonic practice:

The ‘Theme of Chords’ is combined with itself in both its original and its retrograde forms – the retrogradation adding reverberation and resonance to the original (like two rainbows, one encircling the other).<sup>26</sup>

This type of combinatory harmonic process and the use of the ‘Theme of Chords’ are by no means unique to *Vingt regards*, and demonstrate that Messiaen was thinking outside his modal frameworks for extended passages; furthermore, thinking in terms of colour associations during the 1940s, creating solid foundations for his mature style. A style which constantly reviewed and refined earlier ideas and practices.

<sup>26</sup> From Messiaen’s second preface to *Vingt regards*, cited in Atherton, p. 107.

EXAMPLE 4.26: ‘Regard du silence’, 131/5/1

Bien modéré (♩=84)  
(Thème d'accords, rétrogradé et droit)

The score is for piano and features three staves. The top staff is marked '(rétrogradé)' and contains a sequence of chords. The middle staff is marked '(en arc-en-ciel) mf' and '(droit)', with a '7' above the first measure. The bottom staff is marked 'f' and contains a bass line. Below the staves, there are four measures with the word 'Réd.' underneath each, and an asterisk at the end of the fourth measure.

Meditation II marries the holy temple of the *Adorabo* chant with the Trinitarian association of the concluding phrases of the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*: ‘Quoniam tu solus sanctus’. This relationship of paternity and filiation is explored more fully in Meditation III: ‘in God relation and essence do not differ from each other, but are one and the same’,<sup>27</sup> which returns us to the *Inengendré* of the first meditation: ‘the transcendent essence and cause of the universe, on which everything depends, alone subsists’.<sup>28</sup> Balancing this holiness in the symmetrical formal scheme is the notion of simplicity in Meditation VIII, where, with his assertion that ‘God is absolutely primal being’,<sup>29</sup> Aquinas cites Augustine’s concept of the simplicity of God,<sup>30</sup> and this oneness is contained within the united implications of  $\gamma\eta\kappa$ .<sup>31</sup> Messiaen amplifies this idea with Psalm 55.<sup>32</sup>

The use of mode 3 semi-clusters to portray Christ (ACD8-1:52/5:39) is one example of Messiaen’s developing interest in totality and completion as he composed *Méditations*. During the 1960s Messiaen was working on the development of CTC and inclusion of the entire chromatic spectrum as a symbol of the all-embracing nature of God. The collapsing (or contracting) of the voicing of CR into the closest possible spacing to yield modal clusters anticipates the moment in ‘Institution de l’Eucharistie’ which culminates in a total chromatic cluster to describe the totality of the Eucharist (Example 4.27), and it is to this specifically Eucharistic aspect of the chant *Adorabo* that we finally turn.

EXAMPLE 4.27: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘Institution de l’Eucharistie’, 54/1/1

The score is for piano and features two staves. The tempo is marked 'Un peu lent'. The first measure is marked 'mf', the second 'f', and the third 'püf'. Above the staves, there are brackets indicating 'CTI' (with sub-brackets for '5C' and '3B'), 'TC' (with sub-bracket for '2C'), and 'Total Chromatic'.

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<sup>27</sup> STI, Q. 28, Art. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, ed. by Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 24, and cited in Nes, p. 141.

<sup>29</sup> STI, Q. 3, Art. 8.

<sup>30</sup> STI, Q. 3, Art. 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Echad*. See Jeff Leigh, ‘A Hidden Theology: Pitch Association and Symbolism in Olivier Messiaen’s *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, CUNY, 2010), p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> See Example 3.13, p. 74, above.

Prayer the Churches banquet, Angels age,  
 Gods breath in man returning to his birth,  
 The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
 The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;  
 Engine against th'Almightie, sinners towre,  
 Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
 The six-daies world transposing in an houre,  
 A kinde of tune, which all things heare and fear;  
 Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse,  
 Exalted Manna, gladnesse of the best,  
 Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest,  
 The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,  
 Church-bels beyond the staires heard, the souls bloud,  
 The land of spices; something understood.<sup>1</sup>

## TRACK 9

### 'BODILY PRESENCE', 'QUI SPIRITUALIS ET OCCULTUS EST': THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT IN 'PRIÈRE AVANT LA COMMUNION'

The belief of the Church is the proper medium for encountering God, in mysticism which responds to the mystery of God.<sup>2</sup> Messiaen's musical equivalent, despite his favouring of dogma over mysticism,<sup>3</sup> with its Tournemire-inspired use of plainchant, dazzling colour-chords and shimmering registrations is certainly mystical as well as theological. Messiaen's interest in the historical, visual aspects of the divine as well as the hidden nature of the elements in the Eucharist is concordant with an idea expressed in *Herrlichkeit*, in which Balthasar recognizes that for His Church, the Eucharist *is* the representational form of Christ between Ascension and Parousia.<sup>4</sup> Balthasar's ideas influenced the genesis of *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, with Messiaen's understanding of *Points de repère* informing his annotations concerning the 'Absence and Presence of Jesus'.<sup>5</sup> He may also have been reading *Die Wahrheit ist symphonisch*, with 'A God at hand, a God afar off', which also explores 'the absences of Jesus'.<sup>6</sup> *Livre* as a celebration of the Eucharist in all its possible meanings echoes Balthasar's notion of the Mass as Christ in the world:

We cannot make Christ shine through the Church by destroying it or replacing it with forms of community of our own designing. The only way is for Church people to model themselves as closely as possible on the reality of the Church – which is Christ's body and thus his *bodily presence*.<sup>7</sup>

It is fitting that Messiaen should lavish his 'voluptuously refined pleasures' on these sonic explorations of the sacrament,<sup>8</sup> for the sacrifice of the Mass as gift, for Balthasar, radiates beauty.<sup>9</sup> Thus 'Prière avant la communion' prepares for our direct encounter with the beauty of Christ in the words of the centurion: 'Lord, I am not worthy'.

<sup>1</sup> George Herbert, *Prayer* (I).

<sup>2</sup> Voderholzer, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Roch Kereszty, 'The Eucharist and Mission in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar', in *Love Alone is Credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar as Interpreter of the Catholic Tradition*, ed. by David L. Schindler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 344.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Die Wahrheit ist symphonisch: Aspekte des christlichen Pluralismus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1972), trans. by Graham Harrison as *Truth is Symphonic: Aspects of Christian Pluralism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 (my italics).

<sup>8</sup> *Technique* I, p.13.

<sup>9</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Klarstellungen: zur Prüfung der Geister*, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1971, and translated as *Elucidations*, San Francisco, 1998, p. 13.



EXAMPLE 4.28: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'Prière avant la communion',  
113/3/1 & 114/3/2 ACD9-0:14/1:31

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In Example 4.28, 'Prière avant la communion' (transposing the Alleluia *Adorabo*) features the G major of CTI 7 and uses TC 9 to elide with CTI 4 in a colour-scheme of yellows, white and gold. At this moment of our encounter with the divine, Messiaen reminds us precisely *who* God is by means of colour chords. The use of CTI 7 brings with it the colours and connotations of the light of Christ begotten before the Daystar of 'Le Verbe', of the vigorous toccata lying at the heart of *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, and of the harmony accompanying Mary Magdalene's vision of the risen Christ. This use of CTI 7 is anticipated in the first piece of *Livre*, 'Adoro te' (Example 4.29).

EXAMPLE 4.29: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'Adoro te', 8/2/2 & 9/1/3

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Exploring long-range tonal structure in more detail, *Livre du Saint Sacrement* exhibits a consistency of key scheme around the axis of the notes G and C#, which recalls the prominent use of CD based on these two notes in *La Nativité du Seigneur*.<sup>10</sup> Whilst modally-based areas certainly *do* exist in *Livre*, they are of less structural importance than the colour-chords. Messiaen's choice of colour-chord based tonal areas throughout *Livre* is both systematic and fully integrated, linking pieces together and sustaining a highly complex theological argument. Thus Example 4.29 (from the opening piece) charts a harmonic trajectory of descending whole tones from the G foundation of CTI 7 to the goal of the D $\flat$ /C# of CTI 1. This opening act of adoration not only knits together the tonal poles of G and C# which deal with aspects of the divine extending throughout *Livre*, but also introduces CTI 5 of the dawn, heard in 'la Résurrection du Christ'. CTI 7 is used at significant moments in five pieces: 'Adoro te'; 'l'apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine'; 'Prière avant la communion'; 'la Présence multipliée'; 'Offrande et Alleluia final', whilst CTI 1 is an important tonal area in six: 'Adoro te'; 'Acte de Foi'; 'la Résurrection du Christ'; 'la Transsubstantiation'; 'Prière après la communion'; 'Offrande et Alleluia final'.

This bass and harmonic motion of CTI descending by whole tones from G in 'Adoro te' is picked up in the top voice of 'la Présence multipliée' at 146/6/1 and harmonized here by CCR, whilst the canon theme of the multiple presence is harmonized in the closing four bars, making cadential use of the important CTI 7 (Example 4.30).

EXAMPLE 4.30: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'la Présence multipliée', 146/6/1 & 147/3/1

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Returning to the superscription of 'Prière avant la communion', 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof' (Matthew 8. 8), how precisely does Messiaen capture this entering of Christ into the soul? St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153) distinguishes the three comings of Christ based on his understanding of I Corinthians 15. 43-44: 'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body'.<sup>11</sup> Bernard's ideas are conveniently summarized by Dom Prosper Guéranger: firstly, 'He comes in the flesh and in weakness'; secondly 'He comes in spirit and in power'; finally 'He comes in glory and in majesty'.<sup>12</sup> This threefold coming is *to* us, *in* us, and *against* us, where the second is 'spiritual and

<sup>10</sup> *Effet de vitrail* CD above the bass note G feature in 'Le Verbe', and above the bass note C# in 'Les Mages'.

<sup>11</sup> Note also the significance of I Corinthians 15 for Messiaen as superscriptions used for pieces within *Les corps glorieux*, and derived from Aquinas' writings on the qualities of the resurrected.

<sup>12</sup> Dom Prosper Guéranger, *L'année liturgique*, trans. by Dom Laurence Shepherd, O.S.B., as *The Liturgical Year*, 15 volumes (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Jubilee Year edition, 2000), Volume 1, p. 28.

hidden', within our own soul.<sup>13</sup> The idea is amplified by Peter of Blois (c. 1135 – c. 1211), who describes the three comings of the Lord as into flesh, to the soul, and to judgment,<sup>14</sup> since he comes into our souls to prevent him ultimately coming against us.<sup>15</sup> These three comings bring mercy, grace, and glory: firstly, the 'mercy of a hidden and humble coming'; secondly, the 'grace of the coming into our souls in secret and worthy of love'; finally, the coming in 'manifest and terrible glory'. Transformed from the unjustly-judged to our judge of justice, through his grace we are justified; transformed from lamb to lion, in our soul he becomes our friend.<sup>16</sup> In 'The Mystery of Advent', Guéranger draws these ideas together within the significance of the mass:

The expressions of the liturgy which the Church makes use of to ask for this loving and invisible coming, are those which she employs when begging for the coming of Jesus in the flesh; for the two visits are for the same object. In vain would the Son of God have come, nineteen hundred years ago, to visit and save mankind, unless He came again for each one of us and at every moment of our lives, bringing to us and cherishing within us that supernatural life...<sup>17</sup>

How does Messiaen's music attempt to portray such a theology? The serene mode 3<sup>2</sup> close of 'Prière avant la communion' (ACD9-3:44) is quoted directly in *Petites esquisses d'oiseaux*, II 'Le merle noir', in the final two bars. Here Messiaen projects material from *Livre du Saint Sacrement* into his next work, bringing the hushed encounter with Christ in the mass to the colours of the habitat and joy of the blackbird. Messiaen's three different Gregorian chant quotations in this prayer, registered with the symbolism of 16'<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>' ('Donnez-nous l'amour de votre Saint Nom' in 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ' of *Méditations*) cements the theological link between Epiphany and the mass in the universality of Jesus: *Adorabo* is placed alongside *Surge, et illuminare Ierusalem* (ACD9-3:18) and *Lauda Sion* (ACD9-2:05). Thus, with his selection of plainchant material, Messiaen explores the theological links between Dedication (*Adorabo*), Epiphany (*Surge, et illuminare*), and Corpus Christi (*Lauda Sion*), where the holiness and universality of Christ becomes tangible in the contemporary world through the mystery of the mass. We are reminded of 'Le Fils, Verbe et Lumière' with its Epiphany chants, of the light and glory of Christ: the embodiment of the temple, and contained within the Eucharist. And this Eucharistic totality recreates eternity for us anew in the present, at every mass.

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<sup>13</sup> Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (Bernardus Claraeuallensis), *Sermones in aduentu Domini*, Sermo 3: 4: "Triplicem enim eius aduentum novimus: ad homines, in homines, contra homines [...] de secundo, qui spiritualis et occultus est".

<sup>14</sup> Peter of Blois (Petri Blesensis), *Sermones*, Sermo III *De Eodem Adventu*: "Tres sunt adventus Domini: primus in carnem secundus ad animam, tertius ad iudicium".

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: "In primo enim venit ad nos, ut in secundo veniret in nos; in secundo venit in nos, ne in tertio veniret contra nos".

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*:

Primus adventus fuit occultus et humilis; secundus est secretus et amabilis; tertius erit manifestus et terribilis [...] In primo adventu fecit misericordiam; in secundo dat gratiam; in tertio dabit gloriam, quia gratiam et gloriam dabit Dominus. [...] In primo iudicatus injuste; in secundo per gratiam nos justificat, iuste iudicaturus in ultimo. Agnus in primo, leo erit in ultimo, amicus in medio.

<sup>17</sup> Guéranger, p. 30. Stephen Schloesser, in 'The Charm of Impossibilities: Mystic Surrealism as Contemplative Voluptuousness', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 163-182 (p. 169), cites part of this passage as an emblem of the revivalist interest in Christian mysticism, and ultimately as a motivating factor in Tournemire's *L'orgue mystique*.

*There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again.*<sup>1</sup>

## PART FIVE, CASE STUDIES: 'FOREVER FORGOTTEN, FOREVER RECOVERED, FOREVER REPEATED':<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION: INTERTEXTUALITY IN MESSIAEN'S ORGAN MUSIC

This investigation of harmonic and thematic self-quotation in the organ music of Messiaen attempts to determine how it is used to theological effect. *Traité* describes the fusion of individual moments of extemporisation into a perpetual music, constantly reworked anew.<sup>3</sup> What if this also applied to composition? Messiaen's works contain frequently repeated musical gestures: on an esthetic level,<sup>4</sup> when transferred to later works, do quotations bring their original textual association to the 'musical collage'?<sup>5</sup>

Reasons for self-quotation lie not just in the realm of theology: between the *Tristan* trilogy and the *Messe de la Pentecôte* lay the pressures of producing vast amounts of music, and his poetics,<sup>6</sup> just as much practical as they were cerebral, involved 'working at speed, quarrying ideas from his own music [...] simply because they were lying to hand',<sup>7</sup> and here 'his mind was prompted by his fingers'.<sup>8</sup> Yet a *Messe* dense with self-quotation contains imagery impossible to ignore, becoming a 'critique of the church's [...] lack of engagement with modernity'.<sup>9</sup> Umberto Eco believes Dante's linguistic ideals to involve 'selecting the best from every language, fragmenting [...] and recombining the fragments into a new and perfect structure',<sup>10</sup> an approach which is equally valid when applied to the musical textures of Messiaen. Some of the material which Messiaen weaves into his structures has what Copland called a 'usable past',<sup>11</sup> not only drawing on more popular styles,<sup>12</sup> but radically providing new works with a true ancestral grounding:<sup>13</sup> in Messiaen's case stretching from plainchant to Machaut, Le Jeune, and Tournemire. Embracing both time and space, Messiaen frequently appropriated both Greek and Hindu rhythmic theories, and referred occasionally to the music of Tibet and Sikkim.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot: *East Coker*.

<sup>2</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 83: my translation; trans. also in Simeone, "Chez Messiaen, tout est prière", p. 48: 'always forgotten, always found again, and always repeated'.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Ces improvisations devinrent peu à peu "une" improvisation, toujours oubliée, toujours retrouvée, toujours répétée...'

<sup>4</sup> To use the language of music semiology developed in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. xi.

<sup>5</sup> Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, p. 123.

<sup>6</sup> Nattiez, p. xi.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Hill, 'Piano Music II', in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. by P. Hill, pp. 307-351 (p. 308).

<sup>8</sup> Nichols, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Sholl, 'Olivier Messiaen and the Avant-Garde Poetics of the *Messe de la Pentecôte*', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 199-222 (p. 206).

<sup>10</sup> Eco, *Umberto Eco on Literature*, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Robert Pascall, *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. viii.

<sup>12</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, 'Aaron Copland and American Music', *Perspectives of New Music*, 19:1/2 (1980-1981), 31-33 (p. 31).

<sup>13</sup> Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the Himalayan musics of *La Transfiguration*, IX 'Perfecte conscius illius perfectae generationis', which refer both to Sikkim and Tibet.

Considering the elements of Messiaen's music such as rhythm, melody and harmony, we encounter 'a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized'.<sup>15</sup> Transcending boundaries of work, genre, and instrumentation, familiar musical material is able to migrate from work to work. *Deçi-tâlas*, melodic phrases such as the *Boris* motive, or the motto theme taken from 'Jardin du sommeil d'amour', modes of limited transposition, non-modal colour chords: all become common currency within Messiaen's sound world. When an idea or *deçi-tâla* is repeated in subsequent works, does it bring with it its original connotations to the new musical argument? With Messiaen's transference of musical material, are we able to assert that 'to borrow a motive is to borrow a meaning'?<sup>16</sup>

Machaut's reuse of material across many works creates a 'dazzling array of references',<sup>17</sup> where the 'textual interaction' of allusion finds its roots in play and game.<sup>18</sup> Such self-citation furnishes a consistency of style, displaying a unity of purpose across disparate works and adding 'authorial presence',<sup>19</sup> whilst the revisiting of uniquely personal musical gestures is a method designed to enhance a musician's compositional prestige.<sup>20</sup> Joseph Kerman's understanding of intertextuality embraces 'the references composers make in one work to another as acknowledged model or unacknowledged influence',<sup>21</sup> and of particular importance in Messiaen scholarship is the 'relationship between a piece and its remote successors'.<sup>22</sup> Studies of early music have made use of the concept of intertextuality, perceiving that 'intertextual play could add [...] an extra dimension of discourse',<sup>23</sup> and in Messiaen just as much as in Josquin, 'these intertextual allusions were indeed deliberate and meant to be recognized'.<sup>24</sup> Whilst it remains doubtful whether a single word term is able to capture the different natures of musical citation,<sup>25</sup> the concept of musicological intertextuality now tends to have a different, possibly opposite meaning to that originally intended by Kristeva.<sup>26</sup> Yet as an umbrella term to understand the use of common musical material across 'entire complexes of works',<sup>27</sup> the notion of intertextuality becomes useful. Widening this net yet further, intertextuality becomes simply an 'inevitable characteristic of musical composition'.<sup>28</sup> The specificity of

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<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 262.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Klein, review of Christopher Alan Reynolds *Motives for Allusion: Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*, in *Music Theory Spectrum*, 28:1 (2006), 111-118 (p. 112).

<sup>17</sup> Tamsyn Rose-Steel, 'French Ars Nova Motets and their Manuscripts: Citational Play and Material Context' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2011), p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Kerman, p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Pascall, p. viii.

<sup>23</sup> Yolanda Plumley, 'Intertextuality in the Fourteenth-Century Chanson', *Music and Letters*, 84:3 (2003), 355-377 (p. 355).

<sup>24</sup> Vassiliki Koutsobina, 'Readings of poetry – readings of music: intertextuality in Josquin's *Je me plains de mon amy*', *Early Music*, 36:1 (2008), 67-80 (p. 67).

<sup>25</sup> Rob Wegman, 'Another "Imitation" of Busnoys's Missa *L'Homme armé* – and some Observations on *Imitatio* in Renaissance Music', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 114 (1989), 189-202 (pp. 199-200).

<sup>26</sup> John Milsom, "'Imitatio", "'intertextuality", and early music', in *Citation and authority in medieval and Renaissance musical culture: learning from the learned*, ed. by Suzannah Clarke and Elizabeth Eva Leach (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 141-51 (p. 142): Milsom refers to literary theory in general, the most important example in this context being Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez and trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice A. Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

<sup>27</sup> J. Michael Allsen, 'Intertextuality and Compositional Process in Two Cantilena Motets by Hugo de Lantins', *Journal of Musicology*, 11:2 (1993), 174-202 (p. 175).

<sup>28</sup> David Crook, *Orlando di Lasso's imitation Magnificats for Counter-Reformation Munich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 156.

Messiaen's intertextual references are frequently divorced from this 'larger universe of discourse',<sup>29</sup> however, by the constant use of unique and highly personalized musical gestures, normally involving two specific features. Firstly, both in the score and in prefaces and other primary sources, textual citation is theological, referring directly to biblical passages and the work of Messiaen's favourite theologians. Secondly, Messiaen's allusions to quotations of musical material are almost entirely self-referential.<sup>30</sup>

What may have started either as Messiaen's deliberate citation of harmonic progressions with allusion to certain theological concepts, or as a compositional borrowing simply because a certain chord or passage lay conveniently in the memory of his fingers, by the 1960s had become such a constituent part of *son-couleur*, so ingrained within Messiaen's musical language, that isolated incidents of intertextual quotation had become subsumed in an all-embracing texture which constantly refers to, and reuses material from, other works. Berryman has made a case for the way in which such a complex musical language is nevertheless able to make a theological statement,<sup>31</sup> whilst Schloesser has investigated how this music is successfully able to capture the mystical.<sup>32</sup> Thus, imbued with theological and coloured meaning, a chord refers both backwards, to its distant predecessors, and forwards to other works, in a system which transcends boundaries of genre and instrumentation. In this metalanguage, each aspect woven into the fabric *is* the tapestry: '... and the tapestry *was* the world',<sup>33</sup> where in Remedios Varo's surrealist painting *Bordando el manto terrestre* (Illustration 5.1), *everything* is wrapped amongst the folds of the cloth.<sup>34</sup>

*Accords spéciaux* are imbued with symbolic meaning. Chords such as CTI 1B or CTI 4B become so common in Messiaen's music, so structurally important, that they must surely have a special significance for the composer. Is this because their colour-associations were particularly striking to him? Do these chords and their transposition levels above the bass note carry a special theological meaning? Or perhaps Messiaen favoured their especially alluring sounds? Ultimately, did Messiaen the organist simply find them especially pleasing to grasp under his fingers? Perhaps all of these reasons are true.

One of the best examples in the organ music of Messiaen using his most-favoured *accords spéciaux* is to be found in the birdsong writing of *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, where the harmonic content frequently resorts to familiar colour-chord shapes and harmonies. In 'Puer natus est nobis' the dense harmony and upper resonance of the colour-chords become fully integrated within *style oiseau*. The use of chords such as TC, CTC and CTI could easily have stemmed from the composer's hands forming familiar shapes during improvisation (Example 5.1). Yet there are far deeper processes in operation here, for the birdsong and Gregorian chant become intermingled: the characteristic rising 5<sup>th</sup> of the opening of the chant underpins the songs of the Bulbul des jardins and the Tourterelle maillée, transporting us to Judea, and which Messiaen notated in Ein Gedi, most likely in April, 1984.<sup>35</sup> Messiaen's intention is to incorporate into his music the birdsong which Jesus himself would have heard, harmonized by coloured light.

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Hatten, 'The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies', *The American Journal of Semiotics*, iii/4 (1985), 69–82, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Exceptions include Messiaen's use of harmonies by composers such as Berg, Debussy and Ravel.

<sup>31</sup> Berryman, pp. 238–239.

<sup>32</sup> Schloesser, pp. 166–170.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Bantam, 1966), p. 21, describing *Bordando el manto terrestre* by Remedios Varo (my italics).

<sup>34</sup> Janet A. Kaplan, *Viajes Inesperados: El Arte y la Vida de Remedios Varo*, trans. by Amalia Martín-Gamero (Madrid: Fundación Banco Exterior, 1988), p. 21: 'todos arropados entre los pliegues de la tela'.

<sup>35</sup> Messiaen's second visit to Israel is documented in Hill and Simeone, p. 345.



ILLUSTRATION 5.1: Remedios Varo Uranga (1908-1963), *Bordando el manto terrestre* (1961), oil on masonite, central panel of a triptych, Colección particular, México (formerly owned by Germán García)<sup>36</sup> Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (Colección Isabel Gruen Varsoviano)

EXAMPLE 5.1: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'Puer natus est nobis', 32/3/1 & 33/2

32/3/1 TC 33/2/last 3 chords - 33/3 CTC 8 CT1 2

10B 10C 3B 3C D A

(Un peu vif) (Hypolaïs des oliviers)

*mf*

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This birdsong is coloured overwhelmingly with a few favoured transposition levels of the composer's unique *accords spéciaux*, immediately confirming their associations with the colour and light which sparkles with the joy of the Christian message. Susan Landale, discussing the function of birdsong in 'La joie de la grâce', writes:

<sup>36</sup> Remedios Varo, *Catálogo Razonado*, ed. by Ricardo Ovalle and Walter Gruen (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, Fourth Edition, 2008), p. 253.

Messiaen entrusts to [birds] the task of ‘expressing the inexpressible’; it is not by chance that at the moment of the Communion – the most sublime moment of all – that the composer effaces himself and leaves it to his little winged companions to express the exaltation and the joy of the Christian soul in communion with its Lord.<sup>37</sup>

In the realm of French organ music for Pentecost, this notion of intertextuality is by no means unique to Messiaen, and may be traced within the repertoires of the *Grand Siècle*. The *Livre d’orgue* of Nicolas de Grigny exhibits at least five principal influences: structurally drawing upon the expectations of the *Caeremoniale Parisiense* and the layout of Nivers’ *Deuxième Livre*, whilst showing at least some stylistic traits of his teachers Lebègue and Raison. Grigny makes use of extended quotation from Muffat’s *Apparatus musico-organisticus*, yet the most interesting examples of Grigny’s quotation concern three examples from the *Premier Livre d’orgue* and *Second Livre d’orgue* of Jacques Boyvin.

The ‘Duo’ on the 5<sup>th</sup> tone of Boyvin’s *Premier Livre d’orgue* shapes the fugue subject of Grigny’s ‘Dialogue’ in *Veni Creator* (Example 5.2).

EXAMPLE 5.2: Thematic similarities between Jacques Boyvin and Nicolas de Grigny - I

Jacques Boyvin, *Premier Livre d’orgue*: ‘Duo’ on the 5<sup>th</sup> tone, b. 1



Nicolas de Grigny, *Premier Livre d’orgue*: *Veni Creator*, ‘Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux’



The ‘Dialogue de voix humaine’ from the *Premier livre d’orgue* of Boyvin is transformed by Grigny into the climax of the ‘Récit de Cromhorne’ in the *Veni Creator* (Example 5.3).

EXAMPLE 5.3: Thematic similarities between Boyvin and Grigny - II

Boyvin, ‘Dialogue de voix humaine’, *Premier livre d’orgue* b. 22-27



Grigny, ‘Récit de Cromhorne’



<sup>37</sup> Susan Landale, ‘Olivier Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*’, *L’orgue*, 224 (1992), 24-42 (p. 28).



The closing bars of Grigny's 'Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux' from the *Veni Creator* bear a remarkable resemblance to the 'Prelude' of the *Suite du Sixième Ton* of Boyvin's *Second Livre d'orgue*. Both pieces make a feature of sequential 9-8 suspensions above B $\flat$  and A. The spacing is identical, as is the concluding cadence (Example 5.4).

EXAMPLE 5.4 Thematic similarities between Boyvin and Grigny – III

Grigny, *Veni Creator*, 'Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux' b. 80-86

Boyvin, *Second Livre d'orgue*  
*Suite du Sixième Ton*, 'Prelude' b. 6-8

Boyvin, *Second Livre d'orgue*  
*Suite du Sixième Ton*  
'Prelude' b. 21-24

Art such as this, made up of innumerable references to other works can be rich in resonance. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* seems to plunder the history of literature in order to weave meanings from the text, demanding from the reader an intimate knowledge of the canon in order to apprehend the references, and thus understand the message. By 1927, Eliot had been baptised and confirmed and set about writing *Journey of the Magi*, which derives much of its rich imagery from the paraphrasing of a sermon of 1622 by Lancelot Andrewes. Eliot delighted in the literary style of his seventeenth century model, highlighting the fact that 'Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess'.<sup>38</sup> Discussing the religious and poetic functions of symbolism, in 1931 Eliot wrote:

To find the word and give it the utmost meaning, in its place; to mean as many things as possible, to make it both exact and comprehensive [...] this is surely the mastery at which the poet aims'.<sup>39</sup>

Applying this sentiment to musical gesture, we may come close to an understanding of how Messiaen deliberately imbues individual sonorities with rich meaning across his constellation of mature works. In Eliot's *East Coker*, itself both parody and paraphrase, the desire to imbue the signifier with exact and comprehensive meaning elicits self-

<sup>38</sup> T. S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes: essays on style and order* (London: Doubleday, Doran and company, 1929), p. 15, and reproduced in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 347-348.

<sup>39</sup> T. S. Eliot, writing in 1931 and cited by Robin Griffith-Jones in 'Travelling to another death', *The Church Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2006; also cited in Eric Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot: A Study of the Early Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 73.

criticism and renewed attempts at success: 'That was a way of putting it – not very satisfactory'.<sup>40</sup> Eliot draws attention to Andrewes' methods, which 'make an obscure passage suddenly luminous'.<sup>41</sup> This revisiting of ideas brings dramatic weight:

You say I am repeating  
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.  
Shall I say it again?<sup>42</sup>

Messiaen likewise, through his repetition of specific sonorities and thematic material, constantly makes us hear the same idea, in myriad contexts. In *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, his final work for organ, this is spelt out for us using the *langage communicable* at the climax of the final piece: 'LA JOIE'.<sup>43</sup> For Gillian Weir, Messiaen's secret is this proclamation of the joy of the Christian message.<sup>44</sup>

The use of repetition throughout the *Four Quartets* of T.S. Eliot, themselves a reference to musical form, highlights the constant reworking and the disintegration of the writer's earlier ideas which develops a 'glimpsed incarnational redemption',<sup>45</sup> where these glimpses have much in common with the notion of Messiaen's *visions, regards, and éclairs*. This technique of the poet to fuse disparate elements to create a powerful, unified message, exhibits strong parallels with the musical language of Messiaen, and the description of Eliot's writing as 'the intersection of the temporal by the timeless; the integration of past with present',<sup>46</sup> applies just as appropriately to the composer. It is, however, important not to read too much into the musical symbolism of the music: 'score analysis should be combined with evidence from Messiaen's writings and biography, church and theological history, and French intellectual and musical cultures'.<sup>47</sup> With the assembly of many of these factors, however, an understanding of this music may be built which is able to inform a realistic interpretation of Messiaen's message.

Musical material from *Harawi*, *Turangalîla*, and *Cinq rechants* sounds again in later music,<sup>48</sup> and this self-quotation is used symbolically in *Messe de la Pentecôte*. For example, 'Offertoire' quotes the phrase 'pieuvre de lumière blesse foule rose ma caresse' from the third movement of *Cinq rechants*, and the brief cadenza in 'Sortie' before the skylarks sing (ACD11-0:42) is an exact quotation from *Turangalîla* II,<sup>49</sup> also used in 'Offertoire' on p. 7.<sup>50</sup> The space occupied by *Messe de la Pentecôte* therefore functions as a palimpsest, with earlier texts effaced and submerged. In the words of Barthes:

The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the 'stereographic plurality' of its weave of signifiers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: 1963), p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 347.

<sup>42</sup> Eliot, 'East Coker'.

<sup>43</sup> *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, p. 162.

<sup>44</sup> Weir, 'Organ Music II', p. 386.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Mackenzie, *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. by Adrian Hastings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 199.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Robert Fallon, review in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 63:2 (2010), 378-392 (pp. 391-2).

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, p. 101.

<sup>49</sup> Nichols, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> Ingrid Hohlfeld-Ufer, *Die Musikalische Sprache Olivier Messiaens: Dargest. an D. Orgelzyklus Die Pfingstmesse* (Duisburg: Gilles & Francke, 1978), p. 78.

<sup>51</sup> Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, p. 159.

It is true that there are moments in the mass which sound like improvisation, particularly in ‘Communion’, where ‘anything more like composition at this solemn moment in the liturgy would be an impertinence’.<sup>52</sup> Yet the harmonic material exhibits a clear sense of organization,<sup>53</sup> and this unexpected blend of content engages the curious listener. Throughout the mass, cyclic features embrace themes, motives and birdsong.<sup>54</sup> Gillian Weir describes ingredients for *Messe* as ‘a collage of his techniques and obsessions, with birdsong, waterdrops, plainsong, imaginative registrations, serialization in various forms and Greek and Hindu rhythms treated in new ways’.<sup>55</sup> All of this forms a written account of ideas the composer was formulating in the years leading up to the finished composition. In 1948, for example, Messiaen had planned his improvisations for *Matins du Monde* to include ‘a mysterious alternation in staccato notes like drops of water [...] distant and tender. Birdsong on some piquant mixtures’.<sup>56</sup> Julien Green described a radio broadcast of Messiaen improvising at La Trinité in 1949 as ‘cataracts of strange noises which dazzled the ear’,<sup>57</sup> and it became inevitable that these ideas should eventually crystallize into a formal composition:

One day I realised [these improvisations] tired me out and that I was emptying all my substance into them. I then wrote the *Messe de la Pentecôte*, which is a résumé of all my collected improvisations. Since writing this piece I’ve never improvised.<sup>58</sup>

Concerning the nature of his own improvisations at the midday Mass in the late 1940s Messiaen explained in greater detail the genesis of *Messe de la Pentecôte* in *Traité IV*:

...these improvisations gradually became ‘one’ improvisation, always forgotten, always found again, and always repeated: the terrifying groans of the Beast of the Apocalypse alternating with the songs of thrushes and blackbirds, the sounds of the water and of the wind in the trees with the religious meditation and the storms of joy of the Holy Spirit. Hindu rhythms were mixed with the neumes of plainchant, choirs of larks with Tibetan trumpets....the strangest and the most shimmering sounds were alongside the clearest permutations or rhythmic interversions. The known and the unknown were both to be found there, the visible and the invisible, the world of men and the world of angels [...] Without being my best work, it is without doubt the one which is closest to my true nature, and the only one intended entirely for my organ at the Trinité (of which it uses all the timbres and their combinations), since it had been improvised many times there, during the years 1948 and 1949. I wrote it down on manuscript paper in 1950. Then I gave up improvising altogether.<sup>59</sup>

The intended function was for low mass on Pentecost Sunday at La Trinité; the role of the organ here is identical to that of Tournemire’s performances at Sainte-Clotilde during the 1920s and 1930s and preserved as *L’orgue mystique*, which Messiaen used as a formal model. The *titulaire* was to perform or improvise five pieces from the *Grand Orgue* punctuating the liturgy: *Introït*, *Offertoire*, *Elevation*, *Communion*, *Sortie*. Three of these, the

<sup>52</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 157.

<sup>53</sup> Hohlfeld-Ufer, p. 33: ‘Das harmonische Material [...] ist in einer bestimmten Weise “organisiert”’.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> Weir, ‘Organ Music II’, p. 354.

<sup>56</sup> Olivier Messiaen, ‘Note de travail pour l’accompagnement musical de Matins du Monde à l’Église de la Trinité’, in Roger Michael, *Matins du Monde* (Paris: Éditions Bourdas, 1949), pp. 109-112, and reproduced in Simeone, ‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’, p. 50.

<sup>57</sup> Julien Green, *Journal*, Vol. 5: *Le Revenant*, and cited in Simeone, ‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel, *Permanences d’Olivier Messiaen*, p. 31, and cited also in Gillock, p. 143.

<sup>59</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 83, trans. by Simeone in ‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’, p. 48.

*Introït*, *Offertoire*, and *Communion* replaced the respective propers of the day, whilst at the *Elevation* and *Sortie* the organ also made its contribution. By 1945 the midday mass on Sundays at La Trinité had been created, at which Messiaen played modern music,<sup>60</sup> contrasting with his earlier position, when, writing solely to secure his appointment at La Trinité, he had undertaken ‘not to disturb the piety of the faithful’.<sup>61</sup> Yet *Messe de la Pentecôte* does precisely this, awakening us from complacency in ‘Sortie’ with the rushing wind of the Spirit, and beguiling us with birdsong, water droplets and vivid colours in ‘Communion’. The crashing chords of ‘Sortie’ do nothing less than ‘overwhelm with the glory and magnificence of God’,<sup>62</sup> whilst the colour-chords of ‘Communion’ present us with *éblouissement*, in which ‘a window is thrown open on another world’.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. ‘At 12 o’clock I was allowed to play my own music; it was then that I played my Pentecost Mass. It was always a Low Mass and I played the whole time’ (Messiaen’s words to Almut Rößler, and cited in Rößler, *Contributions*, p. 137).

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Curé Hemmer, written at Fuligny on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1931, and translated in Simeone, ‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’, pp. 41-42; cited also in Dingle, *The life of Messiaen*, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen’s Final Works*, p. 30, discussing the monumentality of works such as *La Transfiguration*, but applying equally well here, in the context of effects such as the closing chord of *Messe de la Pentecôte*.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 28.



The dove descending breaks the air  
 With flame of incandescent terror  
 Of which the tongues declare  
 The one discharge from sin and error.  
 The only hope, or else despair  
 Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre -  
 To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
 Love is the unfamiliar Name  
 Behind the hands that wove the intolerable shirt of flame  
 Which human power cannot remove.  
 We only live, only suspire  
 Consumed by either fire or fire.

And all shall be well and  
 All manner of thing shall be well  
 When the tongues of flames are in-folded into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one.<sup>1</sup>

### TRACK 10 - 'COMMUNION (LES OISEAUX ET LES SOURCES) (MESSE DE LA PENTECÔTE): A MOSAIC OF QUOTATION

In his musical equivalence of the universality of the Mass (and perhaps more so than in any other of his compositions), this movement makes plentiful reference to themes and harmonies Messiaen had already used elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> 'Communion' opens with an abstract bird-call (ACD10-0:02), 'appel d'un oiseau idéal, héraut printanier qui ouvre le paysage',<sup>3</sup> which Messiaen quotes directly from *Technique* (Example 5.5).<sup>4</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.5: *Technique* II, p. 12, Ex. E



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The nightingale in 'Communion' (17/4/3 ACD10-0:45) is taken from 'Jardin du sommeil d'amour' of *Turangalîla*.<sup>5</sup> The counterpoint of birds and water droplets also draws upon pre-existing material. Example 5.6, again from *Technique*, demonstrates the origin of the birdsong of 'Communion' (18/1/1 ACD10-1:00), which quotes firstly only the rhythm of the birdsong example of *Technique*, but subsequently also the melody.

EXAMPLE 5.6: *Technique* II, p. 12, Ex. F



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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding'.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 193, which acknowledges the proliferation of self-quotation in this movement.

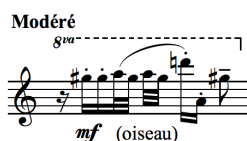
<sup>3</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 109: 'idealized bird-call, herald of spring, which opens the scene'.

<sup>4</sup> This is noted in Robert Sholl, 'Olivier Messiaen and the Avant-Garde Poetics of the *Messe de la Pentecôte*', in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. by A. Shenton, pp. 199-222 (p. 202, n. 13), without exploring the astonishing fact that this fragment (unused in any other context) therefore pre-dates *Messe de la Pentecôte* by six years.

<sup>5</sup> 'Communion', *Un peu vif* (17/4/3) quotes the piano solo of 'Jardin du sommeil d'amour' (*Turangalîla-Symphonie* VI, 239/1/1, *comme un chant d'oiseau*).

‘Communion’ (18/5/2 ACD10-1:31) indicates the song of the blackbird, which is a quotation from ‘Île de feu 1’ (Example 5.8).

EXAMPLE 5.7: *Quatre études de rythme*, ‘Île de feu 1’, 1/3/2



The two chords at ‘Communion’ 17/3/1 ACD10-0:17 find their origin in *Harawi*, I ‘La ville qui dormait, toi’ (Example 5.8), and are registered here with the spiritual symbolism of *Gambe* and *Voix céleste*.

EXAMPLE 5.8: *Harawi*, I ‘La ville qui dormait, toi’, 3/2/2

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The use of the ‘Theme of Chords’ in *Harawi* is linked to, and anticipates, the first appearance of new motto chords,<sup>6</sup> heard throughout the late 1940s and 1950s: Let us call them the ‘Regard’ Chords. These are used, for example, in the piano part of *Turangalila-symphonie*, ‘Chant d’amour 2’, 121/1/2, and 160/3/3 (which also uses the concentrated ‘Theme of Chords’), and 160/7/2 which uses these ‘Regard’ Chords. In ‘Neumes rythmiques’, the first of these two ‘Regard’ Chords is used on the final semiquaver of 7/2/1. In Example 5.9 we note their subsequent use with CCR to colour ‘La rousserolle effarvate’, and in Example 5.10 to colour the *Merle bleu* in ‘Le traquet rieur’.

EXAMPLE 5.9: *Catalogue d’oiseaux*, Book 4, VII ‘La rousserolle effarvate’, 15/1/2

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *Traité* III, p. 283.

EXAMPLE 5.10: 'Le traquet rieur', 3/4/1

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The subsequent extension in 'Communion' of these two 'Regard' chords ('Communion' 17/3/3 ACD10-0:28) is a direct quotation of the passage designated *Linéacourbârasa* in *Cantéyodjayâ*. This chord sequence was originally used at three points in *Visions de l'amen*: in 'Amen des étoiles', 'Amen du jugement', and in 'Amen de la consommation', where it forms a 'harmonic carillon'.<sup>7</sup> Messiaen indicates in *Traité* that it is a combination of mode 2 harmony above a pedal, followed by dominant ninths.<sup>8</sup> In 'Communion', this goal of dominant ninth underpins the call of the cuckoo (ACD10-0:34).<sup>9</sup> Example 5.11 demonstrates the further use of this sequence in *Le merle noir*, where it is preceded by CCR.

EXAMPLE 5.11: *Le merle noir*, 3/1/2

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*Le merle noir* dates from March 1952,<sup>10</sup> and together with the final pieces of *Livre d'orgue* completed during the same period, marks the transition from rhythmic experimentation to the realism of birdsong.<sup>11</sup> *Le merle noir* introduces 1<sup>st</sup> CCR at two transposition levels which later become important in *Catalogue*, where the use of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 9 eclipses all other transpositions, with this progression being heard in reverse in 'La bouscarle' (21/4/2). These chords are used with more long-range purpose at the climax of *Méditations*, where God proclaims 'Je suis', first with CCR 9 (77/1/3), and finally with CCR 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Traité* III, p. 273: 'carillon harmonique'.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 268.

<sup>9</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 110. In *Traité* IV, p. 111, Messiaen also points out (on page 18 of the score) the reduction of the call of the cuckoo from a descending third to a single note.

<sup>10</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.



## MESSIAEN'S USE OF *ACCORDS SPÉCIAUX* IN 'COMMUNION'

The introduction of colour chords in 'Communion' is directly preceded by two modal quotations: *Vif* (20/1/1 ACD10-2:40) refashions the music of *Cinq rechants* III, 'ma robe d'amour mon amour ma prison d'amour faite d'air léger' (15/1/1),<sup>12</sup> whilst 'Communion' 20/1/3 ACD10-2:49 utilizes harmony from *Harawi* V, 'Piroutcha' (30/2/2), and 'pour toi' (30/3/1). Then commencing at 20/3/3 ACD10-3:00 (Example 5.12), Messiaen dazzles us on the strings of the *Récit* by rapidly turning the music through 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> CCR 3, and CTI 3. Whilst the score indicates *Vif*, Messiaen's own recording (3:26) takes this passage at a very leisurely pace.<sup>13</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.12: *Messe de la Pentecôte*, 'Communion', 20/3/3 ACD10-3:00

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With the composition of *Harawi* in 1945, colour associations were to become explicit from the text, such as the colours to be found in Example 5.13.

EXAMPLE 5.13: *Harawi*, V 'L'amour de Piroutcha', 32/2/2

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Thus from *Harawi* onwards, specifically intended colours (rather than merely the brightness of light) begin to appear with the colour-chords, and Example 5.13 shows just one example of CCR used to set a multi-coloured text.<sup>14</sup> The progression in the second bar of Example 5.13 is also used with TC in the fourth song 'Doundou tchil' setting the text 'Arc-en-ciel, mon souffle, mon echo, ton regard est revenu', and cited in *Traité*.<sup>15</sup> The use of material such as this in 'Communion' must clearly have also brought with it the vivid colour-associations which were forming in the mind of the composer.

<sup>12</sup> 'My clothing of love, my love, my prison of love, made from thin air'.

<sup>13</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même* - EMI CZS 7 67400 2 - Disc 4, Track 4. These dense harmonies certainly require space to 'breathe', and Messiaen did not rush his interpretation of these significant colour-chords.

<sup>14</sup> The earlier appearance in the song of this music one tone higher at 31/1/1 is discussed, together with the treatment of the word 'rouge' with CCR, in *Traité* III, pp. 291-291.

<sup>15</sup> *Traité* III, p. 289.

As in ‘Communion’, towards the end of ‘Le traquet stapazin’, Messiaen again dazzles us by turning the harmony through 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CCR, followed by CTI, once more commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8 (Example 5.14). These harmonies depict the final moments of the sunset,<sup>16</sup> where the colours indicated in the score correspond closely to the colours of the chord tables in *Traité VII*.

EXAMPLE 5.14: *Catalogue d’oiseaux*, Book 2, IV ‘Le traquet stapazin’, 26/1/1

The musical score for 'Le traquet stapazin' features three distinct harmonic sections. The first section, labeled '1st. CCR 8', consists of two measures with sub-sections 'A' and 'B'. The second section, '2nd. CCR 8', also has two measures with sub-sections 'A' and 'B'. The third section, 'CTI 11', has two measures with sub-sections 'A' and 'B'. The piano part is marked 'mf' and '(rêveur, contemplatif)'. The harp part is marked 'Très lent (♩=40)'. The score includes performance instructions: '(rouge, orange, et violet du ciel, au dessus de la montagne)' and 'Très lent (♩=40)'. The piano part ends with ten 'Led' markings.

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Yet the antecedents for the use of *accords spéciaux* in ‘Communion’ at 20/3/3 in Example 5.12 may be traced back further than the developing colour-associations of *Harawi*. The complete, ordered use of CTI 3 in ‘Communion’ at 20/3/3 may perhaps stem from the use in *Visions de l’amen* of CTI sequences lying one semitone above and below the bass note E<sub>b</sub>: CTI 4 on E may be heard in ‘Amen des anges’, 66/1/2, Piano I, and CTI 2 on D may be heard in ‘Amen du jugement’, 75/1/1, Piano II (Example 5.15), in which we also hear the use of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8.

EXAMPLE 5.15: Colour-chord use in *Visions de l’amen*: ‘Amen du jugement’

The musical score for 'Amen du jugement' features three distinct harmonic sections. The first section, labeled 'CDA 2', consists of four measures with sub-sections 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D'. The piano part is marked 'più f'. The harp part has four 'Led' markings, with the last one marked with an asterisk. The second section, '2nd CCR', consists of four measures with sub-sections '7A', 'B', '1A', and 'B'. The piano part is marked 'più f'. The harp part has four 'Led' markings, with the last one marked with an asterisk. The third section, '1st CCR', consists of three measures with sub-sections '8A', 'B', and '1A'. The piano part is marked 'più f'. The harp part has three 'Led' markings, with the last one marked with an asterisk.

<sup>16</sup> Loo, Vol. 1, pp. 24 and 164, and Vol. 2, pp. 33 and 214, points out that these chords form a harmonization of the [transposed] *Turungalila* theme (see also p. 132, below).

The choice of 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 8 and 2<sup>nd</sup> CCR 3 in ‘Communion’ was certainly prompted by Messiaen’s practice in *Harawi*. Example 5.16 demonstrates their use together, where different transpositions of CCR portray the brightness of the sky, whilst Examples 5.17 and 5.18 indicate moments when these transpositions are used individually within the prevailing CCR harmonic areas. In Example 5.18, note also the ‘harmonic litany’ D#-C#.

EXAMPLE 5.16: *Harawi*, VIII ‘Syllabes’, 56/1/1

7A B 1A B 9A B 3A B 1st CCR 8A B

Modéré, un peu vif

*f* O o mon ciel tu fleu - ris,

*f* *ff* *f* *ff*

Reo Reo Reo Reo Reo

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EXAMPLE 5.17: *Harawi*, IX ‘L’escalier redit, gestes du soleil’, 72/1/2

9A 11A 7A B 1st CCR 8A B

*p* *ff*

Ma pe - ti - te cen - dre tu es là, tes tem - pes

*p* *ff*

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EXAMPLE 5.18: *Harawi*, X ‘Amour oiseau d’étoile’, 87/3/2

1st CCR 9A B 3A B 4A B

*p* *dim.* *pp*

Mes mains, ton oeil, ton cou, le ciel.

*p* *dim.* *pp* *ppp*

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Fresh in the composer's mind when composing 'Communion', *Cinq rechants* was to provide a rich source of non-modal harmony, which he was able to quote freely, and without the need for transposition. Whilst *Cinq rechants* is primarily a secular work, the colour chords (with their implications of light, colour and theology) are very much in evidence. Messiaen responds to the challenge of writing for a *cappella* choir in a virtuosic manner, and it comes as no surprise that the composer should relish the opportunity to experiment with his recently devised, non-modal harmonies in this context. In the third movement, steeped in Arthurian legend, three transpositions of CTI resolving as appoggiaturas onto CD and descending by whole tones colour the mock-Hindu incantation. Three transpositions of CCR immediately follow, in a passage repeated harmonically but varied rhythmically (Example 5.19).

EXAMPLE 5.19: *Cinq rechants*, III 'Premier Couplet', 17/1/1

1st CCR 8 A B      2nd CCR 4 A B 5 A B      1st CCR 8 A B      2nd CCR 4 A B 5 A B

*1er Couplet*  
Vif *f*

S+A  
ou - mi an - nô - la ou - mi ou - mi an - nô - la ou - mi  
1st & 2nd Tenors

T+B  
cheu cheu ma - yo - ma ka - pri - ta - ma ka - li - mo - li - mo cheu cheu ma - yo - ma ka - pri - ta - ma ka - li - mo - li  
2nd & 3rd Basses + 3rd Tenors 1st Basses

CCR are also a feature of the 'Rechant' of the fifth movement, where the phrase 'tourne à mort' makes use of a 'harmonic litany' in the treble on the notes D# and C#. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CCR support this, and whilst these chords usually function in pairs, by the end of the phrase they become separated as the bass falls by step (Example 5.20).

EXAMPLE 5.20: *Cinq rechants*, V ('Rechant'), 39/2/1

1st CCR 9 A B      2nd CCR 3 A B      1st CCR 9 A      2nd CCR 3 B 4 B

*Rechant*  
Un peu vif (brutal) *ff*

S+A  
fleur du bour - don tour - ne tour - ne tourne à mort  
mort mort

T+B  
do - ka do do do do do ka

## THE SYMBOLISM OF ACCORDS SPÉCIAUX IN ‘COMMUNION’: THE DEPTHS OF GOD’S MERCY

Corresponding liturgically to ‘Communion’ in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘Prière après la communion’ also makes use of CTI 3 towards the close, with identical theological purpose (Example 5.21).<sup>17</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.21: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘Prière après la communion’, 141/1/1

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Again in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘Acte de Foi’ outlines the basis of Christian faith solely by means of *éblouissement*: a compendium of colour-chords glistening with light. One particular version of the Act of Faith makes explicit reference to the divine light and the hidden nature of God, themes which pervade Messiaen’s *Livre*:

I firmly believe, O my divine Jesus! that Thou art truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I believe that It really and substantially contains Thy Body and Blood, Thy Soul and Divinity. I acknowledge these truths; I believe these wonders; I adore the power that has wrought them, the same power that said: “Let there be light,” and light was made. Verily, Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.<sup>18</sup>

‘Acte de Foi’ is a riot of colour-chords, opening with CTI 4 on E<sub>♯</sub> placing rhythmic emphasis on CTI 4B (Example 5.22). A particular feature of Messiaen’s later style as evidenced in *Livre* is an increased importance of 2<sup>nd</sup> CCR, which throughout the earlier music receive relatively little attention.

EXAMPLE 5.22: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, ‘Acte de Foi’, 21/1/1

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<sup>17</sup> Note also the use of CTI 3 A and B in Example 5.23 with greatly differing registration and mood, but again with similar theological intent. See p. 132, below, for a discussion of the placing of the Communion Antiphon within the Tridentine Mass: Messiaen’s texts for both ‘Communion’ and ‘Prière après la communion’ are taken from the prayers of thanksgiving *after* mass.

<sup>18</sup> Sylvester P. Juergens, S. M., *Roman Sunday Missal* (Leeds: Laverly and Sons, 1966), pp. 428-429.

The use of CTI 3 in sequence in ‘Communion’ is recalled in the second bar of ‘Les mains de l’abîme’ in the same octave and spacing but omitting chords C and D from the sequence (Example 5.23). Written one year after *Messe de la Pentecôte* in 1951, ‘Les mains de l’abîme’ in *Livre d’orgue* evokes ‘the meandering of the Romanche River through the terrifying mountain pass of the gorges of the Infernet’,<sup>19</sup> placing ‘penitence, reverence, and vertigo before holiness’.<sup>20</sup> The techniques used in both works are closely linked: ‘In many respects, *Messe de la Pentecôte* functions as a preparatory compositional study for *Livre d’orgue*’.<sup>21</sup> In this example, the symbolism of the abyss of Habakuk resonates strongly with the symbolism of the burning, fiery furnace of Daniel evoked by ‘Communion’.

Messiaen explores ‘the two gulfs of human misery and divine pity’, where ‘the deep of mankind calls to the deep of God’.<sup>22</sup> In the words of Ernest Hello: ‘It is necessary that the very lowest abyss show, below man, death, so the abyss above may exhibit, higher than him, life’.<sup>23</sup> In other words, ‘suffering and evil are only terrible because there is good, which, to be good, must be more final than evil’.<sup>24</sup> In his discussion of the psalm *De profundis*, Hello not only refers to the mountains, but reminds us that the psalm is a celebration of God’s mercy.<sup>25</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.23: *Livre d’orgue*, III ‘Les mains de l’abîme’, 7/1/1

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A favourite technique of Messiaen from around this period is to create a harmonic area in which certain notes are deliberately avoided, and then finally sounded to complete the twelve-tone aggregate, for example most notoriously in ‘Offertoire’ of *Messe de la Pentecôte*. In Example 5.23, the ten different notes of both 1<sup>st</sup> CCR, when combined, omit just two notes of the chromatic scale: these are sounded in the pedal of the second bar in the

<sup>19</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 119.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Hohlfeld-Ufer, p. 26 (my translation): ‘In mancher Beziehung wirkt die Pfingstmesse wie eine Kompositorische Vorstudie zum *Livre d’Orgue*’.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 119.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., citing Ernest Hello.

<sup>24</sup> Pickstock, p. 195.

<sup>25</sup> Aloyse Michaely, *Die Musik Olivier Messiaens: Untersuchungen zum Gesamtschaffen* (Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1987), p. 662.

most obvious way possible. Yet how can it be that these pre-composed harmonies, which up until 1950 had been used to represent the brightness of light, the Beatific Vision, the glittering of stars, the lustre of the sun and multiple colours, are now used to portray the darkness of the abyss? Concerning *Vingt regards*, Messiaen writes that ‘*the Star and the Cross* have the same theme because the one opens and the other closes the earthly sojourn of Jesus’.<sup>26</sup> The theme recalling the opening of Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* and cited by Messiaen in *Technique*<sup>27</sup> is already used joyfully in *La Nativité*, and sets the word ‘*étoile*’ in the first movement of *Poèmes pour Mi*.<sup>28</sup> Yet by the time of *Quatuor*, this theme is marked *désolé* in ‘*Abîme des oiseaux*’, evoking ‘the solitude and loneliness of the abyss’,<sup>29</sup> whilst ‘a similar mood is created by its use in “*Amen de l’agonie de Jésus*” in *Visions de l’amen*, where it is used to express the despair and solitude of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane’.<sup>30</sup> Thus *Star and Cross* have the ability to depict both joy and abyss, and Messiaen’s use of CTI chords originally depicting both the brightness of the flames of the burning, fiery furnace and the heights of the skylark from *Messe de la Pentecôte*, here in the darkness of ‘*Les mains de l’abîme*’ is but the other side of the same coin once more. ‘*Les mains de l’abîme*’ quotes Habakuk 3. 10: ‘*L’abîme a jeté son cri! La profondeur a levé ses deux mains!*’ Yet in this darkness, the surrounding verses contain a stark contrast: ‘and his brightness was as the light’; ‘the sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear’.<sup>31</sup> This symbolism of the abyss therefore encompasses, for Messiaen, both misery and mercy, in equal measure:

‘*L’Abîme appelle l’Abîme*’ dit le Psaume 42 dans un verset célèbre. *L’Abîme* de la misère humaine appelle *l’Abîme* de la Miséricorde Divine. ‘Ce qui est en haut est comme ce qui est en bas’, a dit encore le dieu égyptien Toth, celui que les Grecs appelaient Hermès Trismégiste. Désolation, Consolation: *Abîme* des deux parts. Tout en bas, la lente et longue supplication de l’homme [...] Tout en haut, la réponse Divine: [...] au dessus des hauteurs, exquisement cachée.<sup>32</sup>

In both ‘*Strophe*’ sections of *Chronochromie*, Messiaen layers various transpositions of TC, CTI and CCR. These passages might suggest that there is ‘no obvious indication that any particular transposition was favoured over another’.<sup>33</sup> Yet such an arbitrary choice of harmonies denies the interaction of the implied colour-associations and the preferences Messiaen demonstrates elsewhere for certain transpositions, and would appear contrary to his usually meticulous planning. There are two striking features of Example 5.24, however, which would imply Messiaen’s favouring of certain transposition levels. Firstly, the use of a complete, ordered CTI sequence on E $\flat$  (recalling ‘*Communion*’ of *Messe de la Pentecôte*, ACD10-3:02) which coincides with a complete statement of TC 5, whilst elsewhere the transpositions of TC and CCR sequences are fractured and do not appear in their normal groupings. Secondly, CTI 4B, first heard in ‘*L’ange aux parfums*’, which possesses the simplest and arguably the most numinous colour association (white and gold), is stressed by its significant duration.

<sup>26</sup> *Vingt regards*, Messiaen’s second preface, cited in Atherton, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> *Technique* I, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Atherton, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Habakkuk 3. 4, 11 (King James Bible).

<sup>32</sup> *Traité* III, p. 191.

<sup>33</sup> Amy Bauer, ‘The Impossible Charm of Messiaen’s *Chronochromie*’, in *Messiaen Studies*, ed. by R. Sholl, pp. 145-167 (p. 155).

Thus Messiaen makes distinct compositional choices, solely based upon the linear stratification of *son-couleur*. The progression of CTI 3 provides a central band of mauves and violets, underpinned by the golds, yellows and orange of the individual CCR, glowing with a halo of TC in red and gold.<sup>34</sup> An exchange occurs towards the end of the example: as CTI reach the white and gold of chord 4B, the TC choices deepen to violet and blue.

EXAMPLE 5.24: *Chronochromie*, 'Strophe I' 47/1/2 – 51/1/1 (string parts only)

The musical score for Example 5.24 is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 47/1/2 to 51/1/1) features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Above the Violin I staff, a bracket labeled '8<sup>me</sup>' spans the first two measures. Chord labels above the staves include TC 6A, 5B, 5A, and 5B. CTI labels include CTI 3A, 3B, 3C, and 3D. CCR labels include 1st CCR 12B, 10A, 9B, 6A, and 11B. Dynamics are marked as *mf pp* and *pp*. The second system (measures 51/1/1 to 51/1/1) features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Chord labels above the staves include 5B, 5C, 9A, 1A, 1C, 6C, 4B, 8D, 4B, 5A, and 7B. Dynamics are marked as *mf pp* and *pp*.

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<sup>34</sup> Discerned by comparing the labelled chords of Example 5.24 with the colour descriptions of the chord-tables in *Traité VII*, pp 142 – 172.



Whilst the mauve and violet of CTI 3 colours the burning, fiery furnace of *Messe de la Pentecôte* and the interversions of *Chronochromie*, the circular sequence of Example 5.25 unites these harmonies with the *Dhenkêz*, which Messiaen equated to the Greek Amphimacer or *Crétique* rhythm.<sup>35</sup> It is ‘the oldest, the simplest, and the most natural of the non-retrogradable rhythms’.<sup>36</sup> Messiaen was later to use the idea of non-retrogradation and rhythmic symmetry to portray the divinity of God,<sup>37</sup> and this magical symmetry of all that is non-retrogradable is, for Messiaen, a symbol of eternity:

...this moment which I live, this thought which crosses my mind, this movement which I accomplish, this time which I beat, before and after lies eternity: it is a non-retrogradable rhythm.<sup>38</sup>

In this example, the circularity exists in both rhythm and harmony, thus colouring the idea of eternity, which on a higher formal level creates the concept that ‘L’œuvre ne terminant pas plus qu’elle n’a commencé, mais tournant sur elle-même comme une rosace de couleurs flamboyantes et invisible...’<sup>39</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.25: *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, 28/1/2, (piano only)

The image shows a musical score for piano. At the top, it is labeled 'CTI 3' and shows a sequence of five chords labeled A, B, C, D, and A. Below this, the piano part is written in a single system with two staves. The upper staff has a 'crétique' rhythm indicated above it. The lower staff is marked 'Piano' and 'f'. The score is in 28/1/2 time and features complex harmonic textures.

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Complete, ordered CTI 3 sequences are also to be heard frequently in *Saint François* (such as in Example 5.26), propelling the action forwards with both its tonal direction and vivid colour-associations: we know mauve and violet to be Messiaen’s favourite colours, not least because of their predominance for the distant viewer of stained glass as a result of the mingling of red and blue light. It should therefore be no surprise that CTI 3 is a favourite transposition level for Messiaen, not least in ‘Communion’ of *Messe de la Pentecôte*.

<sup>35</sup> Wu, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> *Traité* I, pp. 288-289.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Darbyshire, p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup> *Traité* VII, p. 218, which cites the composer’s preface to the score: ‘The work neither finishes, nor did it commence, but turns on itself like an invisible rose window of flamboyant colours...’.

EXAMPLE 5.26: *Saint François*, Act II, 4: ‘L’ange voyageur’,  
RN25, 6-9 (33/1/3, strings only)

The musical score is for strings only, marked 'Modéré, un peu vif (♩=126)'. It consists of four measures labeled A, B, C, and D, which form a Coda section. The instrumentation includes 1st Violin (solo 1, 2; solo 3; 4), 2nd Violin (1, 2; 3, 4), Viola 1, and Cello 1. The key signature is B-flat major. The score shows various dynamics (mf, p) and articulations (accents, slurs).

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### TOUS LES PHILTRES SONT BUS CE SOIR

‘Communion’ concludes with a theme and its associated harmonies heard in *Cinq rechants*, with the text ‘tous les philtres sont bus ce soir [encor]’.<sup>40</sup> Two moments in ‘Communion’ (20/6/1 ACD10-3:22 and 21/3/1 ACD10-3:54) quote the Coda of the third movement of *Cinq rechants* (*Lent, caressant*, 29/1/1). Whilst the original textual association concerns the love potions of the Tristan myth, here Messiaen alludes to the life-giving power of God’s love for us available in the mass:

...the “love theme” [...] is to be found in the coda of the third movement of *Cinq rechants*. Communion is, for the Christian, the consummation of divine love through the Eucharist, so [...] the ‘love theme’ is employed to symbolize both human and divine love.<sup>41</sup>

At 20/6/1 the use of E major brings with it Messiaen’s associations with Christ’s Glory as the music turns through all three transpositions of mode 2; Eucharistic totality is implied as the final line unfolds the total chromatic.<sup>42</sup> In *Catalogue d’oiseaux* Messiaen also makes use of this ‘love theme’ in ‘Le loriot’ (10/1/1). This a coded reference to Yvonne Loriod,<sup>43</sup> marked ‘nonchalant - souvenir d’or et d’arc-en-ciel’, where this recollection of gold and of the rainbow also refers to two of his favoured visual symbols of heavenly life.

<sup>40</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 194. Ultimately, this theme draws upon the ‘love theme’ of *Turangalila* (Hill and Simeone, p. 182). Messiaen’s text translates as ‘all the love potions are drunk [anew] this evening’.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 113: the ascending r.h. figure of the final line builds the notes of the total chromatic which are absent from the symmetry of the l.h. diminished seventh.

<sup>43</sup> Hill and Simeone, p. 230.



*Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,  
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeined score  
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour  
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.<sup>1</sup>*

*Earth! Earth! Shout your name!  
Like the sailors of Columbus  
Drunk on laughter, drunk on life  
Carried naked by the wind on the open sea  
Before their chances of greatness.<sup>2</sup>*

### TRACK 11- 'SORTIE (LE VENT DE L'ESPRIT)' (MESSE DE LA PENTECÔTE): DIVINE LIGHT IN RESONANCE, SKYLARKS, AND TIBETAN TRUMPETS

On Pentecost Sunday, 1951, Messiaen first performed movements of his newly composed mass. The formidable, tempestuous blast was to symbolize the irresistible power of spiritual life:<sup>3</sup>

The 'sortie' entitled 'Le Vent de l'Esprit' uses a text from the Acts of the Apostles: 'A powerful wind from heaven filled the entire house'. A 'fortissimo', at first very violent, rises up in rapid swirls, like a chorus of larks as a symbol of joy.<sup>4</sup>

#### A MOTTO THEME LINKING 'COMMUNION' AND 'SORTIE'

The first note of 'Sortie' (D<sub>b</sub>) picks up from the final note in the r.h. of 'Communion' (F#) sounding the theme 'l'explorateur Orphée trouve son cœur dans la mort'.<sup>5</sup> Messiaen used this motto theme in at least seven works, which arranged chronologically are:

- ~ *Turangalîla*, 'Jardin du sommeil d'amour',  
second bar of RN7 (253/1/3: flute, clarinet)
- ~ *Cinq rechants*, I (2/3/4, 5/2/4, and 9/3/1)
- ~ *Cantéyodjayâ* (5/5/1 and 27/3/1)
- ~ *Messe de la Pentecôte* (final note of 'Communion', and opening of 'Sortie')
- ~ *Le merle noir* (1/5/1)
- ~ *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, Book 4, VII 'La rousserolle effarvatte' (15/4/1)<sup>6</sup>
- ~ *La Transfiguration*, V 'Quam dilecta tabernacula tua', RN7 (Vol. I, 119/1/1: cello solo, introducing the text 'candor est lucis aeternae';<sup>7</sup> later: flute, clarinet, cello)

The shape of this theme recalls, for Messiaen, both the style of Mussorgsky, and of Mongolian folksong.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Sea and the Skylark*, published in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Michael, *Matins du Monde*, an oratorio for narrators with organ improvisations by Messiaen, performed in 1948. The translation of this extract is reproduced in Simeone, 'Chez Messiaen, tout est prière', p. 51, and Hill and Simeone, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Messiaen describing 'Sortie' in the notes for Schwann: 'Un coup de vent formidable, brusque, subit, un vent tempête, représentant la puissance irresistible de la vie spirituelle et l'irruption de la Force d'En-Haut' (see *Traité IV*, p. 114, for an expansion). For the first performance dating, see Hill and Simeone, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Olivier Messiaen, 'Orgue', *La Trinité: journal paroissial*, May (1951), p. 3, and reproduced in Simeone, 'Chez Messiaen, tout est prière', p. 47, and Hill and Simeone, p. 195.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 1, above, for a brief examination of the symbolism this motive brings to *Messe de la Pentecôte*.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, p. 101. In Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity*, p. 75, this theme is associated with the yellow iris, reflecting this flower's connotations of forgiveness.

<sup>7</sup> Wisdom 7. 26: 'C'est la splendeur de la lumière éternelle'. See my accompanying dissertation, pp. 70-75, for a detailed explanation of the light symbolism Messiaen uses for this text.

<sup>8</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 84.

Discussing its use in *Cinq rechants*, Griffiths notes that this theme originates in ‘Jardin du sommeil d’amour’ of *Turangalîla* and is quoted in *Cantéyodjayá*,<sup>9</sup> whilst Loo comments on the use of this theme in *Le merle noir* (Example 5.27), labelling it as a ‘*Turangalîla* theme’.<sup>10</sup>

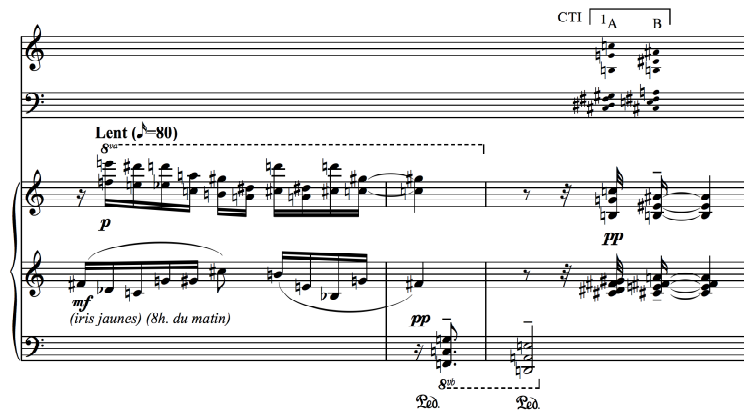
EXAMPLE 5.27: *Le merle noir*, 1/5/1



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Loo highlights the link between this ‘*Turangalîla* theme’ in ‘La rousserolle effarvate’ (Example 5.28) and the use of primary transposition level CTI.<sup>11</sup> With its use in both *Catalogue* and *La Transfiguration*, this theme has taken on associations of colour and light: specifically in the latter, the eternal and uncreated light of the Divine.

EXAMPLE 5.28: ‘La rousserolle effarvate’, 15/4/1



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By concluding ‘Communion’ with the opening note of this theme and commencing ‘Sortie’ with its completion, Messiaen binds together these two pieces cyclically and theologically, linking them also to the other works which make use of this same theme. From a contemporary perspective, the order of mass as defined by Vatican II places the Communion Antiphon during the distribution, recalling early Church practices.<sup>12</sup> The Tridentine rite, however, places this antiphon after the ablutions, and immediately preceding the *Ite, missa est*.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Messiaen’s link between ‘Communion’ and ‘Sortie’ becomes explicit, since in the performance of a Low Mass with organ, these two pieces would be heard together. This use of the motto theme in ‘Sortie’ also links back to ‘Entrée (Les langues de feu)’ in cyclic completion:<sup>14</sup> in the opening movement, the motto is developed in the pedal *Clairon 4*, between 2/1/3 and 2/4/3. Thus Pentecostal fire and wind are combined in this melodic ‘signature’. In the Coptic Liturgy of St. Cyril, the ablutions at the conclusion of mass are marked with the prayer: ‘Angel of this sacrifice, soaring on high with this hymn, make memorial of us before the Lord that he may forgive us our sins’,<sup>15</sup> and as we shall see, Messiaen’s symbolic use of the skylark in ‘Sortie’ carries, together with ‘L’ange aux parfums’, similar theological purpose.

<sup>9</sup> Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Loo, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Loo, Vol. 1, p. 131, and Vol. 2, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *The Gregorian Missal for Sundays* (Solesmes: 1990), p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> *The Small Missal* (London: Burns and Oates, 1959), pp. 286-7.

<sup>14</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 114: Messiaen cites ‘Entrée’, 2/2/2. See also *Traité IV*, p. 84: theme B in the ternary scheme.

<sup>15</sup> James Norman, *Handbook to the Christian Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1944), p. 303.



ILLUSTRATION 5.2: Arnulf Rainer (b. 1929), *Pfingsten*,  
1995/98, distemper on cardboard, laminated on wood, 60.5 x 46.5 cm  
Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden,  
© Arnulf Rainer, reproduced with permission

## THE CHORD OF RESONANCE

Messiaen's dramatic use of mode 3<sup>1</sup> in 'Sortie' corresponds to an orange with red and green pigments, to specks of gold, and also to a milky white with iridescent, opaline reflections'.<sup>16</sup> The work of Arnulf Rainer (Illustration 5.2) on the same theme demonstrates a similar awareness of the vivid colours evoked by Pentecost.

In *Visions de l'amen*, *Vingt regards*, and *Trois petites liturgies de la Présence Divine*, the use of CTI is often associated with the appearance of the Chord of Resonance. This would imply that during this period, Messiaen perceived a conscious link between these two different types of harmony. In the final movement of *Messe de la Pentecôte*, mode 3 CR is used both as a means of punctuation and as the goal of the final cadenza, acting as a cataclysmic summation of the entire work. It subsequently reappears, re-voiced yet with identical function, at the close of *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (Example 5.31).

Whilst it cannot be strictly claimed that CR is a non-modal colour chord, Messiaen points out in *Technique* that its inversions may also be transposed back to the same base note, just as with the sequence of CTI. The theoretical Chord of Resonance is a sounding of all but one note from mode 3.<sup>17</sup> Here in 'Sortie', Messiaen revoices the chord, adding the missing note to create a harmony which is a complete, vertical sounding of mode 3<sup>1</sup>, heard three times on the bass note C and once on E (Example 5.29 ACD11-0:13/0:31/0:39/2:50, which also shows Messiaen's basic voicing of CR). This more astringent voicing first appears in *Technique II*, Ex. 336, and is also cited in *Traité*,<sup>18</sup> finding practical use in Piano 1 of *Visions de l'amen*, 'Amen des étoiles' 19/1/1.

EXAMPLE 5.29: *Messe de la Pentecôte*: Use of CR in 'Sortie' ACD11-0:13/0:31/0:39/2:50

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<sup>16</sup> Samuel, *Music and Color*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup> Messiaen confuses us in *Technique I*, XIV p. 50: 'the chord of resonance gives all the notes of the third mode of limited transpositions' and Ex. 211, *Technique II*, p. 37. In reality, CR omits the third degree of the mode.

<sup>18</sup> *Traité III*, p. 241.

In *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, we should take note of Messiaen's renewed interest in the Chord of Resonance, used in at least seven pieces in *Livre*. CR straddles the divide between modal and non-modal harmony, being used in this work both as τέλος and as transitional harmony in the course of more complex progressions, such as the approach to the climax of 'Les ressuscités et la lumière de Vie'. The use of CR as a final chord may be detected in three pieces of *Livre*. At the close of 'Acte de Foi', CR functions above and below the pedal E as an appoggiatura to the final unison E (Example 5.30), whilst E is the note absent from the 11-note aggregate based on C# at the close of 'Les deux murailles d'eau'.

EXAMPLE 5.30: CR in 'Acte de Foi', 25/3/3

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C# based CR feature towards the close of 'la Résurrection du Christ' and at the opening of 'la Présence multipliée'. The work, and with it Messiaen's entire creative output for organ, concludes with a further 11-note aggregate above C#, again based upon CR. The missing note from the total chromatic is supplied at the end (Example 5.31).<sup>19</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.31: *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, 'Offrande et Alleluia final' 165/3/1

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The dramatic first use of CR in 'Sortie' at 22/3/1-2 is 'like an exploding bomb, enclosing the horizon with all its stature, declining and vanishing'.<sup>20</sup> The *diminuendo* effect of this chord is achieved unusually, by the subtraction of stops as the chord sounds: first *anches*, then all registers of the *Grand Orgue*, before closing the box of the *Récit* (ACD11-0:16).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works*, p. 56, including Example 4.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 115: 'L'accord s'est installé, il s'est ouvert comme une bombe qui éclate, il a bouché l'horizon de toute sa stature, il a décliné, il a disparu'.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114: 'diminution par plans: retrait des anches, retrait du clavier de Grand Orgue, fermeture de la boîte Récit'.



## A CHORUS OF SKYLARKS

The symbolism of the heavenly joy of skylarks in ‘Sortie’ is also to be heard in *Vingt regards*, where the preface to ‘Regard des hauters’ specifically mentions the song of the lark.<sup>22</sup> The score also refers to nightingale and blackbird: birds which also sing in *Messe de la Pentecôte*. The freedom of the birdsong in ‘Sortie’ contrasts sharply, however, with the modal and rhythmic content of the left hand and pedal parts. The l.h. plays a sequence of chords in mode 4<sup>1</sup>, whilst the pedal contrasts with its use of mode 6<sup>3</sup> (ACD11-0:48).

The constant song of the skylarks (in opposition to this) is written in continuous semiquavers to provide a pulse,<sup>23</sup> which is an early example of *monnayage*. Messiaen’s description of *personages rythmiques* stems from analysis of rhythmic complexities in Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps*,<sup>24</sup> where three ‘actors’ perform active, passive, and observational roles. Here in ‘Sortie’, one part increases in duration whilst another must decrease, carrying the symbolic relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist described in John 3. 30,<sup>25</sup> whilst the skylarks remain detached and impartial, as an embodiment of the utmost freedom and life as a symbol of heaven:<sup>26</sup> ‘The one who comes from above is above all’.<sup>27</sup> The r.h. registration, including *Grand Orgue Plein jeu* and *Positif Piccolo*, adds sparkle: ‘c’est lumineux, éclatant, diamante, gemmé de gloire, clouté de pierreries triomphantes...’.<sup>28</sup> This glistening arabesque represents Messiaen’s ‘choir’ of larks at Fuligny, their alleluia symbolizing courage, grace, and the joy of the Holy Spirit, in a flight of ‘perpetual ascension’: ‘Oiseau vole de plus en plus haut: devenu totalement invisible, il s’enferme dans la lumière, [...] dans un délire de soleil et de ciel...’.<sup>29</sup>

In *Saint François*, Messiaen uses the song of the skylark in the percussion above 1<sup>st</sup> CCR 1 as a means of chromatic completion (Example 5.32), whilst the toccata of *Petites esquisses d’oiseaux*, VI ‘L’alouette des champs’ exploits the skylark’s rapid-fire triplets as resonance above rich, sustained harmony, and the use of colour-chords.

EXAMPLE 5.32: *Saint François*, VI ‘Le Prêche aux oiseaux’ RN7 (23/1/1, strings/percussion)

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Percussion and solo strings. The Percussion part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with chromatic completion, marked with dynamics *mf*, *f*, and *mf* *più f*. The solo strings part is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a 3/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords in mode 4<sup>1</sup>, marked with dynamics *p* and *p*. The score is divided into two sections: 1st CCR 1A and 1st CCR 1B. The Percussion part is marked with *8<sup>mw</sup>* and the solo strings part is marked with *3<sup>3</sup>2* and *2<sup>3</sup>3<sup>2</sup>*.

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<sup>22</sup> *Vingt regards*, p. ii.

<sup>23</sup> Nichols, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. This is explained in detail in Healey, *Messiaen’s Musical Techniques*, pp. 59-66.

<sup>25</sup> ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’ (John 3. 30).

<sup>26</sup> Messiaen’s description of ‘Sortie’ for his programme notes for Schwann. The skylark is able to ‘fly higher than any other bird’ (Weir, ‘Organ Music II’, p. 357), striving vertically for the Heavenly heights, ‘in profuse strains of unpremeditated art’ (Shelley, *To a Skylark*: a poem cited in *Traité V/1*, p. 255).

<sup>27</sup> John 3. 31.

<sup>28</sup> *Traité IV*, p. 118: ‘It is luminous, sparkling, diamantine, gemmed with glory, studded with triumphant jewels’.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 118-119: ‘The bird flies higher and higher: becoming totally invisible, it is enclosed in the light [...] in a delirium of sun and sky’.

## A FANFARE OF TIBETAN TRUMPETS

Interrupting the skylarks and ushering in the final toccata-like passage, the pedal *Trompette* intones a theme of four pitches harmonized by the resonance of CTI (Example 5.33 ACD11-2:03). Messiaen writes: ‘Hieratic and magical, the pedal part, **ff** evokes those immense trumpets with terrifyingly deep sounds, several metres long and dragging along the ground, hauled by the Tibetan priests during religious ceremonies in the lamaseries’.<sup>30</sup>

EXAMPLE 5.33: ‘Sortie’, 26/2/1 ACD11-2:03

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The melody is sounded both in the treble and bass, at a distance of two octaves, surrounding the central CTI harmonies. This entire passage consists of only four different CTI: CTI 3 (inversions B and A, which refer back to ‘Communion’ and forwards to their use in ‘Les mains de l’abîme’), and chords 11A and 1C. These four chords have just one note in common, D $\flat$ /C $\sharp$ , which is therefore sustained (in the same register) throughout. The minor ninth span of the ‘Tibetan’ theme in the pedal from C to D $\flat$  refers to the shape of the opening motto theme of ‘Sortie’, and in the second system of Example 5.33, the harmonic sequence of the opening is played concisely in reverse to close the passage, referring again to the D $\flat$ –B of the opening theme. At first glance it would appear that the doubling of the top voice melody by the bass two octaves lower subverts the *effet de vitrail* of transposed inversions above the same bass note. Messiaen’s

<sup>30</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 122 (my translation):

Hieratique, magique, la partie de Pédale fortissimo évoque ces immenses trompes, longues de plusieurs metres et traînant à terre, don’t les prêtres Tibétains tirent des sons graves si terrifiants, au cours des ceremonies religieuses, dans les Lamaseries.

An alternative translation may be found in Gillock, p. 161.

own recording (2:58) clarifies the harmony:<sup>31</sup> the *Récit* is registered with 16' pitch, rendering the CTI bass as the true bass of the harmony, and the predominant tone is the 'Tibetan' pedal *Trompette*, beneath which 16' and 32' *fonds* add inferior resonance. The earlier movement 'Consécration' introduces colour chords within the *Messe*, anticipating CCR of 'Communion' and prefiguring this use of CTI 11A in 'Sortie' (Example 5.34).

EXAMPLE 5.34: *Messe de la Pentecôte*, 'Consécration', 16/5/1

The image shows a musical score for 'Consécration' from the Messe de la Pentecôte. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are treble clef, and the bottom two are bass clef. The score is divided into three sections: 'First CCR 9' (measures 1-2), '2nd CCR 4' (measures 3-4), and 'CTI 11' (measures 5-6). The 'First CCR 9' section has sub-sections 'A' and 'B'. The '2nd CCR 4' section has sub-sections 'A' and 'B'. The 'CTI 11' section has sub-sections 'B' and 'A'. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, notes, and rests. There are dynamic markings like 'pp' and 'più f'. There are also some letters like 'G', 'R', and 'Pb' above notes. The bottom staff has a 'più f' marking at the end.

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The shape and transposition level of the pedal theme of the closing 'toccata' (*Très vif*, 26/4/2 ACD11-2:26), whilst being anticipated in the pedal motifs of 'Entrée', may be traced as a transformation of the second *Couplet* (*Bien modéré, berceur et tendre*) of *Cinq rechants* V (46/1/1: 'losangé ma fleur toujours philtre Yseult rameur d'amour').<sup>32</sup> This pedal theme is also a quotation from the earlier movement 'Choses visibles et invisibles', whilst the manual figuration refers both to this, and to 'Don de Sagesse'.<sup>33</sup>

With the opening theme of 'Sortie', Messiaen the musician had identified himself as *'l'explorateur'*. Certain moments in the piece make substantial technical demands, and in Messiaen's own recording there is a noticeable edit around the last bar of the first page (22/4/3), indicating that this moment gave even the composer some problems of accuracy.<sup>34</sup> The creation of *Messe de la Pentecôte* proved to be a formula of new wine in old bottles, by retaining the formal model of Tournemire and superimposing a highly experimental language of rhythm and resonance. The rushing wind of the spirit here inspired the symbolism of the song of the skylark, and without being able to espouse the *nirvana* of Buddhism,<sup>35</sup> Messiaen was able to capture the intense spirituality of the lamasery. This systematic use of CTI was to lay the foundation for his subsequent compositional practice in the final two great organ cycles.

<sup>31</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même* - Disc 4, Track 5. Note a similar bass octave doubling of the top voice of individual CTI towards the close of *Saint François*, in VIII 'La mort et la nouvelle vie', RN151.

<sup>32</sup> 'Like a diamond always my flower, Isolde the love potion, ferryman of love'.

<sup>33</sup> *Traité* IV, p. 123.

<sup>34</sup> *Messiaen par lui-même* - Disc 4, Track 5 (0:42).

<sup>35</sup> Rößler, *Contributions*, pp. 97-98.

## CONCLUSION: 'HARMONY OF PARTS' AND 'CHARM OF COLOUR'

Through the intermingling of harmony in colour- and modal-chords, and the satisfying blending of musical parameters such as rhythm and resonance as symbols of theological insight, we have attempted to capture Messiaen's 'charm of impossibilities',<sup>1</sup> which, like *Des canyons aux étoiles...*, points upwards towards a spiritual journey. By the selection and juxtaposition of pieces, we have examined fresh perspectives on Messiaen's organ music and Catholic theology: joy, the recurrent theme in *Saint François d'Assise*, as expressed here through Gregorian melody and birdsong; light, reflected as coloured harmony to recreate the spirituality and dazzlement of stained glass; ultimately, the musical equivalent of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of glory, beauty and truth.

The light and glory of *Surge, et illuminare Ierusalem* (Isaiah 60. 1) binds together our meditation on the Son and Word with our prayer before communion, mystically linking the Christ of eternity to our souls in the present.<sup>2</sup> Time games (in which the play of opposing rhythmic processes implies the similarities between *durée réel* and *durée vécue* of Henri Bergson,<sup>3</sup> and the temporal divide between earth and heaven) contrast with ceremonial Himalayan horns and the awesome angel trumpeters of Michelangelo. We have traced the chant *Adorabo* through varied musical and theological interpretations, and heard the multiple meanings of fragmented material in *Messe de la Pentecôte*.

This programme has journeyed from the eternal light of Christ the Word, to the tempestuous, rushing Pentecostal wind beneath skylarks soaring heavenwards, 'enveloping the listener with its ecstatic joy'.<sup>4</sup> Messiaen's joy, sounded through the blazing light of the liberating truth of God's glory, is communicated by music which dazzles in its beauty. Publicly challenged for his zeal in the proclamation of a *theologia gloria*,<sup>5</sup> Messiaen's passionate communication of 'joy and light, salvation and glory',<sup>6</sup> is a celebration of the 'divine power, wisdom and glory',<sup>7</sup> without undermining the significance of the Cross. The most powerful examples of performers engaging with this music on a spiritual level, in '*participation mystique*',<sup>8</sup> have resulted in astonishing transformations: the journey of Père Jean-Rodolphe Kars from secular pianist to Catholicism and the priesthood, was motivated by the seeds of faith planted by the music of Messiaen, whilst pianist Jacqueline Chew, inspired through the catalyst of *Vingt regards* to become a Camaldolese Benedictine, followed a similar trajectory. Here the role of performer, in developing a true understanding of the theological message which shines from Messiaen's music, has truly embraced 'transfigurative listening'.<sup>9</sup> Without such concrete conversion, but charmed by this power of divine music, we have attempted an exploration of these heavenly harmonies. *St. George's, Grenada, 10 February, 2013*

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<sup>1</sup> *Technique I*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See Schloesser, pp. 169-170, which contrasts the awaiting of the Messiah in the Old Testament and the Advent expectations of Parousia and Judgment, with Christ's coming into the soul of every individual, at all times, in a mystical interpretation of the mass based on the ideas of Dom Prosper Guéranger.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> Sander van Maas, 'Forms of love: Messiaen's aesthetics of *éblouissement*', in *Messiaen Studies*, ed. by Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 78-100 (p. 99).

<sup>5</sup> Röbler, *Contributions*, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Shenton, *Olivier Messiaen's System of Signs*, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luther* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1963), and cited in Shenton, *Olivier Messiaen's System of Signs*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey, 'Introduction', *Contemporary Music Review*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett Zon, 'Bedazzled by Breakthrough: Music Theology and the Problem of Composing Music in Words', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 136:2 (2011), 429-435 (p. 435).

## APPENDIX:

### TRACK 1: *ÉCLAIRS SUR L'AU-DELÀ...* I 'APPARITION DU CHRIST GLORIEUX'

For further analysis of this movement, see the accompanying dissertation 'In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*: Technique, Theology, and the Play of Harmonic Resonance in Olivier Messiaen's *Vitrail Sonore*' (Simon Dunbavand, The University of Sheffield, 2013), Chapter 7: *Vitrail Sonore*: The Bourges Apocalypse and *Éclairs* as Theology of Light, pp. 109-116. There is evidence to suggest that Messiaen was inspired by his visits to the stained glass in the Ambulatory at Bourges Cathedral to compose the movement 'Apparition du Christ glorieux', which is a musical representation both of Revelation 1. 13-16, and of the Bourges windows. Messiaen writes:

On voit le Christ, avec le glaive à deux tranchants dans sa bouche. Dans sa main droite, le Livre aux 7 sceaux, en dessous, les 7 chandeliers. Dans sa main gauche, 7 étoiles rouges. En dessus, à droite et à gauche, les 7 anges tombant du ciel, en raccourci.<sup>10</sup>

This music also describes the predominance of reds in the Bourges glass: 'Au milieu du vitrail, le Christ, avec de grands faisceaux de lumière rouge, d'éclairs rouges, de flames rouges, qui partent de ses deux mains',<sup>11</sup> achieved with frequent E major cadences. Messiaen's majestically slow tempo indication of ♩ = 44 is exceeded by Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmonica, who play at a purposeful ♩ = 52.<sup>12</sup> Performance of this music must balance the concerns of acoustic, tempo, and harmonic coherence. Chords directed to be played *marcato* (eg: ACD1-0:17) are emphasized by use of the *Récit* expression box; the division between manuals and the use of the pedal in this transcription takes careful note of Messiaen's orchestration. From figure 10 onwards (ACD1-3:07), the use of *Grand Orgue* and the gradual addition of *anches* takes as its example Messiaen's organ version of 'Majesté du Christ demandant sa gloire de son Père' from *L'Ascension* (particularly the concluding page).<sup>13</sup> The texture and registration of this transcription also takes note of Messiaen's practice in 'Adoro te' from *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, which recalls the traditional registrational scheme of the Cavallé-Coll organ.<sup>14</sup> The tying of repeated notes in the Franckian *legato* of *notes communes*, with frequent finger substitution à la Marcel Dupré, follows Messiaen's practice both in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, and *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (see especially Example 4.23, p. 100 above, for a similar passage in 'La Sainteté de Jésus-Christ'). The harmonic aspect of Messiaen's compositional practice took place at the piano: as a result, even highly complex chords (prior to orchestration) fall conveniently beneath the hands,<sup>15</sup> as demonstrated in Example A.1. This transcription thus *preserves* the music faithfully, as the most appropriate opening of this theologically linked assembly of pieces.

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<sup>10</sup> *Traité* VII, p. 22:

One sees Christ, with the two-edged sword in his mouth. In his right hand, the Book with seven seals, and below, the seven candlesticks. In his left hand, seven red stars. Above, left and right, the seven angels fall directly from heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: 'Central to the window, Christ with large beams of red light, red lightning, red flames, which come from his two hands'.

<sup>12</sup> *Éclairs sur l'Au-Delà...*, Simon Rattle, Berliner Philharmonica - EMI 7243 5 57788 2 6, Track 1.

<sup>13</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works*, pp. 159-160, 288, notes this similarity to the opening of *L'Ascension*.

<sup>14</sup> See Gillock, p. 246: 'Certainly, Franck, Widor, Vierne, Dupré, Duruflé, and many other used this registration [...] As the phrases build and crescendo (as the Swell box opens), that passionate sound becomes more and more present, "blazing up like a fire".'

<sup>15</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen's Final Works*, p. 14.

EXAMPLE A.1: *Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...*, I ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’  
RN 13, reduction<sup>16</sup>

The movement commences with the following inscription:

Choral de louange, solennel, lent, *forte*, par les bois et les cuivres. Au milieu de la pièce, la mélodie s’élève, et fait penser à certains motifs du chant grégorien de l’Alleluia du Christ-Roi’. Les harmonies sont en mode 2, en mode 3, en ‘accords à résonance contractée’. Toute l’œuvre fera appel à ces harmonies.<sup>17</sup>

Christopher Dingle remains sceptical about Loriod’s claims for Messiaen’s Gregorian model,<sup>18</sup> yet in Example A.2, the shapes and contours of the plainchant match the trumpet melody in much the same way as mode 2 distorts the chant *Victimae paschali laudes* (see pp. 44-48, above), and mode 3 distorts the chant of *Verset pour la fête de la Dédicace* (see p. 86, above).

<sup>16</sup> Example A.1 may also be found in Dunbavand, ‘In Search of *Musique Chatoyante*’, as Example 7.1, p. 116 (Reproduced by kind permission of Editions Alphonse Leduc, Paris/United Music Publishers Ltd, England). A full transcription of this movement cannot be included in this folio for copyright reasons.

<sup>17</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1998), Première Partie, p. 4:

Chorale of praise, solemn, slow, *forte*, in woodwind and brass. In the middle of the piece the melody rises up, and is reminiscent of certain motives of the Gregorian Alleluia of the Feast of Christ the King. The harmonies are in mode 2, mode 3, and chords of contracted resonance. The entire work will make use of these harmonies.

<sup>18</sup> Dingle, *Messiaen’s Final Works*, pp. 161-163. Yvonne Loriod, in the preface to score of *Éclairs*, Première Partie, p. 4, wrote that ‘Apparition du Christ glorieux’ alludes to melodic contours of the Alleluia of Christ the King, and Messiaen paraphrases the Gregorian melody *Potestas eius* in recognition of the eternity of the Kingdom. See also Joseph Edward Harris, ‘Musique colorée: Synesthetic Correspondence in the Works of Olivier Messiaen’ (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2004), Chapter 6, pp. 87-88, and Tölle, p. 54.

EXAMPLE A.2: Comparison of 'Apparition du Christ glorieux' (Trumpet 1) and the Gregorian Alleluia *Potestas eius*

1 *Lent Majestueux*  
Trumpet 1

Al - le -

2 lu - ia.

3

4

5

6 et

7

8 9 re - gnum e - ius,

10 quod non - cor - rum

EXAMPLE A.2, cont.

11 pc tur.

12

13

14





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*Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà...*, Simon Rattle, Berliner Philharmonica – EMI 7243 5 57788 2 6  
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