

Summer 2015

Olivier Messiaen: A performance guide for selected mélodie

Melissa M. Sumner
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/diss201019>



Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sumner, Melissa M., "Olivier Messiaen: A performance guide for selected mélodie" (2015). *Dissertations*. 120.
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/diss201019/120>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

Summer 2015

Olivier Messiaen: A Performance Guide for Selected Mélodie

Melissa M. Sumner

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/diss201019>



Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Olivier Messiaen: A Performance Guide for Selected *Mélodie*

Melissa Montague Sumner Swisher

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance, Literature, and Pedagogy

Music

August 2015

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| List of Musical Examples..... | iii |
| Abstract of Dissertation..... | vi |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Purpose of Study | |
| Methodology | |
| Chapter One: A Brief Biography of Messiaen | 5 |
| Chapter Two: The Components of Messiaen's Music..... | 10 |
| Modes of Transposition and Their Synesthetic Relationship to Color | |
| Chordal Structures | |
| Rhythmic Devices | |
| Chapter Three: Analyses of <i>Trois Mélodies</i> | 19 |
| <i>Pourquoi?</i> | |
| <i>Le sourire</i> | |
| <i>La fiancée perdue</i> | |
| Chapter Four: Analyses of <i>Vocalise-étude</i> | 48 |
| Chapter Five: Analyses of selected <i>mélodie</i> from <i>Poèmes pour Mi</i> | 58 |
| <i>Paysage</i> | |
| <i>La maison</i> | |
| <i>L'épouse</i> | |
| <i>Le collier</i> | |
| Chapter Six: Conclusion..... | 97 |
| Appendix A: Chart of Synesthetic Correspondence of Modes to Color..... | 101 |
| Appendix B: IPA Transcriptions with Poetic and Idiomatic Translations..... | 102 |
| Appendix C: Set Theory Analysis..... | 112 |
| Bibliography..... | 134 |

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

| EXAMPLE | PAGE |
|----------------------|--|
| Example 2.1 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 1.....11 |
| Example 2.2 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 2.....11 |
| Example 2.3 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 3.....12 |
| Example 2.4 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 4.....12 |
| Example 2.5 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 5.....12 |
| Example 2.6 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 6.....13 |
| Example 2.7 | Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, mode 7.....13 |
| Example 2.8 | Sixth chord with augmented fourth.....14 |
| Example 3.1 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , A section (mm. 15-18) OCT 0,1 and OCT 2,3.....23 |
| Example 3.2 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , A section (mm. 1-3) OCT 01.....26 |
| Example 3.3 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , A section (mm.4-7) Melodic line approaching F5.....27 |
| Example 3.4 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , B section (mm.) Tritones, augmented fourths, diminished chords.....28 |
| Example 3.5 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , B section (m. 19-21) C-sharp pedal.....29 |
| Example 3.6 | <i>Pourquoi</i> , B section (mm. 22-25) Ending of piece.....31 |
| Example 3.7 | <i>Le sourire</i> (mm. 1-3, 7-9) Diminished seventh chords.....34 |
| Example 3.8 | <i>Le sourire</i> (mm. 1-3) +3/-4 Motive in piano.....34 |
| Example 3.9 | <i>Le sourire</i> (mm. 1-3) Kiss motive in piano.....36 |
| Example 3.10 | <i>Le sourire</i> (mm. 4-9) Use of tied chords.....37 |
| Example 3. 11 | <i>La fiancée perdue</i> , A section (mm. 1-5) Galloping figures.....41 |
| Example 3.12 | <i>La fiancée perdue</i> , A section (mm. 41-54) transitional material...42 |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|----|
| Example 3.13 | <i>La fiancée perdue</i> , B section (mm. 1-2) Beginning..... | 43 |
| Example 3.14 | <i>La fiancée perdue</i> B section (mm. 71-73) Plagal cadence..... | 44 |
| Example 4.1 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , A section (mm. 1-10) OCT 0,1..... | 50 |
| Example 4.2 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , B section (mm. 19-21) OCT 1,2 and OCT 2,3.... | 51 |
| Example 4.3 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , A' section (mm. 31-36) Sixth octave motive..... | 52 |
| Example 4.4 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , A section (mm. 4-7), Seconda passaggio..... | 54 |
| Example 4.5 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , A section (mm. 1-3), Musical motive in piano... | 54 |
| Example 4.6 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , B section (mm. 19-21) Vocal chromaticism..... | 55 |
| Example 4.7 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , B section (mm. 27-33), Vocal/piano Conversation..... | 55 |
| Example 4.8 | <i>Vocalise-étude</i> , A' section (mm. 43-50), Vocal cadenza..... | 56 |
| Example 5.1 | <i>Paysage</i> , Refrain (mm. 1-3) Mode 3, OCT 0,1..... | 65 |
| Example 5.2 | <i>Paysage</i> , Phrase a (mm. 4-6), Mode 2, OCT 2,3 with quartal harmonies..... | 65 |
| Example 5.3 | <i>Paysage</i> , Olivier Messiaen, <i>Technique de mon Language Musical</i> (The Technique of my Musical Language), page 17..... | 67 |
| Example 5.4 | <i>Paysage</i> , (mm.16-18) Mode 2, OCT 0,1 in piano line..... | 67 |
| Example 5.5 | <i>Paysage</i> , Olivier Messiaen, <i>Technique de mon Language Musical</i> (The Technique of my Musical Language), pages 64-65..... | 68 |
| Example 5.6 | <i>Paysage</i> , Refrain (mm. 1-3), Mode 3, OCT 0,1..... | 69 |
| Example 5.7 | <i>Paysage</i> Refrain (mm. 1-3) Tritones and escape tone..... | 70 |
| Example 5.8 | <i>Paysage</i> Phrase b (mm. 16-18) Vocal line..... | 71 |
| Example 5.9 | <i>La maison</i> , phrase a (mm. 1-3) Duples..... | 74 |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|----|
| Example 5.10 | <i>La maison</i> , Beginning of phrase b (mm.7-8)..... | 74 |
| Example 5.11 | <i>La maison</i> , Phrases b and c (mm. 9-10) Tritones..... | 75 |
| Example 5.12 | <i>La maison</i> , Phrase c (mm. 13-15) Quintal harmonies and sixth octave..... | 75 |
| Example 5.13 | <i>La maison</i> , Phrases b and c (mm. 9-15) Text painting..... | 78 |
| Example 5.14 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Section A, phrase a (mm. 1-2) Mode 2, OCT 0,1..... | 80 |
| Example 5.15 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Section A, phrase b (mm. 3-4) Mode 6..... | 80 |
| Example 5.16 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Section A', phrase b'(mm. 7-8) Mode 3..... | 81 |
| Example 5.17 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Section A (mm. 1-4) Added values and notes..... | 82 |
| Example 5.18 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Olivier Messiaen, <i>Technique de mon Language Musical</i> (The Technique of my Musical Language), page 32..... | 82 |
| Example 5.19 | <i>L'epouse</i> , A'' (mm. 9-13)..... | 84 |
| Example 5.20 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Phrase b'' (mm. 13) Mode 3 in piano line..... | 84 |
| Example 5.21 | <i>L'epouse</i> , Phrase a (mm. 1-2)..... | 85 |
| Example 5.22 | <i>Le collier</i> , Olivier Messiaen, <i>Technique de mon Language Musical</i> (The Technique of my Musical Language), pages 69-70..... | 89 |
| Example 5.23 | <i>Le collier</i> , A Section (mm. 11-13)..... | 90 |
| Example 5.24 | <i>Le collier</i> B section (mm. 17-18) Rhythmic preparations and descents..... | 90 |
| Example 5.25 | <i>Le collier</i> B section (mm. 24-25)..... | 91 |
| Example 5.26 | <i>Le collier</i> , A' (mm. 37-40)..... | 92 |
| Example 5.27 | <i>Le collier</i> A' (mm. 30-33) Descents and preparations..... | 94 |
| Example 5.28 | <i>Le collier</i> , Coda (mm. 43-51)..... | 96 |

Abstract of Dissertation

The purpose of this study is to present a performance guide on eight selected songs for voice and piano or orchestra by Olivier Messiaen. The performance guide is the result of five years of research, study, and performance of the presented material. It offers a comprehensive study of information relevant for the performer and collaborator. Included is a concise biography of the composer, followed by an overview of the most important compositional style traits Messiaen used in these works. The focus of the paper turns into a detailed analysis of *Trois Mélodies*, *Vocalise-étude*, and selected *mélodie* from *Poèmes pour Mi*: *Paysage*, *La maison*, *L'épouse*, and *Le collier*.

Song analysis will involve the application of twentieth-century harmonic practices, including set theory, modes and other scales in modern music, the formation of thirds and fourths, added chords, polychords, the manipulation of rhythmic devices not found in traditional compositions, and interpretive insights provided by the author. In addition, the last three appendices are devoted to: a chart of synthetic correspondence of modes to color, International Phonetic Alphabet transcriptions with poetic and idiomatic translations, and set theory analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

Messiaen's music presents many challenges for performers. This guide is designed to assist them in recognizing and learning the difficult patterns associated with set theory within his vocal compositions. This document will show the maturation of Messiaen's compositional style, beginning with *Trois mélodies* [Three Melodies]. Composed in 1930, they are the most accessible for the singer and the pianist. His second composition, *Vocalise-étude*, [Exercise in Vocalization], written in 1935, serves as a transition into *Poèmes pour Mi* [Poetry for Mi], written for his wife, Claire Delbos. This work can be interpreted as either a song cycle or a set of songs. The factors which create the continuity of a song cycle include the musical exploration of modes, and Messiaen's texts, his journey as a newlywed, reflected in his own poetry. However, the songs could equally be performed individually on the concert platform. Written in 1936, this set of nine pieces, divided into two volumes of four and five songs respectively, was orchestrated in 1937 by the composer. Each work demonstrates Messiaen's continual compositional development and in the final examples, his own stylistic traits are most clearly represented.

Messiaen's music is generally considered difficult to interpret, and major challenges facing performers include not only an understanding of Messiaen's musical language, but also his own poetry and that of his mother, Cécile Sauvage. Problematic issues include relating dramatic and musical aspects of each piece while keeping continuity throughout the cycle. Messiaen's use of imagery must be conveyed by the singer, so a sensitivity to text and tone colors within the vocal line and the piano or orchestra is essential. While many singers are comfortable with traditional harmonies,

textures, and key signatures, a study of Messiaen's approach to composition will enable the singer to be most sensitive to his approach to sound-colored harmonies, which will be explored in Chapter Two. If the singer performs an orchestral reduction for voice and piano, as is the case in *Poèmes pour Mi*, examining the orchestral score will aid in this process. Because many of the *mélodies* are very similar, a thorough analysis of the songs will enable the singer to find repeated rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic patterns, as well as areas of minimal variation, a chief compositional tool of the composer. The singer must pay close attention to the rhythms and subtle variations by adding augmentation dots, as measures at first might appear to be identical.

Messiaen's works create technically demanding challenges for a vocalist.

Trois mélodies and *Vocalise-étude* can be navigated by a lyric or young dramatic voice. The first was written during his student years at the *Conservatoire* and the second created as a musical exercise for students at the same institution. However, the voice type required to sing *Poèmes pour Mi* is described by Messiaen in the subtitle to the set as *Grand Soprano dramatique et Orchestre* [Large Dramatic Soprano and Orchestra]. His use of repetition will challenge the singer to stay within the core of the pitch, as repeated passages can easily become flat if the soft palate becomes depressed. The singer is required to have a wide vocal range, be able to navigate the *passaggi* [vocal register shifts] easily, and should have the vocal prowess and stamina to sing extreme tempi and dynamics. The vocalization of outcries in m. 43 in *Epouvante* and the descending phrases in mm. 38-39 in *Le collier* where the bride admires her necklace are obvious examples of the requirement of a large voice, required to sing over heavy orchestration, equivalent to Wagner's *Brunhilde*. At the same time, the melismatic passages of the *Vocalise-étude*,

Action de grâce, and *Le collier* demonstrate this must be an instrument that has extreme flexibility, be able to access depth without weight, and sing coloratura passages with ease. This flexibility will enable the vocalist to navigate a wider dynamic range, as required by Messiaen's dynamic markings. Like Debussy, his dynamic indications range from *ppp* in m. 8 of *Le sourire* to *fff* in m. 43 of *Épouvante*. While voice type plays a less important role in much vocal literature, the extreme vocal demands of these pieces demonstrated above cannot fall into that trend. They should be performed by a more dramatic instrument, or the singer will not be able to meet the demands of Messiaen's music.

Methodology

This research project creates a thorough analysis which will help a performer study *Trois mélodies*, *Vocalise-étude*, and selection from *Poèmes pour Mi*. Chapter one is a brief biography of the composer. Chapter two encompasses the composer's stylistic traits, including his modes of transposition, synesthetic relationship of color to sound, chordal structures and rhythmic devices.

Chapter three incorporates analyses of *Trois Mélodies*, composed of the three songs, *Pourquoi*, *Le sourire*, and *La fiancée perdue*. Chapter four is an analysis of *Vocalise-étude*. Chapter five comprises analyses of selected *mélodies* from *Poèmes pour Mi*: *Paysage*, *La maison*, *L'épouse*, and *Le collier*. An additional aid to singers and pianists, Appendix A contains a chart of synesthetic correspondence of modes to color. Appendix B provides IPA transcriptions with poetic and idiomatic translations. Appendix

C contains a set theory analysis of each work discussed, with the exception of *Vocalise-étude* .

Chapters three, four, and five will contain historical introductory material for each song, poetical and large form analysis, coupled with a comparison of musical and poetic forms. Messiaen's own thoughts and explanations for composition combined with the role of the poem, piano, and vocal line will be investigated concerning performance. Specifically, the following characteristics of Messiaen's music in each song will be considered: the key or mode, the meter or lack of time signature, the tempi, the range and tessitura of the voice, the overall mood of the piece, the form, the level of difficulty and maturity, the melodic line in the voice and piano, and harmonic analysis and observation. Also considered is the length of the musical phrases, their effects on diction, and the intention of the poems, all of which were created by Messiaen himself, with the exception of *Le sourire*, which was written by his mother.

This study is based on the Durand Editions Musicales of Messiaen's *Trois mélodies*, the 1930 edition and *Poèmes pour Mi*, 1937 edition. *Vocalise-Étude* was published by Alphonse Leduc in 1935.

CHAPTER ONE

A Brief Biography of Olivier Messiaen

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), an organist, was one of the most original and influential composers of the twentieth century. His musical universe was inspired by his deep religious convictions as a Catholic, and by his fascination with nature and God's creations, which inspired him to create a musical world and language of his own. Although he studied at the Paris *Conservatoire* [Conservatory] as a young boy, his creative impulses were aroused by other cultures and peoples, and his devout dedication to Roman Catholicism. Influenced by Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Stravinsky, Messiaen took from their music ideas and concepts and fused them together in a unique way. Indeed, Graham Johnson asserts that Messiaen's "canvas was broader and his aspirations more lofty than those of his contemporaries, whom he puzzled and sometimes enraged."¹ Nicholas Armfelt writes that:

Messiaen's music demands an extraordinary intensity of response; and each piece demands entire acceptance. It has the quality of a statement rather than an argument or question. It is a statement expressed emphatically and intensely. The critical listener is disturbed by this. He wants to question the validity of the statement; he regards music as an argument. But Messiaen's music seems not to allow this: it demands all or nothing. Indeed it seems to demand all. That is why it has often provoked such violent reactions. Many listeners, while admitting the expression to be forceful, have found it hard to cope with a music so extreme in its emotive demands.²

While Messiaen's music might first appear to be rather abstract on the surface, underneath there are emotional and personal elements that portray Messiaen's life experiences and his feelings about love, relationships, and the conceptions of faith. For example, the first and last songs in *Trois Mélodies* were written as a musical remembrance to his mother, with poetic

¹ Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 313.

² Nicholas Armfelt, "Emotion in the Music of Messiaen," *Musical Times* (November 1965), <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/malball/messwrit/hymn1> (accessed January 23, 2010).

references that reflect his relationship with her. In his book “Messiaen’s Exploration of Love and Death”, Siglind Bruhn suggests that *Le sourire* is the conversation between two souls. *Poèmes pour Mi* encompass the challenges and experiences he faced as a new husband. Bruhn writes that “Bernard Sherlaw Johnson comes closer to the truth when he characterizes their subject matter as ‘different aspects of the sacrament or marriage and the various spiritual states arising from it for the husband.’”³ Although Messiaen's most famous and well-known work is his *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* [Quartet for the End of Time], which has been well documented in scholarly research, his works for voice are equally worthy of analysis and study.

Messiaen’s father was absent for four years of his early childhood while serving in the military during the First World War. During this time, Messiaen was raised by his mother Cécile Sauvage. Throughout her pregnancy, Sauvage wrote a cycle of poems about Messiaen. From a young age, he began to learn music on his own, playing the piano and composing. Once he learned to read music he was fascinated with the opera scores of Gluck, Mozart, Berlioz, and Wagner. Also influenced by Debussy and Ravel, Messiaen began his studies at the Paris *Conservatoire* in 1919 and remained there for nearly a decade.⁴

While at the *Conservatoire* he worked with several teachers. He studied piano with Georges Falkenberg, harmony with Jean Gallon, counterpoint and fugue with Georges Caussade, piano accompaniment with C.A. Estyle, timpani and percussion with Joseph Baggers, and organ improvisation with Marcel Dupré. Most influential was his music history professor Maurice Emmanuel, an expert on meters of Greek verse and the modes of Greek, liturgical and Eastern use. Messiaen heard Emanuel’s composition *Trente chansons bourguignonnes* [Thirty Songs

³Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen’s Explorations of love and Death: Musico-Poetic Signification in the “Tristram Trilogy” and Three Related Song Cycles*, (New York: Pendragon Press, 2008), 57.

⁴ Paul Griffiths, *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. Second ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), 221.

from Burgundy] and at once was drawn toward modal music.⁵ The Encyclopedia Britannica discusses describes modes and in music, including Greek modes as

any of several ways of ordering the notes of a scale according to the intervals they form with the tonic, thus providing a theoretical framework for the melody. A mode is the vocabulary of a melody; it specifies which notes can be used and indicates which have special importance. Of these, there are two principal notes: the final, on which the melody ends, and the dominant, which is the secondary centre [....] The modes of Greek antiquity were placed by theorists in orderly fashion within a larger context. Although the modes were a series of seven-note diatonic scales (*i.e.*, containing five whole tones and two semitones), the nucleus of the tone system was the tetrachord⁶

Students at the *Conservatoire* in the 1920s were exposed to various musical styles, and as young composers their works were heard at the Notre Dame Cathedral. The age of Stravinsky and *Les Six* [The Six] influenced jazz and cabaret, as surrealism flourished in Paris.⁷ *Le Six* was a group of composers which came into existence shortly after World War One under the leadership of Jean Cocteau and Erik Satie. A reaction against Romanticism and composers like Debussy and Wagner, the composers were influenced by everyday life subject matter, like the importance of machines, which were reflected in their music. All student at the Paris *Conservatoire*, they sponsored and collaborated in public concerts.⁸ During this period, Messiaen's output of French *mélodies* consisted only of *Trois mélodies*. When Messiaen left the conservatory in 1930 to take a post as organist at *La Église de la Sainte-Trinité* [The Church of the Holy Trinity], located in the ninth division of Paris, France, he had already begun to make his mark as a composer writing organ meditations and cycles.⁹

⁵ Paul Griffiths, *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. Second ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), 222.

⁶ Isobel Henderson, "Ancient Greek Music," *Britannica Encyclopedia*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.britanica.com>.

⁷ Paul Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 24.

⁸ *Sainte-Trinité, Paris*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sainte-Trinit%C3%A9,_Paris (accessed June 7, 2015).

⁹ Paul Griffiths, *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. Second ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), 222.

In 1931 he married violinist Claire Delbos, and five years later he composed *Poèmes pour Mi* for her. *Chants de terre et de ciel* [Chants of the Earth and Sky] was written two years later in 1938 after the birth of their son, Pascal, in 1937. In this song cycle, all three members of the family are portrayed. While serving in the French military during World War Two, Messiaen was captured and held as a prisoner of war. It was while in the concentration camp that he composed his famous “Quartet for the End of Time.”¹⁰ In the spring of 1941 he was released.

His final song cycle, *Harawi*, was written in 1945. Written for dramatic soprano Marcelle Bunlet¹¹ with piano accompaniment, the cycle is a story of love and death that contains allusions to Peruvian love songs. *Hawawi* is part of a trilogy of works that were inspired by Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, the other two works in the trilogy being the *Turangalila-symphonie* [Love Song Symphony] and the *Cinq rechants* [Five Refrains] The works all contains thematic material from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.¹² Messiaen continued to write modal and atonal passages combined with intricate melismatic vocalises and dissonances throughout the cycle. During this second period he also completed *Trois petites Liturgies* [Three Petite Liturgies], *Vingt regards* [Twenty Regards], and the *Turangalila-symphonie* [Turangalia Symphony].¹³

Between 1949 and 1952 Messiaen experimented with new practices like electronic music, the serializations of duration, dynamic levels, and varieties of touch on the piano. During his lifetime, Messiaen spent over sixty years notating bird songs throughout the world¹⁴ and his

¹⁰ Ibid, 223.

¹¹ Roger Nichols, *The Oxford Studies of Composers: Messiaen*. Second ed. (New York: Oxford University Press 1986), 41.

¹² Paul Griffiths, *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. Second ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), 238.

¹³ Roger Nichols, *The Oxford Studies of Composers: Messiaen*. Second ed. (New York: Oxford University Press 1986), 42.

¹⁴ Messiaen, Olivier. *Vocalise-étude*. Paris, France: Alphonse Leduc Editions Musicales, 1935.

fascination continued through his later compositional phases.¹⁵ He also wrote several treatises on music, including *Technique du mon langage musical* [The Technique of my Musical Language], which describes his compositional practices. The work is not a treatise on composition, but rather an explanation of his use of melody and harmony, rhythmic devices, and modes of limited transposition. Other treatises include *Vingt leçons d'harmonie* ([Twenty Harmony Lessons], *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* [Treatise on Rhythm, Color, and Ornithology], and *Analyses des œuvres pour piano de Maurice Ravel* [Analysis of the Piano Works of Maurice Ravel]. Throughout his lifetime, he won numerous awards, including the Erasmus Prize, Leonie Sonnig Music Prize, Wolf Prize in Arts, and a Grammy Award for the Best Classical Contemporary Composition in 1996.¹⁶

Messiaen was obliged to retire at the Conservatoire in Paris where he had been teaching analysis since 1947 and composition since 1966. His pupils had included Barraqué, Stockhausen, Xenakis, Goehr, Murail and George Benjamin. While he loved teaching, retirement afforded him more opportunity to travel the world in pursuit of performances and of birds, and he became a familiar figure in concert halls: “benign, gently smiling, accompanied always by Loriod, attentive and courteous to any who came to ask him questions or request an autograph, habitually tieless except when evening clothes were required. Among the many honours bestowed on him during his last quarter century was the naming of a Utah mountain Mount Messiaen.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Paul Griffiths, *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. Second ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), 235-236.

¹⁶ "Olivier Messiaen." Wikipedia. Accessed February 19, 2015.
http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Messiaen.

¹⁷Olivier Messiaen.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18497?q=Messiaen&search=quick&pos=2&start=1#firsthit> (accessed June 7, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO

Components of Messiaen's Music

Chapter two will consist of four stylistic elements typical of Messiaen's compositional style: Modes of transposition, the synesthetic relationship of color to sound, chordal structures, and rhythmic devices. Messiaen created the Modes of Transposition as a means to produce non-functional tonal harmonies. There is no real sense of tonic, as in the traditional major or minor scale. Messiaen, who was a synesthete, related certain colors with certain sonorities, so the synesthetic relationship of color to sound will be reflected in not only the modes of transposition, but in Messiaen's choice of chordal structure involving the use of the tritone, the addition of sixths, fourths, sevenths, and ninths. Rhythmic devices explored by Messiaen include the manipulation of retrogradable and non-retrogradable rhythms, as well as the use of augmentation dots and ties.

Modes of Transposition and Their Synesthetic Relationship to Color

Messiaen's modes can only be transposed by a semitone a limited number of times; there are a limited number of transpositions that produce unique iterations of each mode. However, the modes themselves can create a sense of color, which the singer should be sensitive to. The modes, named by number from one through seven, are simply a set of pitches conceived within the framework of a scale. The following explanations of the modes will include conclusions from Joseph Edward Harris' dissertation of Messiaen's association of specific colors to the modes and their inversions.¹⁸

¹⁸ Joseph Edward Harris. "Musique Coloree: Synesthetic Correspondence in the Works of Olivier Messiaen" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2004) 50-54.

The first mode is commonly known as the whole tone scale, and is often associated with Claude Debussy's later compositional style. Messiaen associated this mode with a red violet color, no inversions. (See Example 2.1)



Example 2.1¹⁹

One can conceive of the second mode, the octatonic scale, as dividing the octave into four intervals of a minor third with each division consisting of a semitone and a whole step. The root position of a chord I this mode was visualized by Messiaen as shades of purple and violet. When this chord is inverted, Messiaen

associated other colors with its use which can be seen in Appendix A. (See



Example 2.2)

Example 2.2²⁰

Mode three is a whole step and two half steps, associated the orange, gold, and milky white. As with mode two, its inversions are associated with other colors, including gray, mauve, blue, green, and red. (See Example 2.3)

¹⁹ Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, as presented in Messiaen's original publication *Technique de mon langage musical* [In Technique of my musical language], Original French Edition by Alphonse Leduc, Paris, 1944, with English Translation by the same in 1956, pp. 59-62. Cited by Ian le Prévost, "Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992", <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk/resources/messstudy.pdf>

²⁰ Ibid.

**Example 2.3**²¹

Modes four through six are centered around the tritone, an interval that also figures prominently in the whole tone scale. These modes are based on four intervals instead of three, which allows them to have more inversions. In its root position, mode four consists of two half steps followed by a minor third, and a final half step. (See Example 2.4) Messiaen perceived the colors of gray, gold, with a hint blue. There are five possible inversions, all of which are described in depth in Appendix A.

**Example 2.4**²²

Mode five remains undiscovered in the works discussed in this document. The intervals which define it are a half step, a major third, followed by two half steps. Harris' document did not discuss any color associations with this mode. (See Example 2.5)

**Example 2.5**²³

Like mode four, mode six has five possible inversions. The intervallic order Messiaen assigned to this mode is a pattern of two half steps followed by two whole

²¹ Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, as presented in Messiaen's original publication *Technique de mon langage musical* [In Technique of my musical language], Original French Edition by Alphonse Leduc, Paris, 1944, with English Translation by the same in 1956, pp. 59-62. Cited by Ian le Prévost, "Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992", <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk/resources/messstudy.pdf>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

steps. (See Example 2.6) In root position, this mode is associated with a gray base with bits of gold, orange, and dark green.



Example 2.6 ²⁴

While mode seven is similar to a chromatic scale, an exact arrangement of semitones followed by one whole step. (See Example 2.7) As with mode five, Messiaen never discussed the colors associated with this mode.



Example 2.7 ²⁵

Chordal Structures

Messiaen uses perfect fourths and tritones in his harmonic architecture. His religious convictions may also be displayed in the symbolism predominate in the Roman Catholic Holy Trinity. In Messiaen's music, his use of the tritone ceases to be used to represent satanic influences, and takes on a more positive connotation. Like other composers, he also uses triplets and tertian chords. It is important to note that Messiaen uses tritones in every song in the cycle *Poèmes pour Mi*. When changing the color of traditional chords by adding notes, particularly the added sixth and the augmented fourth, Messiaen could create streams of sounds unlike traditional

²⁴Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, as presented in Messiaen's original publication *Technique de mon langage musical* [In Technique of my musical language], Original French Edition by Alphonse Leduc, Paris, 1944, with English Translation by the same in 1956, pp. 59-62. Cited by Ian le Prévost, "Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992", <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk/resources/messstudy.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid.

harmonic structures. Messiaen often adds sevenths and ninths, and by doing so, he creates a chord that contains a sixth and an augmented fourth that resolves to a chord with an added sixth,²⁶ as indicated in the sequence labeled Example 2.8 .



Author Ian le Prévost provides an example in his article *Composers and Their Music: Olivier Messiaen*, “Add a sixth to a chord, then a seventh, and then a ninth.”



Le Prévost writes that “Messiaen’s next note in this harmonic sequence should be an F-sharp [...] the final result is a chord containing a sixth and an augmented fourth that resolves to a chord with an added 6th.”



Example 2.8²⁷

With his synesthetic awareness, these chord progressions are like a kaleidoscope. Their colors, depths, textures, and distances create a stained glass window effect in sound. The rose window could have been an inspiration for Messiaen’s compositions. Known as one of “the most beautiful and characteristic features of medieval architecture,” the circular window resembles a

²⁶ Ian le Prévost, “Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992”, <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk/resources/messstudy.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2010).

²⁷ Ibid.

rose and its petals, and was a prominent feature in French Gothic architecture. The rose window is based on geometry, as every space identified by another smaller space, as circles, squares, triangles, and stars add to the pleasing physical proportions.²⁸ Rose windows were found in the gothic cathedrals throughout northern France, and at Sainte-Trinité, the Roman Catholic Church where Messiaen was an organist.²⁹

Noted musicologist Alexandre Abdoulaev notes how Messiaen used chords of resonance:

...which was connected to mode three, lacking only one note from the mode. The chord of superior resonance will thus contain all of the notes of the overtone series, while a chord of contracted superior resonance will present the same notes placed in clusters, but with parts of the overtone series missing...the chord of resonance can be broken into segments (clusters) of notes, consisting primarily of a series of descending fourths and sevenths, thus encompassing the entirety of the overtone series.³⁰

Rhythmic Devices

Messiaen forces the listener to rethink the element of time, both how one defines time and how it is measured. Professor Charles H. J. Peltz recalls Messiaen's discussion of the relationship between rhythm and the temporal element of music in a lecture at the *Conférence de Bruxelles* in 1958:

Let us not forget that the first and most essential element in music is rhythm, and that rhythm is first and foremost the change of number and duration. Suppose that there were a single beat in all the Universe. One beat, with the eternity before it and Eternity after it. A before and after. That is the birth of time. Imagine then, almost immediately, a second beat. Since any beat is prolonged in the silence which follows it, the second beat will be longer than the first. Another number, another duration. That is the birth of rhythm.³¹

²⁸ Rose Windows.[http://www.stonetracery.com/RoseWindowText. Html](http://www.stonetracery.com/RoseWindowText.Html) (accessed May 17, 2015)

²⁹ Frothingham, James Hunnewell. *The Historical Monuments of France*, J.R. Osgood, 1884 (Princeton University, digitized May 4, 2009) Web. 17, 2015, p.268.

³⁰ Alexandre Abdoulaev, "Messiaen's Chord and Harmonic Theory", <http://oliviermessiaen.net/musical-language/messians-chord-and-harmonic-theory> (accessed January 23, 2010)

³¹ Charles H.J Peltz, "Messiaen, Saint Francis, and the Birds of Faith," ism.yale.edu/sites/default/files/Messiaen.pdf (accessed December 13, 2014).

A basic understanding of Messiaen's concept of rhythm and its function is very important for the singer to understand. From a performer's perspective, if one cannot understand how the music is constructed note by note, rhythm by rhythm, set by set, it is nearly impossible to execute. The organic process of breathing, notated during his years of listening to bird calls, may have helped to develop Messiaen's awareness of the natural rhythms of the breath. A singer's awareness of this extension of breath in his music will aid in interpretation.

Messiaen manipulates rhythms by implementing extremely slow *tempi*, which create a particularly static sensation. He uses rhythmic devices to create minimal variation in melodic sequences. This is one of the most difficult observations for the singer, as musical and rhythmic motives in the vocal line can look almost identical. However, upon closer inspection, one realizes that the only difference in the motive is the addition of an augmentation dot or perhaps the use of a tie. The singer must engage the energetic, or cardiovascular breath, to create forward motion so that the vocal line will not become too heavy. Overall, his music has a great deal of syncopations and rhythmic pulsing, symmetrical structures, retrogradable and non-retrogradable rhythms, and extreme tempi markings for piano, orchestra, and soprano which can affect the overall perception of the rhythmic notation. In general, the singer should examine the orchestral score, even when performing Messiaen's vocal works with only piano. This will ensure a more thorough view of the work in its entirety, and allow the singer to discover more colors within the music. Messiaen himself described his rhythmic practices:

My rhythmic language is a mixture of all these elements: durations distributed in irregular numbers, an absence of even beats and of symmetrical measures, love for prime numbers, presence of non-retrogradable rhythms...all this evolves, is mixed and super-imposed.³²

³²Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976), 88.

Messiaen creates rhythmic turbulence in his music by using non-retrogradable rhythms, also known as palindromic rhythms: a pattern of note durations that is performed in the same manner either forwards or backwards. Performers should note the detail with which Messiaen creates subtle rhythmic effects by elongating a note with the use of a tie, rather than an augmentation dots. Ian le Prévost asserts that Messiaen uses rhythmic augmentation and diminution to make his work sound less predictable. He recalls Messiaen's belief that J. S. Bach used similar rhythmic devices in his music, but in a more simplified manner.³³

His admiration for French composer and teacher Maurice Emmanuel prompted his interest in not only Hindu and Indian rhythms, but also Greek modes, and plainsong. These components of ancient cultures were vital to his rhythmic language as a composer and poet.³⁴ He also uses augmentation dots to create additive rhythms, slightly lengthening the individual notes. Prévost states that "this technique allows him to build prime-numbered groupings from an even-numbered rhythmic cell, making Messiaen's rhythms both flexible and unpredictable."³⁵

Messiaen's use of irregular rhythms are a continuous challenge for performers. However, by understanding Messiaen's philosophy of how time and rhythm function and are relatable to the performer, Messiaen

[...] reinforces the idea that rhythm is the source of all music by quoting figures from Plato to Confucius. His philosophy of time and rhythm ranges from the metaphysical to the spiritual, from the natural world to the man-made. He discusses time of the mountains and the time of the cosmos, rhythm as a human creation and timelessness as a sacred eternity. Much of his rhythmic technique focuses on the disruption of the beat, leading towards an absence of pulse, or timelessness. Spiritually, this was one of his means of communicating with the divine.³⁶

³³ Ian le Prévost, "Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992", <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk> (accessed January 30, 2010).

³⁴ Mary Montgomery Koppel, "The Rhythmic Language of Olivier Messiaen", <http://oliviermessiaen.net/musical-language/rhythmiclanguage> (accesses January 23, 2010).

³⁵ Ian le Prévost, "Composers and Their Music, No.1: Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992", <http://www.musicteachers.co.uk> (accessed January 30, 2010).

³⁶ Mary Montgomery Koppel, "The Rhythmic Language of Olivier Messiaen", <http://oliviermessiaen.net/musical-language/rhythmiclanguage> (accesses January 23, 2010).

For many singers, *knowing* the correct rhythms and *feeling* them are two different ideas. The previous quote implies that Messiaen believed that the concept of rhythm was related to the direct organic movement of breath and sound. While he mentions the evolution and importance of the beat itself, he also used the word “pulse” in the quote above. For the singer, there is a distinct difference between the two. The beat functions as a fixed form, one that can be measured with a metronome. The pulse is more flexible and always varying. When singing Messiaen, the performer must adhere to the natural pulse of the music and the natural pulsation of her breath on that day, allowing the rhythm to breathe, rather than simply beat.

CHAPTER THREE

Analyses of *Trois Mélodies*

A: Introduction

Apart from some earlier efforts to publish vocal music, Messiaen's first recognized work for voice and piano is the miniature cycle *Trois mélodies*, written while he studied with Paul Dukas at the *Conservatoire*.³⁷ This set of songs won Messiaen his *Première Prix* from the *Conservatoire*. Of all of his compositions for voice, these three songs are the easiest and most accessible for both the pianist and singer. They are set to the composer's own text, with the exception of the second piece, *Le sourire*, which was written by Messiaen's mother, Cecile Sauvage. Indeed, *Trois mélodies* reflects the loss of her; Messiaen's mother died in 1927 at the age of forty, and these songs were composed in her memory.

The discussion of each song in *Trois mélodies* will contain a poetical analysis, followed by general information about the poetry where applicable. Next, a musical analysis of each song will be presented and compared to the poetical form. Specific elements from Messiaen's musical world discovered in this first song cycle include his characteristic use of the modes of transposition, the juxtaposition of rhythm, and tone colors. Each song will end with a final section devoted to specific performance issues.

There is no doubt that even in this early set of songs, musical scholars from around the world have found Messiaen's compositional style intriguing and invigorating. Graham Johnson, referring to the first song cycle, writes that "from almost the first note of the first song of this

³⁷ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 109.

group we are taken into the antechamber of the harmonic world of Messiaen's maturity."³⁸ There are numerous indications of how Messiaen's personal musical language is beginning to form in this first set of songs. Hill and Simeone write that:

In 'pourquoi?', for example, the harmonies of the reiterated cadence-gliding between F sharp major (the tonic) and A minor-hint at a central feature of Messiaen's language, the Octatonic mode of altering semitones and tones favoured by (among others) Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel, and Stravinsky...also characteristic of Messiaen's early work is the music's intense emotional charge, which causes it to break through the slightly stilted conventions of the poem with an impassioned upsurge, before dying away to the icy frisson of the final 'Pourquoi?'³⁹

Examining the first of Messiaen's songs, it is important to point out how influential the music of Debussy was on this young student's development. In his article "Portrait of Debussy," Roger Smalley's cites an interview that Bernard Gavoty had with Messiaen during the summer of 1961, in which Messiaen describes how Debussy's music inspired him to become a composer: "After the war we moved to Nantes and it was there that I met my first teacher, Jehan de Gibon, who gave me as a present Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande* (an inconceivable thing in 1918 for a provincial teacher to give *Pelleas et Melisande* to a 10-year old boy!). It was this score that decided my vocation."⁴⁰

B: Poetical Analysis

In the first song in the cycle, *Pourquoi*, Messiaen contemplates, and perhaps even questions, the existence of the beauties of nature, possibly alluding to the question "What is the meaning of life?"

³⁸ Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 314.

³⁹ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 22.

⁴⁰ Roger Smalley, "Portrait of Debussy: Debussy and Messiaen." *The Musical Times* 109 Number 1500 (1968): 128-131.

| | |
|---|---|
| Pourquoi les oiseaux de l'air, | <i>Why the birds of the air?</i> |
| Pourquoi les reflet de l'eau, | <i>Why the reflection of the water?</i> |
| Pourquoi les nuages du ciel, | <i>Why the clouds of the sky?</i> |
| Pourquoi? | <i>Why?</i> |
| Pourquoi les feuilles de l'Automne, | <i>Why the leaves of autumn?</i> |
| Pourquoi les roses de l'Été, | <i>Why the roses of the summer?</i> |
| Pourquoi les chanson du Printemps, | <i>Why the song of spring, why?</i> |
| Pourquoi? | <i>Why?</i> |
| Pourquoi n'on tils pour moi de charmes, | <i>Why have they for me charms?</i> |
| Pourquoi? | <i>Why?</i> |

The poem is composed of three strophes. Two quatrains are followed by a couplet with the first two stanzas containing heptasyllabic, octasyllabic, and nine syllables per line. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern $a^7b^7c^8d^2 e^9f^8g^8d^2 h^9d^2$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. The end of each stanza is an iambic monometer on the word “pourquoi,” which is used fifteen times in only three pages, a resounding literary repetition of an iambic foot (˘ /). Every other line in the poem is a tetrameter with an iambic foot at the beginning and end with either a tetrabrach or an anapest foot in the middle.

The first stanza is more meditative, the second more action oriented; however, the singer should note that there are no verbs in these sections, creating a sense of timelessness, a static perception in both the music and poetry. There is an implied “don’t” in the translation, expressing the inability of the list of natural objects to cheer up the poet:

Why (don't) the birds of the air?
Why (don't) the glimmers of the water?
Why (don't) the clouds of the sky? Why?
Why (don't) the leaves of autumn?
Why (don't) the roses of summer?
Why (don't) the songs of the spring? Why?
Why (aren't) they charming for me? Why? Oh, why?

In m. 16, Messiaen demonstrates a sensitivity to the written and sung word. While the texture of the piano transitions from arpeggiations to a conjunct melody moving in parallel thirds, a transformation in the vocal melody and text of the poem occurs. For the first time, the word *moi* [me] is used. Instead of asking general questions, the questions become personal, as the poet writes “Why (aren’t) they charming me?” The inclusion of the word “don’t” justifies the heavy-hearted sentiment reflected in both the contemplative musical and literary repetitions. Messiaen’s own words reflect why he, and, by inference, why we all as human beings find it difficult to realize the joy in the simplicity of nature.

C: Musical Analysis

| Section | A | A | B |
|----------|-----|------|-------|
| Measures | 1–8 | 9–15 | 16–25 |

The form is derived from something similar to German bar form (AAB). Both A sections employ the octatonic scale, OCT 01, as does the beginning of the B section, mm. 16-17, which are labeled in example 3.1. Whereas in the A sections both the accompaniment and melody consist of OCT 1, the B section contains more parallel motion, as the piano accompaniment is comprised of minor and major thirds. While this section does use OCT 01, two octatonic scales are combined: OCT 01 and OCT 2,3. OCT 01 is found in the soprano and tenor lines of the piano, while OCT 2,3 is present in the alto and bass lines. The end of the B section, however, does not use the octatonic collection, instead using the chromatic collection in m. 18. (See Example 3.1)



Example 3.1

The use of mode two coupled with the large amount repetition creates a melancholy quality to the work, and reflects not only Messiaen's deep rooted spiritual life, but also his sadness about his mother's death. It is worth noting that the octatonic scale is usually rich in triads, seventh chords, and diminished sevenths, sonorities that Messiaen uses in *Pourquoi?*. No other modes of limited transposition are used in this piece, or in the rest of the song cycle, as opposed to Messiaen's later works like *Poèmes pour Mi*.

Although the vocalist reaches a cadence at m. 19 that is harmonized by a C-sharp major ninth chord, this should not be seen as a new section, but rather an emotional extension of the B section. The C-sharp major ninth chord coupled with the singers final B-natural renders the cadence unstable. Although the C-sharp is reiterated in the bass in m. 20, as though it were a pedal, in m. 21, this quasi-pedal, pushing into m. 22 arrives on a B major ninth chord. The note "B" is rearticulated in the bass at the beginning of mm. 22–24. Measures 22-25 should not be seen as a coda, as they are ancillary to the piece, and form an integral part of the piece's story. In m. 25 the singer sings her last note, F-sharp, which is preceded by a C-sharp, strongly suggesting dominant to tonic motion, as though one were performing a perfect authentic cadence in F-sharp major. The singer's final note, however, is made dissonant by the C-sharp major-ninth chord the

pianist plays around it, an unstable sound that underscores the degree of uncertainty with which the singer asks, for the third time in a row, “why?”

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. Sets 5-10, 6-33, and 3-7 dominant the A section of *Pourquoi*. While set 5-10 introduces the B section, it is only stated once, as sets 6-22 and 3-9 (12) make one appearance; a total of three sets are inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C. By identifying these repetitions, the singer will be able to recognize musical motives more speedily.

D: Text-Music Relations

The musical form matches the form of the poem: the poem contains three strophes, and the form of the *mélodie* is AAB. Messiaen creates stability throughout the song by the use of simplistic repetition of both musical and poetic ideas. For example, the initial melody stated in mm. 2-3 is immediately repeated in mm. 4-5, with the word “pourquoi” beginning each of those statements. Minimal variation offers a sense of timelessness; and this correlation between time and music is one of Messiaen’s most distinguished compositional trademarks. Variation of rhythmic devices is apparent in both this first song and his later works. Messiaen stresses the natural spoken accent on the second syllable of the word *pourquoi*: the first syllable is always on an upbeat and the second syllable always placed on the downbeat of the following measure. However, the rhythmic setting subtly changes from phrase to phrase. For instance, the anacrusis for the word *pourquoi* is an eighth note in m. 1, while in m. 7, two sixteenth notes replace the eighth note of m. 1. In m. 17, the pickup is reduced to one sixteenth note. Here, both the text and music change, as the final utterance of the word *pourquoi* is eighth and supports no coda. The change to a single eighth note supports previous discussion of the form. On the “quoi” of the word *pourquoi* the downbeat only appears twice as a quarter note, in mm. 2 and 4. Its duration

shortens to a dotted quarter in mm. 9, 11, 16, and 18. The same duration is expressed with a tie in mm. 23 and 24, and elongated in mm. 19 and 25.

While in the A sections, the word *pourquoi* is constantly followed by texts that are evocative of nature, the B section contains a shift in subject: the narrator enters the poem for the first time, indicated by the word *moi* [me]. The entrance of the narrator is emphasized by the lower *tessitura* of the vocal line, perhaps suggesting a more introspective sentiment. Additionally, throughout the end of the B section, mm. 18-25, the word *pourquoi* is isolated which coincides with the change of collection mentioned previously. Measures 18-25 are chromatic rather than octatonic, which highlights the marked isolation of the word *pourquoi*.

E: Performance Recommendations

The range of this *mélodie* covers both the *primo* and *secondo passaggi*. Exactly where these *passaggi* points come might depend on whether a mezzo soprano or soprano voice sings this song. Regardless of voice type, it is apparent that Messiaen expects a different timbre in each register. The singer must be comfortable singing in a lower *tessitura* while performing this piece, and the cycle in general. For example, middle range is used from the F-sharp to the A-sharp in mm. 1-2, 3- 4, 8- 9, and 10-11. At m. 2, the singer should be sure to elide the ‘s’ in the text, *les oiseaux* [the birds] leaning into the A-natural to contrast the proceeding A-sharp, and highlighting OCT 01. (See Example 3.2)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The vocal line is written in French: "Pour - quoi les oi-seaux de l'air, Pour -". The tempo is marked "Très modéré". The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 2/4. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings of *pp* and *p*. A red box highlights a specific passage in the vocal line and piano accompaniment.

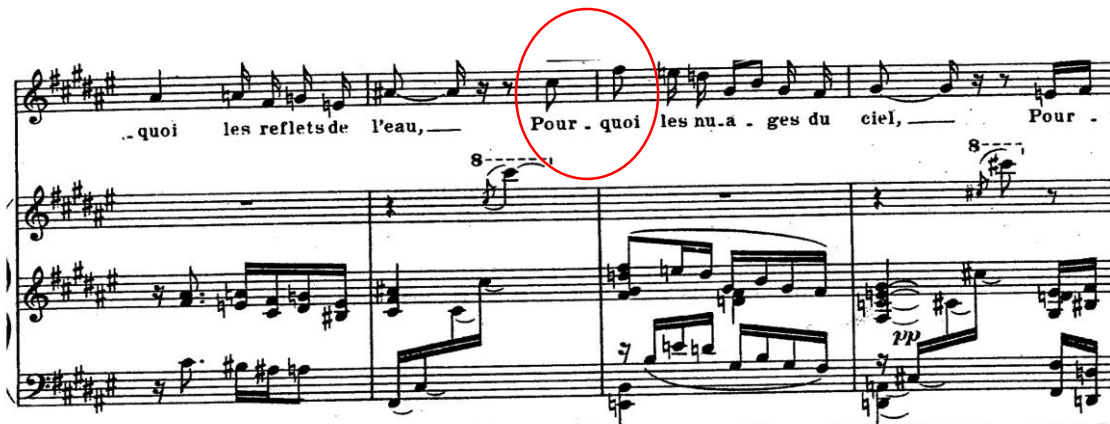
Example 3.2

Upper voice colors will be easy to access in mm. 5-6 and mm. 12-13, as well as in the final *pourquoi* in mm. 22-23. The final utterance of the word *pourquoi* appears in the lower range in mm. 24 and 25, where the darker, steely colors of the dramatic voice can dominate, as do the exclamations from mm. 7-8 and 14-18. Whether soprano or mezzo soprano, a singer faces the technical challenge of negotiating two different *passaggi*, four times, between the C-sharp and F-sharp. Singing the C-sharp too heavily, produces an F-sharp that could sound covered and out of tune. A lifted soft palate that is maintained will enable the singer to navigate these passages easily.

Messiaen is sensitive to sung French, as “the word ‘pourquoi’ gives the singer time to place the diphthong-‘quoi’-with the utmost care.”⁴¹ With every repetition of the word, the singer should contemplate varying dynamics, performing *crescendi* on the non-harmonic tones or accidentals within the phrases. The singer may choose to crescendo the melodic line as she

⁴¹ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 110.

approaches F5, but should approach the perfect fourth delicately, which is labeled in Example 3.3.



Example 3.3

It is a common scholarly observation that Messiaen's religious convictions are often represented in his works. *Pourquoi?* may be an early example of the way in which Messiaen's beliefs are represented in his music. While the tritone was traditionally referred to in early music as the "devil's interval," Messiaen may have used it, and tertian chords, to represent the Holy Trinity. Messiaen's use of diminished triads and tertian chords, the perfect fourth, and the tritone are abundant throughout the *mélodie*. The singer should be sensitive to all of these harmonies, listening for specific colors that will influence her timbre decisions. Perfect fourths are found in the piano accompaniment and the vocal line, and even within some of the chords in the B section, which begins with an anacrusis in m. 15 m. 16 with an A-major triad on top of a D-natural in the bass. This chord is repeated in m. 17 on the first beat and in m. 18 where the 5/8 time signature appears, right before the singer gasps on the word *Ah!*.

Messiaen also exploits the uncertainty of the tritone. In mm. 16–17 the direction of the music shifts, as thirds move in the same direction as the vocal line, creating the momentum of parallel motion. In m. 16 an A-minor triad is established. By adding an F-sharp in the left hand of the piano, he clearly suggests a relationship between C-natural and F-sharp, creating an

augmented fourth. This could also be analyzed as an F-sharp half diminished seventh chord, and is outlined in Example 3.4.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The piano accompaniment is on two staves (treble and bass) with a key signature of three sharps. The lyrics are: ".quoi n'ont-ils pour moi de char - mes, Pour - quoi? Pourquoi, Ah! — Pour." A red rectangular box highlights the section from measure 16 to measure 18. In measure 16, the vocal line has a half note on G#5. In measure 17, the vocal line has a half note on A#5. In measure 18, the vocal line has a half note on B5. The piano accompaniment features complex harmonic structures, including a prominent augmented fourth interval in measure 16, which is highlighted by the red box. The piano part includes dynamic markings like *ppp* and *pp*.

Example 3.4

While the A section features texts that are reminiscent of nature, landscapes, and the elements, the harmonic and melodic shifts in the B section should not be overlooked by the performers. As stated earlier, the narrator enters the poem for the first time, as the word *moi* [me] is of the utmost importance. Although placed on a sixteenth note, a stress on this word would be warranted. Changes within the text and music are noted, as the implications of the octatonic scale are fading, leaving m. 18 void of its presence. In mm. 16-18, Messiaen sets the conjunct vocal line in the spoken register for the soprano, rather than in the higher part of the staff. This facilitates a dramatic breath on the *Ah!* in m. 18, which is followed by a rise in the natural voice, as the singer places the next *pourquoi* on C5. A *messa di voce* on the C-natural sung to the word *Ah!*, will encourage a singer to demonstrate a more emotional delivery of the text. While the poem itself does not contain the repetitions of the word *pourquoi* [why?], Messiaen chooses to reiterate the word, placing it in a manner that suggests self-examination.

Measure 18 also features a pattern of tritones, perhaps indicating a spiritual contemplation. D-natural is added to an F-minor triad in the pianist's left hand, creating a tritone from A-flat to D-natural, within a half-diminished-seventh sonority. In mm. 19–21, Messiaen uses tertian chords and parallel sevenths with C-sharp pedal tones in m. 19-20, which are clearly marked in Example 3.4. The singer should use these three measures of piano accompaniment to build anticipation for the outcries of the word *pourquoi*, observing Messiaen's dynamic marking in the score. The performers should view these three measures as an emotional extension of mm. 16-18. (See Example 3.5)



Example 3.5

The extended piano interlude gives way to the final measures of this piece, as the voice restates the question “Why?” three more times. Throughout the end of the B section, mm. 18-25, the word *pourquoi* is isolated which coincides with the change of collection mentioned previously, as mm. 18-25 are chromatic rather than octatonic, which highlights the marked isolation of the word *pourquoi*. As the voice restates the question, the melody ascends a perfect fourth, mimicking speech where the voice naturally rises when asking the question “why?” While there are locations in the song where the text *pourquoi* is sung to a descending interval, here, Messiaen is continually restating the word, rather than simply using it once. The repetition

is indicative of heightened emotion, which is also represented in the previous piano accompaniment in mm. 19 through 21.

The first time the singer sings *pourquoi* the perfect fourth is high and declamatory, and should be sung *forte*, as an emotional outcry. While the perfect fourth is maintained in the second and third statements, the singer should sing them differently: the second, more of a realization, and the final, one of acceptance. Once again, Messiaen places the sung line in a lower vocal register, and a more reflective emotion is portrayed. The singer should adhere to the dynamic variations that Messiaen indicates in the score.

Harmonically and poetically, Messiaen's piece does not resolve. The singer should deliver the final text *dolce*, staying in character until both pianist and singer release the fermata together. There should be a sense of lingering and longing on the *decrescendo*, as the piece comes to a close. The singer's final note is made dissonant by the C-sharp major ninth chord surrounding it, reflecting the uncertainty of the narrator's acceptance of his grief. The piano bass line reiterates the dyad B-natural to F-sharp, something that would suggest the subdominant in F-sharp major. However, the last sonority we hear contains C-sharp as the lowest note, and the chord that harmonizes could be analyzed as V11 in F-sharp major. The singer should be cognizant of these harmonic notations when making timbral choices in the vocal line.

The harmonic motion suggested by the bass (IV-V) contributes to the sense of incompleteness suggested by the text, as it is reminiscent of a half cadence: although the vocal line ends on the pitch center of the piece, F-sharp, it is harmonized as a dissonance, as seen in Example 3.6. As the singer is pondering the question "why?," tertian sonorities with extensions signify frustration in the piano accompaniment, which is also mirrored in the constant reiteration

of the text. At the end of the piece, Messiaen implies F-sharp major, one of his favorite keys.⁴²

(See Example 3.6)

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef, featuring lyrics in French: "Pour - quoi? — Pour -". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with complex, dense chordal textures. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *pp* (pianissimo), *dim.* (diminuendo), and *peu* (a little). The key signature is F-sharp major (three sharps: F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

Example 3.6

Loss can most certainly be a cause for pause. This is reflected in the music, as this piece has a rather static feeling, a sense of endlessness about it, and in the final measure of this piece, there is no real sense of resolution, as Messiaen clusters the following pitches together: C-sharp, D-natural, F-sharp, G-sharp, and B-natural. Multiple ideas are occurring at this point. There is a split root from C sharp to D natural and polytriads are present: D-flat major triad and B minor triad, when F-sharp is added from the vocal line. Messiaen also uses a C-sharp/D-flat major

⁴² Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 110.

chord, a major seventh chord in C-sharp major, or a diminished seventh chord: E-sharp, G-sharp, B-natural, and D-natural. These pitches also include the tonic, F-sharp, which present the final measure with an exotic feel, perhaps echoing Asian influences, as Messiaen was influenced by the Japanese scale. However the singer choses to view this analysis, one must be sensitive to the text-painting, which is also present on the final word “WHY.” The singer is still contemplating something that is unsettled within him or her, and this conflict both musically and harmonically, must be conveyed textually and emotionally. All of the previous mentioned elements serve the text, as the singer’s contemplations of “why,” remain unresolved. The performer needs to leave the listener to wonder what she is still contemplating, that is unresolved within her.

All of the observations above serve as building blocks for Messiaen’s future vocal compositions, and lead us to his next song, *Le sourire*.

A: Introduction

All poems except *Le sourire* are composed by the composer himself. Messiaen sets his mother’s poem to only one page of music. Born in 1883, Cecile Sauvage was one of three sisters. After marriage, she became pregnant and began her most famous collection of poems, *L’Âme en bourgeon* [the Soul in the Bud]. Hill and Simeone write that the “The poems were published in 1910 by Mercure de France, as part of her collection *Tandis que la terre tourne* [While the earth rotates]: “The extraordinary poems written to Messiaen during just after his time in the womb were things he always considered immensely precious....Although *L’Âme en bourgeon* contains no dedication to Messiaen, it is clear that Cecile wrote them for him.”⁴³ Messiaen often

⁴³ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 10.

spoke of his mother and her poetry. Her poem *L'Âme en bourgeon* contained subjects of later interest to Messiaen, such as music and bird songs. "Her poems deal frequently with music and with nature, and she brought unique insights, honesty and lyric eloquence to the subject of maternity." ⁴⁴

B: Poetical Analysis

Certain mot murmuré
Par vous est un baiser
Intime et prolongé
Comme un baiser sur l'âme.
Ma bouche veut sourire
and my smile trembles.

*A certain murmured
word by you is a kiss,
intimate and prolonged,
like a kiss on the soul.
My mouth wants to smile
Et mon sourire tremble.*

The poem is comprised of one line per stanza, a sestet. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern a⁶b⁶c⁷d⁷e⁶f⁷, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. The predominant foot patterns are iambic, with a scattering of anapest, amphibrach, phryic, tetrabrach, and trochee patterns. The symmetrical pattern of dimeter, trimeter, trimeter is indicated in the number of feet per line; 2,3,3,2,3,3.

C: Musical Analysis

In the second *mélodie* in the song cycle, Messiaen manages to invoke the closeness felt in a single kiss in only thirteen measures. Although *Le sourire* is through-composed, the piano introduction in mm. 1-3 returns in mm. 9-10, but transposed down a whole step. Messiaen establishes a relationship throughout the song between the pitches of G or G-sharp and E-natural, both major and minor thirds and their inversions as sixths. These thirds appear throughout the vocal line and piano accompaniment, perhaps revealing the intimacy of the kiss which is

⁴⁴ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 11.

represented in mm. 1-3 and 9-10. There is minimal variation in the piano line for the entire *mélodie*. For example, in mm. 2 and 9, Messiaen use the same pitches but different rhythms, recalling the triplet he first presented in m. 1. In these measures, he establishes a diminished seventh, as A-natural, C-natural and E-natural create a minor triad. By adding G-natural, he creates a minor seventh, and by adding the F-sharp, he establishes a diminished seventh, as marked in Example 3.7.

Example 3.7 shows a musical score for Chant and Piano. The Chant part is in 4/4 time, marked 'Lent', and has a whole note rest in measure 2. The Piano part is in 4/4 time, marked 'Lent expressif', and features a triplet of eighth notes (A, C, E) in measure 2, which is highlighted with a red box. The piano part is marked 'pp' and 'Certain mot'.

Example 3.7

Messiaen also explores a +3/-4 motive at the beginning of the piece, in mm. 2-3, as marked in Example 3.8. Three ascending semitones followed by four descending semitones is also apparent in m. 3, as G-sharp to B-natural is an ascension of three semitones, with C-natural acting as an escape tone. B-natural to G-natural is a descending pattern of four semitones.

Example 3.8 shows a musical score for Chant and Piano. The Chant part is in 4/4 time, marked 'Lent', and has a whole note rest in measure 3. The Piano part is in 4/4 time, marked 'Lent expressif', and features a sequence of notes (G-sharp, A, B-natural, C-natural, B-natural, A, G-natural) in measure 3, which is highlighted with a red box. The piano part is marked 'pp' and 'Certain mot'.

Example 3.8

This numeric idea spans to mm. 5-6, as the piece is heavily saturated in major and minor thirds. It is also notable that if the bass in the piano is discounted, a series of minor thirds in the

accompaniment are also present. Included, the bass descension is an overall outline of movement from A-natural to E-natural. Note that the piano ends with fourths in mm. 12-13, outlining this descension, while the voice remains fixed on E- natural.

Incomplete versions of the octatonic scale are also mirrored in this song. Measures 1-2 and 7-8 indicate OCT 2,3. This musical notation will be further explored in text-music relations.

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. There are four different sets in the vocal line of *Le sourire*, none of which were inverted. Because the piece is through composed, each set is stated only once. These sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

The musical and poetical forms are symmetrical with each other. Measures 1-3 represent the kiss and features the octatonic scale. OCT 2,3 returns in mm. 7-8 at the text *comme un baiser sur l'âme* [like a kiss on the soul], just as the kiss returns a step lower than earlier stated in m. 9-10. Messaien provides “the kiss” with musically melodic qualities without the presence of a text, allowing an exchange of musical and poetic ideas between the piano and the vocal line.

E: Performance Recommendations

While *Le sourire* is barely ninety seconds long, it lacks nothing. The conjunct vocal line is rather simple, its range spanning the interval of a seventh: the lowest note is an E4 and the highest note is a D5, pitches that are right between the *prima* and *seconda passaggi*. The singer should acknowledge the opening two measures as the kiss itself, which is indicated in Example

3.9, before entering in m.3, a rather cinematic moment.

The image shows a musical score for two parts: CHANT and PIANO. The CHANT part is on a single staff with a treble clef, marked 'Lent'. The PIANO part is on two staves (treble and bass clefs), marked 'Lent expressif'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part begins with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and continues with a melodic line. A red box highlights the first measure of the piano part. To the right of the piano part, there is a section marked 'pp' (pianissimo) with the text 'Cer.tain mot' below it.

Example 3.9

Both the singer and pianist should observe the subdivision of the pulse of the eighth note throughout the piece, as opposed to the strict and heavy quarter. Subdividing will allow a more precise delivery of music and text. For both the singer and pianist, it is difficult not to rush the music, as one should not become too strict with the meter. Both musicians should allow for the same freedom found in operatic recitative. The vocal line is saturated with interval class three, as mentioned in the musical analysis (G/G-sharp to B), which can also be associated with the kiss. The singer should note that the opening vocal line begins with G-sharp to B-natural, and the very first time that the word “kiss” is sung in m. 5, it is to the retrograde of those pitches: B-natural to G-sharp.

Messiaen’s use of tied chords in mm. 4–8 and 12–13 implies a sense of endlessness, as the emotion of remembrance seems to hang in suspended sounds created by the piano. The singer must highlight the [z] in the word *baiser* [kiss] in m. 5, accentuating the texture of the voiced consonant on the lips, leaning into the word *intime* [intimate] and the G-natural that is doubled in the piano line. This is indicated in Example 3.10.

Example 3.10

Measure 5 is the first time the downbeat is unarticulated, obscuring the meter, as if lost “in the time of the kiss.” Messiaen follows this thought as the 5/4 meter is introduced, expanding the sense of time, precisely with the word *prolongé* [prolonged]. On the word *prolongé*, the singer should imply a *tenuto*, for text painting and to convey to the next sung phrase, increasing in dynamic until the *ppp* on the word *l’âme* [soul]. On the word *l’âme* the subito in the piano must be matched by the voice. Author Peter Hill proposes that the singer delay the release from the [l], floating smoothly into the [a].⁴⁵ The preceding notes should not be sung too weighted; otherwise, the D natural will feel higher than it actually is, and could appear flat.

The focused melody in the opening vocal line suggests a sense of intimacy, as lengthy sustained chords hover in the accompaniment, creating the anticipation of the kiss itself. Sustained note values furnish a sentiment of timelessness, as do the *tenuto* markings in the right hand of the piano in mm. 12–13. The performer can use these tied passages to portray the effect

⁴⁵ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 110.

of time standing still, as the singer remembers the kiss and anticipates the next kiss. It is imperative that the singer not rush through these passages, but rather submit to them. In this instance, moments of awkward silence are appropriate and necessary, as the singer must convey the action of the kiss in the most intimate manner possible.

Because the song centers round the interval of a third, the perfect fourth in the piano line in mm. 12 and 13 is a bit of a surprise. As the singer ponders the complexity of a trembling smile, the heaviness created at *Et mon sourire tremble* [and my smile trembles] should not be produced dynamically, but by the singer's timbre choice. The singer should be sensitive to the flexibility of *tenutos* played by the right hand in the piano by weighing the first beat of the last measure. Note the two quarter rests in the last measure before uttering the word *tremble*, by adding a slight hesitation or pause, as the singer recalls the kiss. As the pianist lingers on the perfect fourths in the piano in these final two measures, it should not be mistaken for languishing. An aspirated breath would be appropriate here, to convey a dynamic marking of *ppp*.

In the final chord of m. 12 and 13, Messiaen uses a seventh chord in the left hand of the piano: E-natural, G-natural, A-natural, and C-sharp. Within the stated A-major triad the added G-natural creates the needed minor third. Once again, Messiaen is sensitive to the text of the poem, as “this song presages the highly concentrated smaller songs of “*Poèmes pour Mi*” in its delicate placing of natural word stresses in quasi-recitative style.”⁴⁶ This quasi-recitative style demands the vocalist demonstrate a lifted soft palate on repeated notes resulting in accurate intonation. Messiaen is extremely clear in setting the nuances of French language. The theme of the kiss from mm. 1 and 2 returns in mm. 9–10, now transposed down a whole step and preceding the word *bouche* [mouth]. The singer should accentuate the [ʃ] on the word *bouche*, stressing the B-

⁴⁶ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 110.

flat, highlighting the blissfulness of the kiss. Messiaen brings back the kiss, as the singer does not want to release the treasured moment she is recalling. The vocal entrance at m. 11 should appear subtly, mimicking the kiss in the right hand of the piano. This allows the kiss, the memory, and the voice to emerge simply, rather than abruptly. The singer should not rush the last two measures, but allow the voice and breath to hesitate, savoring the ensuing silence.

The performer should note the repetition of pitches throughout the *mélodie*. An economic use of pitches creates a sense of tension and anticipation for change. The G-sharp is sung seven times and G-natural eleven times within only thirteen measures of music. In mm. 12 and 13 alone, the vocal line repeats the note E-natural seven times. These repetitions could be problematic for the singer, as sustaining repeated pitches in the middle voice requires a lifted soft palate, and adequate room behind the tongue. Otherwise, intonation of minor seconds could be an issue. While there is some doubling between the piano and voice in mm. 4 and 5, the voice is exposed in mm. 3, 6–8, and 11, as Messiaen employs complete silence in mm. 6 and 7, expressing the breath of anticipated intimacy. Because vocal exposure is present, the vocalist must maintain control of her instrument, allowing for buoyancy so that the core of the pitch is not compromised.

A: Introduction

In the final song in *Trois mélodies*, “La fiancée perdue,” Messiaen portrays his mother as a radiant bride. The longest of the three songs in the set, Messiaen’s text explores the pleasures of nature combined with an ardent prayer of supplication. Peter Hill writes that

Irregular phrase lengths and variety of meter already show Messiaen’s fascination with rhythm, which was to prove so richly rewarding in his mature work. Deep-seated faith in man’s relationship and connection to a higher authority is raptly affirmed. . . . this song affords a brief glimpse at the visionary rewards of the later cycle, although the language is at present limited to relatively conventional gestures.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 111.

B: Poetical Analysis

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| C'est la douce fiancée, | <i>It is the sweet fiancée</i> |
| C'est l'ange de la bonté, | <i>It is the angel of goodness</i> |
| C'est un après midi ensoleillé | <i>It is a sunny afternoon</i> |
| C'est le vent sur les fleurs. | <i>It is the wind upon the flowers.</i> |
| | |
| C'est un sourire pur comme un | <i>It is the pure smile</i> |
| Coeur d'enfant, | <i>Like the heart of a child</i> |
| C'est un grand lys | <i>It is a great lily,</i> |
| Blanc comme une aile, | <i>white like a wing</i> |
| Très haut dans une coupe d'or! | <i>Very high in a gold bowl!</i> |
| | |
| Jésus, bénissez-la! Elle! | <i>O Jesus, bless her!</i> |
| Donnez-lui votre grâce puissante! | <i>Give her your healthy grace</i> |
| Qu'elle ignore | <i>That she may ignore the</i> |
| la souffrance, les larmes! | <i>suffering and tears!</i> |
| Donnez lui le repos, Jésus! | <i>Give her rest, Jesus!</i> |

The poem is a single line strophe of eleven lines. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces a pattern of $a^7a^7a^{10}b^6c^{10}d^{17}e^6f^2g^{10}h^{11}i^8$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. The predominant foot patterns alternate hexameters and octameters, with a scattering of trochee and iambic feet, coupled with anapests. With the exception of lines one, two, and three, the lack of an end rhyme scheme and the irregular number of syllables reflect the influence of *vers libre* [free verse], already well established poetical style in French literary culture. The music contests the natural stresses of the spoken French.

C: Musical Analysis

This *mélodie* is in two part song form. In the A section, the melody is repetitive: the two stanzas contained in this section are set to similar melodies.

| Section | A | Interlude | B |
|----------|------|-----------|-------|
| Measures | 1-50 | 51-54 | 55-73 |

The accompaniment in the A section is more active than the vocal line. Constant streams of sixteenth notes in the accompaniment create a driving, galloping intensity that contrasts with the lengthier durations of the vocal line through mm. 1-5. The A section is symmetrical around the G-natural, featured in the piano and vocal line. This pattern of two minor thirds between two major thirds divides the octave evenly, as indicated in Example 3.11.

Example 3. 11

As the previous noted symmetry disappears, harmonic variation in the vocal and piano begin in m. 34. Here, the collections Messiaen uses are no longer symmetrical, as the combination of sixteenth and half note octaves in the right hand of the piano provide a valid

downbeat audible to the singer. Flourishing scales accompany meter changes in mm. 42- 49, as the singer prepares for the dramatic interlude. Galloping figures in the accompaniment come to an abrupt halt in m. 50, with mm. 51-54 serving as a transition into the next textual and musical idea, B, as indicated in Example 3.12.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It contains the text "d'or!" and a long horizontal line indicating a sustained note. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs, also in three sharps. It features a series of rapid, ascending and descending eighth-note patterns, marked with a fortissimo "ff" dynamic. A red rectangular box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment starting around measure 51, where the tempo is marked "Lent" and the dynamic is "mf expressif". This section shows a more melodic and sustained piano line.

Example 3.12

The B Section established in m. 55 is occupied with relentless triplets in the right and left hands of the piano. Peter Hill characterizes the vocal line as intoning “a fervent prayer for divine blessing on the soul of the ‘fiancé’ of the title.”⁴⁸ As previously mentioned, Messiaen depicts the trinity with text-painting, as the ardent prayer is sung over the pianist’s triplets, as shown in Example 3.13. The left hand of the piano offers ties and lengthier notes which prevail over what might normally be a steady downbeat in the accompaniment.

⁴⁸ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 111.



Example 3.13

While suspensions are indicated in the left hand of the piano as the B section approaches, they do not appear in the right hand until m. 59, where they are woven into every other measure until m. 63, where they become a permanent fixture until the meter change in m. 66. Throughout this section the vocal line and the piano accompaniment generate a rocking motion, as Messiaen depicts a prayerful plea woven among diminished triads in the piano line. Scholars Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone write that “the music sinks to rest with a serene prayer for Christ’s blessing. Near the end of his life, Messiaen confided to George Benjamin that he believed his mother had continued to watch over him as a guardian angel.”⁴⁹

Messiaen also continues to use changing meters, as in *Pourquoi* and *Le sourire*, as mm. 1-19 are in 2/4, measure twenty is in 3/4 and m. 21 resumes the 2/4 meter. This same sequence occurs in mm. 23-49. Irregular phrases and meter changes continue until m. 66, as the final word in the text, *Jésus* [Jesus], is sung in mm. 71 and 72, as outlined in Example 3.13. The song ends in a quadruple meter, with what appears to be a G major chord, which would participate in a plagal cadence, if the key were in fact D major. The plagal cadence, also known as an “Amen” cadence is often associated with the church, as many Protestant hymns end in IV-I. (See Example 3.14)

⁴⁹ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 22.

Example 3.14

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. In *La fiancée perdue*, set 4-22 dominates the A section and is stated four times. The A section also features the repetition of sets 4-12 and 4-18, while B is dominated by set 3-2; a total of seven were inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

The driving regular rhythms in the piano and voice are at odds with the natural speech rhythms of the poem. While the schwa would be pronounced in the spoken French, Messiaen does not always acknowledge its presence, as some are placed on tied notes. This particular issue will also be addressed in the performance recommendations below. Musically, the duple rhythms of the first section are used to paint Messiaen's enthusiastic comparisons of his mother's characteristics to natural and religious imagery. The interlude separates the A section from the B section, which becomes a moderate 4/4 prayer for his mother's salvation. The name Jesus is mentioned in the first time in section B, lines 10 and 14 of the poem. The musical prayer begins and ends with the utterance of Jesus' name.

E: Performance Recommendations

Hill argues that “this song affords a brief glimpse at the visionary rewards of the later cycle, although the language is at present limited to relatively conventional gestures.”⁵⁰ For this reason, Hill suggests that this set of songs should be included in the standard French repertoire for young singers: it would be an ideal art song for a young singer and must be warmly recommended for this purpose. The piano figurations are redolent of late Fauré and Duparc, and demand no specialist expertise to perform them effectively. The vocal tessitura is perfectly judged so that the texts can be projected easily and clearly, with an automatic response to color shadings suggested by the poems.⁵¹

While the key signature of E Major is indicated in the clefs, the singer should not listen for E major tonalities, as the first sung note in the vocal line is actually G natural. Although the vocalist’s melody is often doubled by the pianist throughout the work, it is difficult for the singer to perceive, as it is mostly in the middle voice rather than at the top of the staff, where the soprano would expect to hear it. Subdividing the beat to maintain a freer style in the voice as the singer approaches the *seconda passaggio* is recommended. Observing vocal buoyancy will allow further and easier articulated final schwas[ə] on the tied notes, as in mm. 5 and 28. The lighter, more lyrical voice will be more comfortable singing the final schwas, whereas the more dramatic voice might opt to omit them while piloting the *seconda passaggio*. A crescendo and accelerando in the opening phrases will drive the vocal line forward so that it does not become too weighted. Highlighting the nonharmonic tones in the vocal line in mm. 13-16 will serve as preparation for upcoming meter changes.

⁵⁰ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 111.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 109.

An *accelerando* and *crescendo* in conjunction with the piano line in mm. 42-46 will propel the voice toward the high A-natural that Messiaen writes for mm. 45-47. The singer should observe a sharp cut off of this note, in preparation for the accented downbeat by the piano in m. 50, a B dominant seventh chord in the left hand. Messiaen continues the rhythmic texture he has established throughout the A section in mm. 42-44: running sixteenth notes in the piano while the vocalist portrays lengthier durations. While the vocalist's prolongations create a sensation of deferred time, the repetition of the F-natural in the piano in mm. 53-54 in the interlude creates tension, as the singer and listener anticipate what new tonal colors will be established. A piano melody with an F-natural is surprising, as F-sharp has dominated the A section. Charging figures in the accompaniment come to an abrupt halt in m. 50, with mm. 51 to 54 serving as a transition into the next textual and musical idea, B. The performer should use these measures to dramatically prepare for the F-natural in the *seconda passaggio* on *piano*.

The B section begins as the *Modéré* ensues, and the singer should sense the lilt of the triplets introduced in m. 55, using subdivisions to observe weaving dissonances and ties in the piano line. Because this is the first time Jesus is directly mentioned in the text, one should emphasize the singable consonants, in particular, the [z] in the word *Jésus* [Jesus]. While singing descending half notes, arrival on the D-natural will yield the impression of tonic. The performer should consider a warmer timbre on the D-natural itself, implicating an emotional and physical homecoming. The schwa on tied notes should be voiced when indicated, as they are placed in the middle voice.

Messiaen depicts gentle supplication through triplets and diminished triads in the piano line during the course of the B section. Scholars Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone write that “the music sinks to rest with a serene prayer for Christ’s blessing. Near the end of his life, Messiaen

confided to George Benjamin that he believed his mother had continued to watch over him as a guardian angel.”⁵² Throughout the B section the vocal line and piano accompaniment generate a rocking motion, which could be interpreted as comforting. Acknowledging that the comfort is sporadic, as Messiaen alternates the use of ties in the piano accompaniment, is an important dramatic feature for the performers, as they interpret the prayer. The singer should note that ties remain present in both hands of the piano on the last page, as the prayer is answered, and the narrator is at peace with his mother’s death.

As the first note of the final text in m. 71 is delivered a cappella, the singer must observe the dynamic marking of *pp*, being sure to release the sustained pitch precisely with the pianist in m. 72. Do not hold the final note longer, as it will disrupt the final tonality of D sounding in the left hand of the piano. The right hand of the piano provides G-major sonorities, with the dominant octave rolled in the bass. The singer and pianist should observe the rests in m. 73, making sure that the dramatic moment is complete before breaking character.

⁵² Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

Vocalise-étude

A: Introduction

Messiaen's *Vocalise-étude*, also known as *Vocalise*, was published in March of 1935.

Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone write that “In its modest way, the *Vocalise* represents an important stylistic step forward for Messiaen. He was soon to embark on two large song cycles, and in this short piece he used—for the first time—the elaborate, ecstatic vocal melismas that were to be such an important feature of the *Poèmes pour Mi* and, to a lesser extent, the *Chants de terre et de ciel*.”⁵³

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines a *vocalise* as “a singing exercise using individual syllables or vowel sounds to develop flexibility and control of pitch and tone”.⁵⁴

A. L. Hettich, a professor at the Paris *Conservatoire* during the twentieth century, began commissioning vocalizes for his voice students. Author John Koopman discusses the important role of *vocalise* at the Paris *Conservatoire*, referring to voice professor A. L. Hettich:

I am referring to the ten volume Répertoire Moderne de Vocalises-Études that was published over a number of years by the firm of Alphonse Leduc in Paris. The list of composers who contributed to the collection reads like a Who's Who of the important musicians in Paris between the two World Wars; a particularly important place and time for modern music. To drop just a few of the better known names: Fauré, Villa-Lobos, Copland, Ravel, Pizzetti, Nielsen, Gretchaninoff, Kilpinen and five of the Les Six composers. It appears most every composer who taught or studied at the Conservatoire National de Musique at that time was invited to contribute to the project. It was one A.L. Hettich, a professor of music at the Conservatoire, who oversaw the project and edited the collection. His is the operative name to use when searching for this material in most libraries.

The purpose of the collection, Hettich explains in a preface, was to provide material that could be used in the study of singing 'modern' music. These were studies in tone making and execution and engaged the singer in what was, at the time, contemporary music, experiencing the advanced harmony and increasingly interesting

⁵³ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 56.

⁵⁴ The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, “Vocalise”, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.oxfordadvancedlearner'sdictionary.com>.

writing then current. It should quickly be noted that only tonal harmony was admitted; no atonalists were invited to participate.⁵⁵

B: Poetic Analysis

Due to the absence of text, there is no poetic analysis for this piece. However, the piece can be viewed as a conversation between the piano and voice, with the singer and pianist finding an interesting subtext to portray different emotional messages. It is not unusual, as with Ravel's *Vocalises en form d'habanara* [Vocalise in the Form of a Habanara], to imagine this piece accompanying a dance, poetry in motion.

C. Musical Analysis

| Section | A (3-16) | | | B (17-32) | | | Transition | A' (33-50) | | |
|-------------|----------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|------------|------------|-------|-------|
| Sub-section | a | link | a' | b | link | b | | a | link | a' |
| Measures | 3-9 | 9-10 | 11-16 | 17-20 | 21 | 22-27 | 27-32 | 33-38 | 38-39 | 40-50 |

Although the key signature of *Vocalise* indicates A Major, the piece is colored by mode three, the octatonic scale, as Messiaen explores a variety of tonal colors throughout the song. The tempo marking is slow and with charm, and the piece is in a three-part song form with a petite cadenza at the end.

Immediately, Messiaen's *mélodie* is melancholy, understated, and hypnotic. The piano part is demanding, as continuous eighth note arpeggiations support the movement of the vocal line. The vocalist sings diminished triad in m.4-7, as the F-sharp is embellishing A-natural, as C-sharp is embellishing the D-sharp, and the E-natural is embellishing the F-sharp. This is marked

⁵⁵ John Koopman, *A Brief History of Singing and Unsung Songs*: Francis Poulenc. <http://www2.lawrence.edu/fast/KOOPMAJO/poulenc.html> (accessed June 8, 2015)

in Example 4.1. The right hand of the piano is in F-sharp minor while the left hand maintains an E pedal in the bass, evident in mm. 4-6. Together, the two are drawn from OCT 01, mode 2. In mm. 7-9 the octatonic scale disappears, as m. 9-10 link to A'. While the piano in m. 9 recalls the opening statement in m. 1, octave six is heard for the first time in m. 10.

The image displays three staves of musical notation. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, marked 'Lent, avec charme' and 'rall. au Mouvt!'. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs respectively, marked 'p' and 'pp'. The key signature is F# and C# (D major/F# minor). The time signature is 8/8. A red rectangular box highlights measures 4-6 of the piano accompaniment, showing a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a sustained E pedal in the left hand. A red oval highlights measures 9-10 of the piano accompaniment, showing a more complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand.

Example 4.1

While the A section has more minor qualities, the B section initially has more major sonorities, although there is an immediate mixing of modes. The B section contrasts with the A section, as m. 17-18 features a B pedal in the bass and soprano, and also initially in the vocal line, with a D major triad in the middle of m.17, then d minor in m. 18. Initially, the accompaniment appears to be in OCT 2,3 in the B section, while the vocal line is OCT 1,2. The accompaniment in m. 19 changes while the vocal line remains octatonic. Not only are the pitch

materials different, but the registral span of the two sections is largely different: B being more compact with a larger range in A. As in the A section, the sixth octave is appears briefly and fleetingly, as seen in Example 4.2.



Example 4.2

Although they are different, there is a motivic connection to be made between the A and B section. Measure 11 features a minor third, F-sharp to A-natural, while m. 17 features the inversion: E-natural to C-sharp. Together, they form the pitch content from the beginning of the A section. The F-sharp minor with an added E-natural, forms an f-sharp minor 7 chord. A conversation between the piano and voice ensues, as elaborated in the performance recommendations section below. This section should not be seen as a call and response between the two, but a musical dialogue that yields to A'.

The introductory musical motive returns in the A' section with a preparatory *rallentando* at m.

32. Once again F-sharp minor with E-natural pedal in the bass is prevalent in the piano.

However, a new figure appears at the end of m.33 in the piano, which always begins with an A-sharp, a subtle illusion to the major/minor tonalities found in the B section. This figure also features sustained use in the sixth octave, as indicated in Example 4.3.

The image displays a musical score for a piano and voice. The piano part is written in F-sharp minor (three sharps) and 9/8 time. It features a complex texture with arpeggiated figures. A specific figure in the sixth octave is circled in red, indicating its sustained use. The voice part is written in a soprano register, with a high A-natural in measure 43. The score includes dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *pp*, and *p*, and tempo markings like *rall.* and *au Mouv.*.

Example 4.3

As the voice soars to a high A- natural in m.43, it unwinds into an enthusiastically descending cadenza.⁵⁶ The high A yields to the vocal cadenza which spans four measures, only to resolve as the piano doubles the voice. Discreet arpeggiations in the piano are revisited, as the cryptic *Vocalise* comes to a close with a sixteenth note arpeggiation in the sixth octave. While the sixth octave is only highlighted in both A and B, it is more active and sustained in A'.

⁵⁶ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 113-114.

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. In *Vocalise-étude*, a total of nine sets were inverted. Sets 5-31 and 5-21 dominate A and A', and are labeled in Appendix C. While the B section features a variety of sets, transitional material features 5-9 and 3-6(12). The vocal cadenza in A' reveals a variety of sets, most of which are featured only once or twice, and are clearly marked in Appendix C.

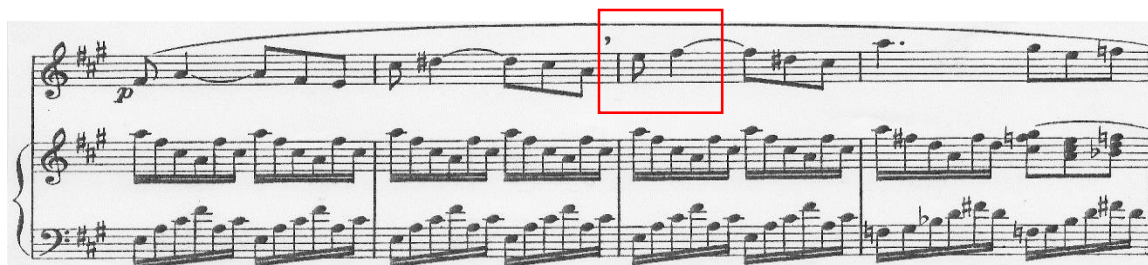
D: Performance Recommendations

The entire piece is textless; instead, the singer can chose to vocalize the melody on an [a] or [u] vowel, invoking an impression of wailing. The meters alternate between 6/8 and 9/8, as the time signature changes allow for “further flexibility [in the] vocal lines.”⁵⁷ The voice is permitted to move with the utmost ease and a natural elasticity. Messiaen marks breaths for the singer to observe; however, the singer should consider deviating slightly from them in order to create some emotional variation. *Crescendi* in mm. 5 and 6 will allow the singer to curve the *diminuendo* to m. 9, and permit for some expansion in m. 10, as the pianist prepares for the re-entry of the singer. Although the breath marks are obviously Messiaen's, an argument can be made for changing where a singer breathes. This may depend on *fach* and might add variation and interest. The overall arching phrase markings indicate that a larger dramatic voice capable of singing long sustained phrase might not need them, as the singer could sing it in one breath. A more dramatic voice might consider not breathing right before the E-natural in m.6, as it lies right in the *seconda passagio*. (Example 4.4) A lighter lyric instrument might find subphrasing

⁵⁷ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 113.

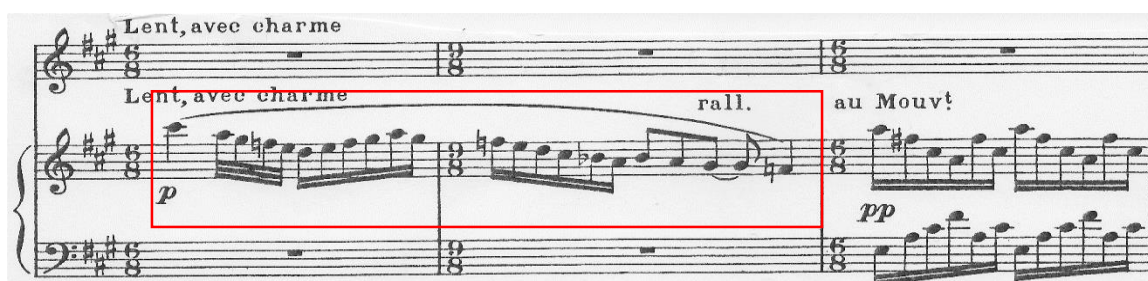
with the breath easier, while keeping the same arching phrase with musical intent as in mm. 4-9.

The nature of the *vocalise* will give a singer room to vary performance.



Example 4.4

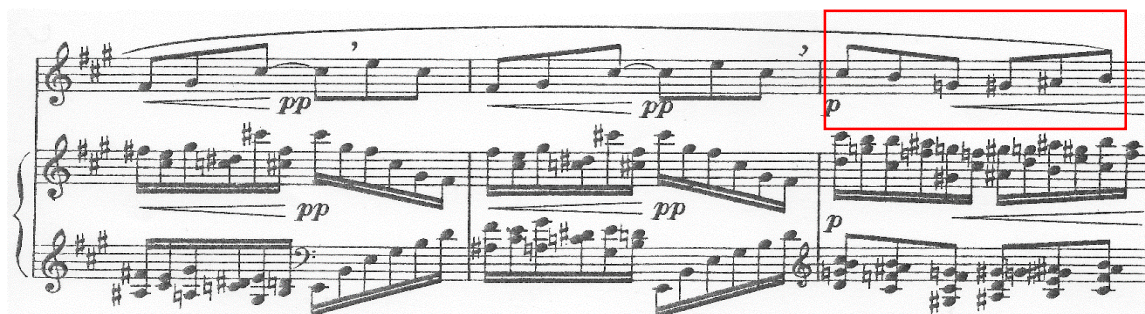
The singer should also be sensitive to the musical motive introduced in m. 1, as it is repeated in mm. 11-16, and 33-43. (See Example 4.5)



Example 4.5

A breath in measure fifteen after the first beat is recommended, in order to accentuate the C-natural and prepare for the B section. Dissonances in the B section should be highlighted by the singer. The vocalist should stay engaged in the *vocalise* because the variation in mm. 21 and 26 may surprise the performer if she is not prepared for the dissonances. The singer must be sure to stay in the core of the pitch while in the middle voice, so that each accidental can be sung with

the utmost attention. Accidentals are outlined in Example 4.6



Example 4.6

A vocal melisma gives way to playful imitation between the vocal line and the piano line in the right hand in mm. 27-32, as Messiaen interplays musical and rhythmic ideas. The piano and singer are encouraged to have a conversation, as the singer emphasizes the minimal variation in m. 21 and 26. The singer has to be sensitive to the reactions of the pianist as the dialogue continues, as provided in Example 4.7. The performers should observe all *rallentando* markings by Messiaen.



Example 4.7

As the A' section returns and the *vocalise* comes to a close, the singer should be watchful of the release of the tied dotted-quarter notes at the ends of measures and prepare for the next musical statement. A *crescendo* on the high A-natural in m. 43 will also create further drama and propel the voice into the pitchy cadenza, marked in Example 4.8, which features accidentals that must be sung with the utmost attention. One wrong note in the passage, and it will be very difficult for the singer to recuperate. The singer could take several approaches to the cadenza itself, feeling the sweep rather than the minute distance from pitch to pitch, but only after learning the pitches carefully. The singer must be sure to highlight the F-natural in m. 45 in order to accurately sing the diminished triad in m. 46. A slight *messa di voce* on the C-natural with the *fermata* in m. 47-48 is recommended; the singer should be sure to release with the pianist in m. 50. (See example 4.8)

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps). It features a long note in measure 42, followed by a cadenza starting in measure 43, which is enclosed in a red box. The cadenza consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a crescendo marking and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs, also in D major. It shows measures 47 and 48, which are marked with piano (p), pianissimo (pp), and pianississimo (ppp) dynamics. Red boxes highlight these dynamic markings and the corresponding notes in the piano part.

Example 4.8

Messiaen clearly indicates specific dynamic markings for voice and piano alike. These should be strictly followed, as the vocalist must differentiate between *p*, *pp*, and *ppp* in mm. 47-

50. For the pianist and vocalist, stamina is an issue in performing this piece. Repetitious passages can seem unending and seamless, but Messiaen affords the singer room for *rubato* and time to implement numerous *messia di voci*. Hill states that “[...] it nonetheless exhibits features which belong with the latter, more substantial cycles. Perhaps it can be seen as a preliminary study for the beautiful, soothing ‘alleluia’ section of *Poèmes (pour Mi)*”.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 113.

CHAPTER FIVE

Poèmes pour Mi

A: Introduction

In 1932 Messiaen married musician and teacher Claire Delbos and the young couple moved to an apartment in Paris, France. In 1936 the maturing composer wrote his first major song cycle *Poèmes pour Mi*, which has become one of his most celebrated works for voice and orchestra. In these nine songs also written for piano, Messiaen celebrates his love and marriage to his wife Claire Delbos, whom he nicknamed “Mi”. In “The Messiaen Companion” edited by Peter Hill, author Jane Manning writes that “poems pour Mi is dedicated to Messiaen’s first wife, the composer and violinist Claire Delbos, and is a radiant affirmation of the joy and sanctity of marriage.”⁵⁹

Claire Delbos was born in Paris on Nov 2 in 1906; Ville de Bourg-La-Reine, Hauts de Seine. The daughter of professor Victor Delbos, she studied the violin and composition at the Paris *Conservatoire*, where she nurtured her talents as a composer and violinist. Delbos composed several organ works, including *Paraphrase sur le jugement dernier* and *L'offrande à Marie*, for Messiaen, whom she married on June 22 in 1932. The couple's only child, Pascal, was born in 1937. Delbos wrote three sets of songs for voice and piano, all of which received performances at the *Société Nationale de Musique*. These five aphoristic settings of poems by Messiaen’s mother, Cécile Sauvage, construct the set *Primevère*, and contain characteristic of Delbos' concise, somewhat astringent musical language.

In 1937, *L'âme en bourgeon* was first performed by dramatic soprano Marcelle Bunlet, accompanied by Messiaen was described by Roger Vinteuil in “Le Ménestrel” on May 7 as

⁵⁹ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 116.

“treating the voice without regard to easily recalled melodic graces, using instead a sort of unadorned, mystical chant. Around the voice, however, the piano accompaniment weaves a rich, finely-nuanced and varied commentary.” In 1947 Ginette Guillamat and Messiaen gave the first performance of *Trois aspects de la mort*, again at the *Société Nationale*. Near the end of World War II, Delbos had an operation, following which her mental condition deteriorated. She remained in an institution until her death.⁶⁰

Known for her ability to learn difficult scores of modern music, Wagnerian soprano Marcelle Bunlet was a natural choice to perform Messiaen’s *Poèmes pour Mi*. Born in the Loire-Vendee region of France in 1900, Bunlet was the premier soprano of France during the 1900s. In his blog about great opera singers, Edmund St. Austell states that “In the concert hall and in recital[...] Bunlet earned the respect of such composers as Russel and the younger Olivier Messiaen, both of whom composed with her voice in mind and both of whom dedicated works to her. Who nowadays, when hearing lighter sopranos singing Messiaen’s ‘Poéms pour Mi’ or his ‘Harawi’ cycle is mindful that these were intended for and premiered by Marcelle Bunlet? Indeed, Messiaen was so fond of her singing that he accompanied her in recitals as late as the 1950s.” Although Bunlet’s recording career was not very extensive, the *hochdramatische sopran* [dramatic soprano] graced the stages of Bayreuth and the Royal Opera House, performing a variety of operatic roles, which included Salmoe, Elecktra, Isolde, and Aida. The French soprano dominated the operatic stages throughout Brussels, Switzerland, Monaco, Argentina, Greece, and North America.

⁶⁰ Claire Delbos.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51575?q=Messiaen&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit> (accessed June 5, 2015).

Vocally, recordings provide today's listener with a voice that is truly electrifying, a gleaming example of chiaroscuro-warm and tender when required, yet bright and steely to cut through any orchestra. Her repertoire spans from Strauss to Wagner, Gluck to Bellini, as she was one of France's most versatile performers.⁶¹ In a review of *Harawi* for classicalmusic.com, author Christopher Dingle writes that "Bunlet is not only strong throughout her vast range, but is able to respond to every twist and turn of this extraordinary music, passionately excited one moment, anxious the next, calm then euphoric, seductive then terrifying, but always in control even when singing with wild abandonment."⁶²

Musical Overview

Poèmes pour Mi was orchestrated in 1937. During this stage of his career, Messiaen began to experiment even more with rhythmic elements, as his compositional style absorbed many exotic influences. At the *Conservatoire* Messiaen studied music history with Maurice Emmanuel, a pupil of Delibes and a friend of Debussy. His influence ignited Messiaen's interest in ancient Greek and Hindu rhythms and modes that were not found in traditional Western music.⁶³ Messiaen began to incorporate more of these colors and plain chants into his music, as depicted in *Poèmes pour Mi* and in his *Quartet for the End of Time*, composed five years later. Paul Griffiths writes of Messiaen's time at the *Conservatoire* in Paris, "it was there that most of the young French composers of the time received the stimulus to press forward with a radical rethinking of the art."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Edmund St. Austell, "Great Opera Singers: Marcelle Bunlet," March 14, 2015, accessed June 8, 2015, http://greatopera.com/singers/bunlet/2015/03/marcelle_bunlet_14.html.

⁶² Marcelle Bunlet and Olivier Messiaen, Debussy and Messiaen, INA Mémoire Vive, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://m.classical-music.com/review/messiaen-debussy>.

⁶³ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 19.

⁶⁴ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: The avant garde since 1945* (New York: George Braziller, 1981), 19.

Messiaen couples sung declamations with sensitive, quiet moments that reflect both the intimacy felt between him and his wife as well as their struggles. The cycle exhibits the kind of rhythmic freedom characteristic of chant and Medieval plainsong, a trait that is particular well-suited to the French language. The moments of recitative that display this sense of rhythmic freedom create dramatic tension, and require sensitivity, focus, and discipline from the singer. In a review of soprano Felicity Palmer's recording, Hugh R. N. Macdonald notes that the rhythmic irregularities were a stumbling block in many early performances of the song cycle: "players were often put off by the unequal bar lengths and by the unusual rhythmic notation [...] so that, for some time *Poèmes pour Mi* was considered unperformable."⁶⁵

Poetical Overview

Poèmes pour Mi is a suite of love letters in the form of poetry, each one a poem, which reveal the journey of a young husband as he contemplates the religious sacrament of marriage. Messiaen's texts take the listener and the performer on a sentimental journey that celebrates the spiritual aspects of nature and love. Although this collection is written from the viewpoint of a man, they are meant to be sung by a dramatic soprano.⁶⁶ This cycle explores relationships: between men and women, husband and wife, Christ and the Church, and man and his Creator.

Jane Manning writes that:

Since the text is the composer's own, some interpreters may feel uncomfortable at what could seem a strongly traditionalist attitude to the woman's role in marriage. However, Messiaen's devout Catholicism is central to his vision. Throughout the cycle, all aspects of the loving partnership are put into perspective with their higher relationship with God; nature images provide philosophical parallels with the spiritual life. It is impossible for a

⁶⁵ Hugh R. N. Macdonald, "A Review of Messiaen: *Poèmes pour Mi*, Tippett: *Songs for Dov* by Felicity Palmer, BBC Symphony Orchestra." *Tempo, New Series, No. 5, June (1973)*, 39.

⁶⁶ Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 314.

sensitive performer, of whatever cred, not to enter heightened awareness of the world that lies beyond the notes.⁶⁷

There are nine songs in the cycle, a number that may represent maternity, given that the average human gestation period is nine months.⁶⁸ The first four songs comprise the first set in the collection. The first song in book one is *Action de grâces*, in which the composer gives thanks to God for nature and his beloved. In the second song in the set, Messiaen expresses his love for the new home he and Claire share in the countryside, away from the bustling streets of Paris in *Paysage*. It was in this house that he would continue to compose for nearly fifty years. In the third song, *La maison*, the valor for home and hearth are expressed in the poem, as Messiaen writes of leaving the house as a metaphor for leaving this earth to return home to heaven. *Épouvante*, the fourth song, explores the loss of human happiness and the celebration of love, and it includes a vision in which a loved one is lost. During the early years of their marriage, Messiaen and his wife Claire experienced sadness with the loss of children through miscarriages.

The second book of *Poèmes pour Mi* includes the remaining five songs.

L'épouse explores the life of a husband as mirrored in the love of Christ for the Universal Church. It is a liturgical celebration of marriage, as evidenced by the text “nothing can separate which God has joined.” The sixth song is an evocation of the voice of his beloved: *Ta voix* compares Clare’s voice with the song of a bird in springtime, a celebration of nature that points to the divine Creator. *Les deux guerriers* (“The Two Warriors”), the seventh song in the cycle, depicts the eternal struggle between good and evil by representing a bride and groom as warriors. The eighth song in the set is a sensuous evocation of love, as lovers embrace: a necklace, the *collier*, is the arms of a lover wrapped around her lover’s neck. The cycle ends with a celebration

⁶⁷ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 116.

⁶⁸ Roger Nichols, *The Oxford Studies of Composers: Messiaen*. Second ed. (New York: Oxford University Press 1986), 25.

of praise in *Prière exaucée*, (Answered Prayer) as the composer gives thanks to God for nature and for love.

This document will continue with a discussion of four of the seven songs within the cycle. The four examples chosen speak personally and musically to a modern performer. Performance suggestions are based on the author's experience of these pieces in live concert situations, and Messiaen's document *The Technique of my Musical Language*. Appendix C will be used as a means for locating patterns within the piano and vocal score.

B: Poetical Analysis

Paysage

| | |
|---|--|
| Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu. | <i>The lake like a large blue jewel.</i> |
| La route pleine de chagrin et | <i>The road full of sorrows and</i> |
| de fondrières, | <i>quagmires,</i> |
| Mes pieds qui hésitant dans la poussière, | <i>My feet which hesitant in the dust,</i> |
| Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu. | <i>The lake like a large blue jewel</i> |
| Et la voilà, verte et bleue comme | <i>And there she is, green and blue</i> |
| Le paysage | <i>like the landscape</i> |
| Entre le blé et le soleil je vois son | <i>Between the wheat and the sun I see</i> |
| visage: | <i>her face:</i> |
| Elle sourit, la main sur les yeux | <i>She smiles, a hand above her eyes.</i> |
| Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu. | <i>The lake, like a large blue jewel.</i> |

This poem could be seen as two quatrains. However, a strong case is made for one stanza of eight lines, an octave. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern $a^8b^{13}b^{11}a^8c^{14}c^{14}a^9a^9$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. Longer lines of the poem are sandwiched between octosyllabic and nine syllable lines. The foot pattern of iambic, two trochee, and two spondee appears three times. Longer lines containing more syllables end in trochee, indicating a strong weak pattern. The number of feet per line ranges from a trimeter to three tetrameters, two pentameters, and one pentameter.

Messiaen evokes the wonder of nature in the initial refrain, “*Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu*” (“The lake like a large blue jewel”). This statement is repeated three times throughout this two-page song. Robert Johnson believes that *Paysage*

[...] displays the influence of the French symbolist poets of the late nineteenth century [...] the repetition of the first line and the contrast of the calm beauty of the lake with the difficulties and pitfalls of the road suggest the contrast between the troubles and difficulties of life and the security offered by a permanent relationship with the beloved.⁶⁹

C: Musical Analysis

| Section | Refrain | a | Refrain | a' | b | Refrain |
|----------|---------|-----|---------|-------|-------|---------|
| Measures | 1-3 | 4-8 | 9-11 | 12-15 | 16-21 | 22-24 |

This song is comprised of three phrase types which I have labeled refrain, a, and b. I will discuss the content of each of these phrases in turn. In the refrain the piano line begins with a descending tritone which is imitated by the vocalist, reminiscent of the call and response one might see in church music, an important part of Messiaen’s musical background. With each return, it employs the same harmonic and melodic materials, as one would expect. However, one important difference in the vocal line is the amount of time between the pianist’s initial chord and when the vocalist actually enters. While mm. 1 and 9 open with a quarter rest in the vocal line, a half rest is present in m. 22. Note that the pianist’s rhythm is different as well, as the initial eighth note tied to a dotted quarter note has now become two quarter notes, the last of which is tied to a dotted quarter.

The vocalists melody in the refrain is from mode three, which is OCT 1,2, as is the descending gesture at the end, associated with the color blue. This motive is marked in Example 5.1.

⁶⁹ Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 56.

Très modéré
mf gracieux ,
CHANT Le lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.

Très modéré
mf
PIANO
gracieux
pp

Example 5.1

The A phrases are characterized by the vocalist's chants on A-natural and Messiaen describes the accompaniment for these phrases in his treatise: "[...] here is a small fragment in mode 2, third transposition, the b-flat' expected (upper staff), superimposed upon chords made of perfect fourths foreign to the mode (lower staff)."⁷⁰ Messiaen indicates that mode two, OCT 2,3, is in the right hand of the piano, with the exception of the B-flat, indicated in example 5.2. Supporting the use of this mode are quartal harmonies in the left hand. Although Messiaen does not specifically mention the vocal line, its note belongs to the mode present in the right hand of the piano, as seen in Example 5.2.

mf
CHANT Laroute
plei - ne de cha - grins et de fondri - è res,

f
PIANO
mf
gracieux

Example 5.2

⁷⁰ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 64.

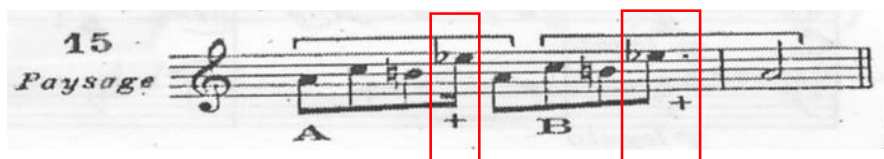
In addition to discussing the pitch content of these phrases, Messiaen also discusses their rhythmic content. In Messiaen's theory, there are as many as three parts to every rhythmic gesture: the preparation, the accent, and the descent. The preparation acts as an anacrusis that leads to the structural beginning of the gesture. Messiaen calls this structural beginning the "accent." The accent is often on a downbeat but does not have to be. The descent is the completion of the rhythmic gesture. It is everything that follows the accent.⁷¹ Messiaen continues his explanation of preparations and descents of mm. 5-8 by writing:

The rhythmic preparation precedes the accent, and rhythmic descent follows it. We shall find this idea again in Chapter XV, taken in the melodic sense. There the appoggiatura will grow to the point of becoming the combination: 'upbeat-accent-termination.' There is an evident analogy between melodic upbeats and terminations on the one hand, and rhythmic preparations and descents on the other. The added value can change considerably the aspect of these last [...] Another example of descents: accelerated A, retarded in B, by the added values (at the crosses):⁷²

There are two gestures here, one labeled A and one labeled B. In A the accent is the note A-natural and the descent is everything that follows it, and the goal of the descent is the second A-natural. Messiaen uses an added value, the E-flat marked with a cross, to propel the melody toward the A. In his words, the descent is accelerated by the added value. By contrast in B, the accent is now the C-natural and the descent is slowed by the added value, the dot that has been added to the E-flat. In Messiaen's words, the descent has been retarded. Messiaen clearly marks the gestures in Example 5.3.

⁷¹ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 17.

⁷² Ibid, 17.



Example 5.3

While phrase a is relatively homorhythmic, phrase b is not. It is characterized by quintuplets in the right hand against triplets in the left hand. An additional element of contrast lies in the degree to which the a and b phrases are modally unified. The a phrases are modally unified, while the b phrase cycles through multiple modes. Messiaen indicates that *Paysage* is written in the second mode of limited transpositions; the theme will be placed above it, in the same mode.”⁷³ Example 5.4 features mm. 16-17 in the piano only, indicating mode 2 OCT 0,1.

Example 5.4

Messiaen discusses the last six measures of this piece in chapter sixteen, regarding the modulation of a mode to another mode:

⁷³ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 54.

As previously, all examples of this chapter use the chosen mode melodically and harmonically, that is to say, all their notes belong to the mode...At A, third mode, fourth transposition; at B, second mode, first transposition; at C, major tonality; at D, third mode. General impression of g major by the frequent return of the tonic G and by the dominant seventh at the letter C. Modulation of the second mode to the third mode:⁷⁴

Although it contrasts rhythmically and modally with the a phrases, the vocalist continues to chant the A-natural connecting the a and b phrases together. The note A-natural chanted by the vocalist belongs to both OCT 01 and 2,3, as indicated in Example 5.5.

The image displays three excerpts from the musical score for 'Paysage' by Olivier Messiaen, illustrating different modes and tonalities. Each excerpt is enclosed in a red box with a label above it.

- Mode 3, 4th transposition:** This section is marked '368 Paysage' and 'Modéré, un peu vif'. It features a vocal line (Soprano) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is 'Modéré, un peu vif', and the dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are '(vi).sa - ge: El - le sou - rit,'.
- Mode 2, 1st transposition:** This section is marked '57' and 'Plus lent'. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is 'Plus lent', and the dynamics are 'p' (piano). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are 'la main sur les'.
- Major tonality:** This section is marked 'Très modéré' and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is 'Très modéré', and the dynamics are 'mf'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are 'yeux. Le lac comme un gros bi - jou'.
- Mode 3:** This section is marked 'bleu.' and 'pp' (pianissimo). It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are 'bleu.'

Example 5.5

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. In *Paysage*, Set 5-33 (12) correlates with the opening refrain, which

⁷⁴ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 64-65.

is repeated three times. The only other set located, 4-12, is stated once in b; only one set is inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

The correspondence between the poetic and musical structures is tenuous. The first half of the poem is set within the ABA sections, while the second half (possibly the second quatrain) is lodged firmly within the B' section. The final line of poetry *le lac comme un gros bijou bleu* [the lake like a large blue jewel] set over the last A¹ section. This glimmering of notes leads into the text “between the wheat and the sun, I see her face: She smiles, a hand above her eye,” as if the singer must shield her face from sight of the sun darting in and out of the wheat field.

The performer seems to be the pursuer in the refrain and a phrases. However, the appearance of “her” is introduced in m. 16 with quintuplets against triplets. This b section now indicates action, as the one being pursued is in sight. The cascading gesture at the end of each refrain is part of mode three, OCT 1,2, which Messiaen associated with the color blue in Example 5.6.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is labeled 'CHANT' and the piano accompaniment is labeled 'PIANO'. The tempo is 'Très modéré' and the mood is 'mf gracieux'. The lyrics are 'Le lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.' The piano part features a cascading gesture in the right hand, highlighted by a red box, with a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking. The score is in G major and 4/4 time.

Example 5.6

E: Performance Recommendations

As previously stated, mm. 1-3, 9-11, and 22-24 are nearly identical, melodically, harmonically, and textually. This melodic motive is mimicked in the voice after being stated in the piano is written three times. Recognizing that the vocal line is part of OCT 0,1, the singer should lean towards the B-flat, as the F-sharp is acting as an escape tone. The performer must provide some varying degree of dynamics, even though they are all marked mezzo forte. (See Example 5.7)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal part is labeled 'CHANT' and the piano part is labeled 'PIANO'. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré' and the dynamics are 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'pp' (pianissimo). The lyrics are 'Le lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.' The score includes a red box highlighting the first measure of the vocal line and a red circle around the piano part's first measure. The piano part is marked 'gracieux'.

Example 5.7

Although the repetitions are not immediate, they are followed by chant-like passages in the voice, a droning A-natural. Because there is little to no variation in pitch in the passages in between these sections, slight dynamic variation will negate any monotony in the vocal line. This opening melody in the piano and voice features the only A-flat in the piece, found in mm. 1-3, 9-11, and 22-24. For this reason, the singer should consider highlighting the A-flat, especially since the passages between this repeated motive are all on A-natural. By doing so, the singer is emphasizing the word *bijou* [jewel]. Just as the lake sparkles like a large jewel, that shimmer is reflected in the cascading piano line after the word *bleu* [blue]. The singer's text chanted on A-natural should always be sung with an *accelerando* and *crescendo*, propelling the music forward.

Caution at the entrances in mm. 4 and 12 is warranted, as entering too early or late will interrupt the momentum in the piano line, as well as the natural flow of the chant.

As a preparation for entering in m. 17, the singer should listen carefully to the thrust of triplets in the previous measure, performing a *crescendo* on the word *vois* [see]. A *marcato* articulation of the first syllable of the word *Elle* [she] will reiterate the subject's smile. The singer should listen for the A-natural played in the right hand of the piano in mm. 17 and 20 for her pitch, as seen in Example 5.8, entering expressively as marked by Messiaen.

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system is titled 'Un peu plus vif' and features a vocal line with lyrics 'Entre le blé et le so - leil je vois son vi -' and a piano accompaniment. A red box highlights a triplet in the vocal line and a corresponding piano line. The second system is titled 'Rall.' and 'Plus lent', with lyrics '- sa - ge: El - le sou - rit, la main sur les yeux.' and a piano accompaniment. A red box highlights a piano line in the second system. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, dynamics (pp, p), and tempo markings (Rall., Plus lent).

Example 5.8

In m. 22 the piano plays two quarter notes, as opposed to the eighth note combination used in mm. 1 and 9, so the singer should be aware of the change in rhythm before her entrance. While there are longer note values in this measure, the singer ought to sing the repeated phrase *a tempo* at the *très modéré*. Messiaen's breath mark before the final sung word allows the singer enough energy to let the last note simply dissipate. Messiaen also indicates clearly in the score

where the singer should and should not breathe. His markings are appropriate and should be observed. During the chant on A-natural, the singer should treat the rests and the breaths as part of the sung phrase, making sure not to linger on them, or make the chant appear too turbulent. The chants and the breath should be presented as complete phrases.

A: Introduction

La maison is a metaphor, comparing how the soul leaves the body in the same manner in which a human being leaves his or her house. Jane Manning writes that somewhat “morbid thoughts are soothed by the promise of lasting spiritual joy and enlightenment.”⁷⁵

B: Poetical Analysis

Cette maison nous allons la quitter:
Je la vois dans ton oeil.
Nous quitterons nos corps aussi:
Je les vois dans ton oeil.
Toutes ces images de douleur qui
s'impriment dans ton oeil,
Ton oeil ne les retrouver a plus:
Quand nous contemplerons la Vérité,
Dans des corps pur, jeunes,
éternellement lumineux.

*This house we will leave:
I see it in your eye.
We will leave our bodies also:
I see them in your eyes.
All these images of pain are
imprinted in your eyes,
Your eye will not find them again:
When we contemplate the truth,
In the body pure, young,
eternally bright.*

This poem is one stanza, an octave, with no interludes. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern $a^{10}b^6c^8b^6b^{16}d^9e^{10}f^{14}$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript, with all foot patterns ending on a strong syllable. Feet patterns are predominantly anapest, with strong iambic implications. These arrangements are coupled with

⁷⁵ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 118.

the occasional phryic and tetrabrach patterns. The pattern of feet indicated centers around a tetrameter, with dimeters and pentameters present.

C: Musical Analysis

| Phrases | a | b | c |
|----------|-----|-----|-------|
| Measures | 1-7 | 8-9 | 10-15 |

The piece, through composed, clearly divides into three phrases: a, b, and c. In the a section, steady and repeated eighth-note patterns of ascending minor thirds knit a timid vocal line in mm. 1–3 and 5–6, as thoughts of loss or death give way to hope in m. 10, with the beginning of the c section. Although no time signature is specifically given, Messiaen is writing in a clear 4/4 time signature, as the piano uses B natural as a pedal tone.

Messiaen's use of an added value is mentioned in his essay on page forty-eight, and he uses mm. 4 and 7 as an example, as indicated in Example 5.9.

Finally, the relation of notes added to chords and values added to rhythm strikes us. The same charm, one somewhat perverse, is found in these values of supplement which make the rhythms limp and delicious, in these foreign notes which insidiously transform the tint of the chord⁷⁶

Duples in the vocal line are pitted against dotted quarters in the left hand of the piano, coupled with “limp” eighth notes in the right hand, as marked in Example 5.9. The “piano splits its right-hand weak beat chord into a slurred note-pair and thus extends the measure to four dotted quarter notes, while the voice retains the earlier division by lengthening each note value.”⁷⁷ This rhythmic tension creates both fear and excitement, as expressed in the text *Je la vois dans ton oeil* [I see it in your eyes] and later in m. 7, *Je les vois dans ton oeil* [I see them in your eyes].

⁷⁶ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Langage Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 48.

⁷⁷ Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Explorations of Love and Death: Musico-Poetic Signification in the “Tristan Trilogy” and Three Related Song Cycles* (New York: Pendragon, 2008), 78.

Presque vif

mf

Cet - te mai - son nous al - lons la quit - ter: _____

p

Je la vois dans ton oeil.

mf expressif

Example 5.9

Phrase b introduces a vocal chant on F-natural in m. 8, above an F-sharp minor seventh chord in the left hand of the piano. This chord contrasts with the F dominant seventh chord missing an A-natural, featured in the right hand, as labeled in Example 5.10.

Plus vif

mf

Je les vois dans ton oeil. _____

Toutes ces images de douleur qui s'impriment dans ton oeil,

mf expressif

Plus vif

Example 5.10

While the a phrase focused on minor third relationships in the vocal line, such as in mm. 1-3 Messiaen explores minor second relationships in the b phrases. For example, mm. 8-9 feature minor seconds not only in the vocal line, but in the piano line as well. As the vocal chant continues in m. 9, one should notice the F-sharp moving to C-natural that is played right before

the singer enters. The tritone voiced in the piano in m.9 is then sung by the vocalist in m. 10, as marked in Example 5.11.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. In measure 9, a red box highlights the piano accompaniment, specifically the right hand, which contains a tritone. In measure 10, a red circle highlights the vocal line, which begins with the lyrics "Quand nous con-tem-ple-rons". The tempo marking "Modéré" is circled in red above the vocal line in measure 10. The lyrics for measure 9 are "Ton œil ne les re-trou-ve-ra plus:". Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *più f* (pianissimo) in the piano part, and *p* (piano) in the vocal part.

Example 5.11

Messiaen outlines the tritone in m. 9 in the right hand of the piano, as he leads the singer into the *Modéré* section, phrase c. This phrase is characterized by a clear 4/4 meter featuring chordal structures, as opposed to the galloping figures in phrase a and the plainsong in phrase b. The next to last measure of the piece, m. 14, features the first appearance of the sixth octave, and Messiaen uses a quintal harmony (with E in the bass) in the last measure. (See Example 5.12)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. In measure 14, a red box highlights the piano accompaniment, which features a quintal harmony (with E in the bass). The tempo marking "Rall." (Ritardando) is present above the vocal line in measure 14. The lyrics for measure 14 are "é-ter-nel-le-ment lu-mi-neux.". Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *pp* (pianissimo) in the piano part, and *p* (piano) in the vocal part.

Example 5.12

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. In *La maison*, two sets are repeated twice: 4-13, which correlates with phrase a, and 3-3, which is located in phrases b and c. The three other sets identified belong

to phrase c, where they are stated once; a total of five sets are inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

Like “Paysage,” it is written in a “*parlando* style of vocal writing reminiscent of Debussy or Ravel, rather than in a liturgical recit.”⁷⁸ This poem is one stanza, as sustained by the compositional form of through composed. Messiaen’s *mélodie* features three distinct phrases, which are distinctly clear in the emotion of the poem: lines 1-4 relaying the body as the house for the soul, lines 5-6, a chant relating to the pain of death, and lines 7-p, a quest for through illumination. These are indicated musically in phrases a, b, and c.

E: Performance Recommendations

In this lyrical yet *parlando* recitative style, the *mélodie* travels through two *passaggi*, as the singer must be comfortable navigating both the upper and lower registers. While the piano doubles the singer numerous times in this piece, one should not rely on hearing vocal pitches in the instrumental line. Listening for clusters of sound and colors that are prevalent from the combination of notes and text, rather than searching for a pitch, will be more helpful for the vocalist.

The singer should take note that mm. 4 and 7 are identical in the vocal line and piano score, as the top note in the left hand of the piano doubles the singer’s pitches. However, sonority will be heard in the lilting eighth notes in the right hand of the piano, offering the singer little support. Messiaen’s use of duples allows the singer to emphasize the A-sharp and the C-natural, as one should lean into the duples, creating a weighted text that is minimally changed.

⁷⁸ Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 56.

The sustained seventh chord in m. 8 in the piano line provides the vocalist some rhythmic freedom to chant on F-natural, a pitch that eventually gives way to the vocal ascension in m. 9. The singer should be thoughtful of the tritone outlined in the right hand of the piano, as she herself outlines a minor third in the vocal line. The chant on F-natural should be sung with a crescendo and recited in one breath, allowing the singer to propel off of the pianist's E diminished chord in measure nine. The singer is cautioned not to allow the treble C on the word *oeil* [eye] to become too weighted when repeated, as the D-sharp will then have a tendency to feel higher than it actually is.

At phrase c, the text and the music completely transform the sentiment of this piece, as the mood becomes more solemn and introspective: *Quand nous contemplerons la Vérité, dans des corps pur, jeunes, éternellement lumineux*. [When we contemplate the truth, in the body pure, youth, eternally luminous]. Text painting is evident as Messiaen uses linear melodies to create chordal calmness, while doubling the vocal line in the right hand of the piano. Enlightenment is portrayed as the piano and voice merge into one identity. While the singer has some melodic movement in the vocal line in mm. 10 and 12, the majority of the last six measures of the piece evoke a more straightforward and orthodox response, as a more reverent text is reflected in a modest hymn-like setting. The singer would be advised to take a more conventional approach to the text and vocal line here, singing this section more mightily or traditionally, than the rest of the piece. The performer should allow the voice to relax and simply weave itself amongst the more plodding quarter notes and dotted quarter notes in the piano accompaniment. Accuracy of rhythms is essential, as the performer should give more gravity to the word *vérité* [truth] in m. 11, leaning on the dotted quarter. This will allow for a crescendo into the half note on G-sharp, which can be followed by a slight decrescendo into the C-sharp at the downbeat of m. 12, which should be sung

softly. A crescendo on the word *jeunes* [young] will facilitate an emotional entry in m. 13 on the word *eternellement* [eternally].

Measure thirteen should encompass a *messa di voce* in the piano and vocal line, as the singer accents the F-naturals leading into m 14. Once again, there is doubling of the voice in the piano line, but the singer should facilitate the contour of the sung line, not waiting for the piano to assist her in finding pitches. The singer ought to be sensitive to the text painting in the final measures of the piece, as *eternellement* [eternally] is the longest set word in the piece. (See Example 5.13)

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The score is written in French and consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "la Vé - ri - té, Dans des corps purs, jeu - nes,". The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with many beamed sixteenth notes. A red box highlights the vocal line in measure 14, which includes the lyrics "purs, jeu - nes," and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second system also includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "é - ter - nel - le - ment lu - mi - neux." and includes a *Rall.* marking. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with many beamed sixteenth notes. A red box highlights the piano accompaniment in measure 15, which includes a dynamic marking of *f*.

Example 5.13

A: Introduction

This first song of book two, *L'Esprit*, is perhaps one of the most touching. It is the shortest piece in the cycle, at only thirteen measures. Jane Manning believes that this piece is “the heart of the cycle,” representing “the moment of marital union, when the bonds of earth and heaven are inseparable.”⁷⁹

B: Poetical Analysis

| | |
|--|--|
| Va où l'Esprit te mène, | <i>Go where the Spirit leads you,</i> |
| nul ne peut séparer ce que Dieu a uni, | <i>No one can separate what God has united,</i> |
| Va où l'Esprit te mène, | <i>Go where the Spirit leads you,</i> |
| l'épouse est le prolongement de l'époux, | <i>The wife is the extension of the husband,</i> |
| Va où l'Esprit te mène, | <i>Go where the Spirit leads you,</i> |
| est le prolongement du Christ. | <i>The church is the extension of Christ.</i> |

This poem is one stanza consisting of a sestet. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern $a^7b^{12}a^7c^{12}a^7d^{13}$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. The poetic meter indicates an alternating ending of trochee and anapest, with the number of feet alternating between a trimeter and a tetrameter.

C: Musical Analysis

| Section | A | | | A' | | | A'' | | |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| | | a | b | | a' | b' | | a'' | b'' |
| Measure | 1-4 | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-8 | 5-6 | 7-8 | 9-10 | 9-10 | 11-13 |

This *mélodie* is written in strophic variation form. Measures 1-2, which is listed as subsection a, could also be interpreted as a refrain, according to author Siglind Bruhn. However, I

⁷⁹ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 121.

have chosen to list these two measures as Section A, for they do not necessarily constitute a separate formal division from mm. 3-4, or b.

The song features two modes and Bruhn has connected these modes to the text. While the vocal line sings a rising tritone, as opposed to the falling tritone in the opening measures of *Paysage*, both the vocal line and right hand of the piano reiterate mode 2, OCT 1,2. (See Example 5.14) Underneath, the left hand of the piano portrays G and E major triads.

197
L'Épouse
Chant
Soprano

Presque lent

mf

Va où l'Es-prit te mè-ne,

A expressif B A

Piano

Example 5.14

Bruhn writes that “harmonically, each refrain is firmly contained in a single transposition of mode 2.”⁸⁰ For the completion of what Bruhn calls a refrain, Section A, phrase b, Messiaen employs mode 6, fifth inversion, as marked in Example 5.15.

Nul ne peut sépa-rer ce que Dieu a u ni,

mf

Example 5.15

⁸⁰ Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Explorations of Love and Death: Musico-Poetic Signification in the "Tristan Trilogy" and Three Related Song Cycles* (New York: Pendragon, 2008), 86.

Bruhn writes that “for the piano’s two comments on the two allegedly analogous ‘extensions,’ he takes all pitches from mode 3.”⁸¹ Measure 8 ending in mode 3, first transposition, and measure 13 in mode three, second transposition. (See Example 5.16)



Example 5.16

Bruhn reminds the reader that “Mode 3, reserved throughout *Poèmes Pour Mi* for gratitude toward God, affirms that the wife’s function as her husband’s ‘extension’ is a blessing in the divinely intended order. Mode 6, established in the thanksgiving for divine gifts that culminate in Christ’s redemptive death, interprets the bond that unites individuals in holy matrimony as one more link in the covenant between humans and their Creator.”⁸²

Messiaen also addresses the use of added values and added notes in *L’épouse* in mm. 1-4, phrase a (See Example 5.17) and in mm. 5-8, phrase A’, with minimal variation:

Except for the first eighth-note, the accent it is also entirely an extremely gracious and refined rhythmic descent. In the first measure, interpretation of the Hindu ragavardhana, divisible into two fragments, A and B; the second variant of these two rhythms: A is deprived of its last eighth-note, the third quarter-note of B is dotted. This dot added value, indicated by the cross, slackens the rhythmic descent while underlining its caressing nonchalance....Use of the augmented fourth added to the perfect chord at A, of the sixth added to the chord of the dominant seventh at B. Use of added values (I insist no further

⁸¹ Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen’s Explorations of Love and Death: Musico-Poetic Signification in the “Tristan Trilogy” and Three Related Song Cycles* (New York: Pendragon, 2008), 87.

⁸²Ibid, 87.

upon their relationship with the added notes). From the beginning to X, the quotation is written in the second mode of limited transpositions⁸³

The image displays two staves of music. The top staff is for the Soprano voice, marked '197 L'Epouse Chant Soprano' and 'Presque lent mf'. The lyrics are 'Va où l'Es - prit te mè - ne,'. A red box labeled 'expressif' highlights a melodic contour in the vocal line, with notes labeled A, B, A, A, B, A. The bottom staff is for the Piano accompaniment, marked 'Piano'. It features a complex harmonic texture with various chords and intervals. A red box labeled 'X' highlights a specific interval in the piano line. Another red box labeled 'A' highlights a melodic contour in the piano line, with notes labeled A, A, B. A third red box labeled 'A' highlights a melodic contour in the piano line, with notes labeled A, A, A.

Example 5.17

The vocal and piano lines outlined in mm. 3 and 7 in the accompaniment are also mentioned in Messiaen's *The Technique of My Musical Language* on pages thirty-one and thirty-two, as he mentions the function of added note values in relation to melodic contours "will serve us to engender a great number of melodic contours."⁸⁴ (See Example 5.18) Melodic contours will be further discussed in performance recommendations.

The image shows a single staff of music for the Soprano voice, marked '86 L'Epouse'. The lyrics are 'Nul ne peut sé - pa - rer ce que Dieu a i - ni,'. A red circle highlights a specific melodic contour in the vocal line, with notes labeled A, A, B.

Example 5.18

⁸³ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) added translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 48-49.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 32.

The A sections are varied within the sub-sections, a and b. For example, in m. 3 the singer enters after an eighth rest, whereas in m. 7, she enters after a quarter rest. Messiaen also slightly changes the rhythm for the pianist as well, adding the occasional augmentation dot or tie. All of these slight variations slowly change the contour of the melody in a very subtle manner, as the piano slightly mirrors the voice, sometimes anticipating its entry.⁸⁵

When the final A section, A'' appears in m.9, the voice and piano recall the opening a phrase, which is now labeled a'', from m. 1-2, but transposed a semitone higher, an intensified portrayal of both textual and musical emotion. However, a'' introduces new text that is repeated at the *Très lent*, which Messiaen marks *mystérieux*. Harmonically, the atmosphere has changed with this repeated text, as Messiaen implores hymn-like chordal textures with added values through the use of sixteenth notes and augmentation dots. Harmonically, the right hand's initial chord is identifying with B-flat major, while the left hand moves in parallel fifths. The right hand in parallel major triads pits B-natural and against B-flat and F-sharp against B-natural, as minor seconds compete. There is no true chordal outline in the vocal line, as the voice simply sings a series of major and minor seconds. (See Example 5.19) While the last two measures might appear as something akin to polytonality, the listener is simply hearing two different streams of sound rather than one or more established key. While no keys are solidified in either hand of the piano, both hands highlight different keys with each melodic contour, which never resolves.

⁸⁵ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 121.

Example 5.19 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is for the voice, marked *pp mystérieux* and *Au mouvement*. The bottom staff is for the piano, marked *Très lent* and *Au mouvement*. The lyrics are "Comme l'Eglise est le pro-longement du Christ." The piano part features a long, slow melodic line in the left hand and a more active, rhythmic line in the right hand. The tempo changes from *Très lent* to *Au mouvement* at measure 13.

Example 5.19

In m. 13, Example 5.20, the lack of a pitch center causes the piece feels unresolved, as Messiaen implores mode 3 as the final piano gesture explores the sixth and seventh octaves.

Example 5.20 shows the same musical score as Example 5.19, but with a red box highlighting the final piano gesture in measure 13. This gesture is marked *f* and *Au mouvement*, and it features a rapid, ascending melodic line in the right hand that explores the sixth and seventh octaves.

Example 5.20

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. Set 3-10 (12) is stated four times in *L'épouse*, each within the A section or a phrase, as is Set 4-12, which is located three times. Set 4-21 (12) is featured three times, twice in the b phrases, and once at the *Très lent* in b". The remaining two sets are stated once; a total of six sets were inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

The musical sections A, A', and A'' correspond exactly to each subsequent two lines of text, “a three-fold refrain altering with three verses.”⁸⁶ Author Siglind Bruhn writes that

The imperative in the refrain ‘Go where the Spirit leads you,’ does not specify whether it is Mi who is spoken to or whether the speaker is rather admonishing himself to remain vigilant and follow only his divine guide. The three verses alternating with the refrain are all taken from the New Testament. Verse 2 is a close paraphrase of Mathew 19:6 [...] whereas verses 4 and 6 may be Messiaen’s rendering of St. Paul’s explanation to the Ephesians [...] ⁸⁷

E: Performance Recommendations

The opening text, A, is restated in mm. 5-6 and 9-10, as the voice alternates a series of minor thirds and tritones. The singer must echo the piano motive of C-sharp, E-natural, A-sharp, as this musical motive is specified three times within the piece, and should be sung at varying dynamic levels each time. (See Example 5.21)

197
L'Epouse
Chant
Soprano

Presque lent
mf

Va où l'Es - prit te mè - ne,

expressif B A

Piano

Example 5.21

A dynamic sequence of *mp*, *mf*, and the last motive as *forte* are advised. Memorizing the first pitch of m. 1 so that the pianist does not have to provide it for the singer will allow for a

⁸⁶ Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Explorations of Love and Death: Musico-Poetic Signification in the "Tristan Trilogy" and Three Related Song Cycles* (New York: Pendragon, 2008), 85.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 85.

seamless entrance. Delicately increasing in dynamic on the opening C-sharp into a *subito piano* on G5 will test the singer's breath control. The singer should sing into, or towards, the A-sharp at the end of m. 2, solidifying this note in the middle voice which is doubled in the piano, a completion of the opening musical motive.

The vocalist should listen intently for the accompanist's entrances in mm. 3, 7, and 11, as the singer's entrance is indicated by either one eighth note or one quarter note. A breath both before and after the word *séparé* [separate] will emphasize the word's meaning. The singer should also observe the dotted-quarter note on the word *Dieu* [God], as Messiaen is elongating the rhythm as a clear indication of text-painting. Is it important that the singer cut off the dotted-eighth-note tie so that the rhythm and *crescendo* in the piano line can be heard clearly. At m. 7 the singer should pay attention to the pianist's melody, listening for the C-flat that begins the measure, doubled in the piano. The singer enters after a quarter rest, as opposed to the eighth-note rest in m. 3. Note that in m. 7 the singer sings the G-natural only after the pianist plays it in the accompaniment, as opposed to m. 3, where the two begin the pitch simultaneously.

The third and final exclamation of the text *Va où l'Esprit te mène* [Go where the Spirit leads you] is repeated a half-step higher than in its initial appearance, an increasing in intensity. Measures 9 and 10 are followed by the repeated text *est le prolongement du Christ* [the Church is the extension.] In m. 11, the singer and pianist must be sure to meet on the E-flat at the end of the measure. As the *Très lent* introduces thicker chordal structures, the singer doubles the pianist's highest notes before delivering the final words, *du Christ* [of Christ] in m. 13. The sung line is then coupled with climbing movement in the piano, nearly an extension of the voice, ending in mode 3.

It is imperative that both the pianist and singer observe the eighth rest at the beginning of the *Très lent*. The singer should breathe after the word *l'Eglise*, rather than eliding with the word *est*, so that there is more breath to color the A-natural which is dotted, emphasizing the word *prolongement* [prolonged]. The singer should also wait for the quarter rest in m. 12, careful not to rush the final text *du Christ* [of Christ]. Placing a *marcato* on the word *du* will intensify the weight of the dotted-quarter note in the piano line. The singer must commit to cutting off the tied G-natural, as not to overshadow the ascending eighth-note clusters in the piano. Although the vocal line may no longer be voiced, the continuation of thought and emotion should remain until the pianist plays the final chord, a D-flat major seventh in the right hand with contrasting tonalities in the left hand. No tonal center is present throughout A'', so the singer must have a clear sense of sung pitches in the vocal line.

A: Introduction

The second longest song in the collection, Messiaen yet again refers to nature and his bride: the text states that the wife's arms are twined around her husband in the early morning, like an exotic pearl necklace or collar.

B: Poetical Analysis

Printemps enchaîne arc-en-ciel léger
du matin,
Ah, mon collier! Ah! Mon collier!
Petit soutien vivant de mes Oreilles lasses,
collier de renouveau, de sourire et de grace,
collier d'Orient, collier choisi multicolore
aux perles dures et cocasses!
Paysage courbe, épousant l'air frais
du matin, ah!
Mon collier! Ah! mon collier
Tes deux bras autour de mon cou
ce matin.

*Restrained Spring, light rainbow of
morning!*
Ah! My necklace! Ah! My necklace!
Petite living prop of my living ears,
Necklace of renewal, of smiles of grace,
Necklace of the Orient, chosen multicolored,
with hard and whimsical pearls!
Landscape curving, hugging the fresh air
of the morning, ah!
Ah! My necklace! Ah! My necklace!
Your two arms around my neck,
this morning.

This poem is one strophe of nine lines. Combined with the end rhyme scheme, this produces the pattern $a^{13}b^8c^{13}c^{14}d^{14}c^9a^{13}b^8a^8$, with the number of syllables per line presented in superscript. The overall pattern of poetic meter is strong, weak, strong, (single spondee followed by an iamb). The number of feet per line varies from tetrameters, to pentameters, to hexameters.

C. Musical Analysis

| Section | A | B | A ¹ | Coda |
|---------|--------|-------|----------------|---------|
| Measure | 1 – 13 | 14-27 | 27 - 43 | 43 – 51 |

Le Collier is in three-part song form. The A section is dominated by non-retrogradable rhythms. Steady quarter- and eighth-note patterns in the left hand of the piano are coupled with steady eighths and sixteenths in the right hand, as the “gently rocking rhythm of the piano’s bi-modal chords supports the voice’s simple tune, irregular note values giving a lilting flexibility.”⁸⁸ These first ten measures feature second-inversion E-Major triads in the left hand of the piano on the downbeat of each measure, as the vocal line neatly weaves minor thirds. Messiaen’s use of polymodality within the A section is evident, as he discusses two modes that are played simultaneously by different hands of the piano different hand, as marked in Example 5.22.

In this chapter [...] we shall see the superposition of these modes, or polymodality; then the connection of one polymodality to another, or polymodality modulation...Second case. Modulation by inversion of the superposed modes:⁸⁹ [...] at A, mode 3, first transposition (upper staff of the piano), upon mode 2, second transposition (lower staff); at B, mode 2, second transposition (upper staff of the piano), upon mode 3, first transposition (lower staff). The second polymodality is exactly the inverse of the

⁸⁸ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 123.

⁸⁹ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Langage Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 68.

proceeding. In the last measure of the example, a new inversion; we find again the first polymodality...⁹⁰

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The tempo is marked 'Modéré, un peu lent'. The score is in French. The vocal line is on a single staff, and the piano accompaniment is on two staves. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the lyrics 'Prin - temps, en - chaî - né,' and the second system contains 'arc - en - ciel lé - ger du ma - tin,'. The piano part is marked with 'A pp' and 'B'. Red boxes highlight specific chords in the piano part, labeled 'Mode 3' and 'Mode 2'. The first system has a 'Mode 3' box on the first measure and a 'Mode 2' box on the last measure. The second system has a 'Mode 2' box on the first measure and a 'Mode 3' box on the last measure. The piano part is marked with 'A pp' and 'B'.

Example 5.22

The A section concludes with a vocal outburst *Ah! Mon collier!* [Ah! My necklace] which is repeated twice, emphasizing the B-natural that has been reiterated in the pianist's bass. Measures 11-12 are further explained in Messiaen's essay on page forty-eight as "the perfect chord with added sixth and added augmented fourth[...]the relation of notes added to chords and values added to rhythms strikes us [...] very striking use of the added sixth in the ninth chord."⁹¹ As Messiaen indicates, the declamation ends on a B Major ninth chord, to which a G-sharp has been added. (See Example 5.23) The singer's ear will gravitate to the solfeggio MI to DO only in the sense that the melody and soprano have the most stable note.

⁹⁰ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 68.

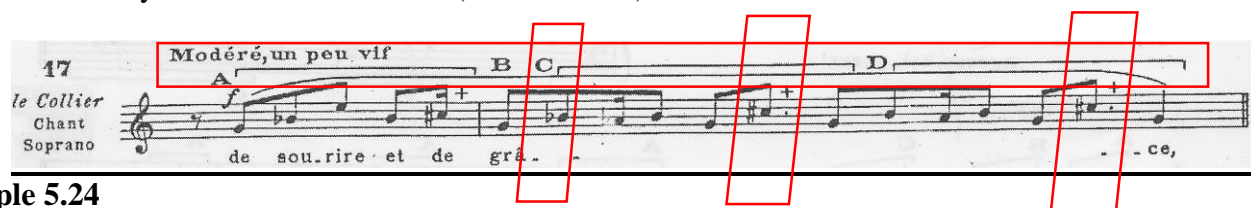
⁹¹ Ibid, 48.



Example 5.23

The B section beginning in m. 14, indicates transformation musically and textually, as the voice continuously outlines a diminished seventh chord, which is a member of the octatonic scale. Underneath, the piano reiterates mode two, OCT 1,2. Rhythmic descents and preparations are prevalent in the vocal line, as Messiaen once again employs the preparation, accent, and descent. (See example 5.24) The elongated preparation labeled A, a sixteenth note acting as an anacrusis, prepares the singer for the beginning of the gesture or downbeat, indicated by B. Labels C and D serve as descents, as Messiaen retards the vocal line with the use of augmentation dots:

The rhythmic preparation precedes the accent, the rhythmic descent follows it...Elongated preparation in A (added value at the cross); at B, accent; C and D, descents retarded by the addition of the dot (at the crosses): ⁹²



Example 5.24

After a melismatic vocalization on the word *grâce* [grace] in m. 18, the vocal line and piano merge with a steady pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, creating an arrangement of colorful musical sounds as the singer mentions multicolored pearls or gems. A C-sharp

⁹² Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 17.

reiteration pedal tone in the left hand of the piano is coupled with major seconds and major thirds in the vocal line. The textures colors change on the sung text “whimsical or funny,” as the melismas are almost dance-like, and are rhythmically doubled in the piano.

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The top system features a vocal line with lyrics: "-ent, col - lier choi - si mul - ti - co - lore aux per - les du - res et co -". The piano accompaniment is marked with *cresc.* (crescendo). The bottom system, enclosed in a red box, continues the piano accompaniment. It includes dynamic markings *più f* (piano), *dim.* (diminuendo), and *Rall.* (rallentando). The piano part consists of complex chordal textures with moving bass lines.

Example 5.25

The B section gives way to the return of A' as mm. 21-39 are exactly the same material as found in A. However, there is no resolution of the G-sharp minor tonality, which could also be heard as a B major ninth chord with an added G-sharp, in m. 39. The chord merely gives way to silence in the piano as the singer delivers the text *a capella*. (See Example 5.26)

Ah! mon collier! Ah! mon col - lier! Tes deux bras

au - tour de mon cou, ce ma - tin.

Rall **Au mouvement**

Example 5.26

There are two possibilities for analyzing this last page of music. While one could argue that the A section simply ends in m. 39, I have chosen to end the A section at m. 43, designating m. 43-51 as a coda. Because resolution of the text and harmony are delayed until m. 43, this could be viewed as the structural close of the piece. Here, the dramatic thought and music provide an atmosphere of resolution. The coda itself highlights piano motives of the A section, as the piece ends exactly where it began, coming full circle.

The set theory analysis should be used to assist the vocalist in identifying musical patterns within the *mélodie*. Set 3-10 (12) was stated four times in *Le collier*, in A, B, and A'. Sets 3-2 and 4-23(12) were each present in A and A'; these two sets were located twice. The remaining four sets were each stated once, two of which were located in the coda itself—a total of seven sets were inverted. All sets are clearly labeled in Appendix C.

D: Text-Music Relations

The poetical form divides neatly into three parts as does the form of the song. The musical sections are led by the poetry. However, the last line of poetry does not coincide with the musical coda.

E: Performance Recommendations

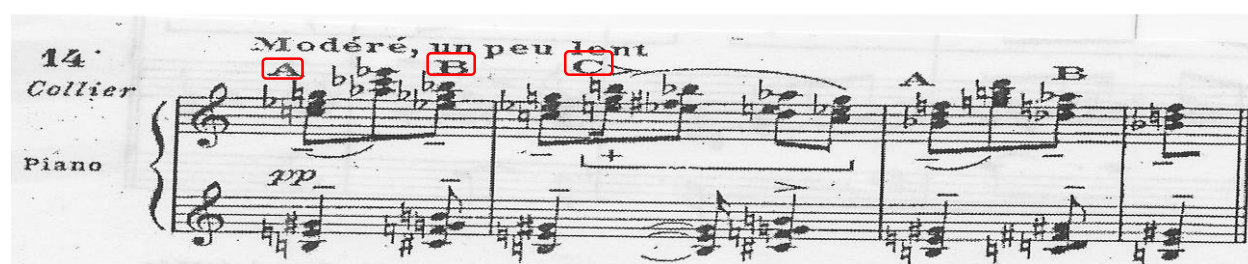
In this piece in particular, restraint and conciseness must be practiced by the singer, as precise cut-offs are essential. Holding a note too long can easily change the color of chords in the piano line. In m. 11, I advocate not breathing after the initial “Ah,” but rather after the word *collier* [necklace], as Messiaen has marked the breath according to the spoken line. At the end of m. 12 and the beginning of 13, the singer should listen for the cadence of SOL to DO, a color chord that prepares the arrival of the B section in m. 14. The singer should be conscious of the C-sharp diminished chord reiterated in the vocal line in m. 14-15, which then outlines an E diminished chord. The addition of the C-sharp in m. 17 makes the vocal line a C-sharp diminished seventh. The singer’s awareness of these changing harmonies will require attention to the pitches. A *messa di voce* on the word *grace* [grace] in m. 18 is most appropriate, as is breathing after the first C-sharp with an augmentation dot in m. 18.

In mm. 19-23, the singer and pianist should simultaneously perform a *crescendo* and *accelerando*, as both will propel a *subito piano* on the F-sharp on the downbeat of m. 24 in the second *passaggio*, emphasizing the word *cocases* [whimsical]. One should observe Messiaen’s breath marks in mm. 24 and 25, in order to more effectively sing the *rallentando* at the end of m. 26. The handling of m. 26 is debatable. A *messa di voce* with a breath before the last set of

eighth notes would prepare for the return of the A section in a more dramatic approach.

However, the singer could choose to sing the entire measure in one breath. Regardless, the observation of the duration of the augmentation dots is essential.

In mm. 30 through the beginning of 33, Messiaen gives yet “another example of preparation thus elongated; at A, accents, at B, descents, at C, preparation (added value at the cross).”⁹³ The composer uses the marking of A as an accented downbeat, while B serves as an upbeat for C, where the added sixteenth note appears. (See Example 5.27)



Example 5.27

The singer should use the conjunct melody and diminished tonalities in the vocal line to create text painting on *courbe* [curving], statically weaving the vocal line in and out of the thirds in the right hand of the piano. The singer should also treat the return of the A section differently than its initial appearance. Breathing after the second “Ah!” in m. 38 allows the listener a slight variation of the previous statement. Also, when repeating texts, it would benefit the singer to speak the text, as if participating in a poetic reading. By doing so, one realizes that the punctuation and natural inflection of the voice change. This, of course, is merely a dramatic suggestion. The singer could commit to singing both motives the same, if dramatically and emotionally justified through performance practice and stage presence. However, when making these types of performance decisions, the singer ought to keep in mind the “timelessness” of

⁹³ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon Language Musical* (The Technique of my Musical Language) translated by J. Satterfield in two volumes (Paris: Alphonse Leduc et Cie, 1956), 16-17.

Messiaen's music and how he is manipulating the rhythms. If the singer wants to convey more of a static presence, monotony in the vocal line could be justified. However, before making such a bold decision, one should contemplate what is happening in the vocal line, the poetic idea, as well as the timbral choices.

The A section ends with text *tes deux bras* [your two arms] sung intimately in the middle register. The voice is completely exposed, as this is the most intimate moment in the entire song. As the singer delivers the final text *autour de mon cou, ce matin* [around my neck this morning], pianissimo chordal structures in the piano evoke a sense of endlessness, as if through these thicker half notes and tied musical structures, time stands still for the lovers lingering in that moment. At the end of the singer's phrase, the coda delivers swaying eighth note rhythms evocative of the beginning of the *mélodie*.

There are several ways that the singer could approach these final phrases. One successful solution would be to take more time at m. 40, breathing after *bras* [arms] so that there is no elision to *autour* [around]. Otherwise, the phrase is quite long, and the singer could struggle to have the adequate breath needed for dynamic variation. This also gives the singer sufficient breath to slightly linger on the D-natural after the piano has stated the note, and then lean into the B-flat, highlighting the unexpected dissonances in m. 41 in the vocal line. The singer could choose to elide the words *bras* [arms] and *autour* [around] in mm. 40-41 and sing this phrase toned without vibrato for a more static effect; however, if this causes intonation problems, a large breath before the G-sharp in m. 42 would allow the soprano to sing a *crescendo* on "ma" and a *decrescendo* on "tin," letting the breath dissipate without the risk of losing the core of the

pitch. (See example 5.28) The singer should not be afraid of the aspirated breath in these final statements, as they are most intimate.

Ah! mon collier! Ah! mon col - lier! *pp* *tendre* Tes deux bras
 au - tour de mon cou, - ce ma - tin. *pp* *cresc.*
mp *dim.* *Rall.* - Au mouvement *pp*

Example 5.28

CHAPTER SIX

Messiaen's music demands close attention to detail on the part the performer and listener. This document has explored eight selected *mélodie*, complete with poetic and musical analyses, as well as the physical demands of performing this repertoire. Messiaen's music is a synthesis of color and rhythm that must be explored and analyzed by the performers:

One of the striking features of some of Messiaen's music is that it makes one conscious that everything in it is within the context of something bigger. There is the sound behind the sound, the longer duration behind the shorter one, the slower rhythm behind the quicker one. And behind all movement there is an awareness of stillness, behind all sound an awareness of silence, and behind all measured time an awareness of eternity.⁹⁴

Messiaen's vocal works are limited only in quantity. While they are few, they are some of the most beautiful French *mélodie* in the genre. They are seductive and complex, as Messiaen takes simple melodies and layers them upon clashing harmonies; and yet his songs are alive with delicate nuances that remind the listener of the great composers of *bel canto*, such as Bellini and Verdi.

The French *mélodie*, or art song, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries followed the model of the German *Lied*, and was usually a setting of a serious lyric poem for solo voice and piano. Impressionistic composers like Faure and Debussy were known for their abilities to unify poetic and musical forms. In his foreword to *The Interpretation of French Song*, Pierre Bernac discusses the difference between the *chanson* and the French *mélodie*, stating that the *mélodie* "is the term always used in France for this musical form [speaking of a title for a composition for one voice with piano accompaniment]....[it] is the French equivalent of 'Lied', [and] denotes serious song."⁹⁵ Authors Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes write that "[...] it is clear that

⁹⁴ ...Nichlas Armfelt, "An interview with Messiaen and Edith Walter first published in French magazine HARMONIE: 1970." *The Musical Times* 1965.<http://www.homepage.ntlworld.com/malball/messwrit.html> (accessed January 23, 2010).

⁹⁵ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Art Song* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

Messiaen did not write *mélodies* in the accepted sense of the term. He has a place in this book because he wrote important songs for the voice and piano in the French language, but they have little to do with *mélodie* tradition. Messiaen's vocal music does not represent the meeting of the musical world with the literary, but the creation of a world apart, strange and wonderful certainly, but an acquired taste."⁹⁶

After a thorough examination of the selected works explored in this document, I must whole-heartedly disagree with these opinions. Messiaen's songs have everything to do with the tradition of the French *mélodie*: an intense attention to nuance and the marriage between text and polymodal music, rich with remarkable textures and colors. Although Messiaen's works might not fit the traditional model of impressionistic vocal music, they are nonetheless representative of the *mélodie*. Messiaen's literary background is evident in his poetry, as he had a clear command of the French language and how to set it to music, particularly for the dramatic voice. Robert Sherlaw Johnson believes that

Messiaen's critics have denigrated his poems, and even his admirers have only rarely paid tribute to them; yet the texts, whatever their literary merits, are an integral part of the composer's thought in the song cycles [...] no criticism of the poems is relevant apart from the music, as they were written at the same time as the music and often conceived simultaneously with it.⁹⁷

In *The Messiaen Companion*, Jane Manning considers Messiaen's ability to set the French language to music. Her comments concerning Messiaen's attention to detail when setting the French will be most evident to the performer of this repertoire, as his placement of not only vowels and consonants, but the breath itself, reveal a true understanding of vocal technique and music making. His awareness of how the performer must move energy and breath to create the

⁹⁶ Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002), 313.

⁹⁷ Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 55.

sound and space needed for phonation of subtle passages and vocal outcries alike make him a noteworthy composer of vocal music:

With such a strong literary background (his mother a poetess, and his father, Pierre Messiaen, a famous translator of Shakespeare) it is not at all surprising that Messiaen displays a gift for words, with a specially acute ear for the distinctive nuances of the French language. Custom-made, and entirely at one with his musical visions, the texts provide startling and powerful images of religious sentiment and mystic symbolism. It would be perhaps inconceivable for Messiaen to set a language other than French. The syllables themselves create a glittering mosaic of sonorities and subtle resonances in addition to their actual meaning (many of the poems do not translate at all satisfactorily). The composer's awareness of the minutiae of verbal enunciations and articulations is miraculous. Each vowel sound can be precisely placed as intended, all dynamics are scrupulously plotted, and the performer's involvement and intimate connection to the music is enhanced by the sensual nature of the word projections: lips, tongue, teeth, and palate are involved, as each sound is savoured and poised for perfect precision of attack and control of timbre. Messiaen even takes account of the problem of exact coordination between singer and pianist at important cadences, by preceding final chords with his characteristic upbeat acciaccaturas which allow the singer to breathe during them and arrive securely and comfortably on target, without interrupting the music's natural flow. Messiaen's awareness of natural body-rhythms is satisfying for singer and listener. In an ideal performance, the audience may find themselves breathing with the singer, this increasing contact and involvement.⁹⁸

Messiaen's association of modes with color influenced his approach to composing the *mélodie*. The composer's medical condition of synesthesia caused him to experience colors when he heard or imagined music. He declared to have perceived particular colors when he heard certain chords, using rhythm and meter to create colors in his music, or to depict an outline of colors by layering textures to create a mosaic of sound. Messiaen describes his own experiences with his condition and how it influenced his writing:

When I was 20 years old I met a Swiss painter who became a good friend by the name of Charles Blanc-Gatti, he was synaesthete which is a disturbance of the optic and auditory nerves so when one hears sounds one also sees corresponding colours in the eye. I unfortunately didn't have this. But intellectually like synaesthetes I too see colours- if only in my mind - colours corresponding to sound. I try to incorporate this in my work, to pass on to the listener. It's all very mobile. You've got to feel sound moving. Sounds are high, low, fast, slow etc. My colours do the same thing, they move in the same way. Like

⁹⁸ Jane Manning and Peter Hill, editor, *The Messiaen Companion* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 107-108.

rainbows shifting from one hue to the next. It's very fleeting and impossible to fix in any absolute way. It's true I see colours, it's true they're there. They're musician's colours, not to be confused with painter's colours. They're colours that go with music. If you tried to reproduce these colours on canvas it may produce something horrible. They're not made for that, they're musicians colours. What I'm saying is strange but it's true. I believe in natural resonance, as I believe in all natural phenomena. Natural resonance is in exact agreement with the phenomena of complimentary colours. I have a red carpet that I often look at. Where this carpet meets the lighter coloured parquet next to it, I intermittently see marvelous greens that a painter couldn't mix - natural colours created in the eye" ⁹⁹

His ability to fuse modes (which are musical sets themselves) and chords of resonance to create very specific textures, nuances, and colors within the music not only allowed him to connect with the listener, but enabled him to propel French art song into the twentieth century. His *mélodie* were composed in in a manner in which the art song community had neither acknowledged nor accepted. That controversy continues today. However, one must remember that Messiaen's aim was "to bring his audiences...into a higher, more integrated (heightened) awareness...working with both nature and art." This supports Messiaen's claim that he is "not a mystical musician, but a Surrealist musician who exceeds his desire of the surreal by the supernatural." ¹⁰⁰ His ability to construct patterns of sounds and palindromic tertian construction creates both tension and freedom in his music, a synthesis of diverse symmetry. Messiaen's innovative writing process and contribution to art song in general should not be overlooked. While underperformed, his vocal compositions are a vital thread in the fabric of the French *mélodie*.

⁹⁹ Olivier Messiaen, "Olivier Messiaen", www.oliviermessiaen.org/messwrit.html (accessed February 20, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Arnold Whittall, "Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art, and Letters." *Music and Letters Volume 89 No 4* (2008), 680.

APPENDIX A

Joseph Edward Harris discusses the colors associated with the modes and their inversions in his dissertation “Musique Colorée: Synesthetic Correspondence in the Works of Olivier Messiaen”

| MODE | SCALE | DESCRIPTION |
|--------|------------------|--|
| MODE 1 | whole tone scale | Red violet colour |
| MODE 2 | octatonic scale | Shades of purple, violet First inversion is gold/brown Second inversion is green |
| MODE 3 | W, H, H | Orange, gold, milky white First inversion is gray, mauve, with a bit of gold Second inversion is blue, green Third inversion is orange, red, with a bit of blue |
| MODE 4 | H, H, m3, H | Gray, gold, with a hint of blue First Inversion is streaks of gray, pink-mauve and coppery yellow; black and clear Prussian blue; green and purple violet Second inversion is yellow, violet Third inversion is violet with deep white veins Fourth inversion is deep violet Fifth inversion is carmine red, violaceous purple, mauve, gray, pink |
| MODE 5 | H, M3, H, H | Messiaen never discussed the colorations associated with this mode |
| MODE 6 | H, H, W W | Gray with bits of gold, orange, dark green First inversion is brown, russet, orange, violet Second inversion is yellow, mauve, gold Third inversion is yellow, violet, black Fourth inversion is gold, pale blue, violet with brown outlines Fifth inversion is black, white, a bit of pale blue |
| MODE 7 | H, H, H, H, W | Messiaen never discussed the colorations associated with this mode |

101

¹⁰¹ Joseph Edward Harris. “Musique Coloree: Synesthetic Correspondence in the Works of Olivier Messiaen” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2004) 50-54.

APPENDIX B

Pourquoi?

[purkwa]

Why?

Pourquoi?

[purkwa]

Why?

Why?

Pourquoi les oiseaux de l'air,

[Purkwa le zwazo də l'air]

Why the birds of the air?

Why (don't) the birds of the air?

Pourquoi les reflet de l'eau,

[Purkwa le rəflɛ də l'eau]

Why the reflection of the water?

Why (don't) the glimmers of the water?

Pourquoi les nuages du ciel,

[Purkwa le nyaʒə dy sjɛl]

Why the clouds of the sky?

Why (don't) the clouds of the sky?

Pourquoi?

[purkwa]

Why?

Pourquoi les feuilles de l'Automne,

[purkwa le fœjə də l'ɔtɔn]

Why the leaves of Autumn?

Why (don't) the leaves of Autumn?

Pourquoi les roses de l'Été,

[purkwa le rozə də l'ete]

Why the roses of the summer?

Why (don't) the roses of summer?

Pourquoi les chanson du Printemps, Pourquoi?

[purkwa le ʃãsɔ dy prɛtã, purkwa]

Why the song of Spring, why?

Why (doesn't) the song of Spring? Why?

Pourquoi n'ont ils pour moi de charmes,
 [purkwa n'õ il pur mwa dəʃarme]
 Why have they for me charms?
 Why (don't) they have charms for me?

Pourquoi?
 [purkwa]
 Why?

Le sourire

[lə sʊrir]

The Smile

Certain mot murmuré Par vous est un baiser

[sɛrtɛ̃ mo murmyre par vu et œ̃ bɛzɛ]

Certain word whisper by you is a kiss

A certain word whispered by you is like a kiss

Intime et prolongé

[ɛtimə e prolɔ̃ʒe]

Intimate and prolonged

Intimate and prolonged

Comme un baiser sur l'âme.

[kɔm œ̃ bɛzɛ syr l'amə]

Like a kiss on the soul

Like a kiss on the soul

Ma bouche veut sourire

[ma buʃ vø surirə]

My mouth wants to smile

My mouth wants to smile

Et mon sourire tremble.

[e mɔ̃ surirə trɑ̃blə]

And my mouth trembles

And my smile quivers

La fiancée perdu

[La fijãseə pɛrɔdy]

The lost fiancé

C'est la douce fiancée,

[sɛ la dusə fijãseə]

This is the sweet fiancé

It is the sweet fiancée

C'est l'ange de la bonté,

[sɛ l'ãʒə də la bɔ̃tɛ]

This is the angel of kindness

It is the angel of kindness

C'est un après midi ensoleillé

[sɛt œn apʁɛ midi ɛ̃sɔljɛ]

This is the afternoon sunny

It is the sunny afternoon

C'est le vent sur les fleurs.

[sɛt lə vɑ̃ syr le flœʁ]

This is the wind on the flowers

It is the wind on the flowers

C'est un sourire pur comme un Coeur d'enfant,

[sɛt œ surirə pyr kɔ̃ œ cœʁ d'ɑ̃fɑ̃]

This is a smile pure as a heart child

It is a pure smile like the heart of a child

C'est un grand lys

[sɛt œ grɑ̃ lis]

This is a large lily

It is a large white lily

Blanc comme une aile,

[blɑ̃ kɔ̃ œn ɛlə]

White as a wing

White as a wing

Très haut dans une coupe d'or!

[trɛ o dɑ̃ zynə kupə dɔʁ]

Very high in a cup golden

Very high in a golden cup

O Jésus, bénissezla! Elle! Donnezlui votre grâce puissante!
 [o ʒezy, benise al elə done lyi vɔtrə grasə pyisāntə]
 O Jesus, Bless the she give him your thanks powerful
 O Jesus, bless her and give her your powerful grace

Qu'elle ignore la souffrance, les larmes!
 [kɛl iŋɔrə la sufrāsə, le larmə]
 It ignores the displeasure, the tears
 Ignore the sorrow, the tears

Donnez lui le repos, Jésus!
 [done lyi lə repo ʒezy]
 Give him rest, Jesus
 Give rest, Jesus

Paysage

[peizaʒə]

Landscape

Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.

[lə lak kɔm œ gro biʒu blø]

The lake as a big jewel blue

The lake, like a large blue jewel

La route pleine de chagrins et de fondrières,

[la rutə pleinə də ʃagrɛ ə də fɔ̃drijjɛrə]

The road full of sorrows and potholes

The road, full of sorrows and quagmires

Mes pieds qui hésitant dans la poussière,

[mɛ pjɛ ki ezitɑ̃ dɑ la pusjɛrə]

My feet hesitant on the dust

My feet hesitate in the dust

Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.

[lə lak kɔm œ gro biʒu blø]

The lake as a big jewel blue

The lake, like a large blue jewel

Et la voilà, verte et bleue comme le paysage!

[e la vwala vɛrt e blø kɔmɑ lə peizaʒə]

And here it is, green and blue as the landscape

And there she is, green and blue like the landscape

Entre le blé et le soleil je vois son visage:

[ɑ̃trə lə blɛ e lə solɛj ʒɛ vwa sɔ̃ vizaʒə]

Between the wheat and the sun I see her face

Between the wheat and the sun I see her face

Elle sourit, la main sur les yeux

[ɛl suri la mɛ̃ syr lez jø]

She smiled the hand on the eyes

She smiles, her hand above her eyes

Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.

[lə lak kɔm œ gro biʒu blø]

The lake as a big jewel blue

The lake, like a large blue jewel

La Maison

[la mɛzɔ̃]

Home

The House

Cette maison nous allons la quitter:

[setə mɛzɔ̃ nu z alɔ̃ la kite]

This home we will leave

This house we will leave

Je la vois dans ton oeil.

[ʒə la vwa dɑ̃ tɔ̃ œj]

I see it in your eyes

I see it in your eyes

Nous quitterons nos corps aussi:

[nu kiteʁɔ̃ no kɔʁ osi]

We leave our bodies also

We will leave our bodies also

Je les vois dans ton oeil.

[ʒə le vwa dɑ̃ tɔ̃ œj]

I see them in your eye

I see them in your eye

Toutes ces images de douleur qui s'impriment dans

[tutə sez imaʒə də dulœʁ ki sɛ̃primə]

All these images of pain that are printed in

All of these images of pain, which are imprinted in

ton oeil, Ton oeil ne les retrouver a plus:

[dɑ̃ tɔ̃ œj nə le ʁətruvəʁə ply]

your eyes, your eye not be found them

your eye will not find them again

Quand nous contemplerons la Vérité,

[kɑ̃ nu kɔ̃tɑ̃plɛʁɔ̃ la Verite]

When we contemplate the Truth

When we contemplate the Truth

Dans des corps pur, jeunes, éternellement lumineux.

[dɑ̃ de kɔʁ pyʁ, ʒœnə, ɛtɛʁnɛləmɑ̃ lyminø]

Within the body pure, young, eternally bright

Within the pure body, young and eternally luminous

L'épouse

[L'épuz]

The Wife

Va où l'Esprit te mène,

[va u l'espri tə mènə]

Go where the spirit you leads

Go where the Spirit leads you

nul ne peut séparer ce que Dieu a uni,

[nyl nə pø separe sə kə djø a yni]

No one can separate what God has united

No one can divide what God has joined together

va où l'Esprit te mène,

[va u l'espri tə mènə]

Go where the Spirit you leads

Go where the Spirit leads you

l'épouse est le prolongement de l'époux,

[l'epuzə ɛ lə prɔlɔ̃ʒəmɑ də l'epu]

The wife is an extension of the husband

The wife is the extension of the husband

va où l'Esprit te mène, comme 'Église

[va u l'espri tə mènə kɔmə l'eglizə]

Go where the Spirit you leads

Go where the Spirit leads you

est le prolongement du Christ.

[ɛgliz ɛ lə prɔlɔ̃ʒəmɑ dy krist]

As the church is the extension of Christ

Just as the church is the extension of Christ

Le Collier

[lə kɔljɛ]

The Necklace

Printemps enchaîne arc-en-ciel léger du matin,

[prɛ̃tɑ̃ z ɑ̃ʃɛn ɑrk-ɑ̃-sjɛl lɛʒɛ dy matɛ̃]

Spring chained rainbow slight of the morning

Restrained spring, slight rainbow of the morning

Ah, mon collier! Ah! Mon collier!

[a mɔ̃ kɔljɛ a mɔ̃ kɔljɛ]

Ah, my necklace!

Ah! My necklace!

Petit soutien vivant de mes Oreilles lasses,

[pəti sutjɛ̃ vivɑ̃ də me z ɔʁɛjɛ lasə]

Petite souvenir living of my ear weary

Petite, tiny living prop of my weary ear

collier de renouveau,

[kɔljɛ də rənɥvɔ]

Necklace of renewal

Necklace of renewal

de sourire et de grace,

[də surir e də ɡrasə]

Of smiles and of grace

Of smiles and grace

collier d'Orient,

[kɔljɛ d'ɔʁjɑ̃]

Necklace oriental

Necklace of the Orient

collier choisi multicolore aux perles dures et cocasses!

[kɔljɛ ʃwazi myltikɔlɔʁ o pɛʁlə dyʁə e kɔkas]

Necklace chosen multicolored of pearls hard and funny

Necklace chosen, many colors of hard beads and whimsical!

Paysage courbe, épousant l'air frais du matin, ah!

[peizaʒə kurbə, epuzɑ̃ lɛʁ frɛ dy matɛ̃, a]

Landscape curving, hugging air fresh of the morning, ah!

Curving landscape, hugging the fresh air of the morning, ah!

Mon collier! Ah! mon collier
[a mɔ̃ kɔlje a mɔ̃ kɔlje]
My necklace, ah! My necklace!
My necklace, ah! My necklace!

Tes deux bras autour de mon cou ce matin.
[te dø bra otur də mɔ̃ ku sə matɛ̃]
Your two arms around of my neck, this morning
Your two arms around my neck, this morning

APPENDIX C

Set Theory Analysis

TROIS MÉLODIES



Pourquoi?

Paroles et Musique de
OLIVIER MESSIAEN

CHANT

Très modéré

p

5-10

Pour . quoi les oi-seaux de l'air, —

5-10

Pour .

PIANO

Très modéré

8-----

pp 1

p 2

pp 3

6-33

3-7

..quoi les reflets de l'eau, —

Pour . quoi les nu.a . ges du ciel, —

Pour .

8-----

8-----

4

5

6

7

5-10

5-10

3

-quoi? Pour . quoi les feuilles de l'Au . tom . ne, Pour . quoi les roses de l'E .

8 9 10 11

ppp p

6-33 3-7 5-10

.té, — Pour . quoi les chansons du Prin . temps, — Pour . quoi? Pour .

8 8

12 13 14 15

pp mf

6-22

-quoi n'ont-ils pour moi de char . mes, Pour . quoi? Pourquoi, Ah! — Pour .

16 17 18

ppp

$3-9(12)$

pen 23

ppp

25

Le sourire

Poème de
CÉCILE SAUVAGE

Musique de
OLIVIER MESSIAEN

4-7(12)

CHANT *Lent*

PIANO *Lent expressif*

pp

Cer.tain mot

4-3

3-7

mur.mu.ré Par vous

est un bai.ser — In . ti . me

et pro . lon .

3-2

ppp

gé — Comme un bai.ser sur l'a . me.

expressif

ppp

7 8 9

ppp

Ma bouche veutsouri.re

Et monsou . ri . re

tremble.

ppp

10 11 12 13

4-22

4-22

4-12

Handwritten musical score for a piece in D major. The score consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics "-te, C'est un a...". The vocal line has a red box around the first measure and another red box around the second measure, with the handwritten note "4-12" above the second box. The piano accompaniment for the first system features chords marked with fingerings 9, 10, 11, and 12. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with similar chordal textures and fingerings.

4-12

7

- près - mi - di en - so - leil -

13 14 15 16

5-34(12)

- lé, C'est le vent sur les

17 18 19 20

4-22

fleurs. C'est

p 21 22 23 *mf* 24

un sou - ri - re

25 26 27 28

4-22

pur comme un cœur d'en . . fant,

mf 29 30 31 32

4-18

C'est un grand lys

33 34 35 36

4-18

blanc comme une ai . .

37 38 39 40

3-2

4-26 (12)

. le, très haut dans u . ne cou . pe

41 42 43 44

Handwritten red box around measures 45-48. The vocal line has a long note with a slur. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords.

d'or!

45 46 47 48

Handwritten red box around measures 49-54. The tempo changes to "Lent". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Lent

mf expressif

49 50 51 52 53 54

Handwritten red box around measures 55-56. The tempo is marked "Modéré". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords.

Modéré

pp

Modéré

55 56

Handwritten red box around measures 57-58. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

57 58

4-215

El . . . le!

Don . nez . lui vo . tre

59 60

cont.

grâ . . . ce puis . san . . . tel

61 62

cont.

Qu'elle i . . gno . re la souf . fran . . . ce, les

63 64

3-2

lar . . . mes!

don . . . nez

65 66

più p
più pp

-lui

le re

dim.

67 68

dim.

-pos,

69 70

pp

Jé sus!

71 72 73

ppp

8^a b^a!

8^a b^a!



Lent, avec charme

Lent, avec charme

rall. au Mouvt

p

pp

1 2 3

5-31

5-21

p

4 5 6 7

8 9 10

p

mf

Handwritten musical score, first system. The top staff has a red bracket under the first measure. The bottom staff has measures 37, 38, and 39 marked in purple. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*.

5-31

Handwritten musical score, second system. The top staff has a red bracket under the first measure. The bottom staff has measures 40, 41, and 42 marked in purple. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, and *mf*. The word *crese.* is written above the staff.

Handwritten musical score, third system. The top staff has measures 43, 44, 45, and 46 marked in purple. The bottom staff has measures 43, 44, 45, and 46 marked in purple. Dynamics include *f* and *mf*. The word *crese.* is written above the staff. Red boxes labeled A and B are drawn around measures 43 and 44 respectively. Above the staff, the following handwritten notes are present: 5-16, 4-11, 4-4, 5-16, 3-10(12).

Handwritten musical score, fourth system. The top staff has measures 47, 48, 49, and 50 marked in purple. The bottom staff has measures 47, 48, 49, and 50 marked in purple. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *mf*.

II. Paysage

5-33(12)

Très modéré

CHANT

mf gracieux ,

Le lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.

Très modéré

PIANO

mf

gracieux

pp

mf Larou - te plei - ne de cha - grins — et de fon - dri - è - res,

f *mf*

4 5 6

Mes pieds qui hé - si - tent dans la poussie - re, Le lac

cresc. *molto*

7 8 9

5-33(12)

comme un gros bi - jou bleu. Et la voi - là, —

mf *pp* *f*

10 11 12

verte et bleue comme le pa - y - sa - ge!

p

cresc. *molto*

mf *p*

13 14 15

Un peu plus vif

Entre le blé et le so - leil je vois son vi -

pp

Un peu plus vif

pp

16 17 18

Rall.. - - - Plus lent

- sa - ge: El - le sou - rit, — la main sur les yeux. —

p

Rall.. - - - Plus lent

p *expressif* *cresc.*

19 20 21

5-33 (12)

mf Très modéré

Le lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.

Très modéré

f *mf* *pp*

22 23 24

III. La maison

CHANT *Presque vif* *mf* 4-13

Cet - te mai-son nous al - lons la quitter: _____

PIANO *Presque vif* *p* 1 2 3

4-13

Je la vois dans ton oeil. Nous quit-te-rons nos corps _____ aus-si: _____

mf expressif 4 *p* 5 6

4-13 *Plus vif* *mf*

Je les vois dans ton oeil. _____ Toutes ces i-mages de douleur qui s'impriment dans ton oeil,

Plus vif *mf expressif* 7 *f* 8

3-3

4-27

11

f Ton œil ne les re-trou-ve-ra plus: ———

p Modéré Quand nous con-tem-ple-rons

più f 9

p 10

4-23(12)

3-3

la Vé-ri-té, ———

mf Dans des corps purs, jeu-nes,

11

12

4-12

f é-ter-nel-le-ment

p Rall. — —

lu-mi-neux.

Rall. — —

f 13

pp 14

15

POÈMES POUR MI

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

V. L'épouse

CHANT

Presque lent *mf* **3-10(12)** **4-12**

Va — où l'Es - prit te mè - - ne,

PIANO

Presque lent *expressif* *f*

1 2

3-3 **4-21(12)**

Nul ne peut — sé - pa - rer ce que Dieu a u - ni, —

3 4 *mf*

3-10(12) **4-12**

Va — où l'Es - prit te mè - - ne,

5 6

4-21(12)

L'é-pou - se — est le prolon-ge-ment — de l'é - poux, —

7 8 *mf*

3-10(12)

3-10(12)

3-12(4)

f Va — où l'Esprit te mè - ne, Com.me l'Egli - se — est le prolongement —

più f 9 10 11

4-21(12)

Très lent
pp mystérieux Comme l'Eglise est le pro-lon-ge-ment

Au mouvement
p du Christ. —

Très lent
pp 12 *mf*

Au mouvement
p 13 *ppp* 8

mystérieux

VIII. Le collier

CHANT *Modéré, un peu vif* *p*

Modéré, un peu vif Prin - temps en - chaî - né, -

PIANO *p* 1 2 3 4 5

3-2

arc - en - ciel lé - ger - du ma - tin, -

6 7 8 9 10

4-23(12)

3-10(12)

f Ah! mon collier! Ah! mon col - lier!

f 11 12 *p* 13

3-10(12)

3-10(12)

II

mf Pe-tit soutien vivant de mes o-reilles las - ses, *f* Collier de re-nouveau,

expressif

mf 14 15 *f* 16

de sou-rire et de grâ-- ce, *p* Col-lier d'O-ri-

17 18 19

cresc. ent, col-lier choi-si mul-ti-co-lore aux per-les du-res et co-

cresc. 20 21 22 23

4-11

più f cas-- *dim.* *Rall.*

più f 24 *dim.* 25 26 *Rall.*

p Au mouvement

-- ses! Pa - y - sa - ge cour - be,

Au mouvement

p 27 28 29 30 31

3-2

é - pou - sant l'air frais - du ma - tin,

32 33 34 35 36

4-23(12) 3-10(12)

f Ah! mon collier! Ah! mon col - lier!

pp tendre 3-7
Tes deux bras

37 38 39 40

5-15(12)

au - tour de mon cou, - ce ma - tin.

pp 41 42 43 44 45

mp 46

Rall. 47 48

- Au mouvement

pp 49 50 51

Bibliography

- A Contemporary Song Selection: Recital from the Theatre Musical de Paris, Chatelet*. Perf. Dawn Upshaw. 2000. DVD.
- Benitez, Vincent. *Oliver Messiaen: A Research and Information Guide A Research and Information Guide (Routledge Music Bibliographies)*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Berman, Greta. "Synesthesia and the Arts." *Leonardo* 32.1 (1999): 15-22.
- Bruhn, Siglind. *Messiaen's Explorations of Love and Death Musico-Poetic Signification in the Tristan Trilogy and Three Related Song Cycles*. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2008.
- Dingle, Christopher. *Olivier Messiaen Music, Art and Literature (Music and Literature)*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007.
- Dingle, Christopher. *The Life of Messiaen (Musical Lives)*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Griffiths, Paul. *Modern Music: The Avant Garde Since 1945*. Vol. 2. New York: George Braziller, 1981.
- Griffiths, Paul. *New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters*. New York: Norton, 1986.
- Griffiths, Paul. *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Hill, Peter, editor. *The Messiaen Companion*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995.
- Hill, Peter and Nigel Simeone. *Messiaen*. London: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Johnson, Graham, and Richard Stokes. *A French Song Companion*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002.
- Johnson, Robert Sherlaw. *Messiaen*. New York: Omnibus Press, 1975.
- Kostka, Stefan and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth Century Music, sixth edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009.
- Macdonald, Hugh R. N. "A Review of Messiaen: Poèmes pour Mi, Tippett: Songs for Dov by Felicity Palmer, BBC Symphony Orchestra." *Tempo, New Series, No. 5, June*, 1973.

Messiaen, Olivier. *Technique de mon langage musical*, Paris: Leduc, 1944, two volumes; English as *The Technique of My Musical Language*, translated by John Satterfield, Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1966.

Messiaen, Olivier. *Poèmes Pour Mi*. Paris, France. Durand Editions Musicales, 1937.

Messiaen, Olivier. *Trois Mélodies*. Paris, France. Durand Editions Musicales, 1930.

Messiaen, Olivier. *Vocalise-étude*. Paris, France. Alphonse Leduc Editions Musicales, 1935.

Messiaen. Conducted by Jun Märkl. Performed by Anne Schwanewilms. Orchestre National de Lyon. Naxos International. CD. 2009.

Nichols, Roger. *Messiaen*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Nicholas Armfelt. "Emotion in the Music of Messiaen." *The Musical Times* (1965).
<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/malball/messwrit/hyml> 9accesses January 23, 2010).

Poemes: Ravel, Messiaen, Dutilleux. Conducted by Daniele Gatti. Performed by Renée Fleming. National de France. Decca Music Group. CD. 2010.

Rindom, Ditlev. "Illuminating the Beyond: The Life and Work of Olivier Messiaen." *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35.2 (2006): 188-91.

Samuel, Claude. *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1986.

Smalley, Roger. "Portrait of Debussy: Debussy and Messiaen." *The Musical Times* 109.1500 (1968): 128-31.

Voyage A Paris. Performed by Frederica von Stade and Martin Katz. BMG Music. CD. 1995.

Wall, Joan. *Diction for Singers*. Dallas: Pst...Inc., 1990.

Whittall Arnold, "Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art, and Letters." *Music and Letters Volume 89 No 4* (2008) 679-682.