THE THEORIES OF OLIVIER MESSIAEN:
THEIR ORIGINS AND THEIR APPLICATION
IN HIS PIANO MUSIC

by

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Music at the University of Adelaide

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SUMMARY

This dissertation is an investigation of the printed writings and sayings of Olivier Messiaen and the relationship they bear to his piano music. The objective is to describe the composer's writings in general, but with particular emphasis upon the influences he has acknowledged and the sources he has recognized as formative to his thought and expression. These influences are then examined both in their original sources and in the more personal and specific selection Messiaen has made of them. Thus described, they are then related, through his words and practice, to the technique of his musical language.

The research is presented in four main categories. Firstly, biographical data is discussed (Chapters I-IV) including Messiaen's early childhood and education (1908-1930), his first appointments and private researches (1931-1939), his return to the Paris Conservatoire as a professor (1942-47) and finally his international position since 1948.

The second section describes the major theological, philosophical and literary influences which Messiaen has recognized, examining from a general historical and derivative basis those features to which the composer has particularly ascribed importance. These include (Chapters V-IX) the writings of the Catholic theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas and Dom Columba Marmion, the philosophy of time in the
writings of Plato and Aristotle and the twentieth-century French philosopher Henri Bergson, the poetry of his mother Cécile Sauvage and the contributions of his father Pierre Messiaen to Shakespearean scholarship, the philosophy of Paul Claudel, and the Surrealist movement in France, particularly through the works of André Breton and Paul Eluard.

Thirdly, the dissertation investigates the major sources of Messiaen's musical language with particular concentration upon his rhythmic practice. These chapters (X-XIII) discuss Indian music, ancient Greek music, plainsong, and the influence of Claude Debussy, Maurice Emmanuel, Paul Dukas and Igor Stravinsky.

The fourth part (Volume II, chapters I-III) comprises an analysis of Messiaen's piano works in which the evolution of his musical language is traced through the formal, rhythmic, harmonic, melodic and timbral structures, these then being related to the theories outlined in the above sections. Included as an appendix to this volume of the dissertation is a list of the meanings of the names of the Hindu talas which Messiaen has incorporated into his rhythmic vocabulary.

The bibliography is divided into two sections: (1) primary sources, that is, Messiaen's printed articles and sayings, and those published scores consulted in the preparation of this dissertation, and (2) secondary sources comprising printed books, printed articles, dissertations, reports and reviews.
I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with very sincere thanks that I acknowledge the encouragement and generous assistance of Dr. Andrew McCredie, who supervised this dissertation. I would also thank Mr. Richard Meale for his valuable help with the analysis of Messiaen's piano works.

I am especially grateful to those who have assisted me in obtaining source materials: Dr. Werner Gallusser of the Elder Conservatorium Library, Miss Walker and Mrs. Bell of the Inter-Library Loans Section of the Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide; Father C. Willcock, S.J. of the Library of Campion College, Kew, Victoria; the Librarian of St. Francis Xavier Seminary, Rostrevor, South Australia; the Conservateur of the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire de Musique, Paris; Mr. Salon, Cultural and Scientific Counsellor of the French Embassy, Canberra; Mr. Warren of Alphonse Leduc & Cie., Paris; Mr. Brossard of the Alliance Française of South Australia; and Mr. Gordon Anderson of the University of New England, Armidale.

I am indebted to a number of friends in Adelaide who have given freely of their time and help; to Mr. Dene Barnett of the Flinders University of South Australia who read the chapter on the Philosophy of Time, to Mr. Peter Lancaster, and especially to Mrs. Elizabeth Wood who read and discussed sections of the work. I also wish to thank Mr. Ian Riach and Miss Verna Blewett who proofread this dissertation.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance, in the form of a Post-Graduate Award, of the Commonwealth Department of Education, and also of the French Government, who, in awarding me a French Government Scholarship, gave me the opportunity of studying in Paris with M. Olivier Messiaen and Mme. Yvonne Loriod. I am deeply indebted to both M. Messiaen and Mme. Loriod for their invaluable help and inexhaustible generosity.
INTRODUCTION

Although the writings and sayings of a major living composer such as Olivier Messiaen incite both interest and at times confusion among scholars of music, and despite the fact that the composer himself considers his published commentaries and explanations are relevant to his music, there has been no previous attempt to examine them as significant and substantial source documents. The task of this dissertation is to examine Messiaen's writings as theoretical evidence of his musical practice, and to describe the major events and influences bearing upon Messiaen's life, thought and expression.

The course of research led initially from the following acknowledgment made in The Technique of my Musical Language:

I do not want to close this introduction without thanking...those who have influenced me: my mother (the poetess Cécile Sauvage), my wife (Claire Delbos), Shakespeare, Claudel, Reverdy and Eluard, Hello and Dom Columba Marmion... (1)

Unfortunately, because little is known of Claire Delbos, it is not yet possible to trace the part she played in Messiaen's life. The unavailability of material related to the Catholic journalist Ernest

Hello has also precluded further discussion in the present work. (2)

Following a biographical study in the first section, this dissertation examines the major literary, theological and philosophical influences on Messiaen's writings in part two, and the sources of his musical language in part three. The final part of the dissertation comprises an analysis of Messiaen's piano works which, by elucidating the structural functions of form, rhythm, harmony, melody and timbre, relates practice with the theories outlined in the preceding sections.

Messiaen's life reveals a primarily literary inheritance, for his mother Cécile Sauvage was a poetess and his father Pierre Messiaen a scholar of Shakespeare and the English Romantic poets. The literary predilections acquired in childhood, especially for fantasy and magic, have remained throughout Messiaen's life and have influenced his own literary style. Another significant influence has been the French Surrealist Movement and the writings of two of its major figures, André Breton and Paul Eluard, are discussed in Chapter IX.

(2) Hello, Ernest, Born Lorient 4 November 1829, died Lorient 14 July 1885. He studied at Saint-Barbe College, and Louis-le-Grand Lycée in Paris. He was originally destined for a career in law, but turned to journalism. In 1859 he helped found the monthly review Le Croisé, which eventually amalgamated with La Revue du Monde Catholique, and wrote many articles for this review. His works include literary criticisms, philosophical essays, biblical meditations and short stories. Some of his major works are Philosophie et Athéisme (1888), Le Livre des Visions et Instructions (1868), Le Jour du Seigneur (1871), L'Homme, La Vie, La Science, L'Art (1872), Physionomie de Saints (1875).
Messiaen's taste for the 'marvellous' in literature finds correspondence in his Catholic faith (Chapter V), and the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Dom Columba Marmion, both of whom Messiaen recognises as lasting influences, are examined in relation to his own writings. His interest too in the philosophical investigations of his contemporary Paul Claudel (Chapter VIII) reflects their mutual attraction to the teachings of Aquinas concerning the logic of unity within diversity; Claudel's 'logic of metaphor' itself presages the language experiments of the Surrealist writers. The French philosopher Henri Bergson's concern with the importance of the intuitive process is also an important link with Messiaen's concern for the processes of the subconscious, the roles of intuition and intellect and the relationship between faith and reason.

However, Messiaen's main philosophical preoccupation has been with Time, in the philosophy of which he follows rather the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition than the Bergsonian; that is, the concept of time as 'the number of motion according to before and after' (Chapter VI). This concept has become the theoretical basis for Messiaen's use of rhythm as a structural element to which he ascribes an importance equal to that previously accorded harmony and counterpoint in Western music.

Messiaen's researches into the use of rhythm in music are discussed in Chapters X to XII. Immediately after completing his early training at the Paris Conservatoire, where rhythmic studies were singularly neglected, he undertook private research into the theoretical
writings of the two musical cultures which had fully systematised their rhythmic practice, namely ancient India and ancient Greece, and supplemented his study with an investigation of the theories of the rhythm of plainsong propounded by Dom Moquereau. He has also acknowledged the influence of two twentieth century composers, Debussy and Stravinsky, upon his rhythmic practice, and, as well, the lasting influences on his development as a composer provided by two of his teachers, Emmanuel and Dukas, are examined in this context (Chapter XIII).

The analysis of Messiaen's piano works, which constitutes Volume II of this dissertation, examines the works from the point of view of the formal (Chapter I), rhythmic (Chapter II), harmonic, melodic and timbral (Chapter III) structures. Their evolution is followed chronologically, and it is shown that the concept of the self-contained unit comes to predominate as these structures increase in complexity. It is then established that this concept is fundamental to both Messiaen's music and philosophy.

It would be presumptuous for any research to draw definitive conclusions on the place and importance of the work of a living and continually productive composer. However, whilst at first sight the extreme diversity of ideas, influences and sources which embody Messiaen's philosophy and his musical creation may appear to be eclectic and arbitrary, a common major preoccupation with time and intuition may be discerned. Accordingly, the present study attempts to elucidate the unifying thought process which sustains this diversity.
ADDITIONAL NOTE TO THE THEORIES OF OLIVIER MESSIAEN

When I began my research everyone understood that Messiaen’s formal structures were built from completely distinct and separate parts - he had notated this in all of his scores. However the question which motivated my research was: how was it that music constructed in this way still came across in performance as a unified whole? How was it that totally disparate, completely unrelated elements with no common material or bridging sections could sound coherent? No-one at that time had answered that question.

I decided to begin by understanding Messiaen’s philosophy and way of thinking because I had seen with other composers that what often seemed like poetic descriptions of what they were doing were actually totally precise, once you understood their language. In Messiaen’s case this turned out to be absolutely true. And so this is why the first volume of my thesis details all his influences and philosophy and draws out the conclusion of an intuitive form of logic, the logic of association. From this I learned how he thought, and this gave me the key to understanding how he had constructed his music.

Since then I have studied the Buddhist tradition in detail and have become aware of, and participated in, the latest research in neuroscience, and have learned that this is the way our subconscious brain is structured. This form of thinking and feeling is the basis of our western mediaeval culture and all oriental cultures — and the east developed and perfected it. Messiaen, then, was truly a mediaevalist, and his loves confirm this. When he discovered Sarngadeva’s list of 13th century Indian talas it was an affirmation of his own way of thinking.

However, for private reasons, I didn’t spell out in my conclusion and summary what I had discovered and I would now like to do so and explain why. Messiaen’s music is constructed exactly like the mediaeval stained glass windows which he adored. If you have a close view all you can see are totally separate pieces of glass, of different colours, totally unrelated and distinctly separated by lead, but when you step back and take in the whole view, it makes up a complete picture. It’s the patterns in which the colours are arranged which make up the picture. I described this in my thesis as a mosaic form of construction.

In Messiaen’s music, and particularly in the Catalogue d’oiseaux, he perfected this and by the time of the Catalogue some of these patterns had become extremely intricate. My formal analyses lay out these patterns clearly.

When I discovered them back in 1975 no one knew whether they were correct or not. I then had the good fortune to gain a French Government scholarship in 1976 which allowed me to study with Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod for three years. I clearly remember him once saying in class that he did not compose so much as juxtapose.

On meeting Messiaen for the first time I mentioned my thesis and he asked to see it. He invited me to his house for an evening and we discussed my work. When I placed my analyses of the Catalogue in front of him I was understandably very nervous.

He sat for at least five minutes in silence contemplating them and then said, “C’est terrifiant”. I waited, and then asked what he meant and he said that they were exactly the same as his first sketches. He then opened up completely and we spent the rest of the evening looking through his library of original editions of French fairy tales after which he showed me his studio where he worked.
ADDITIONAL NOTE TO THE THEORIES OF OLIVIER MESSIAEN

This was evidently a very moving and powerful experience for both of us, and from that moment we became very close – Yvonne, at my next lesson, told me that they considered me to be their son. Because this was such a private experience, and my life took such an unexpected turn when I then went on to study the Buddhist tradition and did not follow through on my career as a pianist and musicologist, even though I did teach for over 20 years at the University of Adelaide, I decided not to spell this out in my thesis, or recount this encounter with Messiaen.

Messiaen, Yvonne Loriod and I remained life-long friends and corresponded until their death. I have left the correspondence to the National Library of Australia where it is now stored.

Graham Williams 16 October 2012
PART ONE

BIOGRAPHY.
CHAPTER ONE

CHILDHOOD AND STUDENTSHIP, 1908 - 1930

1. Childhood, 1908 - 1918.

"Olivier avait le don de la musique."(1)

This gift rose unexpectedly in a family of writers, scholars and poets. Pierre Messiaen,(2) himself a writer and scholar, well-known for his translation of the works of Shakespeare, acknowledged his eldest son's genius with this observation in his autobiography, Images. At the time of Olivier's birth, he was Professor of English at the Lycée in Avignon. He worked as editor for the Revue Forézienne for two years, 1905 and 1906, and in the latter was also editor for La Revue du Sud-Est.

While working for the Revue Forézienne, he received the manuscript of a set of poems by Cécile Sauvage,(3) the daughter of the Professor of History at the Lycée in Digne. He recounts the occasion as follows:

1. Messiaen, P.; Images (Paris, 1944), 153
2. Born 1883
3. Born 1883, died 1927
Je ne pris dire l'heureuse surprise que me donna, un matin de mai 1905, son premier manuscrit, les Trois Muses, cette richesse éclatante du rythme, des paysages, du naturalisme, cette fraîcheur drue et naïve, si féminine. (4)

and his increasing obsession with her:

Étrange automne, étrange hiver de cette année 1906, bruneux, neigeux, d'une poignante mélancolie, avec Cécile Sauvage au centre de toutes mes journées! C'était une hantise. Comment arrivais-je à vivre loin d'elle? Nous nous écrivions maintenant toutes les semaines, de longues lettres où le mot amitié signifiait: amour qui attend l'occasion de se déclarer. (5)

In these letters he wrote to her of a monograph he was writing on the life and poems of Robert Browning. Her replies were full of lengthy descriptions of the walks she had taken, along mountain-paths and the banks of the River Bléone, indicating her acute sensitivity to, and love of nature:

...jours diaphanes, dernières feuilles jaunes tremblant à la pointe des peupliers. (6)

She was also at this time copying a collection of her poems which were to be published by Mercure de France.

4. Messiaen, P., op.cit., 117
5. ibid., 132
6. ibid., 132
Their eventual decision to marry was not received well by either family, for they were both young and Pierre Messiaen had still to undertake his military service:

La famille Sauvage ne voulut pas contrecarrer nos désirs, encore qu'elle les trouvât fort précipités; chez moi, chez M. Fournier-Lefort, [director of Revue Forézienne], chez tous mes amis, la désapprobation fut complète. Maman regrettaît de ne pouvoir m'empêcher de commettre une sottise; une femme qui n'allait pas à la messe, cela ne s'était jamais vu dans notre famille. (7)

Nevertheless, they were married on 8 September 1907(8) in Digne. A month later they and the Sauvage family moved to Avignon.

Pierre Messiaen relates that a year, to the day, after their marriage, he found in a cupboard drawer the first poems of L'Ame en Bourgeon, a collection written by his wife during her first pregnancy. These poems were a record of her feelings, fears and pride as she faced her future maternity:

Je suis grande, je suis la plaine fourragère,
La grappe et le froument pendent à mon côté,
Je marche et me répands ainsi que la lumière,
Ma main verse aux labours les rayons de l'été...
Personne ne saura comme un fils né de moi
M'aura donné le sens de la terre et des bois... (9)

7. Messiaen, P., op. cit., 134
8. ibid., 134. On p. 117 the date 10 September 1907 is given.
9. ibid., 135.
As Pierre Messiaen states, they display the "fierté parente de Dieu semant les planètes et les constellations." (10) In them she addresses the child she carries within her, prophetically as a son:

Les jours que je vivrai isolée et sans flamme,
Quand tu seras un homme et moins vivant pour moi,
Je reverrai les temps où j'étais avec toi,
Lorsque nous étions deux à jouer dans mon âme. (11)

and, as can be seen from this and the following quotation, the poems contain an immense sadness, and a pronouncement of isolation, once the child has been born and has grown into a man:

Il est né, j'ai perdu mon jeune bien'aimé
Je le tenais si bien dans mon âme enfermé.
Il habitait mon sein, il buvait ma tendresse,
Je le laissais jouer et tisser mes tresses. (12)

They also prophesy an artistic life for her son:

Non, tu ne sauras pas quelle Vénus candide
Déposa dans ton sang la flamme du baiser,
L'angoisse du mystère où l'art va se briser,
Et ce goût de nourrir un désespoir timide, (13)

10. Messiaen, P.: ibid., 135
12. Guth, P.: "Nébuleuses spirales, stalactites et stalagmites suggèrent des rythmes d'Olivier Messiaen.'
Le Figaro Littéraire, (Samedi, 14 Février 1953), 4
13. Goléa, A: Rencontres, 22
and, as Messiaen himself sees it, they prophesy a tragic destiny for
the child, in saying:

Tu ne sauras plus rien de moi, le jour fatal
Où tu t'élanceras dans l'existence rude,
O mon petit miroir que vois ma solitude
Se pencher anxieuse au bord de ton cristal. (14)

The son addressed in these poems was born on 10 December,
1908 at Avignon and was named Olivier Eugène Prosper Charles. His
origins were Flemish on his father's side, and Provençal on his
mother's, as Mari states:

...sa double origine: champenoise et flamande par
son père, provençale par son grand-père maternel,
bien que sa mère née à la Roche-sur-Yon. (15)

Messiaen comments on his Flemish origin as follows:

The Flemish origin is real but distant; it goes back
more than two centuries. But, if it is true that certain
manifestations of Flemish art are full of mystery and
fantasy, I have within myself a love of all things
mysterious and marvellous: witness my love of Shakespeare,
and then later I have sung the privileges of the
Corps Glorieux. (16)

The next year Pierre Messiaen was appointed to teach at
Ambert, and so the family moved from Avignon. At Ambert, Olivier,
aged four, learned to read and came under the influence of his
father's friends, the brothers, Francois and Jean Angeli, who were
their neighbours, and Henri Pourrat. Francois Angeli was an artist
and an engraver, and Jean Angeli, also an artist, was, as well, a
writer. He wrote under the pseudonym of "Jean l'Olagne". Henri

14. Goléa, A., ibid., 22
16. Gavoty, B., 'Who are you Olivier Messiaen?' Tempo (Summer, 1961), 34.
Pourrat, for whom Messiaen still has a profound admiration, wrote a book on Cécile Sauvage entitled *La Veillée de novembre.* (17)

In 1912 a second son, named Alain, was born to Pierre Messiaen and Cécile Sauvage.

Another move came in 1913, when Pierre Messiaen was appointed as a Professor at the Lycée in Nantes. Olivier, who was now five years old, began his formal education there.

Because of the declaration of war in 1914, and Pierre Messiaen's consequent mobilisation, the Messiaen's family life was again interrupted. Cécile Sauvage moved with her two sons to her mother's house at Grenoble where they spent the war years. Messiaen recalls his father's absence at this time as follows:

...à l'âge de huit ans, je connaissais à peine mon père: c'était l'époque de la première grande guerre, celle de 1914-1918, et pendant cinq ans, mon père, mobilisé, n'a fait à Grenoble où je vivais que deux ou trois très brèves apparitions, pour des 'permissions' de quatre jours à peine. (18)

It is Grenoble, and the surrounding country of the Dauphiné mountains which Messiaen claims as his true place of origin:

I was born on the 10th December, 1908 in Avignon -- by accident. In my heart I am a Dauphinois. I am not at all attracted by the Midi, but I love passionately mountains in general and those of the Dauphiné in particular. (19)

17. Mari, P., op. cit., 8
18. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 26
19. Gavoty, B., op. cit., 34
He also says:

Je ne suis pas un Français cartésien, mais
un Français des montagnes, comme Berlioz. (20)

Messiaen still spends his summer holidays in the Dauphiné mountains,
and it is there that he has written his principal works.

During the years from 1914 to 1918 Messiaen began to show his
aptitude for music, teaching himself harmony and fugue, and studying
Bach and Beethoven scores at the piano. His first musical endeavours
coincided with his entrance to the Lycée in Grenoble at the age of
eight. He also managed to work his way through the scores of
Mozart's Don Giovanni, Berlioz's Damnation of Faust, and Gluck's
Alceste, which he had received as Christmas presents:

...il déchiffrait au piano tout ce qui lui tombait
sous la main, chantait de sa petite voix fraîche des
partitions entières de l'opéras. (21)

At this time he came into contact with the plays of Shakespeare,
and proceeded to recreate them with small figures, which he designed
himself. His brother, Alain, was his only spectator.

He recounts the experience as follows:

As a child, I hesitated for a long time between the vocation
of actor, decorator and musician. I performed all of Shakespeare's
plays if only for one spectator, my brother. I made the scenery
myself. It was small, made of cellophane, coloured with Indian
ink and placed against a window to reproduce sunlight since
there was no electricity. I designed small figures representing
the characters in the plays and painted and dressed them. I
recited all of Shakespeare's plays, and then the plays of
ancient Greece, Spain, Russia and all countries and all times
...but especially Shakespeare - unfortunately in French the only
language which I speak! (22)


22. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', Le Courrier Musical de France
No.8 (1964), iii.
In 1916, Messiaen wrote his first compositions, among them the piano piece La Dame de Shalott, after Tennyson's poem.

Pierre Messiaen recalls that the years following the war were among the unhappiest of his life. The family returned to Nantes in 1918 where he took up his post again at the Lycée. Cécile Sauvage's health had begun to deteriorate during the war years - she had grown thin and was subject to periods of intense depression. She had written to him in 1906, saying:

Je n'ai pas plus de fortune que vous, moins de santé, peu d'aptitudes ménagères, (23)

and her health proved to be a constant problem. It continued to deteriorate, culminating in her death in 1927.

In Nantes, Olivier received his first musical tuition, from the pianist Gontrand Arconet, and the organist Jehan de Gibon. The latter was to exert a decisive influence on Messiaen's vocation for he gave him, as a present, a score of Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande. As Messiaen himself points out, this was:

...an inconceivable thing in 1918 for a provincial teacher to give Pelléas et Mélisande to a ten year old boy. It was this score that decided my vocation. (24)

Apart from deciding Messiaen's vocation, Pelléas et Mélisande exerted a decisive influence on his musical development, as indicated in the following statement:

This present was to have so great an influence on me that even today, I can analyse the whole score from memory for the benefit of my pupils. (25)

2. **Studentship at the Conservatoire, 1919-1930.**

In 1919 Pierre Messiaen was appointed Professor of English at the Charlemagne Lycée, where he was to teach for the next thirteen years, and so the family moved to Paris. Here, at the age of eleven, Olivier entered the Conservatoire, his studies there extending over eleven years.

His masters were:

Jean (26) and Noel Gallon (27), who stimulated in me the feeling for the "true" harmony; Marcel Dupré (23), who oriented me toward counterpoint and form; [Dupré was


28. Dupré, M., Born Rouen 1886. Pupil of Guilmant, Vierne, Widor, Diémer at Cons. 1st Prix de Rome (1914). In 1926 succeeded Gigout as prof. of organ at Cons. and in 1934 succeeded Widor as organist at St-Sulpice. 1953-1956 director of Cons., then director of Comite nat. de la musique. Pupils include Fleury, Litaize, Langlaize, J. Alain, M. C. Alain, as well as Messiaen. Written many works for organ including: 15 Versets sur les veuves de la Ste Vierge (op. 18), Cortège et Litanies (op. 19 no. 2), Le Chemin de la Croix (op. 29), Offrandes a la Vierge (op. 14). Also works for piano and orch., 2 symphonies, 1 cantata, and written a number of theoretical works, including: Manuel d' acc. du plain-chant grégorien, Cours d' harmonie analytique.
his master for organ, Paul Dukas, (29) who taught me to develop, to orchestrate, to study the history of the musical language in a spirit of humility and impartiality. (30)

Maurice Emmanuel (31) was his master for the history of music, Henri Rabaud (32) for fugue, Falkenberg for piano, and C.A. Estyle for piano accompaniment. In the course of his studies at the Conservatoire,


Messiaen gained five first prizes. (33)

Dupré said to Pierre Messiaen, after seeing the first of Olivier's composition, "Votre jeune musicien porte en lui des rayons de soleil." (34) He gives this account of his first lesson with the young student:

...Lorsque je le pris à ma classe d'orgue du Conservatoire, il me dit: "Dois-je acheter une méthode d'orgue?" "Non," lui répondis-je. "Voulez-vous essayer tout de suite de jouer du Bach?" Je lui jouai la Fantaisie en ut mineur, et lui dis: "A mon cours de la semaine prochaine, essayer de m'en apporter quelques lignes...ce que vous pourrez." Huit jours après, il me jouait par cœur la Fantaisie entière sans une erreur sans une hésitation. (35)

He also recounts his former pupil's development as follows:

J'ai la fierté intérieure d'avoir été le premier à donner à Messiaen confiance en lui-même comme compositeur, quelques mois avant qu'il ne connaisse Paul Dukas, lequel ne tarda pas également à lui donner toute son affection. Et je peux me porter témoin que, chez lui, l'organiste et l'improvisateur sont à la hauteur du compositeur. Lorsqu'il était élève à ma classe, sa langue musicale était déjà complètement formée. J'ai suivi de près les phases de son évolution. Les sources dans lesquelles il a successivement puisé son inspiration sont diverses: l'exégèse des Pères de l'Eglise, les modes et les rythmes Hindous, le chant de l'Oiseau. Mais il est resté et reste fidèle au précepte premier de celui qui œuvre: obéir d'abord et toujours à son coeur. (36)


34. Messiaen, P., op.cit., 221.


36. Ibid., 1090.
Between the ages of fifteen and sixteen, Messiaen began his first researches into the singing of birds. He did not know at this time any of the specific bird species and so was unable to identify any of the songs he notated. Feeling ashamed of this ignorance he asked professional ornithologists to give him lessons. The first was Jacques Delamain who had a large country house in Charente:

Il y avait là des jardins, un parc, des bois, de l'eau, tout ce qu'il faut pour que les oiseaux reviennent après leur migration. J'y ai passé seulement deux fois quatre jours. Mais je ne suis pas couché. J'ai noté jour et nuit. Ce furent les plus beaux moments de ma vie. (37)

It was after a stay at Delamain's house that Messiaen composed Réveil des Oiseaux in 1953. Others from whom Messiaen learned were François Hue de Pezenas, and Robert-David Etchecopar who was the director of the Bird Migration Research Centre. He also worked for a while with Jacques Penot in Camargue and then with Henri Lomont in the region of Banyuls and the Eastern Pyrénées, most of this work consisting of field trips.

While still in Paul Dukas' class at the Conservatoire, Messiaen wrote the first works which were to establish his name as a composer. The Banquet Céleste, for organ was written in 1928, the Préludes for piano, the Trois Mélodies for soprano and piano, (a


38. Aprahamian, F., 'Olivier Messiaen', Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th edn. (London, 1954), 723, states that these: "were published in 1930 at the instigation of Paul Dukas, who, so critical in regard to his own music, approved of these pieces to the extent that his own publishers should issue not one or two, but the complete set."
setting of his own poetry), and Diptyque for organ, in 1929. The following year, after completing his studies at the Conservatoire, he wrote Offrandes oubliées for orchestra, and this work was to be his first contact with the public. Its premiere was given under Walther Straram at the Théâtre du Champs Elysée on 19 February, 1931.

There was one prize which Messiaen did not gain while at the Conservatoire - the Prix de Rome. He entered for it in 1929 with a choral setting of Sainte Bohème, an extract from the Odes Funambulesques of Théodore de Banville, using as a theme a fugue subject of Georges Hüé (39), but the work did not pass beyond the initial judging. He had more success the next year with a setting of the poem of Catulle Mendès, La Jeunesse des Vieux - for this allowed him to compete for the grand prize with the cantata La Mer. However, he did not succeed in winning the Prix de Rome, and did not compete again.

It was during these last years at the Conservatoire that Messiaen’s mother died. Pierre Messiaen relates, as follows, the effect this had on the family:

La mort de Cécile, en 1927, jeta notre foyer dans un grand désarroi. Qu’est-ce qu’une famille où la mère n’est plus là pour animer et ordonner le cours des choses? ... Mes fils, comme tout d’autre, faisaient une adolescence difficile; brillantes études, mais santé physique et morale qu’il fallait surveiller de près,

pouvoir de bon sommeil de nourriture simple et substantielle, de travail regulier, de la plus attentive formation religieuse. (40)

Messiaen's studentship was completed, therefore, in the shadow of tragedy, a tragedy which prefigured the course his future marriage was to take.

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40. Messiaen, P., op.cit. 237, 238.
CHAPTER TWO

FIRST APPOINTMENTS, 1931-1939

1. Private Researches.

On completing his studies at the Conservatoire in 1930, Messiaen began to conduct his own research into rhythm as used in ancient Greek and Indian music. He had been introduced to this music by Maurice Emmanuel while at the Conservatoire but, as he says:

I was conscious of the lack of a class in rhythm...
I became much interested in the Greek metric system and the Deci-Talas of India. I studied rhythm extensively and read almost all works available on the problem of Time (philosophical Time) ranging from Plato to Bergson and Louis Lavelle. Although I am not a Hindu and have never been to India, I was fortunate in obtaining a list of the 120 Deci-Talas of the Ssarngadeva system (13th century A.D.). The list provided me only with the duration of these rhythms as well as their symbolic Sanskrit names. (1)

This list came from a treatise, the Sangita ratnakara, by the 13th century Hindu theorist, Ssarngadeva, and it contained, as Messiaen has pointed out, only the rhythms and their names, giving no clue as to the symbolic meanings of these names. These were revealed to him by a Hindu friend, Shri Turan Kumar Ghosal. He also found that there was a correlation between the symbols contained in the names, and the durations themselves:

(1) Messiaen, O.: 'Impromptu Remarks', v.
Dans ces rythmes, il y a des secrets. Je les ai cherchés et trouvés tout seul. J'ai regardé fixement. Oh! j'ai un grand pouvoir de concentration, s'il le faut. (2)

An interest was also awakened in him in the music and culture of Bali when Paul Dukas urged him to see the Balinese Ballet, with the accompanying gamelan orchestras, at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1932. Further studies included plainchant, and the folklore of China, Japan and Peru.

In 1938, he studied the use of quarter-tones in music with Wischnegradsky and Alois Haba, (3) and he was also given instruction on the Ondes Martenot by the inventor, Maurice Martenot. (4) These studies resulted in the quarter-tone work Deux Monodies written for the Ondes Martenot in 1938. This work, however, has never been published.


4. Martenot, M., Born Paris 14 October 1898. Pupil of Ronchini (cello), and of Gégalge (composition). Invented electronic instrument ondes Martenot, which he presented himself at a recital at the Paris Opera in 1928, and for which at least 220 works have been written. Published Méthode Martenot in 1952. Messiaen's works for ondes Martenot (both unpublished) are: Fêtes des belles eaux (for sextet of ondes) and Musique de scène pour un Oedipe. Works which include ondes are Trois Petitots Liturgies, and Turangalila-Symphonie.
2. L'Eglise de la Trinite.

In 1931, Messiaen was appointed, at the age of twenty-two, organist, at the Eglise de la Trinité in Paris. As he states:

J'étais donc, à l'époque, le plus jeune organiste de France, car j'ai été nommé à l'âge de vingt-deux ans. (5)

His appointment caused a number of difficulties with the clergy who were not at all impressed or pleased with his improvisations. When the parish priest heard the new organist's first improvisation at the low mass at which he was officiating one Sunday, he was convinced that the devil in person had invaded the Church. He called the clergy together to complain, and it was only with the greatest difficulty, and by moderating his improvisations, for a while, that Messiaen was able to retain his post. (6)

His teacher for organ and improvisation, as has already been mentioned, was Marcel Dupré, but another organist has had a very deep influence upon him. This was Charles Tournemire (7) who was organist at Saint-Clotilde in Paris, where Messiaen often went to hear him.

5. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 29.
7. Tournemire, C., Born Bordeaux 22 January 1870, died Arcachon 3 November 1959. Pupil of Franck and Widor at Cons. Was organist at Ste-Clotilde from 1898, and took a class in ensemble at the Cons. from 1919. Wrote many works for organ in the tradition of Franck, also operas, 8 symphonies, and chamber music. Works for organ include: L'orgue mystique, Triple choral, 3 Poèmes, Sei fioretti, Petites fleurs musicales.
Messiaen has said: "l'improvisation permet au compositeur d'avancer plus vite dans sa création," (8) and it was through improvisation that he developed his own modal language:

... j'utilisais depuis longtemps déjà mon système modal, dont j'avais acquis une pratique extrêmement rapide en improvisant journalement selon mes modes à la classe d'orgue. (9)

3. Teaching.

The year 1936 holds an important place in Messiaen's life and development, for it saw him gain his first teaching appointments, and was also the year of his first marriage. As well, he took part in the formation of the group Jeune France.

His first appointments as a professor were to the Ecole Normale de Musique and to the Schola Cantorum. He held both these positions until 1939, when he was mobilised because of the outbreak of war.

Messiaen's composition teacher, Paul Dukas, died in 1935. In a special issue of La Revue Musicale (1936) a number of composers, including Florent Schmitt, Manuel de Falla, Gabriel Pierné, Guy Ropartz, Joaquin Rodrigo, Julien Krein, Tony Aubin, and Elsa Barraine,

were commissioned to write a tribute in his honour. Messiaen's contribution to this issue was the short piano work, *Pièce pour le Tombeau de Paul Dukas*. (10)

Messiaen's ill-fated first marriage was to the violinist Claire Delbos. He gave her the nickname Mi, and wrote for her the *Poèmes pour Mi* of 1936 and the *Chants de Terre et de Ciel* of 1938. The *Poèmes pour Mi* are two books of poems, written by himself and set for soprano and piano, on the "états d'âme de l'épouse". They combine his two main preoccupations of the time, religion and theology, and his newfound marital happiness. The first poem *Action de grâces* is addressed to God and to the woman whom God has given him as a wife:

> Le Ciel,
> Et l'eau qui suit les variations des nuages,
> Et la terre, et les montagnes qui attendent toujours,
> Et la lumière qui transforme.

Et un œil près de mon œil, une pensée près de ma pensée,
Et un visage qui sourit et pleure avec le mien,
Et deux pieds derrière mes pieds
Comme la vague à la vague est unie.

But these gifts are as yet incomplete in themselves, and they are transcended as Messiaen moves to the spiritual plane:

> Et une âme. Invisible, pleine d'amour et d'immortalité,
> Et un vêtement de chair et d'os qui germera pour la résurrection,
> Et la Vérité, et l'Esprit, et la grâce avec son héritage de lumière.

Tout cela, vous me l'avez donné.

10. See *La Revue Musicale* No.166 (May-June, 1936).
The conclusion of this poem is a parallel, in strict theological tradition, listing the ways in which God has given himself:

Et vous vous êtes encore donné vous-même,
Dans l'obéissance et dans le sang de votre Croix,
Et dans un Pain plus doux que la fraîcheur des étoiles
Mon Dieu.
Alleluia! (11)

The first poem of Chants de Terre et de Ciel, Bail avec Mi, however, shows the yearning of a soul which wants to be unified with God and infinity, but which is condemned to remain a part of the earth. The garment of flesh has now become a prison of flesh, and the soul's yearning is answered only by the silence of the star. The contracts of life on earth and of marriage, both shared with his wife, are accepted with resignation:

Ton oeil de terre,
Mon oeil de terre,
Nos mains de terre,
Pour tisser l'atmosphère,
La montagne de l'atmosphère.
Étoile de silence, à mon cœur de terre,
À mes lèvres de terre,
Petite boule de soleil, complémentaire à ma terre,
Le bail, doux compagnon de mon épaule amère. (12)

In 1937 Messiaen's son, Pascal, was born at Boulogne-Billancourt. In the Messiaen tradition, he became a writer, and scholar, and like Kessiaen's father, a specialist in a foreign

12. Ibid., 138.
language. Pascal Messiaen's specialty was to be Russian, and he became a professor of Russian at the Lycées Montaigne and Valéry.

Messiaen's marriage, like his father's, was to end with the death of his wife, for during the war, Claire Delbos, contracted a serious brain disease.

5. Jeune France.

On the 3rd of June, 1936 in the Salle Gaveau in Paris, a concert, conducted by Roger Désormière and including Messiaen's Hymne au Saint-Sacrément and Les Offrandes oubliées was given. This was the first public appearance of a group which had been formed at the instigation of Yves Baudrier called Jeune France; a title previously made famous by Berlioz. Baudrier had contacted Messiaen after assisting in a performance of Les Offrandes oubliées in 1935, with the idea of

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14. Désormière, R., Born Vichy 1898. Pupil of Koechlin. Composed in his youth, but has devoted himself entirely to conducting, especially contemporary music. Member of Ecole d'Arceuil. Worked with Russian and Swedish Ballets (1924-30), with the Orchestre Symph. de Paris, the Orch. National, and at the Opera-Comique (1936-44), and the Opéra (1944-46). In 1952 founded the Assoc. franc. des mus. progressistes with S. Nigg and E. Barraine.

15. Baudrier, Y., Born Paris 1906. Studied Philosophy and Law, as a musician is self-taught. Works include Le chant de jeunesse (1935), Raz de Sein (1935), La Dame à la licorne (1935), Melancolie (1938), Une jeune fille joue avec un enfant (1938), Eleonora (1938), Le grand voilier (1939), 3 poèmes de Tristan Corbière (1939-40), Lied (1939), Symphonie (1943), Le musicien de la cité (1936-37, 1946). He has also written film music.
forming a group, and Messiaen proposed that two musicians, André Jolivet, whose music he had had occasion to defend at the committee of the Société Nationale, and Daniel-Lesur, his friend while a student at the Conservatoire, also be asked to join.

Unlike Les Six and the École d'Arcueil, the group Jeune France was an organized one, under the patronage of members of the Académie Française, and supported by an association called Les Amis de la Jeune France. As can be seen from the manifesto reproduced below, it was formed with the intent of propagating a living music, generated by sincerity, generosity and artistic integrity.


Writings include, HANAU "Les musiciens célèbre" (1946), A propos du 1er concert pour ondes et orch. (Rev. intern. de mus., no.10 1951), L. van Beethoven (1955), also commentaries on the works of Beethoven, Berlioz, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Wagner (Heugel pocket scores 1952-1954), and articles in Zodiacque VII, 1957, and R. M. juin 1957.

17. Lesur, D. (Daniel-Lesur, Jean Yves), Born Paris 19 November 1908. Pupil of Tournemire, Caussade, J. Gallon, and A. Ferté. From 1927-1937 was deputy for Tournemire at Ste-Clotilde. In 1935 was appointed professor of counterpoint at the Schola Cantorum. In charge of music information at the R.T.F. and director of Schola Cantorum for 3 years.

He has written 1 sextet, 1 string quartet, 4 suites, plus songs, piano and organ works, and the three cantatas: L'Anonciation (1952), Cantique des cantiques (1953), Cantique des colonnes (1954-1957).

The four composers were united against what they saw to be the excess of preoccupation with technique for technique's sake, to the exclusion of sincerity and sensibility. They were inspired by the desire of giving the expression of their humanity the primary place in their music:

...un esprit de sincérité absolue
et le sentiment de la nécessité
d'un retour à l'humain. (19)

Their intentions and principles were laid out in a manifesto which reads:

Les conditions de la vie devenant de plus en plus dures, mécaniques et impersonnelles, la Musique se doit d'apporter sans répit à ceux qui l'aiment sa violence spirituelle et ses réactions généreuses. Groupement amical de quatre jeunes compositeurs français. Yves Baudrier, Daniel-Lesur, André Jolivet et Olivier Messiaen, la Jeune France reprend le titre qu'illustra autrefois Berlioz et se propose la diffusion d'œuvres jeunes, aussi éloignées d'un poncif académique que d'un poncif révolutionnaire. Les tendances de ce groupement seront diverses: elles s'uniront pour susciter et propager une musique vivante dans un même élan de sincérité, de générosité, de conscience artistique. (20)

Goléa points out that in presenting works which dared to be lyrical and dramatic they risked having themselves shut out from all the houses where the kind of new music France was to have had been decided for a very long time, but, as he states: "leur audace fut payante,"


The critique of their first concert illustrates how well-received they were by the public:

"As well as the Messiaen works, Daniel Lesur's Suite Francaise and Interludes pour cors were performed. All of these had been performed previously; Messiaen's under Straram and Lesur's under Monteux. The reviewer's only comment was:

Je n'y reviendrai que pour constater le nouvel succès qui les accueillit afin de pouvoir davantage me consacrer aux premières auditions."
André Jolivet was represented at the concert by his *Danse Incantatoire*, Yves Baudrion by his *Raz de Sein* and his *Chant de Jeunesse*. Germaine Tailleferre was invited to take part in the concert, and her *Ballade pour piano et orchestre* was played by the pianist Ricardo Vinès.

*Jeune France* gave a number of concerts after this one, but their activity was stopped by the outbreak of the war in 1939. The group did not survive the war, for although they were unified in their desire for a more human music, their attitudes as to how they would achieve this were vastly different. Their aesthetic approaches separated into two distinct ideologies. Lesur and Baudrion considered that to restore musical emotion and expression to their proper place, it was necessary to push technical preoccupations into the background. They also believed that there was an abyss between audience and creator and that it was the composer's responsibility to bridge this. Messiaen and Jolivet, however, considered that they should search unceasingly for new technical means, and that these should then be put at the service of expression.

Messiaen has expressed his point of view as follows:

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...recherche d'une expression neuve et hardie s'exerce sur une expérience musicale qui a ses racines dans le passé le plus lointain et le plus proche. (23)

6. The War Years. 1939-1942.

Messiaen spent the summer of 1939 in the Dauphiné mountains, where he wrote Les Corps Glorieux for organ (29); however, his teaching career and composition were interrupted by the outbreak of war in the same year. He joined the army, where he served at first as a private, then as a pioneer at Sarraguemines, then as a hospital attendant at Sarrable, "avec une grande blouse blanche" (30) and lastly at Verdun, where he met with three fellow musicians. During his first few months in the army, he was given the privilege of playing the organ for certain occasions. These were on 11 November and Christmas Day, 1939 and 1 January 1940:

Je M'y suis payé de multiples improvisations, style avant-garde, avec un certain solo de bourdon 16, et Tierce, sur un fon' harmonique à faire frémir Schonberg lui-même. (31)


During the occupation of France by the Germans in June 1940, Messiaen was captured while travelling in the company of the three other musicians, from Verdun to Nancy. He had left Verdun after exploding the ammunition there and burning the petrol depots, and set out with the others, with his satchel of scores. They had stopped for the night, at the edge of a forest and it was there that they were captured. The Germans apparently had a special method of surrounding the enemy on motorcycles and shouting certain words in rhythmic patterns. Messiaen was intrigued by this technique which he called "choeurs parlés", for the different sounds of the words multiplied, giving the illusion of a large number of troops, even though, as in this case, there were not many at all. They were taken to Nancy where they spent six days in a garage, then to a prison camp in Brabois-Villers for ten days. Messiaen relates that among the thirty thousand prisoners, he noticed a young man who seemed to him to be very intelligent. He was noticed in turn, for the young man approached him and said:

Vous lisez une partition de Noces de Stravinsky. Voulez-vous me la prêter une demi-heure? Je suis égyptologue, et je m'appelle Guy Bernard Delapierre. (32)

That night Messiaen was taken to Germany, but before leaving he managed to place on Delapierre's great-coat a piece of paper with his name and telephone number on it. Three years later, after they

32. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 60.
See also Bernard-Delapierre, G., 'Souvenirs sur Olivier Messiaen', Formes et Couleurs, Vol.VII (1945), unpaged.
had both been released, Delapierre telephoned Messiaen, and it was
at Delapierre's house that Messiaen gave a private composition course
for "quelques disciples spécialement affectueux et attentifs," namely,

33. Nigg, S., Born Paris 6 June 1924, Finished studies at Cons. 1945, studied counterpoint and fugue with Mme. Plé-Gaussade, as well as harmony and comp. with Messiaen. Embraced successively Neo-classicism (1943-1946), 12-tone technique (1947-48), and then a deliberately accessible style, as advocated by Communist theory. In 1953 received Chabrier prize.


35. Loriod, Y., See Chapter IV, section 5, page 68.


37. Martinet, J-L, Born Sainte-Bazeille 8 November 1912. Studied Schola Cantorum (Koechlin), and Cons. (Dicasse, Munch, Desormière, Messiaen). Studied serial technique with Leibowitz (1945), went to Vienna (1949) to continue studies in serial music. Won grand prix mus. de la ville de Paris (1952). Turned to progressiste aesthetic.

38. Boulez, P., Born Montbrison 1925. Began scientific studies, then studied with A. Vaurabourg-Honegger, Messiaen (for one year, 1st prize harmony, 1945), and Leibowitz. From 1946 was director of music of J-L Barrault Theatre Company, and from 1954 organized Domaine musical concerts. In 1960's became internationally known as symphonic and operatic conductor. Leader in serial technique in France, and until and including Structures Book I (1951-52), committed to total organization of all parameters. From then on has worked with related but free-standing sections in works, each based on independent and preconceived formal plans, viz., 3rd Piano Sonata (1956), Ple selon Plis(1958-60) and Doubles (1958), both for orchestra.
Pierre Messiaen details the journey to Germany, as related to him by Olivier. They were piled into padlocked cattle trucks and were taken by rail to Görlitz. The journey took four days, without a break, surrounded by excreta, and with nothing to eat or drink. Messiaen contracted dysentery on the train, and had to spend a month in a hospital run by Polish nuns.

The prison camp at Görlitz in Silesia was called Stalag 8A, and here he was, like all the other prisoners stripped of his clothes. But even in this state:

...je continuais à garder, d'un air terrible, un musette contenant tous mes tresors... (40)

These treasures consisted of a small library of orchestral pocket scores which ranged from the Brandenburg Concertos of Bach to Berg's Lyric Suite. The Germans decided that he was perfectly innocuous, and not only did they allow him to keep the scores, but one officer also gave him pencils, erasers and music paper. These scores were to be:

...ma consolation lorsque je souffrais, comme les Allemands eux-mêmes, de la faim et du froid. (41)

41. Ibid., 61.
In the camp he met three musicians; the violinist, Jean Le Boulaire, the clarinetist, Henri Akoka, both of whom had managed to keep their instruments, and the cellist Etienne Pasquier, who had been given a gift of a three-stringed cello.\(^{(42)}\) For them Messiaen wrote a small trio, which they performed privately in a washroom. This trio became the Intermède of the eight movement quartet, Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps, which he then proceeded to write, the instrumentation being violin, clarinet and cello plus piano. The Quartet had its premiere in the prison camp on the 15th January 1941, before an audience of five thousand prisoners, in a temperature of minus thirty degrees, with the performers and instruments already mentioned and Messiaen playing the piano part on a badly out of tune piano whose keys wouldn't return. The audience ranged over an extremely diversified cross-section of society and nationalities; the military officers of the camp, and French, Polish and Belgian prisoners made up of farmers, workers, intellectuals, business men, doctors and priests. Messiaen says of this audience:

\[
\text{Jamais je n'ai été écouté avec autant d'attention et de compréhension. (43)}
\]

The Quartet was directly inspired by the following quotation from the Apocalypse of Saint John:

\[42. \text{Goléa, A., Vingt ans, 12.}\]
\[43. \text{Goléa, A., Rencontres, 63.}\]
Je vis un ange plein de force, descendant du ciel, revêtu d'une nuée, ayant un arc-en-ciel sur la tête. Son visage était comme le soleil, ses pieds comme des colonnes de feu. Il posa son pied droit sur la mer, son pied gauche sur la terre, et, se tenant debout sur la mer et sur la terre, il leva la main vers le Ciel et jura par Celui qui vit dans les siècles des siècles, disant: Il n'aura plus de Temps; mais au jour de la trompette du septième ange, le mystère de Dieu se consommera. (44)

The reason that Messiaen gives in the Preface to the Quartet for its consisting of eight movements is that seven is the perfect number, the creation taking six days was sanctified by the divine Sabbath; the seven of this repose extends into eternity and becomes the eight of flawless light, of constant peace. (45)

Messiaen gives as his motivation for writing the work:
...c'était pour m'évader de la neige, de la guerre, de la captivité et de moi-même. Le meilleur bénéfice que j'en ai tiré, c'est qu'au milieu de trois cent mille prisonniers, j'étais probablement le seul à ne pas l'être. (46)

The work was given an enthusiastic reception by the audience at Görlitz, and, as Goléa observes, this was an experience which was not to be repeated often in Messiaen's life:

44. Chapter 10, verses 1, 5, 6, 7. Quoted from Preface to Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps, (Durand, Paris, 1942), I.

45. Ibid. I.

46. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 67. Goléa's comment on this statement is: Rarement l'extraordinaire égocentrisme de l'artiste a été souligné plus fortement que par elle.
Bientôt, ses faits et ses gestes, sa vie privée et sa vie publique, ses paroles et ses écrits, ses commentaires et ses exécutions devaient susciter, un peu partout, mais en France surtout, les scandales les plus variés. (47)

In the spring of 1942 Messiaen was released on health grounds. He returned to Paris where he rejoined his wife and son, now six years old.

47. Goléa, A., Vingt ans, 15.
CHAPTER THREE

RETURN TO THE CONSERVATOIRE. 1942-1947.

1. Professor of Harmony. 1942-1946.

On his return to Paris in 1942, Messiaen was appointed Professor of Harmony at the Conservatoire. He was nominated by Claude Delvincourt, the Director, and, as Claude Rostand has pointed out, this, along with the appointment of Darius Milhaud as Professor of Composition was one of the great moves which made Delvincourt famous.

Messiaen now began the teaching career which was to make him one of the most sought-after teachers in the world. Within five years he had transformed his harmony class into a complete survey of all styles of musical composition:

Ma classe n'ont jamais été autre chose que des classes d'analyse et des composition...

He analysed the works of Monteverdi, Bach, Debussy, Stravinsky (his ten-hour analysis of the Sacre du Printemps has become legendary.)

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Messiaen was the first to analyze the rhythmic structures in the work), and Schoenberg. He also took his students to the Musée de l'Homme to study Hindu talas and Balinese gamelan music.

By 1944, Messiaen's concepts of serialized duration and intensity, concepts which were to have enormous influence, were formulated. He relates:

En 1944, dans les classes d'harmonie de fin d'année, après le concours, j'avais montré à mes élèves le 'Pierrot lunaire' de Schoenberg et la 'Suite lyrique' de Berg (à ce moment-là, on ne pouvait malheureusement pas se procurer les œuvres de Webern). À propos de ces deux œuvres, dont la seconde seule est sérielle et pour de courts instants seulement, je m'étais vivement élevé, et à voix très forte, contre la tendance unilatérale qui poussait ces musiciens à prospecter dans le domaine de la hauteur sonore seulement. Et j'avais déjà prononcé les mots: 'série de timbres', 'série d'intensités', et surtout 'série de durées'; en tant que rythmicien, c'est ce qui me tenait le plus à coeur... (5)

It will be remembered that it was also in 1944 that Messiaen met again with Guy Bernard Delapierre, and at his house gave a private composition course for certain students. Messiaen dedicated to Delapierre his Technique de mon language musical, which was published in the same year. (6)

5. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 247.

6. Published by Alphonse Leduc, 1944, in two volumes. Volume I was translated into English in 1956 by John Satterfield.
2. **First Marriage.**

It is necessary to return to Messiaen's private life, for the brain disease contracted by Claire Delbos during the war necessitated her transference to a nursing home. She remained there, losing gradually the use of all her faculties, until she died in April, 1959. During this time Messiaen had to live alone, indissolubly tied to his wife by the sacrament of marriage.

Goléa gives an account of the day she died. Colette Herzog was to sing the *Chants de Terre et de Ciel* at the Ecole Normale de Musique. She had asked Messiaen to assist her in a rehearsal and he had agreed. The rehearsal was set for four o'clock in the afternoon. The evening before, Colette Herzog received a phone call from Messiaen asking if the rehearsal could be held one hour later. He arrived at ten past five, apologizing for being ten minutes late. Goléa was at the rehearsal and he knew that Claire Delbos had died forty eight hours earlier, and that Messiaen had requested that the rehearsal be an hour later because of his wife's funeral. He describes Messiaen at the rehearsal:

*Il ne dit rien, naturellement. Son visage accusait une pâleur extrême, mais aussi une sorte de paix profonde. Il paraissait tranquille, pacifié, détendu; il donnait un peu l'impression de venir jusqu'à nous d'un autre monde. S'étant excusé, il fit commencer la répétition tout de suite, et travailla, pendant deux heures avec Colette Herzog et son pianiste, de la façon la plus rigoureuse et la plus concentrée.* (8)


3. Tristan and Isolde.

Quénétain says that "Messiaen was predestined to live out - as he has in fact lived out - the drama of hopeless love, the drama of Tristan." (9) Certainly this was the theme which preoccupied him during the second half of the forties, the theme of passionate, tragic mortal love - symbolised in the myth of Tristan and Isolde. He wrote a trilogy embodying three aspects, that is, "de matière instrumentale, d'intensité, d'importance et de style différents" (10) of the Tristan and Isolde theme; Marawi, Chant d'amour et de morte for Soprano and piano (1945), Turangalîla-Symphonie for piano solo, ondes Martenot, and orchestra (1946-48) and Cinq Rechants for twelve mixed voices, a capella (1949). These three works are concerned with mortal love -

...l'amour fatal, irrésistible, qui transcende tout, qui supprime tout hors lui, tel qu'il est symbolisé par le philtre de Tristan et Yseult. (11)

Yvonne Loriod was to play a large part in Messiaen's life at this time - this:

...unique, sublime, géniale interprète dont l'existence a transformé non seulement l'écriture pianistique, mais aussi le style, la vision du monde et les modes de pensée... (12)

11. Ibid.
for it was she who became the focus of his love. This love, which had been realised in his marriage, now, through Yvonne Loriod, engendered the piano works **Visions de l'Amen** (1943), and **Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus** (23 March to 8 September, 1944) both written for her. Messiaen writes of passionate love, a love which can only find its fulfillment in death - and, ironically, it was only through his wife's death that he was free to consummate his love for Yvonne Loriod in marriage - but his love, sublimated, that is, idealised and refined through his Catholic faith, found fulfillment in his compositions. The love of which he sings, symbolised in Tristan and Isolde, Viviane and Merlin, Orpheus and Eurydice, has been a constant preoccupation of western civilisation. As Denis de Rougemont observes:

> Happy love has no history - in European literature. And a love that is not mutual cannot pass for a true love. The outstanding find made by European poets... is the secret of the Tristan myth; passionate love at once shared and fought against, anxious for a happiness it rejects, and magnified in its own disaster - unhappy mutual love.

> ...unhappiness comes in, because the love which 'dominates' them is not a love of each for the other as that other really is. They love one another, but each loves the other from the standpoint of self and not from the other's standpoint. Their unhappiness thus originates in a false reciprocity, which disguises a twin narcissism. So much is this so that at times there pierces through their excessive passion a kind of hatred of the beloved. Long before Freud and modern psychology Wagner saw this. 'By me chosen, lost be/me!' Isolde sings in her frantic love. (13)

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Denis de Rougemont goes on to show that the unhappiness results from desiring what they have not yet had - namely death - and from losing what they did have - life. He shows that they do not love each other:

If she loves me, it is by the poison that holds me from leaving her, and her from leaving me.

Lord, by Almighty God, he loves me not, nor I him; except for a herb potion which I drank; it was a sin. (14)

but, in fact, love being in love. They need each other in order to feed their own passionate fantasy, but to do this they need each other's absence.

Thus the pertings of the lovers are dictated by their passion itself, and by the love they bestow on their passion rather than on its satisfaction or on its living object. (15)

What de Rougemont shows is that this myth, passionate love, conceals a desire for death for it is believed that through death the lover will embrace All:

The erotic process introduces into life an element foreign to the diastole and systole of sensual attraction, - a desire that never relapses, that nothing can satisfy, that even rejects and flees the temptation to obtain its fulfillment in the world, because its demand is to embrace no less than the All. It is infinite transcendence, man's rise into his god. And this rise is without return. (16)

15. Ibid., 42.
16. Ibid., 62.
Therefore:

Unawares and in spite of themselves, the lovers have never had but one desire - the desire for death! Unawares and passionately deceiving themselves, they have been seeking all the time to be redeemed and avenged for 'what they have suffered' - the passion unloosed by the love potion. In the innermost recesses of their hearts they have been obeying the fatal dictates of a wish for death. (17)

Messiaen writes the first of his Cinq Rechants:

Les amoureux, s'envolent.
Brangien dans l'espace tu souffles,
Les amoureux s'envolent
Vers les étoiles de la mort. (18)

and also:

Miroir d'étoile,
Château d'étoile,
Yseult d'amour séparé,
Bulle de cristal,
D'étoile mon retour... (19)

He points out that the crystal bubble referred to is the one in which Hieronymus Bosch encloses his lovers. (20) Reference is also made to the prison of air, in which Viviane encloses Merlin, in this quotation from the third Rechant:

19. Ibid., 182. See also notes by Messiaen to recording of Cinq Rechants conducted by Marcel Couraud (also contains Nuits by Xenakis, and Stabat Mater by Penderecki), Record Society S/C523, originally released by Erato.
Ma robe d'amour,
Ma prison d'amour,
Faite d'air léger.... (21)

Finally, this concept is expressed explicitly in the following quotation from the first Rechant:

L'explorateur Orphée trouve son cœur dans la mort. (22)

It can be seen clearly from these quotations, that they completely support de Rougemont's thesis, that passionate love is the desire for death.

To return to Quénétain's statement, it would seem to be true that Messiaen had in fact lived out this myth; with the separation from his wife, and the concomitant separation from Yvonne Loriod. However, this is obviously not entirely true. Claire Delbos died, but Messiaen did not commit suicide, neither did his love for Yvonne Loriod conceal a wish for death - it revealed a wish for life - a wish for generation, epitomised in the works written during this period. For Messiaen states:

Pour exprimer avec une puissance durable nos ténèbres aux prises avec l'Esprit saint, pour élever sur la montagne les portes de notre prison de chair, pour donner à notre siècle l'eau-vive dont il a besoin, il faudrait un grand artiste qui soit aussi un grand artisan et un grand chrétien. (23)

22. Ibid., 182.
It is the wish to give, 'the living Water' which saves Messiaen from just repeating the Tristan myth in his life. For to give is to create, to be fertile, and Messiaen in expressing this desire reveals his true identity. This is why he was able to sublimate his "passionate love" - his desire for death which accompanied his wife's gradual and merciless disintegration - and turn it through Yvonne Loriod into an act of creation.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that Quénétain's statement is not correct, for although Messiaen was preoccupied during the second half of the forties with the theme of passionate love, he certainly did not live out the "drama of Tristan".

4. The "cas Messiaen."

In the two years following the Second World War, Messiaen became the cause and centre of a public controversy - he became the exemplification of what was known as the "cas Messiaen", a psychopathic disorder. It was set off by the premiere performance of his Trois Petites Liturgies de la présence divine written in 1943 and 1944 (24) for a choir of women's voices, piano, Ondes Martenot, and orchestra, given on the 21st of April, 1945, at the Concert de la Pléiade in Paris, under the direction of Roger Désormière.

24. From 15 November 1943 to 15 March 1944.
As Goléa says:

Ce fut le plus beau scandale de la musique depuis les jours lointains de la première du Sacre du Printemps. On hurla à la force, à l'imposture; on accusa Jessiaen de blasphème... (25)

Rostand called it a:

...tawdry work, falsely sumptuous, misleadingly mystical, this work with dirty fingernails, clammy hands, lymphatic complexion, its unhealthy fat stuffed with dubious ingredients, and the look of an angel with too much make-up on. (26)

Its artistic worth was also brought into question. The critics stated that his inspiration and taste were:

...rattachés à la pire esthétique saint-sulpicienne...

and he was accused:

...d'utiliser des recettes arbitraires destinées à masquer son manque d'invention mélodique, harmonique et - ô hérésie - rythmique! (27)

Several of his own pupils, among them, Pierre Boulez, who had left him to study under René Leibowitz, (28) a disciple of

28. Leibowitz, R., Born Varsovie 17 February 1913. Although originally Polish, has lived in Paris since 1925. Between 1930 and 1933, travelled to Germany and Austria, where studied with Webern. Also studied with Schoenberg and Ravel. Since 1945 has concentrated on Musicology.
Schoenberg, joined the ranks of those accusing Messiaen of vulgarity and misguidedness. Also, those of the avant-garde rejected Messiaen's work for the following reason:

This composer who is trying to pass himself off as a revolutionary actually brings to music no essential element that has not already been expressed, from Massenet to Roane Moretti. (29)

The Parisian musical world split into two camps over the "cas Messiaen". The Figaro Litteraire published a special enquiry entitled Y a-t-il un 'Cas Messiaen'? with replies by Arthur Honegger, Fred Goldbeck, Francis Poulenc, Claude Delvincourt, Guy Bernard-Delapierre, Roland-Manuel, Louis Beydts, Max-Pol Fouchet, Henry Barraud, and Father Francois Florand.

Honegger's reply reads as follows:

Il y a un cas Messiaen comme il y a 'un cas' chaque fois qu'apparaît une personnalité marquante dans la musique. Chaque fois cela suscite une diversité d'opinions dont il n'y a pas lieu de s'étonner. Mon opinion: les Petites Liturgies sont une œuvre magnifique à côté d'autres comme le Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus ou les Visions de l'Amen: Celui qui les a créées est un grand musicien. (30)

Francis Poulenc, while objecting to Messiaen's writings, as follows:

Bien que désapprouvant totalement la littérature de Messiaen autant que les recettes de son traité de composition...


stated that he held first place in the contemporary musical world:

...il ne me viendrait pas un instant de nier la place de premier plan qu'occupe aujourd'hui ce musicien dans la production contemporaine.

He also considered that if there were a "cas Messiaen", it was an aesthetic and not a musical one:

S'il y a un "cas Messiaen", il est d'ordre esthétique et non musical puisqu'il s'agit indisputablement d'un musicien-ne. (31)

Claude Delvincourt strongly defended Messiaen's music, but also expressed dislike for the "fatras mystico-litteraire" which accompanied it. He says:

Par malheur, c'est de cette encombrante et quelquefois ridicule exégèse que le snobisme et le publicite se sont emparés pour monter en épingle le "cas Messiaen"...(32)

Guy Bernard-Delapierre compared the situation with the misunderstanding of Joan of Arc, Galileo and Stravinsky. (33) Roland-Manuel (34) spoke of a personality without precedent, and called the cas Messiaen that of one daring to break with the aesthetics of the

32. Delvincourt, C., ibid., 4.
34. Roland-Manuel, 'Y a-t-il un Cas Messiaen?' Le Figaro Littéraire (20 April, 1946), 4.
time. Henry Barraud (35) asserted that Messiaen's work was very important on a musical basis, and referred to the *Visions de l'Amen* as a work of unheard of splendour. Louis Beydts (36) warned him against listening to his woolly disciples.

Fred Goldbeck, on the other hand, gave the following opinion of Messiaen's music:

Son goût des matériaux hétéroclites; son sens du montage qui lui tient lieu de sens de la forme; sa prédilection pour la mélodie déformée et la rythme écorné; la folle complication, les mille et trois accords du morceau tel qu'il le fallait entendre et la simplicité simplicité de la musique que, le premier choc passé, on n'a pas grand-peine à apercevoir à travers le fantasque de la veture; l'astucieux commédiant si sûr de ce qui passa la rampe, et son ingéniosité enrobée de métaphysique - tout cela m'empêche, non d'apprécier ses qualités de musicien, mais de prendre son œuvre pour ce qu'elle voudrait être. Mais tout cela pourrait faire un style parfaitement vatable, si Messiaen acceptait le talent de musicien de Grotesques qu'il porte en lui, qu'il dedaigne peut-être par romantique esprit de sérieux. (37)

Other writers who defended Messiaen's work were: Marc Pincherle and Lily Maurice-Amour (38) who considered Messiaen's compositions to be a success and among the great pages of French music; Yves Baudrier (39) who accused Messiaen's opponents of jealousy; Norbert

37. Goldbeck, F., 'Y a-t-il un Cas Messiaen?' Le Figaro Littéraire (13 April 1946), 4.
38. La Revue Musicale (1 April 1946). Reference see Becker, G. de., 'Het debat rond Olivier Messiaen', Schalmei (July, 1946), 7. (This reference applies to footnotes (40) to (45).
39. Ibid.
Dufourcq (40) who maintained that Messiaen was a life force against which the arrows and barbs of critics had no power.

Against Messiaen were ranged Bernard Cavoty, (41) who accused him of perpetrating naive literature and symbolism and of following a mysticism which had little or nothing to do with true mystery, and Claude Rostand (42) who called Messiaen's works, lies and sacrilege, and who stated that the "cas Messiaen" did not belong to music but to psychopathology. Roger Blanchard, (43) accused him of being too sensual and Fred Goldbeck, writing in Contrepoints, (44) found the language of Messiaen's music idle and empty, full of crazy complication and grotesquity. J.L. (45) considered that his music was dense and without organic connection.

Writers in the field of religious art entered the debate, and two priests, Father Francois Florand and Dom Clément Jacob both strongly defended Messiaen's music. Florand states that Messiaen "s'inscrit en plein humanisme chrétien", and that he is "un grand musicien qui s'explique de travers dès qu'il cesse d'écrire avec des notes."(46) Dom Jacob writes:

40. La Musique d'orgue Française (1941), 232. Ref., cit. 8.
42. La Revue Musicale (1 April 1946), Ref. cit. 8.
43. Ibid.
44. Contrepoints (1 January 1946). Ref. cit. 8.
46. "Y a-t-il un Cas Messiaen?" Le Figaro Littéraire (13 April 1946), 4.
Mais si nous avons la chance de rencontrer un musicien
marveilleusement doué, au cœur de qui, par surcroît, est
plantée la foi chrétienne, et dont l'œuvre illustre la foi,
si ce musicien tente de nous expliquer, avec une certaine
naïveté, mais avec une pleine conscience de sa valeur,
ce qu'il a voulu faire, ce qu'il a voulu dire, nous
ne pouvons que le remercier.

C'est le cas d'Olivier Messiaen. (47)

However, another writer in this field took the opposite view.
Henri Davenson states that Messiaen is "suspect d'escroquerie à la
mysticité", and observes "qu'il n'y a pas de vrai musique sans ascèse,
la première ascèse étant ici le silence." He also considered that the
music only has pretensions towards being an expression of religious
experience, and is really "une musique trop terrestre pour les valeurs
mystiques dont Messiaen prétend la lester."(48)

It is interesting to note that through this controversy those
who remained on the side which supported Messiaen and his music
included the artists Braque and Picasso, and the writers Cocteau,
Eluard and Valéry.

Two of the protagonists against Messiaen at this time
eventually came to publicly acknowledge his worth. One of these
was Claude Rostand who wrote a pamphlet announcing his change in
position. He also states in his book La Musique Française Contemporaine

47. 'Olivier Messiaen', Témoignages, Cahiers de la Pierre qui Vire,
(August, 1946), 231.

48. Rostand, C., La Musique Française, 60.
that there never was a "cas Messiaen", and he says:

Ce que l'on a pris pour tel n'a été qu'un ensemble
de manifestations montées à loisir, et suivant le degré
d'inspiration, par les fanatiques d'une part, et par ceux
qui n'étaient pas... entièrement d'accord d'autre part.
Le seul cas Messiaen qui soit et n'ait jamais été est
celui d'un artiste puissamment doué qui, comme tous les
artistes de grand tempérament, cherche à exprimer ce que
lui dicte ce tempérament, et aussi cherche des moyens
d'expression qui lui paraissent nouveaux.

However, he still considers that Messiaen is:

...plus un explorateur et un jongleur qu'un inventeur
dans le plein sens de ce dernier mot. (49)

The other was Pierre Boulez. Boulez was in Messiaen's
harmony class in 1944, where he gained first prize, and he also took
part in the private composition course given at Guy Bernard-
Delapierre's house in the same year. He only studied with Messiaen
for the one year. Before this, he had studied counterpoint with
André Vaurabourg-Honegger, and afterwards studied serial composition
with René Leibowitz. It was at this stage that his attitude to his
previous master was one of contempt, which he displayed freely. This
had a profound effect on Messiaen for he had nothing but admiration
for Boulez.

Boulez est un génie, et je crois qu'il aurait
fait quelque chose avec n'importe quel maître,
fut-il défaillant. (50)

49. Rostand, C., op. cit., 57.
As Goléa relates, echoes of Boulez' insults reached Messiaen daily; however, he could not cease loving and admiring him. Boulez made amends eventually, and here is Messiaen's account of it;

Vers 1945, un beau dimanche, après mon dernier office à l'orgue de la Trinité, Boulez s'est présenté à la tribune, tout souriant et un peu essoufflé; il m'apportait en cadeau un superbe 'balafon' (sorte de xylophone africain). Le balafon est toujours là, symbole de notre commune admiration pour la musique exotique, et symbole de notre amitié... (51)

Later, Boulez played a large part in arranging premiere performances of Messiaen's works. On the 21st March, 1955, he arranged the French premiere of the Livre d'Orgue, at a Domaine Musical concert, held at the Trinité. (52) He conducted the first performance of Oiseaux Exotiques at a Domaine Musicale concert on 10th March, 1956, and that of the Sept Haikai at the Théâtre de France in Paris on 30th October, 1963. On October 17th, 1964, he conducted the premiere performance of Couleurs de la cité céleste at the Donaueschingen Festival, and he also conducted the third performance in Paris of Et Expecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum in 1965.

52. Ibid., 208, relates that Boulez, anticipating that there would be about fifty people to hear the recital, arranged only for a small side door to be opened. However: "...il se présenta au moins deux milles auditeurs, ce qui provoqua un embouteillage formidable."

Messiaen gave the world premiere of this work in Stuttgart in 1952, for the inauguration of the organ of the Villa Berg.
CHAPTER FOUR


Messiaen had become so well-respected among his students as a teacher, that two of them, Pierre Boulez and Yvonne Loriod went to the director of the Conservatoire, Claude Delvincourt, asking that he be appointed Professor of composition. Delvincourt was entirely in agreement with this, but, knowing that the minister at the time who was responsible for appointments was counselled by the members of the Institute, who in their turn could not even hear the name "Messiaen" without experiencing "une profonde horreur",(1) would never allow it, had the idea of recommending that Messiaen take a special class in analysis, aesthetics and rhythm. This class was to be officially only a side-track, and was not compulsory for students who wanted to do composition. The minister and his advisers agreed to this and so, in 1947, this special class was created. (2)

Messiaen says of the class:


2. Darius Milhaud was appointed Professor of Composition in 1947, which position he held until 1966.
partitions à tous les points de vue: formel, melodique, harmonique, orchestral — et surtout rythmique. Ce dernier point est ma grande spécialité. Nous discutons beaucoup sur le temps et sur la durée, sur la philosophie de rythme. Vous le royez, c'est une classe éminemment variée. On y fait tout ce que n'ont pas le temps les professeurs de composition. Le cycle des cours, est de quatre ans. Mais, en fait, chaque année je renouvelle entièrement mon programme. Mon influence est purement morale, et jamais dogmatique... je ne parle jamais de mes œuvres. 

For example, in 1962, he discussed Opera, in 1963 Sacred Music, and in 1964, Piano Music. 

In fact, this class, which was originally termed a voie de garage became the most famous class at the Conservatoire. Composers from other European countries, from Japan, from the United States, and from China came to study with Messiaen. His students have included (as well as the ones mentioned previously): Jacques Charpentier, Pierre Henry, Michel Fano, Gilbert Amy, 

7. Amy, G., Born 1936. Studied at first with Milhaud. First published works are in total serial technique. They include: Movements for chamber orchestra, and Epigrams for piano.
Sieglinde Ahrons, Raymond Depraz, Marcel Fremiot, Alexander Goehr, Karl Goeyvaerts, Jean-Jacques Normand, Makato Shinohara, Gilles Tremblay, Iannis Xenakis, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. It was mentioned previously that Maurice Le Roux was also one of Messiaen's pupils. He has dedicated his first book Introduction à la Musique contemporaine to Messiaen, and says of his former master:

8. Depraz, R., Born Margence, 1915. Studied with T. Aubin as well as Messiaen. Works include a symphony (1948), and a ballet (1951).


He knows how to bring meticulous severity into his classroom work, without in any degree curbing enthusiasm. He also has an enormous capacity for giving his full attention to others. (15)

Messiaen was eventually appointed Professor of composition in 1956.


In 1947 Messiaen accepted an invitation to give a course in rhythmic analysis at the Conservatorium in Budapest, (16) and in August, 1949, was invited to teach at the Berkshire Music Centre at Tanglewood in Massachusetts, where he wrote the piano work Neumes Rythmiques. (17) In 1952, Wolfgang Steinecke, the founder of the Internationale Ferseinkurse für Neue Musik (the summer course held at Darmstadt), invited Messiaen to give a course in analysis, along the lines of his classes at the Conservatoire. (18) Antoine Goléa accompanied him as interpreter, as Messiaen speaks only French.

16. Rostand, C., Olivier Messiaen, 50 Jahre Alt, 524.
18. In 1953, he accepted another invitation to teach at Darmstadt, (Goléa, A., Rencontres, 217), and in the same year taught at Saarbrucken, (Rostand, C., 50 Jahre Alt, 524).
In the programme of the course, Messiaen published a manifesto which reads as follows:

La musique - dans le sens harmonique du terme - a maintenant atteint son plafond. Ce plafond, ce ne sont plus les musiciens du XXme siécle qui le créeront. Il faut attendre 200 ou 300 ans au moins pour un renouveau dans ce sens. Par contre, les autres éléments de la musique, et spécialement les éléments du rythme si longtemps oubliés; la durée, le timbre, l'attaque, l'intensité sont, de nos jours, remis à l'honneur. Si je suis en grande partie coupable de cet état de choses, il faut rendre hommage aux prophètes qui ont ouvert la voie - voie qui va de Varèse à Boulez en passant par Webern, Jolivet, John Cage et moi-même. La musique 'concrète' s'inscrit tout naturellement dans cet ordre de recherches en lui fournissant des matériaux. (19)

While attending the summer school at Darmstadt in 1949, Messiaen wrote the piano work, Mode de valeurs et d'intensités, which he considers to be a:

...prolongation des idées d'Einstein, sur l'influence de la vitesse, sur l'appréciation des événements et une super-série. (20)

This work was the fulfillment of the ideas he had expressed in 1944, and it had an enormous success and influence. As Messiaen says:

...its success was disproportionate to its length--four minutes, which is not very long.

It was much talked about and had a great influence on the entire school of young composers. (21)


21. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', V.
Stockhausen was one of the young composers who was strongly affected by the work for in 1951:

...demi de partition, se fit tourner
la fameuse étude peut-être 30 fois à la suite;
et quelques mois plus tard, à la rentrée
scolaire, on le vit à Paris, parmi les plus
fidèles élèves de Messiaen. (22)

In honour of the year of his fiftieth birthday, Messiaen was invited to give, on the 15th of September 1958, a lecture at the International Exhibition in Brussels. In this lecture he elucidated his position as regards inspiration, technique, and Nature, as follows:

Dans toute création artistique, il y a trois étapes:
l'inspiration, le travail, l'oeuvre achevée. Au terrible XXe siècle, siècle de recherche et de vitesse, on met l'accent sur la seconde étape. La plupart des musiciens actuels nient l'inspiration et la déclarent romantique et démodée. Et dans toute l'histoire de la musique, à côté de milliers de travaux, bons ou mauvais, utiles ou inutiles, combien trouve-t-on d'œuvres, au sens total du terme?

Il faut donc saluer très bas les vrais chefs-d'œuvres.
Sans oublier qu'ils sont le résultat d'un travail et d'une technique immenses, l'un et l'autre mis au service de l'inspiration. En considérant l'inspiration non pas comme une illumination soudaine et unique, non pas comme un délire plus ou moins échevelé, mais plutôt comme un rêve, un rêve qui indique, précise, soutient, achève, et prolonge la technique... (23)

When speaking of the ways music may follow in the future, Messiaen emphasized the importance of Nature in the work of the

creative artist, as shown in the following quotation:

Technique rythmique, inspiration retrouve par les chants d'oiseaux: telle est mon histoire. D'autres procederont autrement. Les surrealistes electronistes pourront 'ecrire des nuits, fixer des vertiges', comme disait RIMBAUD -- les dodécanopistes serieux pourront aligner des changements de registres, des sons isolés, des intensités et des densités multiformes, des melodies de timbres, des melodiees d'attaques -- les stereophonistes pourront déplacer les foyers sonores et créer des contrepoints d'espace absolument inouïs au sens propre du terme. Il y a mille façons de lancer la sonde vers l'avenir...

Je leur souhaite seulement de ne pas oublier que la musique fait partie du Temps, qu'elle est un découpage du Temps comme notre propre vie - et que la Nature, toujours belle, toujours grande, toujours nouvelle, la Nature, trésor inépuisable des couleurs et des sons, des formes et des rythmes, modèle inégalé de développement total et de variation perpétuelle, la Nature est la suprême ressource! (24)

The Institute di Tella in Buenos Aires invited Messiaen, in 1963, to take a lecture course, and again, he gave his course in rhythmic analysis. (25)


Messiaen's first major commission came in 1945, when Serge Koussevitzky and the Koussevitzky Foundation commissioned a work from him for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Messiaen, not liking to work to commission, agreed because of Koussevitzky's terms, which he relates as follows:

Je n'ai écrit que très peu sur commande dans ma vie, trois ou quatre fois au maximum, et cela à cause de mon humeur changeante. Il suffit qu'on me commande un recueil de mélodies pour que je fasse une série de pièces de piano, et un ballet pour que j'écrive pour choeurs et orgue. Mais jamais commande n'a été faite dans des conditions aussi aisées à remplir que celle de la Turangalîla. En effet, Serge Koussevitzky m'a dit: 'Faites-moi l'œuvre que vous voulez, dans le style que vous voulez, de la durée que vous voulez, avec la composition instrumentale, que vous voulez, et je ne vous impose aucun délai pour me remettre votre travail.' (26)

The work, Turangalîla-Symphonie, was written between the 17th July, 1946 and 29th November, 1948, and had its premiere at Boston on the 2nd December 1949 under Leonard Bernstein, with Yvonne Loriod performing the solo piano part and Ginette Martenot the Ondes Martenot. The second performance was given the next day in Boston, and the third was held on Messiaen's birthday (27) at New York in Carnegie Hall. The French premiere took place on the 25th July, 1950 at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, conducted by Roger Désormière, and the Paris premiere on the 4th March, 1954 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, with the Orchestre National under Rudolf Albert. (28) For the Paris performance, the piano solo was


played by Yvonne Loriod, and the Ondes Martenot by her sister Jeanne Loriod. (29)

In 1960 the first performance of a work commissioned by Heinrich Strobel, director of the Sudwestfunk, Baden-Baden, was given by the Sudwestfunk Orchestra under Hans Rosbaud at Donaueschingen, on the 16th October. (30) The work was *Chronochromie*, and its performance created a scandal comparable with that created by the *Trois Petites Liturgies*.

Goléa describes the premiere as follows:

A la fin de l'exécution de l'œuvre, à Donaueschingen, les protestaires ne se gênèrent plus: les grognements, les chuchotements firent place à des cris, des hurlements, des couinements, des onomatopées de toutes sortes, le tout dominé par la stridence assourdissante d'une douzaine de sifflots à roulettes, maniés par ceux qui, à l'occasion de concerts de cette sorte, préméditent froidement le scandale. Bien entendu, la réaction ne fit pas attendre: les applaudissements nourris et les cris de 'bravo' éclatèrent de toutes parts, et on eut, plusieurs minutes durant, le traditionnel contrepoint - très concret! - de bruits et de contre-bruits qui suit l'exécution, œuvres qui choquent les habitudes du public, et même d'un public en principe acquis à la cause de la musique moderne. (31)

At the Paris premiere, given on the 13th February, 1962 with the Orchestre National conducted by Antal Dorati, (32) the audience

29. Loriod, Jeanne, Studied with Maurice Martenot at the age of 18. She has perfected 10 concertos for ondes and orchestra. She is also a pianist, and teaches in Paris. As well, she is on the jury at the Conservatoire.

30. Messiaen, O., Notes to recording of *Chronochromie*, BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Antal Dorati, (Charles Koechlin's *Les蓓dards*, and Pierre Boulez' *Le Soleil des Faux* included on the same recording), H.M.V., released through The Record Society, S/6189.


32. Messiaen, O., Notes to *Chronochromie*. 
gave it an even worse reception. Messiaen relates:

I watched bearing down on me, a horde of respectable ladies clad in fur capes and jewels, who had clearly been turned into Furies. They put out their tongues at me and screamed at the top of their voices, "Get out, you dirty beast, get out!" (33)

Messiaen's reaction to this though, is not one of justification, persecution, or even blame. In fact, he defends the public's right to either applaud or boo, saying that he does not agree with those who maintain that there is a gulf between composers and the public, or with those who accuse the public of misunderstanding:

I do not find that there is any world separating composers from the public. I even find that the public is very comprehensive and intelligent. I defend all publics...I have been to all kinds of classical and avant-garde concerts and I assure you that the public understands perfectly, that it applauds where it should applaud, that it boos where it should boo, and that it does not react when a piece of music is mediocre - it goes to sleep.

I do not believe either that a public which boos is a public which has not understood. It has been brutally shocked and boos because of this. If the music were uninteresting, it would not boo. Composers should sometimes be pleased to have been booced. It has happened to me several times; and, when I think about it, it has made me feel younger. After all, I tell myself, I am younger than I believe. If I shock people, then I have gone further than previous works. (34)

Goléa describes Messiaen after the Donaueschingen premiere as; "secrètement ravi de se voir," for the public had treated him


34. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', x.
like an enfant terrible at the age of fifty-two. Messiaen's only comment about the reception was:

Comme c'est drôle! Ils ont protesté contre le passage le plus gentil! (35)

The passage in question was the 18-part counterpoint, for strings only, which appears in the penultimate movement of the work - the Epode - which is constructed completely of French bird songs.

Heinrich Strobel commissioned another work from Messiaen for the Donaueschingen Festival, this time specifically for three trombones and three xylophones. The idea of writing for trombones set off apocalyptic associations in Messiaen's mind, and for a second time he wrote a work inspired directly by the Apocalypse. It was called Couleurs de la cité céleste, (36) and the original three trombones and three xylophones became a section of trumpets and horns, a trumpet in D, and a bass trombone as well as the three trombones, plus one xylophone, one xylorimba and one marimba instead of the three xylophones. To this was added a piano solo for Yvonne Loriod, and extra percussion instruments including bells, cencerros, gongs and tam-tams. (37)

It was composed in 1963 and given its premiere performance on the 17th October 1964 under Pierre Boulez at the Donaueschingen Festival. The


36. Stravinsky, I., (and Craft, R.) I, Retrospectives and Conclusions, (New York, 1969), 18, said, on hearing the work: "It seemed to me to have been inspired by J.Arthur Rank, and its force de frappe is so great I wonder the marimbas, xylophones, cymbals and gongs did not collapse from metal fatigue."

37. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', i, ii.
Paris premiere was given on December 16th in the same year, at a Domaine Musical concert, again under Pierre Boulez. (38)

Messiaen received a commission from the "Directorate-General des Arts et des Lettres" for a work to commemorate the centenary of Debussy's birth. He was, however, unable to fulfil this commission, but it does seem the work Sept Haikai was intended for it. (39) This was inspired by a journey to Japan, with Yvonne Loriod, for the one hundredth performance of the Turangalîla-Symphonie in 1962. While in Japan, his impresario, Mrs. Yamaguchi, "an extremely cultured woman who speaks a dozen languages", (40) arranged for him to hear Japanese music, to see Noh drama and Kabuki theatre and to visit Lake Yamanaka, and the foot of Mt. Fujiyama, Miyajima and Karnizawa, so that he could become acquainted with Japanese birds and notate their calls. Sept Haikai is based on the impressions gained, and the bird calls notated while in Japan, and was completed in 1963. It had its premiere in Paris on 30th October, 1963 at the Théâtre de France under Pierre Boulez.

A fourth important commission was Et Expecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum, which was composed in 1964. It was commissioned by André Malraux, Secretary of State, in memory of the millions who had died in the two world wars. Its premiere took place on 7th May, 1965 at a private performance at the Saint-Chapelle in Paris. The first

38. Messiaen, O., Notes to recording of Couleurs de la cité céleste, conducted by Pierre Boulez, (also includes Et Expecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum), CBS, SBR 255364.


40. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', viii.
public performance was given in Chartres Cathedral, under Serge Baudo on Sunday 20th June 1965 at the end of High Mass, and in the presence of the Bishop of Chartres and President Charles de Gaulle. The Strasbourg Percussion Ensemble took part in both performances. (41) Messiaen's large-scale composition La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ, (42) was commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1955 in honour of Calouste Gulbenkian's birth, and was premiered at the Gulbenkian Festival in Lisbon on its completion in 1969. This work is an oratorio, the text of which is drawn from the gospels, psalms, Saint Paul, Saint Thomas Aquinas and the liturgy. It is scored for six groups, consisting of 18 woodwind, 17 brass, 7 soloists (flute, clarinet, xylorimba, vibraphone, marimba, cello and piano), a choir of 100 arranged in 10 groups, strings and percussion. The work is divided into two septenaries both of which follow the same formal outline. They consist of two movements based on the gospel narrative of the transfiguration, each of which is followed by two movements developing its basic ideas, with texts from Genesis, the Wisdom of Solomon, St. Paul's Epistles, the Summa of Aquinas and the Missal, and a chorale as the seventh movement. The chorales of the two septenaries are based on Psalms 48 and 26 respectively. (43)

41. Messiaen, O., Notes to Recording of Et Expecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum.
42. According to Alphonse Leduc (correspondence dated 19 May 1972) the work is expected to be published late in 1972.
The premiere was conducted by Serge Baudo, with the Gulbenkian Choir, the Orchestre de Paris, the cellist Rostropovich and the pianist Yvonne Loriod. It was originally intended to inaugurate the new Gulbenkian Hall, but as this was not completed in time, it was held in the Coliseu, a nineteenth-century building seating five thousand. The hall was full for the premiere, and the work was received very enthusiastically. A critic at the concert commented as follows:

The choral sound, gospel narrations in striding unison with large intervals, at times flowering into huge, juicy, radiant chords, is an exciting addition to the noise of baying brass, clashing bells, cymbals and tam-tam, shrill and piercing birdsong, and iridescent string harmonies familiar from the Celestial City and Et Expecto. (44)

La Transfiguration was premiered in Paris in the same year at the Palais de Chaillot, (45) and in London at the Promenade Concert on the 17th July, 1970. (46)

Messiaen's latest composition is the nine movement organ work, Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité. It was begun in the second half of 1970, and its premiere was given by Messiaen at the National Shrine in Washington in March, 1972. (47)

46. Dennis, B., op.cit., 29.
47. Date from correspondence with Alphonse Leduc, 19 May, 1972. Halbreich, H., 'Ciphered Creed', Music and Musicians, Vol. 20, No.12 (August, 1972), 18, gives the date as April. At the time of writing, the Méditations were due to be published in 1973. Since the time of writing, Des Canyons aux Etoiles for piano and orchestra has been premiered in New York on 20 November, 1974. See Addenda to Bibliography for reviews of concert.
Two unique features of the Méditations are the manner in which Messiaen incorporates Gregorian plainsong, melodically unaltered, either in unison, or accompanied with modal harmony, and his use of a "communicable language." This consists of a series where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a definite pitch, octave and duration, as follows:

(Musical notation image)

Messiaen has used this alphabet to create a number of different series, derived from quotations, in French, of the Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The first and seventh movements contain important sections based on this "communicable language", and the whole of the third is built from it.

49. Ibid., 19.
The point is made in a review of the Méditations, that, as the theological significance of each movement is to be found in the music through the "communicable language", no titles are given, and thus Messiaen insists that future generations will know of his basic creed, even though the work's title or the composer's name may be lost. (50)

The European premiere of the work was given at the second Messiaen festival, organised by the community of the Evangelical Johannis Church at Dusseldorf, by Almut Rossler, on the 10th of June. (51)


In 1951 the Radiodiffusion Television Francaise equipped a studio for research into electronic music. This inspired a group consisting of Messiaen, Marcel Delannoy, (52) Jean-Jacques Grunenwald, (53)

51. Ibid., 18.
52. Delannoy, M., Born 1898. Pupil of Ecole National des Beaux-arts, studied also with Jean Gallon. Was a painter and architect before becoming a composer.
André Jolivet, Yves Beaudrier, and Henri Dutilleux\(^{54}\) to meet for the purpose of experimenting with musique concrete. Messiaen saw, as the main problem posed by musique concrete, that of having to conquer a completely new rhythmic vocabulary. However he only composed one work in this field with the assistance of Pierre Henry, *Timbres-Durées*, which remains unpublished.\(^{55}\) It appears that he considers that musique concrete cannot be included in the main stream of music, not only as he says, because it is virtually impossible to work in the field of *rythme dynamique*:

> C'est, d'ailleurs, dans le domaine du *rythme dynamique* que la musique concrete me bouleverse le plus. \(^{56}\)

but also for the following reasons:

> Cette déshumanisation caractérisée par l'absence d'interprète est, à côté de l'annexion du royaume des bruits, ce qui semble opposer la musique concrete à tout le reste de l'univers musical...Plus d'inspiration, un ingénieur autour de superpositions d'enregistrements dont il ne peut plus prévoir le détail. \(^{57}\)

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55. The realisation and spatial design of this work by Pierre Henry, as well as Messiaen's original manuscript are reproduced in Fasquelle: *Encyclopédie de la Musique*, Vol.I (Paris, 1958), 576-578.


57. Mari, P., op.cit., 63.
He also states:

Ce ne sont plus des hommes qui jouent,
ce ne sont plus des hommes qui composent,
c'est le hasard qui est roi. (58)

And the following is a statement he made concerning the *Symphonie pour un homme seul* by Pierre Schaeffer (59) and Pierre Henry:

Quant à l'émotion provoquée, elle n'a rien à voir avec l'émotion humaine engendrée par les grandes classiques de la musique. C'est une émotion d'un caractère pathologique, analogue aux tresses des derviches tourneurs, provoquée par l'extrême éloignement ou l'effroyable rapprochement de stridences dangereuses pour le tympan, le cœur et même le cerveau. (60)

On the other hand, Messiaen seems to consider that electronic music does have a role in the main stream of music, for he judges one work in this medium, Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* to be a complete success:

...pour retourner vers musique électronique,
j'ai entendu il y a quelques temps une œuvre
exquise de fraîcheur et qui correspond à l'insu
de son auteur à son secret désir de retour à la
nature, je veux parler du *Chants des Adolescents*
de Karlheinz Stockhausen, pour voix d'enfants et
sons électroniques. Est-ce à cause du sujet,
qui évoque toutes les forces et tous les phénomènes
de la nature, est-ce à cause de l'extraordinaire
qualité sonore, est-ce à cause des voix d'enfants,
je ne sais, mais je tiens cette œuvre pour une
totale réussite... (61)

61. Ibid., 254.
5. Second Marriage.

On the first of July, 1961, Messiaen married Yvonne Loriod. It will be remembered that he referred to her as a sublime interpreter of genius, who had transformed not only his style of pianistic writing, but also his vision of the world and his manner of thinking. She was born on the 20th January, 1924 at Houilles, the daughter of Gaston Loriod, who was head clerk at Gaz de France, and Simone Bilhaut.

She studied at the Conservatoire under Lazare-Levy, Caussade, Calvet and, of course, Messiaen, where she obtained eight first prizes; in piano, harmony, counterpoint, fugue, piano accompaniment, musical ensemble, analysis and musical aesthetics.

She has travelled widely as a concert pianist, performing in most European countries, Africa, North and South America and Japan. Her specialities are the Bach Forty-Eight, Mozart's twenty-eight concerti, Albeniz Iberia Suite and all the piano works of Chopin, Bartok and Messiaen. As well, she has premiered in Paris, the concerti of Bartok, Schoenberg's Concerto, and works of Jolivet, Boulez and Messiaen.

Yvonne Loriod is Professor of piano at the Conservatoire, and of the summer courses at Darmstadt and Bayreuth. She is also Professor of the masterclass for piano at the Badische Hochschule für

Músik of Karlsruhe. In recognition of her work she has been awarded the Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur and has also been awarded the Grand Prix du disque twice. (63)

It will be recalled that Messiaen wrote for her especially the Visions de l'Aman and the Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus, and as well, he has written for her the Catalogue des Oiseaux which was composed from October 1956 to 1st September, 1958. All of his major orchestral works, dating from the Turangalîla-Symphonic, excluding Chronochromie of 1960 and Et Expecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum of 1965, have included a piano solo part.


Until 1961, when he married Yvonne Loriod, Messiaen lived alone in a suburban-style house, the Villa du Danube, on the Buttes-Chaumont in Paris. He described himself as an "homme de ménage", (64) and gives the following account of his daily life at that time:

Je me lève à 6 heures et je descends charger la chaudière. Couvert de cendres et de charbon, je remonte faire ma toilette, ensuite je vais au café voisin prendre mon petit déjeuner. Trois fois par semaine je fais une heure de métro, avec cinq kilos de partitions sous le bras, pour me rendre au Conservatoire. Le dimanche le vais à la Trinité tenir l'orgue aux messes de 9h. 30, 11 heures, et a celle de midi, où j'improvise. Les autres jours, je décroche mon téléphone et je travaille chez moi dans le silence absolu. (65)

65. Ibid., 233.
Goléa recounts an incident when he invited Messiaen to his home for dinner. Messiaen's acute loneliness became apparent during the visit for, as he said to Goléa:

Vous vivez en société, et je ne parle pas seulement de votre famille, mais du fait que votre logement n'est pas isolé, mais encastré dans une grande maison, parmi d'autres logements, que la chaleur dont vous bénéficiez n'est pas seulement celle que vous dispensent vos appareils de chauffage, mais aussi celle de vos voisins, de la cage d'escalier, de la rue même, bordée de hautes maisons, et non pas de petites villas éloignées les unes des autres, comme chez moi. (66)

After the meal Goléa accompanied Messiaen to the métro where Messiaen held out his hand with, "une chaleur qui me sembla exceptionnelle, étant donné son habituelle réserve". He then expressed, very simply, his feeling of solitude thus:

Vous êtes heureux de vivre en famille. Présentez encore mes hommages à votre femme et à vos charmantes filles.

Goléa states that these words, seemingly quite banal, appeared to him as, "un cri de cœur, venu des profondeurs". (67)

At present Messiaen lives with his wife at 230 rue de Marcadet, Paris, 18e. (68)

67. Ibid., 269.
68. Lafitte, Jacques (edns), op.cit., 1126.
7. Honours and Prizes.

Many civil and academic honours have been bestowed on Messiaen.

These include:

Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur.
Grand Officier de l'ordre national du Merit.
Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres.
Consulteur de Conseil post-conciliaire pour
Member of the Académie des beaux-arts. (1967).

Other academies of which he has been made a member are those of Bavaria,

He has also been awarded the following prizes:

Renish Grand Prize for Music, awarded by the Republic of Germany.
(1963) (69)
Prix Tornon-Loeffler de composition musicale, of the Académie.
(1966).
Prix de l'Académie du disque (prix du président de la
Prix Erasme. (1971). (70)

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69. Mari, P., op.cit., 43, states that the prize had the following
dedication:
...au chef de file de toute une génération de compositeurs
et a l'interpréte qui influence fortement les milieux musicaux
en Allemagne, au créateur d'un nouveau style musical et au
théoricien.

70. Lafitte, J. (edns), op.cit., 1126.
8. The Future.

As far as his teaching and his music are concerned, Messiaen is humble about his future position. In his *Technique de mon langage musical*, he states that he wrote the work:

In the hope that my students will return to the few ideas that I am going to develop - whether to use them better than I, or to draw something else from them, or to reject them ultimately if the future proves them unlikely to live... (71)

And in the *Conférence de Bruxelles*, he concludes by asking which works are the true masterpieces of the twentieth century - these works which are the result of "...un travail et d’une technique immenses, l’un et l’autre mis au service de l’inspiration." (72)

Quelles sont les oeuvres du XXe siècle? Ai-je moi-même écrit une seule oeuvre? Je ne sais pas...
Le Temps - encore lui! - règlera tout cela.
"Qu’apportera la musique de demain", demandent les interviewers? Laissons faire les jeunes: ils ont en mains ses destinées. Voici au moins deux jeunes musiciens de génie: Pierre BOULEZ et Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN. A eux la joie de déranger, de changer, d’innover, de défircher des terres inconnues. A eux "le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui!" (73)

Stravinsky, in a rather backhanded way, paid tribute to Messiaen.


73. Ibid., 6.
in Retrospectives and Conclusions, and stated what he considered Messiaen's future position would be when he answered the question:

You have named Messiaen as a dominating influence of the decade, and at the same time criticized important elements of his music. How do you appraise his music generally?

with the following:

High. In fact, one of those great hymns of his might be the wisest choice of all our music for the deck-band concert on the Titanic of our sinking civilization; among other advantages, rescuing vessels - other planets - would have a good chance of hearing it. I rashly predict, as well, that his more recent works will last as long as any music of the time. (74)

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL

AND LITERARY INFLUENCES.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

1. Theological Background.

Je suis avant tout un musicien catholique. Toutes mes œuvres, religieuses ou non, sont un acte de foi et glorifient le Mystère du Christ. C'est en balbutiant autour de l'Amour Divin que j'ai essayé de trouver une musique qui soit un temps nouveau, un espace nouveau, une musique qui aime et qui chante. (1)

Of the forty-two works by Messiaen which have been published, twenty-one are based on religious themes, and two, the song cycles Poèmes pour Mi, and Chants de Terre et de Ciel, include theological concepts in the poems which he has written for them. As he states, however, all his works, whether they are religious or not, are an 'act of faith', and 'glorify the Mystery of Christ'. It is necessary, before a complete understanding of what he says is to be gained, to examine the concepts of 'faith', the 'Mystery of Christ', and 'Divine Love', as expressed in Catholic theology.

1. Faith.

Messiaen has named the theologian, Dom Columba Marmion, (2)


2. Marmion, Dom Columba, Born Dublin 1858, died Maredsous 30 January, 1923. His father was Irish, and his mother French. He was ordained a priest in Rome in 1881, and in 1886 admitted as a novice to the Abbey at Maredsous in Belgium. He was appointed Professor of philosophy, and then in 1899 sent as Prior and Professor of theology to Mont-Cesar at Louvain, where he remained for 10 years. In 1909 he was appointed Abbot of Maredsous.
as one whose writings have played an important part in his development. Thus Marmion's book *Christ and His Mysteries* has been used as a basis for this discussion of the theological aspects of Messiah's statements and writings.

Marmion defines faith as follows:

> It is a mysterious participation in the knowledge that God has of Himself. God knows Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father in knowing himself begets from all eternity a Son like unto and equal to Himself. ..... When he tells us that Jesus is His beloved Son, the Father reveals to us His life; and when we believe in this revelation, we participate in the knowledge of God himself. ... The Father declares that the Babe of Bethlehem, the Youth of Nazareth, the Preacher of Judea, the Victim of Calvary is His Son, His well-beloved Son; our faith is to believe this." (4)

The Catholic Church teaches that to know God is the primary function of man, and that everything must take second place to the love and knowledge of God. Nothing is to be loved for its own sake:

> I am aware that I owe this to God as the chief duty of my life, that my every word and sense may speak of Him. (5)

Marmion emphasizes that it is impossible for those who

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3. See page


partake in the knowledge of God to attach themselves to good in other things in place of God, for He is the Sovereign Good:

They to whom this grace is granted can nevermore separate themselves from God, because they see that God is the Sovereign Good, and that no particular good, however vast it may be, can be compared to Him. Hence sin, which consists in turning away from the law of God, from His Will, or, what comes to the same thing, in turning away from God Himself, to attach oneself to some good as seen in self or in the creature, - is rendered radically impossible. (6)

Therefore faith, defined as "a mysterious participation in the knowledge that God has of Himself", must, of necessity, be the dominant force in the life of a Catholic. This is so, because no other thing can be as vast as God, and therefore every act and thought must be a manifestation of the knowledge gained about Him. To attach oneself to good apart from God, that is, to turn away from God's law, is what is defined as sin.

Marmion shows that faith takes the place of the full and complete knowledge of God, the 'Beatific Vision', which can only be attained after death:

In heaven, the blessed have reached the perfect age of Christ; they have attained the measure of the divine gift:... they enjoy the beatific vision in the fulness of the grace bestowed upon them; they participate in a perfect manner, each according to his degree, in the Divine Sonship of Jesus: that is why they remain, like Him, fixed forever in sanctuario secreto divinitatis: that is eternal impeccability.

Here below, it is not given to us to abide perfectly in this 'sanctuary of the Divinity.' But what is it that takes the place of the Beatific Vision for us upon earth? It is faith. Through faith we have God ever present... This

faith in the light of which we walk, is the source of
our union with Jesus and the root of our perfection... (7)

ii. The 'Mystery of Christ.'

Messiaen uses the term 'Mystère du Christ.' As St. Thomas
Aquinas points out, Christ is fundamental to a knowledge of God, for
the following reason:

Now what we are asked to hold by faith about God
cannot be self-evident to man, since it surpasses
the ability of the human intellect. It had therefore
to be made known to man by Him to Whom it is self-
evident... If man, therefore, was to reach a perfect
certitude concerning the truth of faith, he had to
be taught by God Himself made man, so that man might
receive the divine teaching in a human way. (8)

Marmion explains that it is through Christ that men can become
adopted sons of God; that God, in becoming Christ, in becoming human,
adopted mankind as His children, giving men a special relationship
with Him apart from that of being His creation, His creatures.
It is because of this special relationship that mankind can participate
in the knowledge God has of Himself, and it is for this reason that
Christ is central to the understanding of God in Catholic theology.
Marmion explains this more fully as follows:


8. Pegis, A.C. (ed), The Wisdom of Catholicism (England, 1950,
Four Square ed. 1962), 330.
From the Summa Contra Gentiles.
Being Infinite Intelligence, God perfectly comprehends Himself; in a single act, He sees all that He is, all that is in Him. He comprehends, as it were, in a single glance, the plenitude of His perfections, and, in one thought, in one word that exhausts all His knowledge. He expresses this infinite knowledge to Himself. This thought conceived by the eternal intelligence, this utterance whereby God expresses Himself is the Word. Faith tells us that this Word is God: ... because the Word has (or rather, He is) with God one and the same divine nature.

And because the Father communicates to this Word a nature not only like unto His own, but identical with it, Holy Scripture tells us that He begets the Word, and it calls the Word, the Son.... 'Thou art My Son, My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' ... Because this Son is indeed perfect; He possesses with the Father all the divine perfections saveing the property of 'being Father'; so perfect is He that He is the equal of His Father by the unity of nature. A creature can only give to another creature a nature like to his own: ...but God begets God and gives to Him His own nature. It is God's glory to beget the Infinite and to contemplate Himself in another Himself, Who is His equal. So equal is the Son to the Father that He is the Only-begotten, for there is only one Divine nature and the Son exhausts the eternal fecundity: ... therefore He is one with His Father ... (9)

The above clarifies the intimate relationship which exists between Christ and God, and it explains the nature of Christ's Sonship; God's expression to Himself of Himself through the Word, the Son. Because:

The Word was made flesh,
He lived among us,
And we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth (10)

because God took human flesh through the Word, and became 
man, mankind
has attained a special kinship with Him.

Marmion elucidates this further as follows:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with 
God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made 
flesh, and dwelt among us.'
Christ is the Incarnate Word. Revelation teaches 
us that the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the 
Word, the Son, took a human nature in order to unite 
Himself personally to it. This is the mystery of the 
Incarnation.(11)

It is at Jesus' baptism that God, for the first time, acknow-
ledges Christ's authenticity as the Son of God, for, after Jesus has
been baptised, He says:

'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased'.

As Marmion explains:

...It is at this moment that the mission of Jesus, as One 
sent by God, is declared authentic. The Father's 
testimony accredits, so to speak, His Son before the 
World... (12)

12. Ibid., 179.
Therefore it is through baptism that men become adopted as sons of God, in parallel with God's affirmation of the Sonship of Jesus at the moment of His baptism:

Baptism, with faith in Jesus Christ, has become for us the sacrament of Divine adoption and Christian initiation. (13)

The following summarizes the point clearly:

To the divine filiation, necessary and eternal, of His Only-begotten Son, the Father willed to add, by an act of love, infinitely free, a filiation of grace: He adopts us as His children, to the point that one day we shall share in the beatitude of His inmost life. This is an inexplicable mystery; but faith tells us that when a soul receives sanctifying grace at baptism, it participates in the divine nature. (14)

This explains, therefore, mankind's relationship with God, as seen from the Catholic point of view. It is one where mankind shares in the knowledge that God has of Himself, which is manifested in the Word become flesh; the Son. The Son is God's revelation of Himself to Men, and thus it is only through the Son that they can come to know God. Through baptism, mankind can attain a share in Christ's Sonship, by adoption, and thereby share in His special relationship with God, which is to know God as He knows Himself. The 'Mystery of Christ' is consequently fundamental to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

14. Ibid., 46.
iii. Divine Love.

The last aspect to be considered in this examination of the theological implications of Messiaen's statement, is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit:

...this beloved Son, equal to the Father, although distinct from Him, and, like Him, a Divine Person, does not leave the Father. The Word ever dwells in the infinite Intelligence that conceives Him; the Son ever dwells in the bosom of the Father Who begets Him: ... He dwells there by unity of nature. He also dwells there by the love which they mutually bear to one another and whence proceeds, as from one principle, the Holy Spirit, the substantial love of the Father and of the Son. ....

- The Father, plenitude of all life, begets a Son; from the Father and the Son, as from one principle, proceeds the Spirit of Love. All three have the same eternity, the same infinity of perfection, the same wisdom, the same power, the same sanctity, because the Divine nature is one for the Three Persons. (15)

This is the meaning of Divine Love. It is the Spirit of Love which proceeds from the love which the Father and the Son mutually bear to one another. Each comprehends completely the other's nature, for the Word was God's manifestation of His knowledge of Himself to Himself.

The following quotation concludes the discussion of the three theological concepts referred to by Messiaen, for it emphasizes man's relationship with God, and yet distinguishes it clearly from that

of the Son, who 'ever dwells in the bosom of the Father Who begets Him.'

As Marmion says, it is only by grace, by the love which proceeds from the Father and the Son, that man is able to share in the Sonship of God:

With the Word, we can say: 'O Father, I am Thy son, I came out from Thee.' The Word says it necessarily, by right, being essentially God's own Son; we say it only by grace, as adopted sons; - the Word says it from all eternity; we say it in time, although the decree of this predestination is eternal; - for the Word, this language denotes a relation of origin with the Father; for us, there is added a relation of dependence. But for us, as for Him, there is a true sonship: we are, by grace, God's children. (16)

2. Messiaen and the Catholic Faith.

When the comment, "...Mais la foi en votre art vous soutient", was made in an interview, Messiaen replied, "La foi, oui; la foi tout court", (17) and followed this with the statement quoted at the head of this chapter.

Taking into account the previous discussion of faith, it can be seen that Messiaen's reply to this comment is utterly from the Catholic point of view. The comment itself could be interpreted as meaning belief in art, however it is obvious that this interpretation would be meaningless to Messiaen. Faith, it will be remembered, is a


17. Bender, G., op.cit. 190.
mysterious participation in the knowledge that God has of Himself, and Messiaen therefore views his art as a manifestation of faith. This is emphasized in his own statement; "Toutes mes œuvres... sont un act de foi...". It is this faith which sustains his art, and this is why he says that he is, above all, a Catholic musician.

In the same interview he says:

...L'homme est chair et conscience, corps et âme.
Son coeur est l'abîme; seul le divin peut le remplir.
L'homme cherche Dieu partout. En art comme ailleurs...
Sans la foi nous ne toucherons pas les coeurs. (18)

The heart he views as an abyss which only Divine Love is capable of filling, and if art does not have faith - that is, if art is not a manifestation, or an act of faith - it is not capable of touching the heart.

In the discussion on the mystery of Christ, it was pointed out that in one word, God expressed to Himself, His infinite knowledge. This Word was therefore God, and It was called the Son. This same doctrine is expressed in Messiaen's Séquence du Verbe, Cantique Divin, (Dieu présent en lui-même...), the second of the Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine:

Il est parti le Bien-aimé, c'est pour nous!
Il est monté, le Bien-aimé, c'est pour nous!
Il a prié le Bien-aimé, c'est pour nous!
Pour nous!
Il a parlé, il a chanté,
Le Verbe était en Dieu!
    Il a parlé, il a chanté,
Et le Verbe était Dieu!

Louange du Père,
Substance du Père,
Empreinte et rejaillissement toujours,
Dans l'Amour,
Verbe d'Amour! (19)

The Word, as the Son, remains with the Father. To reiterate what Marmion says; "The Word ever dwells in the Infinite Intelligence that conceives Him." (20) This concept is expressed in the following quotation from the same Liturgy:

Par lui, le Père dit: c'est moi,
Parole de mon sein!
Par lui, le Père dit: c'est moi,
Le Verbe est dans mon sein! ... (21)

From the love which the Father and the Son mutually bear towards one another proceeds the Spirit of Love, and through this Love mankind can partake in the Sonship of God by adoption. By grace, men become God's children; as Messiaen puts it in the second of the Trois Petites Liturgies, "Enfants d'Amour":

Il était riche et bienheureux,
Il a donné son ciel!
Il était riche et bienheureux,
Pour compléter son ciel!
Le Fils, c'est la Présence,
L'Esprit, c'est la Présence!
Les adoptés dans la grâce toujours,
Pour l'Amour
Enfants d'Amour! ... (22)

22. Ibid., 72-78.
From this comparison of Messiaen's confession of faith, and some of his poetry from the *Trois Petites Liturgies*, with the teachings of Dom Columba Harmon, it can be seen that his religious concepts are theologically based, and are not mystical. As he says:

Musique pure, musique profane, et surtout musique théologique (et non pas mystique comme le croient la plupart de mes auditeurs) alternent dans ma production. (23)

Messiaen's faith has always been an integral part of his nature, and the following quotations illustrate this:

Tout enfant, j'ai été attiré irrésistiblement par la foi catholique, par la musique, et aussi par le théâtre et les décors de théâtre. Les deux premières passions seules ont subsisté. J'ai essayé d'être un musicien chrétien et de chanter ma foi, sans y arriver jamais. Sans doute parce que je n'en étais pas digne (soit dit sans fausse humilité!). (24)

Myself, I have always believed, simply and completely with the faith of a charcoal-burner. (25)

23. Messiaen, O., 'Une Équête'. *Contrepoints* No. 3 (Mars/Avril, 1946), 73.


25. Gavoty, E., 'Who are you Olivier Messiaen?' *Tempo*, (Summer, 1961), 34.
3. Messiaen and the "Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus".

Messiaen acknowledges directly his debt to Marmion for the inspiration of his *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* in the preface to the work, the *Note de l'Auteur*:

Dom Columba Marmion (Le Christ dans ses Mystères) et après lui Maurice Tesse (Les Douze Regards) ont parlé des regards des bergers, des anges, de la Vierge, du Père céleste; j'ai repris la même idée en la traitant de façon un peu différente et en ajoutant seize nouveaux regards. (26)

Marmion treats the "regards" or the contemplations of the Shepherds, Angels, Virgin and the Father under the title *Admirabile Commertium*. This is the intercourse or exchange which is effected between God and humanity - the exchange whereby God partakes of humanity, through the Word (His externalization of the knowledge He has of Himself) becoming flesh in the form of the Son, and the consequent partaking of humanity in the divinity as it now can, through the Son, become adopted Sons of God. Marmion examines the different degrees or modes in which this act was comprehended by those who contemplated Jesus at His birth.

This then, ... is one of the acts of the contract. God takes our nature so as to unite it to Himself in a personal union.

...... What is God going to give us in return?
...... What the Word Incarnate gives in return to humanity is an incomprehensible gift; it is a

participation, real and intimate, in His Divine nature. In exchange for the humanity which He takes, the Incarnate Lord gives us a share in His Divinity; He makes us partakers of His Divine Nature. And thus is accomplished the most wonderful exchange which could be made. (27)

Messiaen deals with this topic in the third piece of the Vingt Regards, entitled L'Echange, where he says, reflecting the idea expounded by Marmion:

Descente en gerbe, montée en spirale; terrible commerce humano-divin; Dieu se fait homme pour nous rendre dieux... (28)

The first to contemplate the infant Jesus is the Father, for the Son is the Word of the Father made flesh, and thus the two are both God.

The Heavenly Father now contemplates His Incarnate Son. The Word, although made man, nevertheless remains God. Become the Son of man, He is still the Son of God. The first glance that falls upon Christ, the first love wherewith He is surrounded, is the glance, the love of His Father. What contemplation and what love! Christ is the Only-begotten Son of the Father; therein lies His essential glory. He is equal to and 'consubstantial with the Father, God of God, Light of Light... by whom all things were made,' 'and without Him was made nothing that was made.' (29)

27. Marmion, Dom C., op.cit., 120, 121.

28. Messiaen, C., Vingt Regards, II.

29. Marmion, Dom C., op.cit., 118.
Messiaen places this *Regard du Père* first, and prefaces it with:

*Et Dieu dit: 'Celui-ci est mon Fils bien-aimé en qui j'ai pris toutes mes complaisances...'* (30)

the affirmation, by the Father, of Christ's divinity, which took place at His baptism.

Marmion comments again on the look of the Father, quoting the same affirmation:

The Heavenly Father saw that which never man, nor angel, nor Mary herself could comprehend: the infinite perfections of the Divinity hidden in a Babe... And this contemplation was the source of unspeakable rapture: Thou art My Son, My beloved Son, the Son of My dilection in Whom I have placed all My delights... (31)

Marmion discusses the look of the Shepherds as follows:

...simple-hearted men, enlightened by a ray from on high... they recognised in this Child the promised Messias, long awaited, ... they paid Him their homage, and their souls were for a long time full of joy and peace. (32)

Messiaen does not consider the look of the Shepherds separately, but groups them with the look of the Prophets and the Wise Men.

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32. Ibid., 131.
These constitute the different representatives of humanity who shared in the Nativity. He gives no special theological commentary to this piece.

Marmion then speaks of the contemplation of the Angels.

The Angels likewise contemplated the New-born Babe, the Word made Flesh. They saw in Him their God; this knowledge threw these pure spirits into awe and wonderment at such incomprehensible self-abasement; for it was not to their nature that He willed to unite Himself, but to human nature. (33)

This idea is reflected exactly in Messiaen’s commentary to the

Regard des Anges;

... - et la stupeur des anges s’agrandit; - car ce n’est pas à eux mais à la race humaine que Dieu s’est uni... (34)

Marmion quotes, as the basis for the idea expressed in these commentaries, Paul’s letter to the Hebrews:

For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. (35)

The last contemplation which Marmion discusses is that of the Blessed Virgin.

34. Messiaen, O., Vingt Regards, III.
Into what depths of the mystery did her gaze penetrate - that gaze so pure, so humble, so tender, so full of bliss? Who shall be able to express with what lights the soul of Jesus inundated His Mother, and what perfect homage Mary rendered to her Son, to her God, to all the States and mysteries whereof the Incarnation is the substance and the root. (36)

Messiaen devotes two pieces of the twenty to the Virgin. The first is number four, Regard de la Vierge, in which the Virgin in her innocence, tenderness and purity contemplates the Child.

Innocence et tendresse... la femme de la Purité,
la femme du Magnificat, la Vierge regard son Enfant... (37)

The other is number eleven, Première communion de la Vierge, where, through the idea of the Virgin consenting to bear the Child, and therefore receiving Jesus into her, the first communion was made with God. A tableau is presented where her womb is encircled by a bright halo. This picture is very close to the one Halmion draws when he says; 'Who shall be able to express with what lights the soul of Jesus inundated His Mother'.

Un tableau où la Vierge est représentée à genoux, repliée sur elle-même dans la nuit - une auréole lumineuse surplombe ses entrailles. Les yeux fermés, elle adore le fruit caché en elle. Ceci se passe entre l'Annonciation et la Nativité: c'est la première et la plus grande de toutes les communions. (38)

37. Messiaen, O., Vingt Regards, II.
38. Ibid., III.
These pieces from the Viuct Regards represent the direct inspiration derived from Marmion's book Christ in His Mysteries, but it can also be seen that all the ideas expressed in the work are theologically based. For instance, the Note de l'auteur for Recueil de l'Esprit de Joie reads as follows:

Donnez vénération, ton livre des cors, transport du Saint-Esprit... la joie d'amour du Dieu bienheureux dans l'âme de Jésus-Christ... J'ai toujours été très frappé par ce fait que Dieu est heureux - et que cette joie ineffable et continue habitait l'âme du Christ. Joie qui est pour moi un transport, une ivresse, dans le sens le plus fou du terme. (39)

Marmion writes concerning the Nativity of Christ:

Therefore joy is one of the most marked characteristics of the celebration of this mystery. The Church constantly invites us to it, remembering the words of the angel to the shepherds: 'Behold I bring you tidings of great joy... for this day is born to you a Saviour.' It is the joy of deliverance, of the inheritance regained, of peace found once again, and above all, of the vision of God Himself given to men. (40)

The theological teachings which have been outlined earlier in this chapter are also found to be the basis of the following quotations from Messiaen's preface:

39. Messiaen, O., Viuct Regards, II.
40. Marmion, Dom C., op.cit., 130.
...la personne du Verbe dans une nature humaine - mariage des natures humaine et divine en Jésus-Christ...
Il s'agit évidemment du Fils-Verbe regardant le Fils-Enfant-Jésus. (41)

Cet enfant est le Verbe qui soutient toutes choses par la puissance de sa parole. (42)

Le Verbe assume une certaine nature humaine; choix de la chair de Jésus par la Majesté épouvantable... (43)

This section reveals, therefore, the very close correspondence which exists between the theological teachings of Dom Columba Marmion, outlined in his book, Christ in His Mysteries, and the ideas which Messiaen expresses in his preface to his Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus.


Aquinas' Summa Theologica has long had widespread recognition as the most authoritative theological work in the Catholic Church. In 1918 Aquinas' work was incorporated into the Codex Juris Canonici which directs that priests should receive their

41. Messiaen, O., Vingt Regards, II.
42. Ibid., III.
43. Ibid., III.
theological and philosophical training according to the methods, doctrines, and principles of Aquinas. He was the first to set up the structure whereby both reason and faith, philosophy and theology, could be joined, and thereby used together in the seeking of knowledge of God.

By the thirteenth century, the division of intellectual life into two sharply divided sections had become very acute - the division into what was 'known' and what was 'believed'. Aquinas saw it as his function to join the two, and saw that the only way for unification came in accepting the truth in both opposing positions, thereby unifying through discourse, rather than taking the traditional authoritarian position to the exclusion of one side or the other. The intellectual knowledge over which there was so much dispute was that of the classical Greek philosophers, notably Aristotle. The interest aroused by Aristotle's writings had been accompanied by the reserve and hostility of the ecclesiastical authorities. As Copleston states:

For though Aquinas was convinced of the great value of the potentialities of Aristotelianism as an intellectual instrument, the weight of conservative opinion was against him. ...the more conservative thinkers tended to stress a division between the Christian theologian-philosophers like St Augustine and St Anselm and the pagan philosophers. (44)

Aquinas was therefore the first to enunciate clearly that knowledge of God should be sought both from the writings of philosophers as well as theologians, and to show that there was not necessarily any dichotomy between them. Pieper states the position as follows:

...to one who is engaged in theology it is impossible to delimit a specific realm of subject matter. For that would mean presuming to limit the speech of God to specific subjects. We need only express this to expose the absurdity of any such undertaking: it is obviously not for us to determine what God may speak of and what not. This means that it is likewise impossible to say that theology ought to lie beyond the range of natural knowledge. The documents of revelation contain many things that 'in themselves' are also comprehensible to the natural cognitive powers of man and attainable by those powers. Thomas went out of his way to show the significance of that. (45)

From Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, comes the following proposition; 'That the truth of God to which the natural reason reaches is fittingly proposed to men for belief':

Since, therefore, there exists a twofold truth concerning the divine being, one to which the inquiry of the reason can reach, the other which surpasses the whole ability of the human reason, it is fitting that both of these truths be proposed to man divinely for belief. (46)

He states that it is the function of the intellect to understand God:

To know God, therefore, by understanding Him is the final end of an intellectual substance. (47)

The structure towards which Christianity had been aiming, and to which it has remained consistent ever since, "...the conjunctio rationis et fidei, the conjunction of reason with faith," (48) was therefore established in Aquinas' work.

As evidence for the use of reason in seeking knowledge of God, Aquinas postulates the following:

Sensible things, from which the human reason takes the origin of its knowledge, retain within themselves some sort of trace of a likeness to God. (49)

This statement is buttressed by the following argument:

Because God by virtue of His essence is existence itself, therefore the existence of what He has created is necessarily a producing peculiar to His essence; just as flaming up is the effect peculiar to the essence of fire. Therefore God must be in all things, and in the most intimate manner. (50)

As Pieper explains, this means that:

Every existing thing - whether alive or not, whether material or spiritual, whether perfected or wretched, and in fact whether good or evil - everything that has existence, confronts us in the most direct way with the primal reality of God...

because the being of the world participates in the divine being which pervades it to its innermost core, the world is not only a good world; it is in a very precise sense holy. (51)

However, Aquinas was careful to assert that reason alone is not sufficient in the seeking of knowledge of God. The postulate that sensible things retain within themselves some sort of trace of a likeness to God is followed by this qualification:

This is so imperfect, however, that it is absolutely inadequate to manifest the substance of God. For, effects bear within themselves, in their own way, the likeness of their causes, since an agent produces its like; yet an effect does not always reach to the full likeness of its cause. Now the human reason is related to the knowledge of the truth of faith (a truth which can be most evident only to those who seek the divine substance) in such a way that it can gather certain likenesses of it, which are yet not sufficient so that the truth of faith may be comprehended as being understood demonstratively or through itself. (52)

He shows that faith as well as reason is necessary in order to gain knowledge of God, and supports the necessity of faith with the following:

Just as, therefore, it would be the height of folly for a simple person to assert that what a philosopher proposes is false on the ground that he himself cannot understand it, so (and even more so) it is the acme of stupidity for a man to judge as false what is divinely revealed through the ministry of the angels simply because it cannot be investigated by reason. (53)

53. Ibid., 308.
Intellectual knowledge was seen by Aquinas as a necessary prelude to knowledge gained by faith, as the following quotation illustrates:

The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature and perfection the perfectible. (54)

As it is impossible for the intellect to completely comprehend the nature of God, he states:

Beneficially, therefore, did the divine mercy provide that it should instruct us to hold by faith even those truths which the human reason is able to investigate. (55)

And it is, therefore, in the eventual turning away from the visible things of the world to those things which are invisible that men will gain closest contact with, and knowledge of God:

In this (Christian) faith there are truths preached which surpass every human intellect; the pleasures of the flesh are curbed; it is taught that the things of the world should be spurned. Now for the minds of mortal men to assent to these things is the greatest of miracles, just as it is a manifest work of divine inspiration that, spurning visible things, men should seek only what is invisible. (56)


56. Ibid., 313.
Aquinas then shows that man's seeking for the invisible realities and truths is a fulfilment of the revelation which God has given to man of Himself, in that God has revealed Himself, among other things, as belonging to an invisible world, contactable only by faith. The following statement of Aquinas, supporting this point, concludes this discussion of his teachings:

Now that this has happened neither unexpectedly now by chance, but as a result of the disposition of God, is clear from the fact that through many pronouncements of the ancient prophets God had foretold that He would do this. The books of these prophets are held in veneration among us Christians, since they give witness to our faith. (57)

5. Messiaen and Aquinas.

A comparison of a number of Messiaen's statements with the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas reveals that these teachings are an integral part of Messiaen's religious philosophy, thus enabling a more complete understanding of that philosophy.

The following are two statements he has made concerning the aims of his music:

Je veux écrire de la musique qui soit un acte de foi, une musique qui touche à tous les sujets sans cesser de toucher à Dieu. (58)


God for me is manifest, and my conception of sacred music derives from this conviction:
God being present in all things, music dealing with theological subjects must be extremely varied. (59)

Aquinas taught that all created things retain within themselves some sort of semblance of God, and that God must be in all things in the most intimate manner. He also stated that an intellectual knowledge of the natural world was a necessary prelude to faith. Messiaen's aims, therefore, are directly in line with these teachings, for they affirm his wish to touch all subjects without ceasing to touch God, his belief that music which deals with theological subjects must be extremely varied.

In the third of the Trois Petites Liturgies, the same idea is expressed. The title of this Liturgy is Psalmodie de l'Ubiquité par amour (Dieu présent en toutes choses), and the first stanza reads as follows:

Tout entier en tous lieux,
Tout entier en chaque lieu,
Donnant l'être à chaque lieu,
A tout ce qui occupe un lieu,
Le successif vous est simultané,
Dans ces espaces et ces temps que vous
(avez créés,
Satellites de votre Douceur,
Posez-vous comme un sceau sur mon coeur ... (60)

59. Gavoty, B., op.cit., 34.
60. Messiaen, O., Liturgies, 118-121.
Messiaen, himself, says of these lines:

Cette description de l'ubiquité divine,
l'attribution d'un être à chaque lieu sont des
conceptions thomistes. (61)

and continues:

Le successif vous est simultané, ces termes,
qui décrivent la différence entre le temps et
l'éternité, sont de moi, mais sont dans le
courant d'idées de saint Thomas d'Aquin. (62)

The chapter on the philosophy of time will examine in
detail the Thomist notion of time, which is based on that of
Aristotle. It will be seen in that chapter that Aristotle defined
time as "the number of motion according to before and after", (63)
and the implications of this definition will be gone into fully there.
At this stage, it is only necessary to note that because time is
defined in terms of before and after, it is "necessarily unidirectional
because each phase of the primary motion is numerically distinct from
its neighbours before and after."(64) Therefore, because time is
numbered number, and it is imbedded primarily in one particular motion,
the position of each event on the time line is always irrevocably
different. The opposite of time is eternity, and if successive

61. Coléa, A., Rencontres, 49.
62. Ibid., 49.
    (New York, 1967), 156.
64. Ibid., 160.
events are simultaneous, they cannot possibly be conceived in terms of time, as defined above, and consequently must belong to eternity. This is what Messiaen means when he says that "Le successif vous est simultané" describes the difference between time and eternity.

Aquinas stated that reason was not sufficient to gain a knowledge of God, and that faith must ultimately be the means by which God is known, for He has revealed Himself as belonging to an invisible world contactable only by faith. Messiaen speaks of the invisible world as follows:

Si tout était 'normal' dans le monde invisible, où serait la différence entre l'Infini et le fini, entre Dieu et les hommes, et que nous resterait-il à apprendre dans l'éternité? 'Heureux ceux qui n'ont pas vu et qui ont cru!': c'est écrit dans l'Evangile. (65)

and in a specific reference to the Creed again refers to this world, thus reaffirming the fundamental importance of the doctrines of Catholic theology in his own religious philosophy:

'Je crois en un seul Dieu Tout-Puissant, créateur des choses visibles et invisibles.' Ce terme 'chose invisible', qui contient tout, le monde des étoiles, le monde des atomes, le monde des anges, le monde des démons, le monde des nos propres pensées et le monde de tout ce qui nous est inconnu, notamment le monde des possibles, qui n'est connu que de Dieu, ce terme m'a tellement frappé, que je lui ai dédié spécialement une pièce d'orgue, la seconde de ma Messe de la Pentecôte, pour orgue seul. (66)

66. Ibid., 39.
A final confirmation of Messiaen's intimate knowledge of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* is his use of quotations from this work as texts in his two latest works, *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, and *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité*. That Aquinas' work is the basis of Messiaen's own theological philosophy is particularly emphasized by his use of it as the means of creating different series with his "communicable language." (67) It has already been shown that Messiaen was reported as insisting that through the use of this language, and consequently, through the teachings of Aquinas, his own basic creed would be transmitted to future generations. (68)

67. See Chap. IV, page 64.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIME.

I studied rhythm extensively and read almost all works available on the problem of Time (philosophical Time) ranging from Plato to Ferguson and Louis Lavelle. (1) (2)

Messiaen made the above statement when discussing his preoccupation with the use of rhythm in music, and his desire to be known as a rhythmist. It would be impossible to attempt to give a detailed account of the history of the philosophy of time, and so no more than a brief summary of some of the main philosophies which have had an impact on Messiaen's thinking will be given in this chapter. This will, of necessity, be incomplete and distorted, and will in fact be not much more than a list of definitions with commentaries, but it will illuminate a number of Messiaen's statements concerning time.

1. Lavelle, Louis, Born Saint-Martin-de-Villeréal, 15 July, 1883, died there 1 September, 1951. With René Le Senne, he founded the movement known as the philosophy of the spirit, which aimed at a renewal of metaphysics in reaction to positivism and classical rationalism. He was named inspector general of national education, then Professor at the Collège de France in 1941. In 1947 he was elected to the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques. One of his last writings ends on this characteristic note: "We should tremble with joy every morning at the thought that we have another day to love God."

His philosophy began with an analysis of being, founded on an experience that includes and transfigures the sensible. At the source of being he found divine love. The real, in his thinking, gradually merged with cosmicality and tended to reduce itself to objectifiable phenomena. He defended the univocity of being, but sought to avoid pantheism. His philosophy was extremely rich, formed in a highly developed system, equating religion and philosophy, covering many kinds of values and categories, including time.

discontinuous and predictable. The intellect is incapable of comprehending life, becoming, and spirit, and it refuses to admit the existence of God, the human soul and free will. Bergson was therefore concerned to assert the spirit of man, and reject the mechanistic view of man. (5)

The intellect evolved solely to ensure man's physical survival and to make possible his domination over nature, and its power is the ability to see things as separate from one another, it can deal then only with inert matter, for matter is that which is separated into distinct things. As Bochenski states:

Since we require clearly defined things for our use, the intellect concentrates upon whatever is corporeal, unorganized, and partially fixed because the intellect can only lay hold upon immovable things. It can only conceive of matter, which it constructs for the purpose of turning bodies into tools; it is the organ of homo faber and its essential function is to fashion tools. (6)

Bergson saw matter as opposed to life; as the degradation, or the descending motion of the upward flow of life, which is the primordial reality. Intellect cannot therefore know life; it can only be known and understood by intuition, which is the process of direct contact or coincidence.

As he states:

The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to understand life. (7)

Philosophy must therefore be both empirical and intuitive, for reality, which is ever moving, growing and unpredictable, can only be known through intuition. The intellect can only form a clear idea of the discontinuous and immobile; its concepts are outside each other like objects in space, and have the same stability. The intellect can only therefore be concerned with space, and only intuition can be concerned with time.

Bergson regarded time and space, consequently, as dissimilar, and to be considered as separate. Space is the characteristic of matter, and time is the essential characteristic of life. However, Bergson was careful to emphasize that the time spoken of is not mathematical time, which is "the homogeneous assemblage of mutually external instants", (8) for this is really a form of space. The time which is of the essence of life is duration:

We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space. (9)

8. Ibid., 759.
Nonetheless, he states that because of familiarity with space it is inevitable that:

...we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another." (10)

The following is Bergson's account of duration:

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present states from its former states. For this purpose it need not be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea; for then, on the contrary, it would no longer endure. Nor need it forget its former states: it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (11)

Duration, then, is never something made, it is perpetual becoming, and memory consequently plays a very important part in this concept, for it is in the memory that the past survives in the present.


11. Ibid., 100.
Plato conceived time as "the moving image of eternity" or "the everlasting image revolving according to number." (12) Time, then, for Plato was the movement of the sphere of the fixed stars; their circular course imitating the unchangeable life of the Living Being. The revolutions of the stars number the intervals called days and nights, months and years. The following is Plato's account:

When the father who had begotten it saw it set in motion and alive, ...he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern. So as that pattern is the Living Being that is forever existent, he sought to make this universe also like it, so far as it might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing. But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number -- that to which we have given the name Time." (13)

He goes on to say that before this there were no days and nights, months and years; they came into existence at the same time as the heaven was framed. The forms of time 'was' and 'will be'


do not and cannot apply to the eternal being, only 'is' belongs to it and describes it truly. 'Was' and 'will be' can only apply to the 'moving image of eternity', for they belong to becoming which proceeds in time; they are therefore motions.

The sight of day and night, months and years, has created in us a knowledge of number, and has therefore given us the conception of time. The difference between eternity and the heaven is clearly enunciated, in that the movement of the sphere of the fixed stars imitates the life of the Living Being, and therefore of eternity, but it is precisely this movement which differentiates it from eternity:

But that which is forever in the same state immovably cannot be becoming older or younger by lapse of time, nor can it ever become so; neither can it now have been, nor will it be in the future; and in general nothing belongs to it of all that Becoming attaches to the moving things of the sense; but these have come into being as forms of time, which images eternity and revolves according to number. (14)

Time, therefore, is the image of the eternal, moving according to number. It is apparent that Plato defined time in terms of what it is not, that is, in terms of the eternal. His explanation of time was metaphysical, whereas Aristotle, as will be seen in the next section, attempted to define time by means of natural induction.

3. Aristotle.

Aristotle, in his discussion of time, first of all postulated the possibility of the non-existence of time, for it is composed of past and future, of which the one no longer exists, while the other does not yet exist. (15) However, he rejected this view, defining time as "the number of motion according to before and after." (16)

He clearly separated the notions of time and movement, showing that time, although it accompanies motion, is not identical with it:

Now the most obvious thing about time is that it strikes us as some kind of 'passing along' and changing; but if we follow this clue, we find that, when any particular thing changes or moves, the movement or change is in the moving or changing thing itself or occurs only where that thing is; whereas 'the passage of time' is current everywhere alike and is in relation with everything. And further, all changes may be faster or slower, but not so time; for fast and slow are defined by time, 'faster' being more change in less time, and 'slower' less in more. But time cannot measure time thus, as though it were a distance (like the space passed through in motion) or a qualitative modification, as in other kinds of change. It is evident, therefore, that time is not identical with movement; nor, in this connexion, need we distinguish between movement and other kinds of change. (17)

He then reached the conclusion that time is a measure, and consequently, that time is number:

Time, then, is not movement, but that by which movement can be numerically estimated. (18)

Aristotle observed that motion is potentially time, but only becomes so in actuality when its temporal succession is noted and measured by some sentient creature. (19)

He then deduced the continuity of time, that is, its infinite divisibility, from the fact that motion is continuous. This, in its turn, is deduced from the continuity of the space traversed. Therefore, as the space traversed is continuous, so then must motion be continuous; and as there is complete correspondence between each point of the trajectory and a moment of time, then the time that measures it must be continuous also. (20)

The concept of the continuum is clarified as follows, and this leads to the adoption of the notion of 'before and after' in Aristotle's definition of time:

A continuum is formally one and materially partitive: the parts joined to one another make up an order of local before and after. Not motion as such, but motion concretized in the spatial continuum, is properly called motion according to before and after. Data from nature and art attest that man estimates time by noting motion according to before and after. (21)

20. Ibid., 1.
As far as number is concerned, Aristotle saw it as a multitude measured by unity, the many arising from the division of the continuum. Time, then, comes from the division of the motion-continuum by the 'nows' which occur along its passage. This motion, made many by the continuum divisions, is raised to the state of number when it is seen by a sentient creature as before and after under the common aspect of the 'now', and then counted as two 'nows'. Number, then, is the multitude, that is, the continuum divisions, measured by unity, which is the 'now', observed by the mind.

The complete definition of time therefore, is 'the number of motion according to before and after', which is, the multitude of continuum divisions that the motion describes, seen by a sentient being as 'now...now'.

The section devoted to St. Thomas Aquinas made the point that Aquinas attempted, in his work, to bridge and unify the revelations of Christianity with the intellectual knowledge of Aristotle. As far as the philosophy of time is concerned, therefore, Aquinas' philosophy is an elucidation of the philosophy of Aristotle. He specified that the 'nows', as observed by a sentient being, rather than any continuous parts, are numbered before and after; that the primary motion exists secondarily in other motions; and that time is essentially a being of nature, needing the soul to fix its totality. The last point is a re-affirmation of the necessity of the observation of the 'nows' by a sentient being, which has become in his philosophy, the soul. (22)

22. Quinn, J.M., op. cit., 156.
The difference between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle becomes apparent, in that Plato defined time as the 'moving image of eternity', and the intervals, or numbers, which result from this movement constitute time, whereas Aristotle defined it as the measure of movement, as number, that by which movement can be numerically estimated, according to before and after. As was pointed out in the preceding section, Plato's definition is metaphysical, in that he defined time in terms of the eternal, and Aristotle attempted a definition according to natural induction.

4. Messiaen and the Philosophy of Time.

On examining the few available statements which Messiaen has made on time, it can be seen that they have closest correspondence with the philosophy of Aristotle, and consequently with that of Aquinas. He says:

L'étude du Rythme commencent par celle du Temps, j'ai essayé il y a quelques années de faire à mes élèves du Conservatoire de Paris une philosophie de la Durée. Je leur ai parlé de tous ces temps superposés qui nous entourent: temps immensément long des étoiles, temps très long des montagnes, temps moyen de l'homme, temps court des insectes, temps très courts des atomes: tous ces temps étant semblables en ce sens qu'ils représentent pour chaque unité une durée de vie normale -- tous ces temps présentant aux contraire d'énormes différences pour notre perception.(23)

This philosophy is laid out in Messiaen's enormous work, the *Traité de Rythme*, as the first section of the work, but this, unfortunately, has still to be published. (24) However, a number of deductions can be drawn from the few statements he has made.

In the *Conférence de Bruxelles* he says:

Supposons un seul frappé dans tout l'univers.
Un frappé: il y a l'éternité avant, l'éternité après. Un avant, un après, c'est la naissance du Temps. (25)

Defining time in terms of a before and an after is synonymous with the definition of time given by Aristotle. That is, time is conceived as number, which is observed as before and after. Before giving this definition, Messiaen shows that he is thinking in terms of number when he states:

*N'oublions pas que l'élément premier, essential, de la musique, est le rythme, et que le rythme c'est d'abord le changement de nombre et de durée.* (26)

And following the statement on the nature of time, he says:

Supposons, presque aussitôt, un second frappé. Comme tout frappé se prolonge du silence qui le suit, le second frappé sera plus long que le premier. Autre nombre, autre durée, c'est la naissance du Rythme. (27)

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24. Information obtained from correspondence with Leduc et Cie, 19 May, 1972.
26. Ibid., 3.
27. Ibid., 3.
Thus time, for Messiaen, is seen as number, and duration is seen as the quantity of number, which is the specific amount of time, or number, which each beat encloses. This concept is absolutely fundamental to Messiaen's notion of rhythm, for he then conceives rhythm as the change of number, or duration, which can exist between two or more different beats.

The given case illustrates a situation where the second beat is longer than the first, thereby bringing about a change of duration from the first beat to the second. This constitutes, for Messiaen, the concept of rhythm, as distinct from the mere passage of time. He does not conceive rhythm in terms of the reiteration of a given pattern, or in terms of the bar, or measure, but symmetrically, as a series of changes in duration. This means that, for him, each beat in a particular piece of music has its own duration, built up from the free multiplications of a short value, and the rhythm of the piece comes from the series of durational changes. (28)

It can be seen, therefore, that the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy of time is necessary for this concept of rhythm, and this explains Messiaen's insistence that the study of rhythm begins with the study of time.

Messiaen's definition of rhythm is reinforced by the following statement:

La liberté rythmique a été victime des mètres réguliers, puis de la mesure, puis des valeurs irrationnelles: on a cru la retrouver par le hasard: or le hasard se calcule... Et les musiciens vivent dans le TEMPS -- leur musique se déroule dans le Temps...

The second half of this statement speaks of musicians living in time, and of their music unfolding in time. Another statement, which follows, expresses the same idea:

...duration does not belong to music but, on the contrary, music belongs to time. The greatest creation of God is Time, which is the absolute opposite of Eternity. Everything which we do evolves in Time, including music. As a result, duration -- not music -- is the important thing.

The concept expressed here, namely that everything is in time, including music, is again in line with the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy of time. Time is the measure of motion, and therefore everything is in time, inasmuch as it is connected with motion. It is established that the very substance of mobile being is not being temporally determined, but only a thing's duration or concrete length of existence.

he views duration in terms of length of existence, and, as this is measured by time, music, which is made up of a succession of durations, is connected with motion and thus belongs to time. Consequently, Messiaen sees duration as "the important thing", which explains his preoccupation with rhythm, and his desire to be known primarily as a rhythmist.

Messiaen's concept of time diverges widely from the Bergsonian point of view, for Bergson would have seen the definition of time in terms of number, or measurement, as a spatialization of time. It is evident, therefore, that Messiaen, although having read Bergson on time, has not followed his notion of duration, but has kept within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

It is pertinent to note, however, that Messiaen, in taking part in the formation of Jeune France, was concerned to promote the ideals of sincerity, generosity and "un retour a l'humain", as opposed to the mechanistic approach to man and music which Jeune France considered was prevalent at the time. Their aim was to create and propagate:

...une musique vivante dans un même élan de sincérité, de générosité, de conscience artistique. (32)

The desire to create a living music accords with Bergson's philosophy, which has been categorized by Bochenski as a Philosophy of Life. (33)


Bergson completely rejected mechanistic philosophical systems, dependent on the methods of science, and erected a system based on intuition. He also defined the fundamental concept of his philosophy, duration, in terms of life.\(^{(34)}\) Thus, a very close correspondence can be seen between the basic concepts of Bergson's philosophy and the aims of Jeune France. It could perhaps be said that although Kessiaen's idea of time is not influenced by Bergson, his approach to life and music, as revealed in the Jeune France manifesto, is closely aligned with Bergson's philosophy.

\(^{(34)}\) Bergson, H., op.cit., 100. "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live."
CHAPTER SEVEN

CÉCILE SAUVAGE

Il y a dans la poésie de ma mère, et surtout dans l'Ame en bourgeon, un goût de l'observation des choses de la nature et une richesse d'images dont je dois tenir mon amour du chatoiement sonore et mon amour des chants d'oiseaux... (1)

1. Perspective.

The main collection of Cécile Sauvage's poetry was published by Mercure de France in 1929, under the title Oeuvres de Cécile Sauvage, and contains the following sets of poetry: (2) Tandis que la terre tourne, l'Ame en bourgeon, Melancolies, Fumées, Le Vallon, Primevère, as well as two sections headed Fragments and Pensées et extraits de lettres. The preface for this collection was written by Jean Tenant. An earlier edition of her works, entitled Tandis que la terre tourne, poèmes, was published in 1910, also by Mercure de France. In 1955, a special edition of l'Ame en bourgeon, with a preface by Marie Dormoy, and a portrait of the poet, painted in 1912 by Georges Pavis, was published by the house of Steff in Paris.


According to Mari, Cécile Sauvage also wrote a work entitled Hémérocalle et la guerre in the style of La Nef of Elemir Bourges, and Shelley's Prometheus Bound, but this work has now been lost.

Messiaen states that his mother belonged to the naturalist period of poetry, and gives as an example of this period, Francis Jammes. In the correspondence between Henri Alain-Fournier and Jacques Rivière from 1905 onwards, is found the following reason for Alain-Fournier's love of Jammes:

J'ai aimé Francis Jammes parce qu'il n'a pas séparé la vie d'avec l'art. (6)

In a way, this opinion summarizes the aim of the period in poetry from the turn of the century, and of Jammes' in particular, for the period was "...one of conscious glorification of existence, of an acceptance of the universe, which might take the form of pantheism". (7)


5. Jammes, F., Born 1868, died 1938. His most noted book of verse is De l'angélus de l'aube à l'angélus du soir (1888-97). He was converted to Catholicism, partly as a result of Claudel's influence. Both Milhaud and Honegger have set selections of Jammes poetry: Milhaud in his opera, La Brebis Egarée (1910-1915), and in the song cycles, Poèmes de Francis Jammes (1910-18), L'Eglise habillée de feuilles (1915, unpublished), Trois Elegies de Francis Jammes (1939, unpublished), and Fontaines et sources (1956), and Honegger as one of his Quatre Poèmes (1914-1916).


7. Ibid., xxiv.
and James' aim was to assert the poetic value of the common life.

The following extract from his poem, *A Charles de Bourdeu*, illustrates this point clearly:

Le soleil faisait luire l'eau du puits sans le verre. Les pierres de la ferme étaient cassées et viciles, et les montagnes bleues avaient des lignes douces comme l'humidité qui luisait dans la mousse. La rivièrè était noire et les racines d'arbres étaient noires et tordues sur les bords qu'elle râpe. On fauchait au soleil où les herbes bougeaient, et le chien, timide et pauvre, par devoir aboyait. La vie existait... (8)

Cécile Sauvage's poetry reflects the same aspirations, for its main themes are her own experiences and emotions, and their relationship with the natural world. In her work and thought, she expressed a pantheistic point of view, for she regarded the world, without any reference to religious belief in a creator, as existing in its own right, and herself as an integral part of it.

The following quotation from Dom Columba Marmion clarifies the pantheistic position:

The whole creation came forth from the hands of the Father, not by an emanation of His nature, as the pantheists would have it, but in that it was produced from nothing by virtue of the Divine Omnipotence. (9)

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The fundamental difference, therefore, between the teaching of Catholicism, and pantheism, is that the Catholic faith holds that God created the world from nothing, whereas a pantheist believes that God is everything, and vice versa, and cannot be separate from the creation.

An examination of Cécile Sauvage's poetry, and of statements of her beliefs, as recorded by Pierre Messiaen, shows that she had a very acute sensitivity to the forces and processes of nature, and that she was strongly opposed to any sort of religious belief.

2. Poetry.

Pierre Messiaen says of *l'Ame en bourgeon*:

*l'Ame en bourgeon, réunissant le berceau et le tombeau, sans élan supra-terrestre d'espoirance, ne peut que scandaliser un chrétien.* (10)

His observation is justified in the light of the following lines from the poem, *La Tête*:

O mon fils, je tiendrai ta tête dans ma main,
Je dirai: j'ai pétri ce petit monde humain;
Sous ce front dont la courbe est une aurore étroite
J'ai logé l'univers rajeuni qui miroite
Et qui lave d'azur les chagrins pluvieux.
Je dirai: j'ai donné cette flamme à ces yeux,

J'ai tiré du sourire ambigu de la lune,
Des reflets de la mer, du velours de la prune
Ces deux astres naifs ouverts sur l'infini.
Je dirai: J'ai formé cette joue et ce nid
De la bouche où l'oiseau de la voix se démente;
C'est mon œuvre, ce monde avec sa face humaine.

The last line of this poem reads:

Et la tête de mort, c'est moi qui l'ai sculptée. (11)

These lines indicate her feeling of possession over the child, in fact even over the act of birth, for, as she says; "C'est mon œuvre."

They glorify the process of birth, completely from a personal point of view, for it is she who has 'shaped this little human world', has 'placed the universe under this brow', and has 'given this flame to these eyes.'

The first two stanzas of Enfant, pâle embryon, addressed to the embryo which she carries within her, speak of its existence in terms of a fish drowsing below the reeds, and of a plant unconsciously drawing its being from the breast of the earth:

Enfant, pâle embryon, toi qui dors dans les eaux,
Comme un petit dieu mort dans un cercueil de verre,
Tu goûtes maintenant l'existence légère
Du poisson qui somnole au-dessous des roseaux.

Tu vis comme la plante, et ton inconscience
Et d'un lis entrouvert qui n'a que sa candeur,
Qui ne sait même pas à quelle profondeur
Dans le sein de la terre il puise sa substance. (12)


Goléa's comment on this poem is:

Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est qu'il n'y a rien de très catholique dans ce poème, extraordinairement panthéiste et d'une ressonance typiquement baudelairienne.

12. Ibid., 20.
The comparison of the embryo with 'a little dead god in a coffin of glass' is especially noteworthy, for it echoes the idea stated in *La Tête* of the 'head of death' which she has carved. Both of these images illustrate what Pierre Messiaen means when he speaks of *l'Âme en bourgeon* 'uniting the cradle and the tomb'.

Again, the possession she feels over the child in her womb is emphasized, for she regrets the time of its birth, as this will mean its loss to her. (13) Her participation in the act of creating life, seen here in terms of an extremely intimate physical contact with the embryo, expresses itself in an intense love, bordering on ecstasy:

La larme qui me monte aux yeux, tu la connais,
Elle a le goût profond de mon sang sur les lèvres,
Tu sais quelles ferveurs, quelle brûlantes fièvres
Déchaînent dans ma veine un torrent acharné.

Ecoute, maintenant que tu m'entends encor,
Imprime dans mon sein ta bouche puérile,
Réponds à mon amour avec ta chair docile:
Quel autre enlacement me paraîtra plus fort? (14)

From a later set of poems, *Le Vallon*, (1909-1913), comes an extract which indicates how Cécile Sauvage regarded death:

Ma bouche a la bonté du rire et la jeunesse
De vos premiers baisers, des baveuses caresses
Que donnent, fleurs du jour, les lèvres enfantines.

13. This point was previously made in Chap.I, page 4, where the following stanza is quoted:
"Les jours que je vivrai isolée et sans flamme,
Quand tu seras un homme et moins vivant pour moi,
Je reverrai les temps où j'étais avec toi,
Lorsque nous étions deux à jouer dans mon âme.

Venez, la terre même écoute et me devine
Et m'appelle sa soeur humaine et doureuse,
Moi qui seule connais, dans mes entrailles creuses,
Toute l'horreur que donne au sang vivant la mort,
La mort qui me regarde et qui sur mon trésor
De chair plante sa main osseuse et sépulcrale,
Et dépouille l'enfant de sa fraîcheur natale,
Et montre le squelette et réduit en poussière
Le squelette lui-même et la nature entière... (15)

This quotation contrasts the freshness of the child, its kisses and lips,
with the unavoidable fate which awaits it - that of returning to the
earth, through death. She regards this inevitability with horror in
the lines:

Moi qui seule connais, dans mes entrailles creuses,
Toute l'horreur que donne au sang vivant la mort,

and visualizes death in terms of a bony, sepulchral hand, which reveals
the skeleton, and reduces even this to dust, along with the whole of
nature.

Each of these examples shows a complete involvement in the forces
of life; each glorifies life, and draws its images solely from nature.
Cécile Sauvage's poetry, like Jammes', certainly does not separate art
from life, for it deals with her own life, revealing her most intimate
experiences and emotions. She relates her life to the natural world
around her, which she views pantheistically.

The following quotation expresses clearly Cécile Sauvage's
acute sensitivity to nature, and her yearning to be united with it:

15. Messiaen, P., op.cit., 139. He relates that Jammes, after reading
Le Vallon, wrote to Cécile Sauvage saying: "Allez à la messe."
Je veux d'une plainte suave
Exhaler ma peine au soleil,
Et que mon chant soit pur et grave
Comme une campagne au réveil;

Une campagne solitaire
Ou le seigle étend son velours,
La montagne moite et légère
Entourant l'air calme du jour.

Elancez-vous, jeune alouette,
Vos œufs sont pondus dans les blés,
Et la rosée en gouttelettes
Tremble sur les gazons dorés. (16)

3. Beliefs.

Cécile Sauvage's rejection of religious convictions was an attitude which was common to her family, as Pierre Messiaen explains:

Hormis sa mère qui, vers dix-huit ans, avait songé à se faire religieuse, les grands-parents et les parents de Cécile étaient d'honnêtes voltairiens; ils l'enjoyaient à la messe et au catéchisme, mais lui peignaient la religion comme une entreprise commerciale spéculant sur la sottise ou l'ignorance des hommes. La lecture de livres comme l'Histoire de l'Orient', de Maspéro et l'Histoire des Grecs', de Louis Ménard, avaient confirmé cette première empreinte de négation. Raison, savoir, langage, poésie, autant de rêves émanés de la nature et se diluant dans la nature. (17)

Her background, therefore, was one based on Voltairian ideals, with knowledge and reason as its foundation. Although a token gesture

17. Ibid., 143.
was made by her mother at giving her some religious education, religion was ultimately presented to her as a commercial enterprise, speculating on the stupidity and ignorance of mankind. Her reading confirmed this opinion, and she consequently placed her trust in reason, knowledge, language, poetry and the 'dreams emanating from nature.'

Life, she viewed as a prison. The inability to control its inevitable direction towards death was an obsession with her - she saw no hope in the act of living, for it was only a return to dust. It was a cage, extending from the womb to the coffin, from which one could not escape. Pierre Messiaen quotes what she often said to him:

Nous sommes dans l'univers comme dans une cage, d'abord au sein de notre mère, puis au berceau, dans nos maisons, dans notre destinée, enfin au cercueil. On crie, on pleure, on s'amuse, on s'ennuye, on ne sort jamais de la cage. (18)

Her concept of beauty is outlined below, as recorded by her husband:

La Beauté, pour Cécile, ce n'était pas l'effort chrétien de retrouver l'original paradis d'intelligence et d'amour en la miséricorde de Notre-Seigneur; c'était, comme aux yeux des philosophes grecs et des humanistes de la Renaissance, l'éternal féminin de lumière et de fécondité accompagné d'un enfant qui joue parmi les fleurs et suivi de la mort qui nous rejette sans cesse au néant. (19)

19. Ibid., 138.
Whereas she felt a complete affinity with nature, and her approach to it was one of love and understanding, she did not feel any sympathy towards her fellow humanity, for she saw mankind as purposeless, blind, deceitful and stupid:

Elle tenta d'exprimer en mètres variés,...la tendre mélancolie que lui inspirait cette campagne du Livradois, noyée de brume et de silence en hiver, en été baignée de soleil pâle où l'herbe et la fougère sont fleuries de campanules, où le verne, le bouleau et le seigle ondulent dans un infini murmure d'alouettes. Puis elle regarda autour d'elle les hommes, leurs travaux, leurs passions, leurs maisons; elle les vit comme des ombres, d'aveugles marionnettes surgissant de l'abîme, accomplissant dans une fuite éternelle leurs mêmes gestes inconscients, la naissance, le ménage, le marché hebdomadaire, la moisson, les fiançailles, les noces, les obsèques, parfois un meurtre ou un suicide, toujours poursuivis par le vieux mythe égyptien et platonicien de la Beauté qui ordonne l'univers selon un rythme d'ordre et de mesure. (20)

These lines clarify the impression of a very rich and complex personality; one which rejected any form of religious belief, which saw life as basically hopeless, and mankind as stupid and futile, but yet had a profound love for nature, rejoiced in its forces, and yearned to be absorbed by it.

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4. Cécile Sauvage and Messiaen.

When asked whether he considered that his mother's poetic work, through its spiritual content and form, had had any direct influence on the fundamental characteristics of his work as a musician, Messiaen replied that he attributed to his mother, rather than any direct literary influence from her poetry, his love of the 'sonorous shimmer' and his love of bird-song. (21) He attributes this especially to l'Ame en bourgeoise:

A very important thing in my life was her book of poetry entitled l'Ame en bourgeoise, which was dedicated to a boy—me—even before I was born. The lyrical expectation of a baby must influence his whole destiny. I am very proud of this book which is my greatest title to glory. (22)

It is of interest to note that Cécile Sauvage wrote a number of poems, besides l'Ame en bourgeoise, specifically for members of her family, for Messiaen says:

Certains poèmes n'appartiennent qu'à mon père, certains autres qu'à mon frère Alain, quant à l'Ame en bourgeoise, je n'ose pas. (23)

21. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks' iii. He has set only one of her poems, La Sourir, in his Trois Mélodies of 1929. On page vi Messiaen relates the following anecdote:

"When I was a baby, they used to give me a piece of bread to nibble on. If, by chance, a bird was chirping, I would put down the bread, raise my index finger for silence and listen."

22. Ibid., iii.

He establishes that his mother's poetry has had no influence upon his own:

...I wrote the poems of my vocal works. At that time my mother was already dead and interest in literature had changed. My mother belonged to the period of Mme. de Koailles and Francis Jammes, which was a naturistic and symbolist period...I was reading Paul Eluard and interested in the surrealist movement. (24)

The following statement confirms that Cecile Sauvage's poetry has its importance in Messiaen's life, not as a direct literary influence, but as a tangible manifestation of his mother's personality, and the influence which this has had upon him:

...un livre de vers, intitulé l'Ame en bourgeois, qui a certainement influé sur mon caractère et sur toute ma destinée. (25)

The power of this influence is attested to by the fact of his father's absence for five years of his childhood (from 1914 to 1918, when mobilised), (26) for during this time he was under the direct control of his mother. Consequently, it would be expected that aspects of Messiaen's character would reflect his mother's, and this is certainly so. He has a tendency to depression, and a strong sense of the futility of mankind, and like his mother turns to nature for inspiration and regeneration:

24. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', iii.
La Nature, les chants d'oiseaux!
Ce sont mes passions. Ce sont aussi mes refuges.
Dans les heures sombres, quand mon inutilité m'est brutalement révélée, quand toutes les langues musicales: classiques, exotiques, antiques, modernes et ultra-modernes - me semblent réduites au résultat admirable de patientes recherches, sans que rien derrière les notes justifie tant de travail - que faire, sinon retrouver son visage véritable, oublié quelque part dans la forêt, dans les champs, dans la montagne, au bord de la mer, au milieu des oiseaux? (27)

Quand tout semble perdu, qu'on ne sait plus le chemin, qu'on n'a vraiment plus rien à dire (et c'est, hélas! le cas le plus fréquent), vers quel maître se tourner, quel "daïmon" invoquer pour sortie de l'abîme? En face de tant d'écoles opposées, de styles démodés, de langages contradictoires, il n'y a pas de musique humaine qui puisse rendre la confiance au désespéré. C'est ici qu'interviennent les voix de la grande Nature (28)

Quénétain points out that he has a very pessimistic view of the evolution of music and humanity, as well as an obsession of impending catastrophe:

Yet when he is not preoccupied with other people, his expression is one of extreme sadness. He has an obsession about impending catastrophe... "I'm always afraid that letters will bring some frightful piece of news" (29)

Messiaen also shares with his mother an intense dislike of technological development. Pierre Messiaen says of Cécile Sauvage:

Elle avait horreur du progrès moderne, de tout ce qui sent la mécanique, le monde entier clôture dans les mêmes gestes et les mêmes idées. (30)

And Quénétain relates, concerning Messiaen:

He knows that our civilization is growing up in towns, and he rejects it; he believes that electronic music will replace the traditional orchestra and grieves over it. (31)

One especially important difference in their psychological make-up must, however, be emphasized. Cécile Sauvage was opposed to any form of religious belief, whereas Messiaen has always been deeply religious. It is pertinent to note their differing attitudes to death in this context, for it will be remembered that in the poem Le Vallon, Cécile Sauvage regarded the inevitability of death with horror. However Messiaen's view of death is as follows:

Pour un enfant, la mort n'est pas terrible.
Pour en enfant, il est tout naturel de voler comme un oiseau ou de passer à travers les murs.
Les fées, les fantômes et les sorcières de Shakespeare ne me surprenaient pas davantage.
Aussi, quand j'ai compris plus tard les qualités des 'Corps glorieux': la subtilité, l'agilité, l'impassibilité, la clarté, je n'ai fait que passer de l'imagination à la réalité. Et si je ne nomme que ces Vérités touchant à la résurrection des corps, c'est par révérence pour les autres articles du Symbole... (32)

Hé mentions here the "...fées, les fantômes et les sorcières de Shakespeare...", and in the following quotation emphasizes that the works of his mother, and of Shakespeare gave him his taste for the marvellous, which has remained with him, integrated into the Catholic faith:


32. Coléa, A., Rencontres. 26. Messiaen made this statement after re-reading the poem La Tête from l'Ame en bourgeon, the last line of which reads: "Et la tête de mort, c'est moi qui l'ai sculptée."
J'ai toujours eu le goût du merveilleux. Ma toute première enfance s'est écoulée entre les poésies de ma mère et les drames de Shakespeare, qui n'ont fait qu'accentuer ce goût. Il a trouvé sa vraie pâture avec le conte de fées réel des Vérités, avec un grand "V", de la foi catholique. (33)

Messiaen has said that he acted through all of Shakespeare's plays at the age of eight (34) and this means that his contact with Shakespeare came during his father's absence. He also points out that the French translation through which he gained his knowledge of Shakespeare was not that of his father, for his father did not begin his translation until twelve years later: (35)

...mon père n'a commencé sa traduction de Shakespeare que douze ans plus tard. (36)

The following is Messiaen's description of the translation he knew as a child:

la découverte du théâtre de Shakespeare, que j'ai lu entièrement à haute voix à l'âge de huit ans, dans une traduction française ornée de romantiques gravures sur bois, et que j'ai déclamée ensuite, comme petit acteur, avec mon frère comme partenaire ou comme spectateur. (37)

33. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 34.
37. Ibid., 25.
Apart from the plays of Shakespeare, Messiaen has shown a continuing interest in the work of the English poets. His first composition, written at the age of eight, had as its inspiration an English poem, namely, The Lady of Shallot of Tennyson, and in the Livre d'or of the Encyclopédie de la Musique, published by Pasquelle in 1958, he quotes Keats as follows:

Les mélodies que l'on entend sont douces, celles que l'on n'entend pas sont plus douces encore... (38)

It is possible that this interest in his father's field of study was stimulated by his mother, for Pierre Messiaen states that he introduced his wife to the work of the English romantic poets, and he suggests that, because of this, he could have had considerable influence upon her own poetry:

Ai-je révélé à Cécile des choses qu'elle n'avait point remarquées? Ai-je exercé quelque influence sur les thèmes et la manière de sa chanson? Je lui fis connaître les romantiques anglais et leur profonde tendresse religieuse pour la nature, la vie quotidienne; je crois qu'ils accentuèrent ce réalisme poétique qu'elle portait déjà en elle. Ah! son visage si heureux en m'écoutant lire et traduire le sonnet de Keats sur le 'Grillon et le criquet', un soir de décembre que le fayard flambait au poète Godin. (39)


39. Messiaen, P., op.cit., 137. Pierre Messiaen, at this stage, is discussing the years 1909-1914, thus Cécile Sauvage's introduction to English literature came well before Messiaen's.
It is pertinent to note that Pierre Messiaen was a very religious man.\(^{(40)}\) Whether or not this had any bearing on Messiaen's extremely religious nature it is impossible at this stage to determine, for all he says of his early religious experience is that he had "...always believed, simply and completely..." \(^{(41)}\)

Any paternal influence in Messiaen's life, then, was indirect, perhaps as some sort of counter-balance to his mother's antithesis to religion, and also as the means through which he came to know the plays of Shakespeare and the works of the English poets. However, it has been shown that it is quite possible that he was introduced to these by his mother.

Cécile Sauvage's influence, on the other hand, was a strong and determining one, and manifests itself mainly in aspects of Messiaen's character, and in his receptivity to the natural world, especially bird-song.

\(^{40}\) This is shown in his comment on page 143 of Images, accounting for the despair in Cécile Sauvage's Le Vallon: "Il devait venir ... de l'entièrè absence de toute foi chrétienne."

\(^{41}\) Gavoty, B., op.cit., 34.
CHAPTER EIGHT.

PAUL CLAUDEL

Pour exprimer avec une puissance durable nos ténèbres aux prières avec l'Esprit saint, pour élever sur la montagne les portes de notre prison de chair, pour donner à notre siècle l'au-vivre dont il a besoin, il faudrait un grand artiste qui soit aussi un grand artisan et un grand chrétien. (1)

Messiaen’s plea for a great artist who is also a great craftsman and a great Christian, could equally well have been made by Paul Claudel, for Claudel, like Messiaen, saw himself, first and foremost, as a Catholic artist. In order to appreciate fully Claudel's role as an artist, and his influence upon Messiaen, it is necessary to trace the main events of his life, and to examine in some detail the basic concepts of his philosophy.

1. Life.

Claudel was born on 6th August, 1868, in the village of Villeneuve-sur-Fère-en-Tardenois, on the plains of Champagne. He came from four generations of peasant ancestors on his mother's side, and to them he attributed his kinship with Christianity and the Gallic

1. Rostand, C., La Musique Francaise, 59.
soil. His father was a civil servant. At first he was taught privately, then in various secular schools, and at fourteen was sent to the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, completing his studies at the School of Law and the School of Political Science. Throughout this time in Paris he was profoundly unhappy, and found the answers propounded by his teachers to his questions concerning life completely unsatisfactory. At this time he came under the influence of the poetry of Baudelaire and the Symbolists.

In 1886 Claudel read for the first time Les Illuminations, and Une Saison en Enfer of Arthur Rimbaud. These works had an overwhelming effect on him, as he relates:

The first gleam of truth was given me when I happened on the books of a great poet, to whom I am eternally indebted, and who has had a preponderating share in the formation of my thought, Arthur Rimbaud. Reading the Illuminations and a few months later A Season in Hell was a capital event for me. Those books opened for the first time a slit in the walls of my materialist convict-prison, and gave me a vivid and almost physical impression of the supernatural. (2)

He later described Rimbaud as "un mystique a l'état sauvage", (3)


for his reading of Rimbaud's poems led to a sudden spiritual awakening which occurred on Christmas Day in Notre Dame in the same year. He was not officially received into the Roman Catholic Church however, until 1890.

The connection between Rimbaud and Catholicism in Claudel's mind lay in the idea of the symbolic. Wallace Fowlie in his book on Claudel says:

Claudel learned from the example of Baudelaire and Rimbaud the lesson of 'pure receptivity', a state in which the language will be far less an expression through words than a revelation of meaning through symbols. (4)

It can then be seen why Claudel said of Rimbaud's poetry that it "gave me a vivid and almost physical impression of the supernatural." As Will be examined in detail later, Claudel followed the Thomist line of thinking that everything has been preconceived in the mind of God, and therefore, as God spoke the Word which revealed Himself to His creation, so too can the poet speak the word which will reveal this creation and express what it wants to say; he can be forever in the sight of God the offerer and the witness. (5)

From 1887 until he left France at the beginning of his diplomatic career in 1894, Claudel attended Mallarme's Tuesday evening gatherings. In 1890 he passed the exams for the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, and was appointed in 1893 to the vice consulate in New York, and in 1894 that in Boston. During these years the first versions of Tête d'Or (1889), La Ville (1890), and La Jeune Violaine (1892), were completed. In Boston, Claudel wrote L'Echange (1894).

He was then sent to China, where he remained until 1899. On his return to France in 1900, he entered the Benedictine Abbey of Liguge in order to test his religious vocation, but was ultimately discouraged by his superiors from continuing. This was followed by a second and third stay in China, from 1901 to 1909, which included journeys to Japan and Indo-China, separated by his return to France in 1906 to marry Mlle Reine Sainte-Marie Perrin. He was posted to Prague in 1910, Frankfurt in 1911, and Hamburg in 1913, returning to France in 1914 at the outbreak of war.

In September of 1913, Claudel's L'Annonce faite à Marie was produced at the experimental theatre in Hellerau, near Dresden. He had met Darius Milhaud for the first time in 1912, and in 1913 invited him to Hellerau to see the play. Milhaud went, and it was there that he began work on the music for Agamemnon, his first major collaboration with Claudel. (6)

From 1915 to 1916, Claudel was on an economic mission in Italy, and from 1917 to 1919 was Ministre plénipotentiaire in Rio de Janeiro, with Milhaud as secretary. Thereafter the stations in his

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diplomatic career were Denmark until 1921, Japan from 1921 to 1926, Washington 1926 and in 1927, and finally Belgium in 1933, where he remained until his retirement in 1936.

In 1935 he was a candidate to be elected to the Académie Française, but he did not win the election. He was eventually admitted on March 12th, 1946.

During his first stay in China, Claudel entered upon a period of solitude, silence and meditation, making studies of the Bible and Saint Thomas Aquinas. At this time the works Vers d'Exilé (1895) and Repos du Septième Jour (1895 to 1896) were written.

Claudel has been referred to as a Thomistic poet, but Richard Griffiths asserts that Claudel was not a genuine intellectual and tended to oversimplify, picking out the items that were of use to him and ignoring the rest. Griffiths refers especially to Aquinas, for Claudel claimed to have read and annotated the two Summas, completely rejecting the texts of the commentators, because they were far too complicated. He maintained that he found the texts very simple.


8. Griffiths, R. (ed.), 'Introduction'. Claudel - A Reappraisal, 8, 9. He says:
The indigestible way in which Claudel presented certain separate ideas of St Thomas in his play Le Repos du Septième jour (1896), and the unfortunate way in which he allows the opinions based on these ideas occasionally to contradict each other, shows that, as in other cases, he has used the author only in so far as he fits in with his own preconceptions. 'In Claudel's plays', as I have said elsewhere, 'a certain amount of intellectual paraphernalia adorns what are essentially simple, violent beliefs and passions'.
From the second and third periods in China come the works, Connaissance de l'Est, (the poems of the first part of which were written in 1894, and of the second part in 1901), *L'Art Poétique* (1903-1904), the dramas *Partage de Midi* (1905), and *L'Otage* (1909), and the poems *Cinq Grands Odes* (1904-1908). Three of the main works written in the years which followed, from 1910 to 1914, are the dramas *L'Annonce faite à Marie* (1910), the first version of *Protée* (1913), and *Le PAIN dur* (1914).

As was pointed out above, Milhaud was Claudel's secretary during his term as Ministerial Agent in Rio de Janeiro; however their relationship extended far beyond their formal administrative one, in that Claudel collaborated with Milhaud in a number of his works. (9) The main one from this period is the ballet *L'Homme et son Désir* (1918), for which Claudel wrote the libretto. While in Brazil, he wrote *La Messe là-bas* and the play *L'Ours et la lune*, both in 1917.

One of the most important of Claudel's plays, *Le Soulier de satin*, which he considered to be the résumé of all his poetic and dramatic work, was written from 1919 to 1924, (10) being completed in Tokyo. (11) In 1927 he wrote *Le Livre de Christophe Colomb* which, in

9. The complete list of the works on which Claudel and Milhaud collaborated, including Milhaud's works which are set to texts of Claudel, is as follows:
   Christophe Colomb (1923).
   *Cantate de la Guerre* (Poem by Claudel, 1940).

10. Incidental music was composed for this play in 1943 by Arthur Honegger.
collaboration with Milhaud, became the opera Christophe Colomb. The second version of Progé was written in 1926 while he was ambassador in Washington, and in the following year, while still in Washington, he wrote his first exegesis of the Bible, L'Apocalypse.

From 1933 to 1935, while ambassador in Brussels, he wrote Une Poète regarde la croix, and Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher. After his retirement in 1935, Claudel's work mirrored his now predominant interest in, and studies of the Scriptures. Among these works are L'Epée et le Miroir (1935 to 1937), which are reflections on the Seven Dolours, and La Rose et la Rosaire (1946), meditations on Our Lady and the Rosary. They also include a translation with personal applications of the Penitential Psalms, an essay on the Book of Job (1946), and a lecture on the Apocalypse (1946).

This list of Claudel's works is by no means complete, but it is intended to show his extremely wide range of subjects and literary forms, which include drama, poetry, essays, lectures, translations, ballet and opera. It shows, above all, his profound and all-pervading Catholic faith, and this is the attribute which is of most concern, for this is the one he shares with Messiaen. Claudel's view of Catholicism was one of all-inclusiveness and universality, the same as Messiaen's. However Claudel had an enormous appetite for experience and sought his faith through experience.

Perhaps his attitude is best summed up in the following quotation from *Le Soulier de satin*:

Dora Prouhèze. - L'homme entre les bras de la femme oubliée Dieu.
L'Ange Gardien. - Est-ce L'oublier que d'être avec Lui? est-ce ailleurs qu'avec Lui d'être associé au mystère de Sa création,
Franchissant de nouveau pour un instant l'Eden par la porte de l'humiliation et de la mort?
D.P. - L'amour hors du sacrement n'est-il pas le péché?
A.C. - Même le péché! Le péché aussi sert. (13)

To conclude this section, it is important to observe that
Claudel, whose whole life and work was inspired and infused by Catholicism, despised and rejected literature which was mainly inspired by humanist ideals. He prayed that he would not be sent to perdition along with the Voltaires, Renans, Michelets and Hugos, and said of Hugo:

All the trammels of superstition and morality had been swept away; what a triumph of life, what a radiant orgy of liberty and joy we were going to see! And we find nothing but despair, pessimism, nightmare visions, bitterness, aberrations, fury; the mind possessed by the most hideous spectacles, and ending in our own day in the stammerings of idiocy. (14)

Of Jean-Paul Sartre and the Existentialists he had this to say:

How can they live in that atmosphere of cafes, of drunkenness and pederasty? (15)

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Claudel did not confine his denouncement of creative works which took no account of what he considered to be the necessary religious basis of the creative act to works of literature. He was a prominent figure in the reaction against Wagner in France in the first half of this century. Until 1930 he exhibited a certain degree of tolerance, and even admiration, for Wagner, but in *Le Poison Wagnérien* of 1938, his attitude was completely intolerant. (16)

He says, in this essay:

> Ce poison m'a empoisonné et il a laissé dans l'organisme des toxines qui ont été longues à s'évaporer. (17)

Of the operas, *Tannhäuser* was the only one of which he consistently wrote sympathetically. The one which he most disliked was *Tristan und Isolde*.

It becomes apparent in Claudel's criticism of Wagner, that the basis of his aesthetic attitude was his Catholic faith, and that he therefore refused to accept strictly human themes as having any

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   His pronouncements are no longer controlled by sound artistic and critical judgment, they are the disappointing expression of an excessively proud Frenchman and an intolerant Catholic.

positive validity in art. Tannhauser's appeal, therefore, lay in its religious feeling.

Perhaps Claudel's complete rejection of works dealing solely with human themes can best be understood if viewed in the context of a man who considered the world, above all, as the creation of God. He consequently saw man's function, for man in his turn was a creative being, as representing God's creation in his own, and thereby acting as witness to it. In this light, humanism appears as utterly sterile, and forms of knowledge as pagan, for they do not take any account of God at all. Claudel believed that scholarship had furnished very little knowledge about man, compared with what the mystics had revealed, and therefore, Catholicism was, for him, the one truth. He believed that the Cross was the true meeting-place between God and His creation, for at that moment the creation participated in all suffering and all exultation. (18) He also believed that "the great divine joy is the only reality", (19) and his whole œuvre, therefore, was an act of praise to God and His creation.

2. Philosophy

An understanding of Claudel's mind - his aesthetic and philosophical theories - can best be gained from his Art Poétique.

19. From Correspondence with Rivière, 103. Quoted from Ryan, M., op. cit., 15.
which is made up of the two treatises *Connaissance du Temps*, written in 1903, and *Connaissance du Monde et de Soimême*, written in 1904. These are presented in a doctrinal and didactic form, as a profession of faith. They also represent a conclusion to many of the aesthetic beliefs of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé.

*Art Poétique* was written as an exposition of Claudel's theory of poetry, about which he wrote extensively at the beginning of his career. He continued to write on his theories of poetry during his life, but the later additions do not diverge at all from the earlier doctrines. Claudel was sure of his aesthetic and philosophical beliefs early in his life, and later writings confirm, substantiate and repeat the tenets of *Art Poétique* rather than modifying or developing them.

In *Art Poétique*, Claudel expresses that the future is not his concern. He considers that it is the present which he is urged to decipher, and that men have always thought "... que toutes choses à toute heure ... élaboraient un mystère qu'il fallait de nécessité surprendre." His entire work could be seen as an increasing consciousness of the "Real Presence" in the world. Relationships which are manifested in the world are limitless, according to Claudel, and he sees the poet's role as that of the reader of the world, and the one who deciphers its relationships. These ideas have their origin


in Rimbaud, and Claudel's debt to him becomes apparent. The universe is therefore an ensemble, with every element having secret affinities with every other element. However, following the teaching of Aquinas, Claudel believes that all the forms in the world are symbols of Divine Essence, and he states that therefore it is man's duty to know the world and to exist as an intermediary between the Creator and the created.

Thus, unlike Rimbaud and Mallarmé, he provides his symbolism with a base, by binding it with the metaphysical and theological truths of the Catholic faith. His study of Aquinas confirmed and gave him more insight into his own aesthetics, for he found his own symbolic system in accord with Thomist thought, thus imparting to the symbolism of Rimbaud and Mallarmé a theocentric character. (22)

Accordingly, Claudel conceives the poet's task as one of recognizing the wholeness of the universe, as discovering the meaning of its drama, and of paying homage to its creator. Claudel certainly does not believe that the poet is to be simply the creator of the beautiful, nor does he hold with the doctrine of art for art's sake.

i. Sens and Connaissance.

Before discussing any further Claudel's aesthetics and philosophy, it is necessary to elucidate his unique use of the words, sens and connaissance. Sens can have a number of connotations in French,

22. Fowle, _, op.cit., 58.
besides its initial meaning of sense, or perceptive faculty. These are: actual perception, power of judging, meaning, the right aspect, and direction. Claudel deliberately uses this word in a divergent and ambiguous way, in order, in a single statement, to imply a number of different ideas. For instance, the word is used in this way in the following statement:

Le temps est le sens de la vie.

And Claudel continues to enumerate the meanings implied:

Sens: comme on dit le sens d'un cours d'eau,
le sens d'une phrase, le sens d'une étoffe, le sens de l'odorat. (23)

Therefore, whenever Claudel uses this word, he uses it with all of these connotations.

Connaissance is used in a similarly divergent manner. The word is often spelt co-naissance in Claudel's works, thereby linking the concept of knowledge with that of birth. As he says:

Nous ne naîsons pas seuls. Naître, pour tout, c'est co-naitre. Tout naissance est une connaissance. (24)

This is then supported by a statement which is not one of complete

24. Ibid., 63.
philological integrity, but the idea which he wishes to express is quite explicit:

Pour comprendre les choses, apprenons les mots qui en sont dans notre bouche l'image soluble. Ruminons la bouchée intelligible. La parenté est certaine qui relie les idées dans trois langues d'acquérir par l'esprit et de surgir; gencumai et signàsko, nàsci, signàre, novi, cognoscere, nàître et connaître. (25)

This use of the word is fundamental to the whole of Claudel's thinking. A relationship is also set up between the words naître and n'être - not etymological, but based on their similarity in sound. The idea expressed by this conjunction is that when one is born, one is given, by the supreme, self-existing Being, one's small, separate existence. Then, as one tends towards the goal of returning to the Creator, one tends towards the state of not-being. Hence the relationship between the two, namely; all birth has as its goal, not-being.

ii. Time, Duration, Movement.

In Connaissance du Temps, Claudel enunciated his concept of time. This is seen as the design of the universe as it produces itself in the movement of the whole. Duration is seen as the continuity of this movement:

L'espace où le dessin fini, le temps ou le dessin qui est en train de se faire on un mouvement universel qui est le temps. L'univers est une machine à marquer le temps. (26)

From this definition it becomes apparent that Claudel regards space as the completed design of the universe, and time as the design which is produced as the universe continuously recreates itself. Thus the design in relation to time is never static or complete, but in constant change. Time is then, in Claudel's mind, inextricably linked with the idea of movement.

In examining Claudel's concept of movement it is found that he views every created thing as being in perpetual motion. This motion is also what causes what was created to perish. It gives created things their sense, for it is the movement out from the self-existent Being which gives created things their own existence, but their origin is also their end, for they must ultimately move back to their Creator. And so the movement also causes them to perish, to return to a state of non-being (n'être). The movement out from the Creator, and the inevitable movement back produces a state of equilibrium, which is brought about through a state of constant tension. The tension is an inherent state of the created because everything other than complete and self-sufficing Being is in a state of interplay and contradiction:

It would seem then, that Claudel regards time as the movement of the created from the Creator back to the Creator. This movement is its existence, and the continuity of its existence is its duration. Hence time is inseparable from existence, time is the created's movement, or existence (the design of the universe producing itself). As this movement must return to the Creator, time is the invitation to die:

Le Temps est l'invitation à mourir, le moyen qui permet aux choses d'avouer en expirer leur néant dans le sein de leur Créateur. (28)

Le temps est le moyens offert à tout ce qui sera d'être afin de n'être plus; il est l'Invitation à mourir, a toute phrase de se décomposer dans l'accord explicatif et total, de consommer la parole d'adoration à l'orelle de Sige l'Abîme. (29)

At this stage, it is pertinent to note that Claudel's conception of time has a close affinity with the definition given by Plato. (30) Plato defined time as "the moving image of eternity."

28. Ibid., 9.
29. Ibid., 57.
30. See Chapter VI, section 2, p. 108.
and thus equated time with motion, in that it is motion which differentiates time from eternity. It was stated that Plato gave a metaphysical explanation of time, for he defined time in terms of what it is not, namely, the eternal. Claudel's notion of time follows the same line of thought; he states that motion differentiates the created from the Creator, and that this motion gives the created its sensus and being. His explanation of time, then, is also metaphysical, and equally equates time with the concept of motion.

iii. Metaphor.

Claudel's experiments with language can now be seen to be at the vanguard of those of the Symbolists and Surrealists. The most important of these is his use of the metaphor as a means of creating a new logic. It will be seen that, to the Surrealists, metaphor was the most important of the poetic devices - the continuous search for the *fil-conducteur* which connected all objects. (31)

However, Claudel goes a step further than the Surrealists, for in believing in the creation of all things by God, and in following the Thomist teaching that all things "retain within themselves some sort of trace of a likeness to God", (32) the concept of a *fil conducteur* is

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31. See Chap. IX, section 3.

irrelevant. The logic of metaphor therefore becomes the means of understanding the invisible reality of God as revealed in the visible. As Fowlie puts it:

The universe is a complicated network of metaphors, of which the primordial metaphor is man himself who was created in the image of God. (33)

Metaphor itself is the coexistence of two different things, as Claudel explains:

L'ancienne avait le syllogisme pour organe, celle-ci a la métaphore, le mot nouveau, l'opération qui résulte de la seule existence conjointe et simultanée de deux choses différentes. (34)

The logic of association is, therefore, a means of understanding God through nature and the senses, whereby things are observed by the poet according to their arrangement, rather than in relation to the law of causality.

The following quotation, given as an example by Claudel in *Art Poétique*, illustrates clearly his concept of the logic of metaphor:

Jadis au Japon, comme je montais de Nikko à Chuzenji, je vis, quoique grandement distants, juxtaposés par l'alignement de mon œil, la verdure d'un érable combler l'accord proposé par un pin. (35)

33. Fowlie, W., *op. cit.*, 36.
35. Ibid., 50.
iv. The Role of the Poet.

The poet is, by definition, the maker of something (the Greek poiesis means making), and he is therefore the creator, in the sense that he can only make out of what is to be found in the world, not as God, who can make out of nothing. Thus Claudel sees a very strong need for collaboration between the poet and the world, for a poem begins when a relationship is perceived.

Man's function, then, is to be an image of God's creative activity; he must work out what he is, each man according to his own individuality, for he is God's delegate as regards external things:

Par rapport à Dieu, il est le délégué aux relations extérieures, le représentant et le fondé de pouvoirs. (36)

His duty is to first observe the universe, and to place himself in the role of a critic, to test, examine, and understand how the creation has been produced. The analogy is drawn with a critic examining the work of a poet, or an artist before the work of another artist, or an engineer before the work of a beaver:

Mais nous nous placerons devant l'ensemble des créatures, comme un critique devant le produit d'un poète, goûtant pleinement la chose, examinant par quels moyens il a obtenu ses effets, comme un peintre éignant des yeux devant l'œuvre d'un peintre, comme un ingénieur devant le travail d'un castor. (37)

37. Ibid., 13, 14.
A very important aspect of Claudel's philosophy, is that he considers the world to be in a state of constant renewal - renewed at every moment. God's creation did not place once and for all, to be then left; it is continually undergoing perpetual change. The reason for this is that every created thing is creative in its turn, and this therefore produces a continual new momentum in the universe:

Être, c'est créer. Toutes choses dans le temps écoutent, concissent et composent. Les rencontres des forces physiques et le jeu des volontés, humaines coopèrent dans la confection de la mosaïque Instant. (38)

Claudel sees the universe as a whole, and the parts of it as closely interdependent, not only in the present, but throughout all time. He states in *Connaissance de l'Est*, that the stuff of poetry is the universe of visible things, to which faith adds that of invisible things. The poet is conditioned and defined by what is other, that is, external, to himself, and he, in his turn, conditions the other. It is therefore his duty to know the other.

Man consequently is seen as the key to the universe, for he is the only creature that can comprehend it. In other words, he can know things and give them birth in his own consciousness. Thus, he has the duty of summoning up at every moment this knowledge, for by naming the moment or the created thing, he rescues it from its

fate of dissolution. The human spirit is alone able to comprehend something of the bond which exists between the instability of the world and the stability of God. The poet, and man, is then defined by Claudel as the one whose function it is to represent the creation of the Creator.

v. The Senses - Colour.

Claudel maintains that the senses are interdependent, and that sensation is not just a passive phenomenon, but a special state of activity:

La sensation n'est point un phénomène passif, c'est un état spécial d'activité. (39)

He regards them as tools of the intellect, in line with Thomistic thought, and, as well, as servants, to be used for the pursuit of beauty.

A very important aspect of Claudel's notion of the senses, is that he considers them all to have the same source. This comes about because it is the same nerve pulsation which maintains vision as maintains hearing and smelling, and this has its origin in the switch board or control station which gives the wave its first elaboration. He points out that our sensitive organs are only an apparatus for transforming the initial current. The senses, then,

are interdependent, and the pressure on the surface of the body which produces sight determines the same activity as that which elsewhere produces sound. He goes on to deduce that sight therefore can express the quality of sound:

De longtemps sans doute il ne sera permis d'aller plus loin, de remonter à la source même de la sensation, au tableau de distribution, à ce poste central où l'onde destinée à alimenter les différents organes de la périphérie reçoit sa première élaboration. La même pulsation nerveuse qui entretient notre vision, dirigée sur d'autres réseaux, nous permet d'entendre et d'odorier. Nos organes sensitifs ne sont que des appareils de transformation de courant initial et pour ainsi dire d'allumage construit pour des rupteurs divers. Il suit qu'ils sont interdépendants et que la pression par exemple qui produit la vue qualifie le même déploiement de la circonférence qui ailleurs a le son pour limite, et que le regard dès lors peut qualifier le bruit. (40)

The subject of the inter-relationship of sight and sound is particularly relevant, for Messiaen has also made this a very important part of his own concept of art. (41) Claudel is quite specific about his ability to use the senses of sight and sound in correlation, as the following quotation shows:

I do not only see, I hear. It takes a certain amount of practice to hear what our eyes see. (42)


41. See Section 3, pp. 162, 163.

42. Ryan, i., op. cit., 24.
He speaks also of the yellow cry of the tug-boat, and of the vowel a being crimson in colour.

vi. Claudel and Aquinas.

Claudel's basic aims, and his view of the function of man and the artist, correspond very closely with the teachings of Aquinas. Reference has been made to Claudel's study of Aquinas' works, and to the inclusion of these teachings in his own writings. The previous section made the point that Claudel regarded the senses as tools of the intellect; and Aquinas taught that intellectual knowledge, gained through the sensible world, is a necessary prelude to knowledge of God through faith, for all things retain a trace of a likeness of God. This teaching finds its reflection in the following statement of Claudel:

All passions, things are the image of God, creatures are not only the work of the Creator, they are His sign, they bear His signature, they are so many drafts on infinite wisdom and generosity. When we understand the real essence of things -- that they are the work and the sign of God, when we bring out of them all that they contain of praise, life, beauty and beneficence; when we give them back to God who has made them and help them to do the will of God who has set them in motion -- in so doing we are rendering to Him what belongs to Him. (44)

43. See Chap. V, section 4, pp. 95, 96.

44. Ryan, M., op. cit., 25.
However, this knowledge is a prelude, and it is only through faith, by turning to the invisible world, that knowledge of God can be gained. Again, the Thomistic basis of Claudel's thinking is revealed in the following statement:

...the world is a text,...it speaks to us, humbly and joyously, of its own absence, but also of the eternal presence of someone else, to wit the Creator...that we are a certain beginning of the creature, that we see all things in an enigma and as in a glass darkly, that the world is a book written within and without, and that the visible things are made to lead us to the knowledge of the invisible. (45)

Claudel, therefore, consciously subscribes to the fundamental doctrines that God is manifested in all things, and that through a knowledge of these, one can be led to a knowledge of God through faith.

3. Messiaen and Claudel

Both Messiaen and Claudel express themselves, first and foremost, as Catholic artists, using their art to affirm the truths of the Catholic faith. The affinity between them extends further, for both have been strongly influenced by the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Messiaen has stated that as God is present in all things, and as his music is an act of faith, his desire is to write music which touches all things,

without ceasing to touch God. (46) Claudel has made the following statement:

The Church is anything but exclusive because it is Catholic; that is to say universal and leaving absolutely nothing outside itself. (47)

and through it shows exactly the same basis to his thought as Messiaen. Especially, the ideas of both artists are an expression of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, particularly those of Aquinas, and thus, their strongest correspondence is their wish to place their work as artists at the service of their faith. It is perhaps at this level that Claudel has had the strongest impact upon Messiaen.

Another important correlation is the way in which both Messiaen and Claudel see their roles as artists. It will be remembered that Claudel saw the artist as one whose duty it was to represent the creation of the Creator, and that through his relationship with God he was delegated to deal with the external world. His working material, therefore, must be the visible world, which leads him to a knowledge of the invisible world.

Messiaen sees his role as an artist to glorify God. Like Claudel, the role is seen in terms of God, but with Messiaen the emphasis is different. He sees his role, as a Catholic composer, to glorify the truths of the Catholic faith. (48) His aim is to glorify the Mystery of

46. See Chap V Section 5, p. 98.
47. Lucie-Smith, E., op. cit., 85.
48. See quotation at head of Chap. VI.
Christ, and to express the struggle of the spirit in search of God against the prison of flesh. Claudel's aim, on the other hand, was to know the world, to take it and recreate it so that it could be given back to God. It can be seen, therefore, that both artists agree on the necessity of the creative act in revealing the true nature of God.

As far as the philosophy of time is concerned, it is necessary to differentiate clearly between the concepts held by Claudel and Messiaen. The previous section showed that Claudel's notion of time was much closer to the one held by Plato, than those of Aristotle or Bergson. It will be remembered that Bergson was careful to separate the concepts of space and time, and that Aristotle found it essential to differentiate between motion and time. Messiaen, in his philosophy of time follows the philosophy of Aristotle, and consequently of Aquinas; however, Claudel, although a Catholic, was obviously not in this line of thought, for he combined the three concepts of space, motion and time under the notion of the design of the universe. This would be consistent with his basic philosophical outlook, in that he inclined towards combining as many ideas under the one label as possible, rather than separating and defining them.

It was pointed out above that Claudel, in his use of metaphor, and in his concept of the logic of metaphor, presaged the language experiments of the Surrealists in their search for the fil conducteur.

49. See Chap. VI, section 1, p.106, section 3, p.110
He spoke of "le mot nouveau, l'opération qui resulte de la seule existence conjointe et simultanée de deux choses differentes", and, as will be shown in the following chapter, this use of language is the basis of Surrealist poetry. Messiaen's own poetry has been strongly influenced by that of the Surrealists, and is consequently in line with the experiments initiated by Claudel. It is important to note, as far as this point is concerned, that Messiaen has said:

Poetry is an extraordinary meeting of two disparate elements destined to merge - but after death, the secret relationships of things will be revealed to us as truth. (51)

The last area to be considered is that concerning their attitude to the senses, especially those of sight and hearing.

Colour has always played an important part in Messiaen's process of creation. When speaking of the work, Couleurs de la cité céleste, he said:

This subject suits me, especially since I am not afflicted with synopsis, which would have been a fortunate thing, but rather with an extreme sound-color sensitivity. When I listen to music, I see colors. When I read and hear music, I visualize colors in my mind.... I vividly feel those colors and have marked them on my scores. (52)

In 1931, Messiaen became friendly with the Swiss painter, Blanc-Gatti, who had synopsis, that is, he suffered from an optical

52. ibid., i.
and auditory nerve disorder which meant that he saw colours corresponding to the sounds he heard. He painted what he heard, and Messiaen maintains that Blanc-Gatti's paintings are similar to his own interior visions. Each of Messiaen's modes has been equated with particular colours, and he has also enumerated the colours associated with the eight Préludes for piano. (53) Harmonic sequences have their own colours, and also particular chords. For example, the chord of the dominant is Prussian blue, veined with red, gold, orange and lilac. Concerning harmonic progressions Messiaen has said the following:

My secret desire of enchanted gorgeousness in harmony has pushed me toward those swords of fire, those sudden stars, those flows of blue-orange lavas, those planets of turquoise, those violet shades, those garnets of long-haired arborescence, those wheelings of sounds and colors in a jumble of rainbows of which I have spoked with love in the Preface of my Quatuor pour la fin du Temps; such a gushing out of chords should necessarily be filtered; it is the sacred instinct of natural and true harmony which, alone, can so charge itself. (54)

The modes are associated with the following colours: mode II - violet crimson, mode III - orange tinged with milk-white, veined with red, like an opal, mode IV - deep purple, and mode V - grey-pink-green studded with gold. (55)

53. These will be discussed in the section analysing the Préludes.
54. Messiaen, P., Technique. 52.
It was pointed out that Claudel also considered the inter-
relation of sight and sound as important in his work, and it will be
recalled that he spoke of hearing what was seen, and that he attributed
colours to particular sounds. The reason he gave for this was that all
senses have the same source, and that sense organs are therefore only
an apparatus for transforming the initial current. From this, it will
be remembered, he deduced that all senses are interdependent.

In conclusion, it can be said that possibly the strongest
influence Claudel has had on Messiaen is that of one Catholic artist on
another. Claudel's art is a creative returning and witnessing to God
of His creation, Messiaen's is an act of faith; both thereby have
placed their art at the service of the Catholic faith.
CHAPTER NINE

SURREALISM

Good consonants and vowels were absolutely indispensable to my complex rhythms and difficult melodies - consonants and vowels which are easy to sing and which go with the rhythm and the melodies. Therefore I wrote the poems of my vocal works. At that time...I was reading Paul Eluard and interested in the surrealist movement. (1)

1. Definition.

For a definition of the term surrealism it is best to turn to the writings of the Surrealists themselves, for they took great care to express exactly what they meant by it. Firstly, from André Breton's article Enter the Mediums comes the following:

This word, which we have not invented, and which we could so easily have left in the vaguest of critical vocabularies, is employed by us with a precise meaning. We have agreed to refer by it to a certain psychic automatism, which more or less corresponds to the dream-state, a state of which it is by this time very difficult to fix the limits. (2)

Secondly, from an early surrealist tract:

Le surréalisme n'est pas un moyen d'expression nouveau ou plus facile, ni même une métaphysique de la poésie. Il est un moyen de libération totale de l'esprit et de tout ce qui lui ressemble. (3)

1. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks,' iii.
And lastly, from Louis Aragon:

Le surréalisme est l'inspiration reconnue, acceptée et pratiquée. Non plus comme une visitation inexplicable, mais comme une faculté qui s'exerce. (4)

The word **Surrealist** was first used by Guillaume Apollinaire to describe his play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, written in 1918, the year of his death. It was sub-titled **drame surréaliste**.

Writers on Surrealism are careful to emphasise that it is not to be treated as a merely textual phenomenon, that is as a style, as a school of literature, or as a school of painting, but as a living commitment, a "latent state of mind, a human attitude in the widest sense of the word human."(6) Breton elucidated this point when he stated that a surrealist work is distinct from any other because of its surrealistic motive and that this motive is to reduce, and finally to dispense of the contradictions which exist between the sleeping and waking states, the dream world and the world of reality, the unconscious and the conscious. The surrealists therefore saw as their main purpose and activity the return to the sources of the imagination, which they considered to be a sufficient and generating force for the renewal of the whole of life. They laid emphasis on both spontaneity and moral

5. This was set as an opera by Francis Poulenc in 1944-1945.
commitment - spontaneity which revealed itself in automatic writing, chance relations of language and experience, and in a refusal to submit to logic; moral commitment which manifested itself in revolt against bourgeois attitudes and literary models. Both of these modes of living and working centred their means of expression and their hope for the renewal of the world on the process of bringing together elements from totally different spheres, and creating from the conjunctions thereby produced new images and new meanings. (7)

Surrealism, then, sought to be a liberation. As Anthony Hartley illustrates, this was mainly, and in the first place, from the rationalism of the lyceum philosophy class, orthodox religion, and the civilized world, built from systems bound together with preconceptions and prejudices. (8)

This seeking shifted the emphasis in art from the work of art itself to the processes by which it was produced. Poetry was therefore conceived on the one hand as being a perpetual functioning of the psyche, in other words, a continuous flow of subconscious images, which only needed a certain predisposition and discipline to be revealed in the form of words, and on the other hand as a universally valid attitude to experience, and therefore a mode of living. (9)

The liberation came then, specifically in the world of art, as a liberation of the creative imagination, of the inner world and its expression; and surrealist poetry, by its suppressions of logic, and

with its greater freedom of imagery, was more and more a manifestation of the poet's subconscious, its main theme being the short moments of perception and disquiet of the poet.

The following sums up both the meaning and purpose of Surrealism:

Surrealism insults reason for the benefit of spontaneity, logic for the benefit of the lyric sense of the marvellous, and everyday reality for the glorification of the insolite, in which elements of the real are transfused with the light of the 'super-real' by the inexplicable and unexpected workings of objective chance ("a solution more perfect than one could have hoped to a problem one was not aware of having"). (10)

2. **History.**

Surrealism had its roots in the Dada movement, and Gascoyne traces its ancestors back to the Marquis de Sade, through Lautréamont, Rimbaud and Baudelaire. (11) Dada literally means hobby-horse, and was chosen from a dictionary at random. The movement was founded in Zürich on 8 February 1916, by Tristan Tzara, R. Hülsenbeck and Hans Arp.

Tzara moved to Paris in 1919 and initiated the movement there; the form it was to take was influenced very strongly by

Andre Breton. Dada was the concrete expression of an almost universal state of mind which had existed even before the outbreak of war, and it was utterly negative in attitude:

Qu'est-ce que c'est beau? Qu'est-ce que c'est laid?
Qu'est-ce que c'est grand, fort, faible?
Qu'est-ce que c'est Carpentier, Renan, Poch?
Connais pas. Qu'est-ce que c'est moi? Connais pas.
Connais pas, connais pas, connais pas. (13)

In a final negative act, it disbanded itself in Paris in 1922. However, from this movement grew Surrealism, which was rather more positive in outlook. As Gascoyne has shown, it was a negation of negation, and therefore a new affirmation. (14) Surrealism, then, began as a movement in 1922, and, unlike the Dada movement, it had a leader. The leadership was assumed by Breton, who "frequently behaved like the Lenin of the Parisian literary world." (15)

Surrealist publications from 1922 to 1924 included the review Litterature, edited by Breton, with contributions by Louis Aragon, (16)


16. Other publications were: Breton's collection of poems, Claire de Terre, Aragon's Les Aventures de Télémaque, and two books by Eluard and Ernst in collaboration, Répétitions and Les Malheures des Immortels.
17. Aragon, L., Born Paris 1897. He initially studied medicine and then met Breton 1917. With Breton and Philippe Soupault (who introduced Breton to Aragon), he founded the review Litterature in 1919. He traveled to the U.S.S.R. in 1930, where he had to present the aims of Surrealism to the second conference of writers at Kharkov. In 1932, he aligned himself firmly with the Communist Party against Surrealists.
Robert Desnos, (18) Paul Eluard, (19) and Max Ernst. (20) The year 1924 forms a clear delineation in the history of Surrealism, for in this year appeared both the first Manifeste du Surréalisme, written by Breton, and the first number of La Révolution surréaliste.

The Manifesto stands as one of the most important documents of Surrealism, for in it, Breton lays out the aims and intentions of the movement. It begins with the theme that man's imagination should be free, and yet is everywhere in chains; the chains of logic, rationalism, experience and civilization. Breton acknowledges the importance of Freud, for his discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis, and his assertion of the importance of aspects of mental life which had previously been deemed unimportant. Breton's aim can perhaps be summarized with his own statement; "the imagination is perhaps on the point of reclaiming its rights", and in his intention, once the mental forces have been recognized and released, to 'canalize' them, and perhaps later to submit them to the control of reason.

18. Desnos, R., Born Paris 1900, died 1945. He joined Surrealist movement in 1922. From 1929 to the beginning of the War he worked as a journalist without any contact with Surrealism. In his poetry he returned to fixed forms and rhyme schemes. He was captured by the Nazis during the War, taken to Buchenwald and died of typhus soon after being released by the Allied Forces in 1945.

19. Eluard, P., Born Saint-Denis 1895, died Paris 1952. His real name was Eugène Grindel. He was mobilised in 1914 in the medical corps, and ended the War in the infantry. In 1920 he founded the review Proverbes, and he made a world tour in 1924. In 1938 he published the Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme. He joined the Communist Party in 1926.

20. Ernst, M., Born 1881. He introduced the Dadaist movement into Cologne in 1919 and was well-known as an artist, making collages and frottages as well as collage novels. He joined the Surrealist movement in 1924.
The following is an extract from the beginning of the Manifesto:

Nous vivons encore sous le règne de la logique, voilà, bien entendu, à quoi je voulais en venir. Mais les procédés logiques, de nos jours, ne s'appliquent plus qu'à la résolution de problèmes d'intérêt secondaire. Le rationalisme absolu qui reste de mode ne permet de considérer que des faits relevant étroitement de notre expérience. Les fins logiques, par contre, nous échappent. Inutile d'ajouter que l'expérience même s'est vu assigner des limites. Elle tourne dans une cage d'où il est de plus en plus difficile de la faire sortir. Elle s'appuie, elle aussi, sur l'utilité immédiate, et elle est gardée par le bon sens. Sous couleur de civilisation, sous prétexte de progrès, on est parvenu à bannir de l'esprit tout ce qui se peut taxer à tort ou à raison de superstition, de chimère; à proscrire tout mode de recherche de la vérité qui n'est pas conforme à l'usage. C'est par le plus grand hasard, en apparence, qu'a été récemment rendue à la lumière une partie du monde intellectuel, et à mon sens de beaucoup la plus importante, dont on affectait de ne plus se soucier. Il faut en rendre grâce aux découvertes de Freud. Sur la foi de ces découvertes, un courant d'opinion se dessine enfin, à la faveur duquel l'explorateur humain pourra pousser plus loin ses investigations, autorisé qu'il sera à ne plus seulement tenir compte des réalités sommaires. L'imagination est peut-être sur le point de reprendre ses droits. Si les profondeurs de notre esprit récèlent d'étranges forces capables d'augmenter celles de la surface, ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles, il y a tout intérêt à les capter, à les capter d'abord, pour les soumettre ensuite, s'il y a lieu, au contrôle de notre raison. Les analystes eux-mêmes n'ont qu'à y gagner. Mais il importe d'observer qu'aucun moyen n'est désigné à priori pour la conduite de cette entreprise, que jusqu'à nouvel ordre elle peut passer pour être aussi bien du ressort des poètes que des savants et que son succès ne dépend pas des voies plus ou moins capricieuses qui seront suivies. (21)

The conclusion of the Manifesto deals with, among other things, the use of language, and puts the proposition that language has been given to man in order that he might make a surrealist use of it. The main instance of this use is in the fusion of two mutually distant realities, that is, in the juxtaposition of two elements normally unrelated to each other. Examples of this fusion are Pierre Reverdy's image; "The day was folded like a white cloth", and Lautréamont's, "chance meeting, on a dissecting-table, of a sewing-machine and an umbrella."(23)

The publication La Révolution surréaliste, appearing for the first time in December of 1924, eventually became Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution, as the Surrealists affiliated themselves with the Communist Party. (24)

From the end of 1925 till the end of 1929, a large body of Surrealist works appeared, and many exhibitions of Surrealist

22. Reverdy, P., Born 1889, died 1960. He anticipated in his poetry the work of the Surrealists, sharing many of their techniques and preoccupations, but was not himself part of Surrealist movement. He contributed during the First World War to the review Nord-Sud, which published many of the poets who were later to become Dadaists and Surrealists. The Collections in which most of his poems are to be found are Plupart du temps (1945) and Main d'oeuvre (1949). Some of his rather aphoristic critical opinions are contained in Le Gant de crin (1924).


24. The most outstanding feature of the first number of Le Révolution surréaliste was an enquiry to determine whether suicide was a legitimate solution.

25. These included Breton's Nadja, Eluard's Capitale de la Douleur, Les Dessous d'une Vie, L'Amour la Poésie, Aragon's Payson de Paris, Desnos' La Liberte ou l'Amour and Max Ernst's collage novel La Femme 100 Têtes.
paintings, including works of Arp, Chirico, Ernst, Miro, Picasso, Man Ray and Yves Tanguy, were held. In 1928, Breton's detailed study of Surrealist painting, Le Surréalisme et la peinture was published.

The Deuxième Manifeste du Surréalisme, again written by Breton, appeared in 1929, and in it he set out to restate, after a number of dissensions and break-aways, and after five years practical experience, the Surrealist position and its aims.

More important Surrealist works were published in 1932, including Breton's Les Vases Communicants and Eluard's La Vie Immédiate. By 1935 the relations which had grown up between the Surrealists and the Communist Party had become strained, particularly over the autonomy of art. They were finally severed; the Communists maintaining that the Surrealist concept of revolution was much broader than theirs, for it embraced both spiritual and material liberation.

The original group which had come together to form the Surrealist movement around Breton was, during the latter half of the

26. Other works which appeared in this year were Breton's Le Revolver à Cheveux Blancs, Salvador Dali's film scenario Babaouo, and Tzara's Ou Boivent les Loups.
thirties, disintegrating. Aragon had already left the group, and Tzara followed in 1934, with Eluard separating himself from Breton in 1938. By 1940, both Tzara and Eluard had realigned themselves with the Communist Party, and Aragon was to become the leading intellectual of the French Communist Party.

3. Language and Imagery.

It will be remembered that Breton stated in the first Manifesto that language was given to man in order for him to make a surrealist use of it. Therefore one of the main functions of Surrealism was to experiment with, and investigate language. Taking as the point of departure the fact that language is a means of communication, the Surrealists saw as their most important undertaking the seeking and sustaining of a dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious. This communication was seen as occurring in chance happenings, which created the merveilleux. It was symbolized in the images of the half-opened and the swinging door, and the relationship set up between the container and what it contained. These images imply

27. Aragon's departure was precipitated by the events, known as L'Affaire Aragon, which surrounded the publication of his poem Front rouge in 1931. His poem was interpreted as a call to anarchy, and he was consequently charged and brought to court in January 1932. The Surrealist group sponsored a petition protesting against the charge, and it was circulated throughout Europe in order to collect signatures. The affair became a test case for Surrealism, for it revolved around the extent to which the content of a poem could be taken literally. Aragon, himself, who was against the petition, took the stand that a Surrealist had no right to claim artistic immunity from the battle against the bourgeois mentality. The charges were eventually dropped, and Aragon resigned from the movement. For him, its revolt against 'art for art's sake' and its moral commit-ment had come into question, and had been found wanting.
a continuous flux between the two elements, and thus the analogy is
suggested between them and the idea of the dream passing into everyday
life. Thereby the necessity in what was previously thought to be
chance is revealed. As Breton says, concerning the first Manifesto:

Pour cette fois, mon intention était de faire
justice de la haine du merveilleux qui sévit chez
certains hommes, de ce ridicule sous lequel ils
veulent le faire tomber. Tranchons-en: le
merveilleux est toujours beau, n'importe quel
merveilleux est beau, il n'y a même que le
merveilleux qui soit beau. (28)

The container/contained image, as used, for example, by Eluard
in the title, La Jarre peut-elle être plus belle que l'eau? expresses
the idea of the importance of what is contained within what is familiar,
whereas Breton's use of the swinging and half-opened door image, as for
example in Les Vases Communicants, treats the relationship between the
conscious and the unconscious in a rather different light. The title
Les Vases Communicants refers to the part played by Surrealism as a
capillary thread, or tissue, which assures the constant exchange between
the interior and exterior worlds. This exchange necessitates the
continuous interpenetration of the sleeping and waking states. (29)
Breton also emphasized the chance nature of communication between the
two worlds of consciousness, and postulated that these could be brought

under the direct control of reason. (30)

As the basic concept of Surrealist poetry was the interpenetration of the conscious and the unconscious, the objective and the subjective, it therefore created a whole world of relationships between seemingly opposed objects and ideas. These relationships were established through the process of linking. The theory of linking consequently has a place of fundamental importance in the theoretical writings of the Surrealists. Eluard has stated that "everything is comparable to everything", and Breton has suggested as a Surrealist technique, that of linking any noun to any other. (31)

This link is seen as taking place by means of a thread, the fil conducteur, which transmits a charge from one element of the image to the other. The charge results from bringing into contact two highly differentiated elements, causing a fusion between the two, and thus forming them into one image. Breton has stated that it is the task of the eye to establish new links through fils conducteurs, the connecting wires seen between objects. (32)

4. The Poetry.

The main aspects of concern in this examination of Surrealist poetry are the examples of the imagery created through the process of linking, and the often used combination of elements through constant repetition, the so-called litanic form.

30. See quotation from first Manifesto above.
32. Ibid., 31.
When creating images through linking - the ability of the poet to see the thread connecting disparate elements - the poet is actually imposing the form of his interior vision on what surrounds him. This is substantiated by the quotation which Breton made from Reverdy: "Creation is a movement from the interior to the exterior and not from the exterior over the facade." (33)

The two following quotations from Breton's poetry illustrate his use of linking; of his seeking the fil conducteur:

Chemises caillées sur la chaise. Un chapeau de soie inaugure de reflets ma poursuite. Homme...
Une glace te venge et vaincu me traite en habit ôté. L'instant revient patiner la chair.

Maisons, je m'affranchis de parois sèches. On secoue! Un lit tendre est plaisanté de couronnes.

Atteins la poésie accablante des paliers. (34)

Les coqs de roche passent dans le cristal
Ils défendent la rosée à coups de crête
Alors la devise charmante de l'éclair
Descend sur la bannière des ruines
Le sable n'est plus qu'une horloge phosphorescente
Qui dit minuit
Par les bras d'une femme oubliée... (35)

Eluard's poetry gains its strength from the poet's ability to transmute everything into everything else. He was occupied with

34. Ibid., 74. From prose-poem Age (1916).
35. From Tout Paradis n'est pas perdu, quoted from Hartley, A., op.cit., 234.
the paradox of the one within the other, as was pointed out previously, and he valued, above all, the ability to participate and to understand. He rejected the concepts of separateness and discontinuity, and in line with surrealist thought saw things as potentially to be joined. For him there was no distance between the actual and the imagined, the concrete and the abstract, they were totally identified with each other.

This can be seen in the following lines from the poem Cour à pic, from Cours naturel, where abstractions, as well as intangible feelings are linked with the physical landscape:

Moulins des miroirs et des yeux  
Iles des seins sillons des mots  
Neige câline de la force  
Mares fanées de la fatigue. (36)

The following, from the poem Grand Air, illustrates the same point:

La rive les mains tremblantes  
Descendait sous la pluie  
Un escalier de brumes  
Tu sortais toute nue  
Faux-marbre palpitant  
Teint de bon matin  
Trésor gardé par des bêtes immenses  
Qui gardaient elles du soleil sous leurs ailes  
Des bêtes que nous connaissions sans les voir... (37)

Along with his ability to transmute things into each other, Eluard had the psychological capability of transforming himself into

a different personality, of recreating himself entirely through the "mediation of all beings". (38)

Je suis le spectateur et l'acteur et l'auteur
Je suis la femme et son mari et leur enfant
... Car où commence un corps je prends forme et conscience
Et même quand un corps de défait dans la mort
Je gis en son creuset j'épouse son tourment. (39)

Another example of this transformation is to be seen in the poem L'Amoureuse, where the woman loved is dissolved into his own being:

Elle est debout sur mes paupières
Et ses cheveux sont dans les miens
Elle a la forme de mes mains
Elle a la couleur de mes yeux
Elle s'engloutit dans mon ombre
Comme une pierre sur la ciel.

Elle a toujours les yeux ouverts
Et ne me laisse pas dormir.
Ses rêves en pleine lumière
Font s'évaporer les soleils,
Me font rire, pleurer et rire,
Parler sans avoir rien à dire. (40)

The other surrealist technique to be examined is that of the litanic form, a secular version of the sacred litany, that is, a constant repetition of a single idea with slight variations.


40. Bédouin, J.L., op.cit., 164.
Perhaps this form is used to express more for carefully the unity between contrasting ideas. It is a way of combining elements seen from within as unified, and suppressing the distance which separates them - constructing more convincingly the fil conducteur between them. Each phrase of the repetition can be seen as starting from a fresh, though single, beginning.

The technique can be seen very clearly in Eluard's poem *L'Amoureuse*, which was quoted above, and also in his *Je te l'ai dit pour les nuages*, which is constructed entirely on the litanic form.

```
Je te l'ai dit pour les nuages
Je te l'ai dit pour l'arbre de la mer
Pour chaque vague pour les oiseaux dans les feuilles
Pour les cailloux du bruit
Pour les mains familières
Pour l'œil qui devient visage ou paysage
Et le sommeil lui rend le ciel de sa couleur
Pour toute la nuit bue
Pour la grille des routes
Pour la fenêtre ouverte pour un front découvert
Je te l'ai dit pour tes pensées pour tes paroles
Toute caresses toute confiance se survivent. (41)
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Finally, an example of litanic form from Breton's poem *L'Union Libre*:

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Ma femme aux seins de taupinière marine
Ma femme aux seins de creuset du rubis
Aux seins de spectre de la rose sous la rosée...

Ma femme aux fesse de grès et d'amiante
Ma femme aux fesse de dos de cygne
Ma femme aux fesse de printemps...
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It will become evident in the examination of Messiaen's poetry just how strongly he has been influenced by the forms and techniques of Surrealist poetry.

5. **Messiaen and Surrealism.**

André Breton spoke, in the first Manifesto, of the marvellous; those chance happenings which established communication between the conscious and the unconscious worlds:

...le merveilleux est toujours beau, n'importe quel merveilleux est beau, il n'y a même que le merveilleux qui soit beau. (43)

Messiaen has stated that he has always had a taste for the marvellous, "J'ai toujours eu le goûê du merveilleux", (44) and the following quotation illustrates how Messiaen finds this taste fulfilled in the Catholic faith. He speaks of two of the titles of his organ works, and of their Surrealist quality:

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42. Bédouin, J.L., op.cit., 83.
43. Hartley, A., op.cit., xlvii. See also above, section 3.
44. Goléa, A., **Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen** (Paris, 1961), 34.
Les vérités de la foi contiennent encore une certaine poésie surréaliste, que je me suis bien gardé de mépriser. Voici deux titres tirés de mon Livre d'orgue: les Mains de l'abîme, les Yeux dans les roues. Cela pourrait être signé André Breton ou Max Ernst, qui ne passent pas spécialement pour des catholiques, et pourtant les Mains de l'abîme s'appuient sur un texte du prophète Habacuc, que voici: "L'abîme a jeté son cri, la profondeur a levé ses deux mains," et les Yeux dans les roues s'appuient sur un texte du prophète Ezechiel, que voici: "Les jantes des quatre roues étaient remplies d'yeux tout autour, car l'Esprit de l'Être Vivant était dans les roues." (45)

Messiaen's intimate knowledge of Surrealist poetry is revealed also, in the notes he wrote for the recording of the Turangalîla-Symphonie. In speaking of the fifth movement, Joie du sang des étoiles, he says that to understand the excesses of the piece, one must remember that the union of true lovers is, for them, a transformation on a cosmic scale. To illustrate this he quotes from Breton's L'Union Libre as follows:

André Breton retrouve tous les éléments dans l'être aimé: 'Ma femme, aux yeux, de niveau d'eau, de niveau d'air, de terre, et de feu'. (46)

Messiaen has written his own poems for the song cycles Poèmes pour Mi, Chants de Terre et de Ciel, Harawi, Chant d'Amour et de Mort and Cinq Rechants, as well as for the Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence divine. He has used as models for his poetry the works


of Paul Eluard, Pierre Reverdy and André Breton, and his interest in the Surrealist movement has meant that his own poetry follows the same style. In order to show the Surrealist derivation of Messiaen's poetry, examples from the poems written for his work Harawi will be examined. It is necessary, however, to point out that Messiaen has said these poems have no literary pretensions, and that they were written with the music, and therefore written only to be sung. (47)

Concerning Harawi, Messiaen has said the following:

A l'époque où je l'ai écrit, ... j'étais grand lecteur de Pierre Reverdy et de Paul Eluard, et aussi d'un très bel ouvrage d'André Breton sur le surréalisme et la peinture. Il est donc presque entièrement surréaliste, sauf certaines images empruntées à mes montagnes de Dauphiné (parce que je n'ai jamais vu le Cordillère des Andes), et certains vocables péruviens surréalistes, tels que "colombe verte". La colombe est la jeune fille au Pérou, la couleur verte est la couleur du printemps. (48)

Harawi is based on the Tristan and Isolde myth, but in terms of the ancient Inca civilization. The word Harawi is a Quechua word, Quechua being the ancient language of Peru, and it means a love-song ending with the death of the lovers. Piroutcha is the Isolde of Harawi, and it is her to whom the Surrealistic symbol of the green dove refers. (49)

47. Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', iii.


49. Johnson, R.S., Notes to recording of Harawi, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, piano, Noelle Barker, soprano, Argo, ZRG 606.
As Messiaen has pointed out, the double symbol refers to youth. The dove is the young girl, and green is the colour of spring. The dual symbolism of love and death is expressed surrealistically in Harawi, for both are man's links with the eternal. The idea of sacrifice is common to both, whether it is the love between a man and a woman, or the death of Christ on the Cross for the love of the world. The eternal therefore acts as the fil conducteur between love and death.

According to Messiaen, the whole work is symbolized by a painting by Penrose, which shows, extending from bottom to top, a man's two hands, and a woman's head upside-down, with the neck continuing into the sky and the stars. (50)

The images Messiaen has used in Harawi will be examined from the perspective of Surrealism as the revelation of the subconscious through chance associations. From this principle, images are created by the juxtaposition of two disjunct elements, the procedure of which is, of course, that of linking, which was outlined in the preceding section.

Along with the image colombe verte, Messiaen also uses the image oiseau d'étoile to refer to the beloved, namely Piroutcha. Oiseau d'étoile is also used in association with the female head in the Penrose painting, for the poem Amour oiseau d'étoile was directly inspired by this painting.

50. Goléa, A., Rencontres, 156.
Other examples of the creation of images by linking come from the poem *L'escalier redit, gestes du soleil*:

Ton œil présent qui respire,
and
Le coeur de l'horloge folle. (51)

From *Amour oiseau d'étoile* come the following images:

Ton œil qui chante,
Ton œil d'étoile, (52)

and from *Katchikatchi les étoiles*:

mains de mes cheveux. (53)

A particular device Messiaen uses in the poem *L'escalier redit, gestes du soleil*, is the permutation of a series of images, linking the staircase with the eye, time, water and the firmament. They appear in the following order throughout the poem:

....l'escalier du temps.
....l'escalier du ciel.
....l'œil de l'eau.

....l'escalier du ciel.
....l'escalier de l'eau.
....l'œil du temps.

....l'escalier de l'eau.
....l'escalier du temps.
....l'œil du ciel. (54)

52. Ibid., 84.
53. Ibid., 90.
54. Ibid., 70-83.
The staircase refers to the winding staircase in *Répétition planétaire*, which takes the lovers from time to eternity.

In order to show the way in which the above permutation is incorporated into the structure of the poem *L'escalier redit, gestes du soleil*, the first stanza from the poem is quoted as follows:

Il ne parle plus,
l'escalier sourit,
Chaque marche vers le sud.
Du ciel, de l'eau, du temps,
l'escalier du temps.
Son œil est désert,
lumière en secret.
Pierre claire et soleil clair.
De l'eau, du temps, du ciel,
l'escalier du ciel.
Ma petite cendre tu est là,
tes tempes vertes, mauves,
sur de l'eau.
Comme la mort.
L'œil de l'eau. (55)

This poem tells of the lovers liberated from the world, where, having passed through the danger and fear associated with death, they are at one with the infinite, and perform a dance which embraces the whole universe, uniting their love with the love of the world.

The other Surrealist technique which was discussed was the litanic form. *Harawi* has many examples of this form, the main one being the poem *Katchikatchi les étoiles*, whose first section is based entirely on it:

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55. Messiaen, 0., *op. cit.*, 70-72.
Katchikatchi les étoiles,
faîtes les sauter,
Katchikatchi les étoiles,
faîtes les danser.
Katchikatchi les atomes,
faîtes les sauter,
Katchikatchi les atomes,
faîtes les danser. (56)

Katchikatchi is an actual Peruvian word meaning a grasshopper,
and this part of the poem refers to the lovers, who become the stars and
the atoms which jump like grasshoppers.

The following quotations are three more examples of litanic
form as used in Harawi, the first two coming from L'escalier redit,
gestes du soleil, and the third from the last poem, Dans le noir:

La mort est là, ma colombe verte.
La mort est là, ma perle limpide.
La mort est là. (57)

Pour nous chercher,
pour nous pleurer,
pour nous rêver,
pour nous trouver. (58)

Dans le noir, colombe verte.
Dans le noir, perle limpide.
Dans le noir, mon fruit de ciel, de jour,
Loïtain d'amour. (59)

56. Messiaen, O., op.cit., 88, 89.
57. Ibid., 76,77.
58. Ibid., 79.
59. Ibid., 94-97.
In the examination of the formal techniques which Messiaen uses in his piano music, it will be seen that these same techniques, namely, litanic form, and juxtaposition and permutation, have a very important place.

Finally, the point should be made that Surrealism, in its insistence on the use of chance happenings, the merveilleux, on the release of the subconscious, or to put it in other words, on the use of intuition, has its origins not only in the work of Freud, but was also presaged by Bergson. The Surrealist movement was also opposed to the use only of the intellect, and had as its aim the liberation of the psyche from rationalism. Again, this would seem to have a very close relationship with Bergson's concept of duration:

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live. (61)

According to Bergson, the intellect separated and spatialized, and it was against separation both of time, and of objects, that the Surrealists fought. Thus they, through the process of linking, through the fil conducteur, and through chance happenings, attempted to unify. This is also what Bergson advocated.

60. Bergson, H., Time and Free Will, (London, 1910), 101. Here Bergson defines intuition as the ability to "conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole."

61. Ibid., 100.
PART THREE

THE SOURCES OF MESSIAEN'S
MUSICAL LANGUAGE.
CHAPTER TEN

INDIAN MUSIC

Recalling that Igor Stravinsky, consciously or unconsciously, drew one of his most striking rhythmic procedures, the augmentation or diminution of one rhythm out of two...from the Hindu rhythm simhavikridita...we shall in turn address ourselves to Hindu rhythmics to infer from it our first rules. (1)

1. The Sangita-Ratnakara.

Messiaen's first acquaintance with Hindu rhythm was through the table of 120 desi talas (2) from the Sangita-Ratnakara by Sarngadeva, (3) which became the major source of his rhythmic inspiration. Sarngadeva refers to himself as Nissanka, which means "free from doubt", (4) and the Sangita-Ratnakara, written in the first


(3) Sarngadeva; Lived about the middle of the 13th century, and traces his family's origin to Kashmir, and to the sage Vrsagana (at the beginning of the Sangita-Ratnakara). His grandfather, Bhaskara, migrated to the south. His father was Sodhala, who was patronized by King Singhana, king of the Yadava dynasty, who ruled in Deogiri (now Doulatabad) from 1210 to 1247 A.D. Sarngadeva himself lived at the court of this king as a high official, holding the position of accountant-general.

half of the thirteenth century, has been considered by many authorities to be the Liber Magnus of mediaeval North Indian music.\(^5\) The name means "Ocean of Music", and the work has always been subject to a great deal of controversy in the many commentaries written upon it, mainly over whether it represents the practice of northern or southern music.\(^6\)

C. Kunhan Raja, in the introduction to the first volume of the Sangita-Ratnakara, considers it one of the most important and comprehensive works on Indian music extant, and indicates that its authority has been recognized by subsequent scholars.\(^7\) However, its meaning has been misunderstood, as the following quotation shows:

> It would certainly be interesting to know why such a great work like the Ratnakara should have become absolutely unintelligible everywhere within about a hundred and fifty years of its completion. Our wonder is only increased when we see that Kallinatha, Sharamgadeva's great commentator, and other subsequent southern writers who freely quote from his work, the Ratnakara, should not be in a position to explain any of the rāgas described in it, notwithstanding the fact that many of the latter were such as they themselves perhaps constantly sang and played.\(^8\)

Apparently writers on music were in the habit of quoting and paraphrasing the older treatises simply out of respect for authority,

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(5) Kaufmann, W., The Ragas of North India, (Bloomington, 1968), 42.

(6) Ibid., 43.


(8) Bhatkhande, Pandit, V.N., A Short Historical Survey of the Music of Upper India, (Bombay, 1939), 16f, from Kaufmann, W., The Ragas, 43.
and without any understanding of what they quoted. (9)

The Sangita-Ratnakara is divided into seven adhhyayas, or chapters, dealing with the following subjects:

1. Svara
2. Raga
3. Prakirnaka
4. Prabandha
5. Tala
6. Vadya
7. Nrtya

It is from the fifth chapter that the table of 120 desitalas was derived.

2. Tala.

The syllable 'ta' represents Shankara (Shiva) the 'Giver of Happiness', the syllable 'la' the 'Lady of the Mountain' (Parvati). Rhythm is called 'tala', because it is the union of the First Principle (Shiva) and his Energy (Shakti = Parvati). Shiva and Shakti being its very nature, rhythm (tala), one with the life-breath, is meritorious, leads to fame, gives enjoyment and liberation and so is cherished by Yogis. (10)

The word tala literally means the palm of the hand or the clapping of hands, and the tala or rhythmic system of Indian music

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has been compared with the rhythmic modes of thirteenth century European music. (11) From the numerous tala systems which have been used during India's history, two have survived. (12) These are the marga talas which arose from Sanskrit prose, and refer to the free recitation of liturgical texts in a small branch of classical temple music, and the desi talas which are associated with folk or dance music, performed to the accompaniment of drums. (13) It is the latter system which is relevant to the clapping of hands, and also to the study of the music of Messiaen.

The essential principle of the tala system is that it is quantitative rather than accentual, which relates it to the Sanskrit language in which syllables are differentiated by length unlike the English prosody of accent and stress. (14)

The terms 'divisive' and 'additive', first used by Curt Sachs, described the fundamental difference between Western and Indian rhythm. In a 'divisive' rhythm a certain duration which recurs regularly (the bar), is divided into equal parts, whereas the recurring group within an 'additive' rhythm is composed of longer or shorter elements (for instance, 7 + 1 + 2 units). (15)

(11) Kaufmann, W., Musical Notations of the Orient, (Bloomington, 1967), 188.
Malm, W.P., Music Cultures of the Pacific, the Near East, and Asia, (New Jersey, 1967), 72, 73, describes the tala as a more complex version of the talea in the isorhythmic motets of the Ars Nova.
(13) Kaufmann, W., The Ragas, 20.
The talas of Indian music are constructed by grouping together values of different lengths, and thus it is impossible to divide them into halves, thirds or quarters. Within a song or instrumental piece they are organized into sections (avartas, 'enclosures'), which consist of several bars or feet (vibhaghās, 'divisions'), composed of a number of 'members' (āngas), corresponding to the individual notes in music and having the length of one to seven time units (matras). It is possible for the vibhaghās to contain differing numbers of āngas, and the rhythm of the piece consists of constant repetition of the avartas. However, the talas and their names which are in use today are completely different from those listed in the Sangita-Ratnakara.

i. Matra.

Matra means instant or unit, and corresponds to the ancient Greek concept of chronos protos which is the first or smallest duration. Apparently an old system defined the matra as the shortest time in which a syllable could be pronounced. Within this system, the normal human pulse beat would last three matras, and the normal musical beat or hand-clap, (called the laghu, 'short'), would last from three to nine matras, usually four. Nevertheless,


modern practice equates the *matra* with the basic musical beat and thus with the *laghu*, which is transcribed as a crotchet. Kaufmann indicates that the *matra* is the Northern term for the equivalent Southern *laghu* (19).

Joanny Grosset, in the article on the music of India in the Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire, defines the *matra* as corresponding to five short syllables, and also equates it with the *laghu*:

> L'unité de temps-type (mâtâ), correspondant à cinq syllabes brèves, est appelée *laghu* (= *levis*, brève) et se représente par le signe "(!), que nous pouvons traduire par notre *croche* "[ ). (20)

This definition would seem to combine the ideas expressed in both the ancient and modern systems.

There are, theoretically, three main tempos in Indian music; slow, where each beat lasts about one second (\( \downarrow = 60 \)), medium, (\( \downarrow = 120 \)), and fast (\( \downarrow = 240 \)). (21)

ii. Rhythmic Notation.

The main values within the desi-tala system, with their rhythmic signs and equivalent values are as follows:

(19) Kaufmann, W., Notations, 194.

(20) Grosset, J., op.cit., 297.

Another rhythmic sign, the *virama* which denotes a rest, or, more exactly, a prolongation, is defined by Grosset as being equivalent to half the value of the note to which it is attached:

La notation rythmique utilise encore le signe de *virama* (repos, temps d'arrêt), sorte d'accent grave en forme de croissant, qui, placé au-dessus d'une durée, la prolonge de la moitié de sa valeur. Ainsi le signe "\( \text{\textvisiblespace}^0 \text{\textvisiblespace} \)" vaut \( 1 + \frac{1}{2} \) *druta* (\( \text{\textvisiblespace}^1 \text{\textvisiblespace} \)); le signe "\( \text{\textvisiblespace}^1 \text{\textvisiblespace} \)" vaut \( 1 + \frac{1}{2} \) *laghu*, c'est-à-dire *laghu* + *druta* (\( \text{\textvisiblespace}^1 \text{\textvisiblespace} \)). \( \text{\textvisiblespace}^{(23)} \)

This sign is not used with the *guru* or the *pluta*.

iii. The names of the *talas*.

Fox-Strangways\( (24) \) suggests that the names of the *talas* are often no more than picturesque appellations, and that in the cases where they have recognizable meanings the rhythmic patterns to which they apply in the ancient treatises are quite different from the modern *talas* possessing the same names.

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\( (22) \) Fox-Strangways, A.H., *op.cit.*, 200.
Grosset, J., *op.cit.*, 300 gives the same table but halves these values; *matra* = \( \text{\textvisiblespace}^0 \text{\textvisiblespace} \).

\( (23) \) Grosset, J., *op.cit.*, 300.

Nonetheless, Messiaen claims to have found the symbolic meanings of the names and the durations of the desi talas in the Sangita-Ratnakara:

I was fortunate in obtaining a list of the 120 Deci-Talas of the Sarngadeva system (13th century A.D.). The list provided me with the duration of these rhythms as well as their symbolic Sanskrit names. After much thought, I found the symbols contained in the names and the durations. (25)

3. Rhythmic Practice.

The drum in Indian music is considered to be "the king among instruments", and its purpose is to accompany the soloist, the drummer articulating the tala "with an amazing variety of strokes, occasionally even of great intricacy." (26) The drummer, who uses either one drum with two heads or two drums with one head each, in both cases tuned to different pitches, either an octave or a fifth, often plays complex counter rhythms to the singer or instrumentalist without disturbing his tala. (27)

One simple means of deriving a counter rhythm is to play the tala with the right hand, while at the same time playing its augmentation with the left hand,

(25) Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', Le Courrier Musical de France No.8 (1964), v. One example is the tala lakṣmica which he interprets as follows:
Lakṣmica signifie: La paix qui descend de la déesse Lakṣmi.
(See Guth, P., 'Nébuleuses spirales, stalactites et stalagmites suggèrent des rythmes à Olivier Messiaen', Le Figaro Littéraire, (14 February, 1953), 4.)

(26) Kaufman, W., Notations, 218.

Another frequent rhythmic device is to play simultaneously two different talas, one in standard tempo and one in augmentation:

It is possible, in the simultaneous playing of two different talas, that the duration of each will be different, so that the beginning of each new statement of each tala will not coincide, as was the case in the previous example. The following is an example of a case where the tala patterns overlap:

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(28) Op. cit., 108. Sachs points out that the augmentation in this case is what the later Gothic Age would have called proportio subdupla.

4. **Raga.**

The fundamental basis of all musical scales in Indian music is the microtonal scale, or the scale of **srutis**. There are generally held to be twenty-two **srutis** to the octave, however these do not in themselves form a directly usable musical scale but constitute the intervals available for use in the different modes.\(^{(30)}\) The musical scales are made up of **svaras** or expressive notes, which consist of the sound plus its expression, and there are seventy-two of these containing seven **svaras** each. The **svaras** derive their significance from the place they hold in the microtonal scale.\(^{(31)}\) The modes, or **ragas**, occur within the musical scales, and are constructed by grouping together notes from the **sruti** scale.

As Powers points out, the following definition of mode applies equally well to the **raga**, if it is borne in mind that the same 'modal scale' can have many different **ragas**:

> A mode...is composed of a number of motives (i.e. short music figures or groups of tones) within a certain scale. ...composition is nothing but...arrangement and combination of this limited number of motives..."freedom" of creation consists further in embellishments... (32)

Consequently a **raga** can be identified by a few very typical groups of notes. Each of the notes within a **raga** also has its own function,


either "as the starter, the predominant, the center, the final." (33)

Indian music theory recognizes two kinds of sound, a vibration of ether and a vibration of air. The former is considered to be the basis of all substance, and is called unstruck sound because it does not emanate from a physical shock and cannot be heard, the latter is called struck sound and is audible. Daniélou explains the use of musical sounds as follows:

The sounds used in music are those whose mutual relationships form an image of the basic laws of the universe as represented by the unstruck sounds. Thus musical sounds have it in their power to reproduce the first creation of the Primordial Intellect. This creation is at the same time a rhythm and a thought. The main characteristic of musical sounds is that they convey ideas, emotions, and at the same time form simple harmonious relations. (34)

Every note within the raga therefore has its own kind of expression as well as a distinct psychological and physical effect, and so each raga determines a state of feeling peculiar to it. This is indicated by Chou Wen-Chung:

In Indian theory each of the twenty-two srutis has its own emotive value, and the rasa [the aesthetic response aroused by emotions that are supra-sensuous] of a raga is determined by the sruti content of its scale tones as well as by the emphasis given to certain tones and

motives - that is, the question of emotion is a structural matter that functions at various levels in a composition. (35)

The aim of the raga is to charm the listener, for the purpose of Indian music is to express and heighten a particular emotion to the point where the listener becomes unified with it:

The word 'raga', is obtained by adding the suffix 'ghan' (which indicates 'doing') to the root 'ranj', 'to please'.

A raga, the sages say, is a particular arrangement of sounds in which notes and melodic movements appear like ornaments to enchant the mind.

When all the notes that form a mode combine to express one coherent mood, the raga appears more attractive and its magic more powerful. The mode must seize the mind and hold it as if enchanted. Then the mind "is charmed and becomes lost in it." (36)

A particular raga is appropriate only for a certain time of day, and if it is performed at this time it will "develop naturally in favourable conditions", for "the cycle of the day corresponds to the cycle of life which also has its dawn, its noon, its evening" and "the cycle of sounds is ruled by the same laws as all other cycles". (37)


(37) Ibid., 95.
However, as Sachs relates, the tradition associated with this aspect of the ragas has been hopelessly lost, and contradiction and confusion exist not only between the different local schools but also between the north and south of India.\(^{38}\)


Messiaen devotes the first chapter of the section dealing with rhythm in The Technique of my Musical Language to the desi tala ragavardhana and Hindu rhythm. Initially, the concept of addition in rhythm is introduced; the so-called 'additive' principle which is fundamental to Hindu rhythm, and also to the rhythm of Messiaen's music. He refers to his music as 'ametrical', indicating by this term that the notions of 'measure' and 'beat' are replaced by the feeling of a short value and its free multiplications. The Hindu rhythm, simhavikridita, which Messiaen relates to one of Stravinsky's rhythmic procedures, is given as an example of 'ametrical' music.

(39)

(38) Sachs, C., Rise of Music, 175.

(39) Messiaen, O., Technique, Vol.I, 14, Vol.II, 1. Simhavikridita is no.27 of the table of desi talas from the Sangita-Ratnakara and is notated: \(1 \; S \; S SS S \; 1 \; S \; S \; 1 \; S\)

Grosset, J., op.cit., 301.
In this rhythm, A augments and diminishes progressively by one quaver, while B remains constant.

The first principles of Messiaen's rhythmic technique are derived from the tala ragavardhana:

\[(\text{40})\]

Viewed in this way, the rhythm is seen to be a classic rhythmic diminution which, however, is rendered inexact by the dot added to the second quaver. From this Messiaen derives the notions of the added value which transforms the metric balance of a rhythm, of augmentation and diminution according to forms more complex than the simple classic doublings, and of the non-retrogradable rhythm, for the fragment B cannot be retrograded.

The added value is defined as "a short value added to any rhythm whatsoever, whether by a note, or by a rest, or by the dot."\[(41)\]

This concept is only possible in a system where each note is conceived in terms of a basic short value, and where the value of each note is notated exactly in terms of a smallest absolute value.

\[(40)\text{ This is no.93 in the table of desi talas, and is notated: } O \ 0^\circ \ 0 \ S\]

Grosset, J., op.cit., 303.

\[(41)\text{ Messiaen, O., Technique, Vol.I, 16.}\]
A very effective use of the added value is made in what Messiaen terms rhythmic preparations and descents. These are used to point an accent (B), the rhythmic preparation (A) preceding it, the rhythmic descent (C) following it, (the added values are shown by the crosses).

(42)

He also draws an analogy between the use of the added value in rhythm and the added note in harmony.

The second principle derived from the tala ragavardhana is that of more complex forms of augmentation and diminution. Messiaen draws up a table of these which comprises additions of $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ (or dot), the whole, twice, three and four times the values of a rhythm to the values themselves, and the withdrawal of $\frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{3}$ (or dot), $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{4}{5}$ of the values from the values themselves. (43)

Inexact augmentations are also proposed, and Messiaen gives examples of these:


(43) Ibid., Vol.II, Ex. 24, p.3.

He stresses that with very inexact augmentations one would arrive at rhythmic variants rather than augmentations as such.

The third rhythmic principle is that of non-retrogradable rhythms. Messiaen explains these as follows:

Depuis longtemps, dans les arts décoratifs (architecture, tapisserie, vitrerie, parterres de fleurs), on use de motifs inversement symétriques, ordonnés autour d'un centre libre. Cette disposition se retrouve dans les nervures des feuilles d'arbres, dans les ailes de papillons, dans le visage et le corps humain, et même dans les vieilles formules de magie. Le rythme non-rétrogradable fait exactement la même chose. Ce sont deux groupes de durées, rétrogradés l'un par rapport à l'autre, encadrant une valeur centrale libre et commune aux deux groupes. Lisons le rythme de gauche à droite ou de droite à gauche, l'ordre de ses durées reste le même. C'est un rythme absolument fermé. (45)

Thus a non-retrogradable rhythm consists of the disposition of two groups, one of which is the retrograde of the other, around a common central value. The following example, from the piano piece Cantéyodjayá, illustrates a particular use of a non-retrogradable rhythm; in this case each group is amplified at the centre by a single value at each repetition. The value is marked thus: — .

In elucidating his use of polyrhythm and rhythmic pedals, Messiaen gives as an initial illustration the superposition of rhythms of unequal length:

Our first essay in polyrhythm, the simplest, the most childish, will be the superposition of two rhythms of unequal length, repeated until the combination of departure.

This produces the same overlapping effect as the Indian practice of playing simultaneously different talas of differing durations.

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(48) See Section 3 of this chapter.
The second example Messiaen discusses is that of the superposition of a rhythm upon its different forms of augmentation and diminution:

![Music notation]

(49)

Again, this finds its counterpart in Hindu rhythm where the practice of playing a tala with its augmentation is one of the means by which the drummer creates a counter-rhythm to the tala of the singer or instrumentalist.

Messiaen extends these basic polyrhythmic techniques by creating further variations upon them. They include the superposition of a rhythm upon its retrograde, and the derivation of various kinds of rhythmic canons. An example of the former is as follows:

![Music notation]

(50)

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Rhythmic canons, Messiaen states, may exist without the presence of any melodic canon, and he illustrates these with the following:

(51)

He creates two more complex varieties of rhythmic canons; the first is the canon by the addition of the dot:

(52)

the second is the canon of non-retrogradable rhythms:

(53)

Another rhythmic technique which Messiaen employs is the rhythmic pedal, which he defines as a "rhythm which repeats itself indefatigably, in ostinato, ... without busying itself about the rhythms which surround it". (54)

Incorporated into Messiaen's music are a number of desi talas which are quoted directly from the table of desi talas in the Sangita-Ratnakara. These are not used as they would be in Indian music, where one tala forms the rhythmic pattern of a particular piece, but simply as elements within Messiaen's rhythmic system.

One example is the combination of three desi talas to form the rhythm:

Messiaen analyzes this rhythm as a combination of augmented rhythms, added values, and inexact augmentations and diminutions:

All the fragments B are in diminution or augmentation of the fragments A; the added values are indicated by the crosses.
...the total of its values is thirteen quarter-notes (a prime number). (55)

It is used extensively, as a rhythmic pedal, a rhythmic canon, and a canon by the addition of a dot, in the Visions de l'Amen and the

Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus. (56)

Messiaen has also employed desitalas from the Sangita-Ratnakara throughout the piano work Cantéyodjaya. Those used are:

(a) lakshmica
(b) gajahampa
(c) simhavikrama
(d) candrakala
(e) ragavardhana
(f) pratapacekhara (57)

Although Messiaen does not deviate from traditional Western notation so far as to create a system whereby all values in all works are conceived according to a single, fixed, external unit of duration like the matra, he does establish the unit of duration for each

(56) Visions de l'Amen, (Durand et Cie, Paris, 1950):
No.III, bars 64-89 as a rhythmic pedal, pp. 29-31.
No. VII, bars 1-50 as a rhythmic canon, pp. 78-84.

Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus (Durand et Cie, Paris, 1947):
No. VI, bars 26-33, 99-106 as a rhythmic canon, pp. 26-27, 33-34.
No.XIV, bars 29-37, 55-68, 85-88, 97-105, 115-127 as a rhythmic canon, pp. 100, 102, 103, 104-105, 105-106.
No.XVII, bars 1-19 as a canon by the addition of a dot, pp. 128-129.

(57) Op. cit.,
(b) bars 129-130, 133-134, p.12; Ref. cit., No.77, p.303.
(c) bars 131-132, 135-136, 199-201, 208-211, pp.12, 17; Ref. cit., No.8, p.301.
(d) bar 137, p.13; Ref. cit., No.105, p.303.
(e) bars 138-139, p.13; Ref. cit., No.93, p.303.
(f) bars 203-204, 206-207, p.17; Ref. cit., No.75, p.303.
individual piece, or section of a piece, through a metronome mark, and each value within the piece or section is expressed in terms of this unit of duration. The following example, from *Le Merle de Roche*, is an explicit illustration, for Messiaen marks into the score each of the individual durations in terms of the basic unit, which in this particular case is the demi-semiquaver.

\[ \frac{\frac{7}{8}}{\frac{7}{12}} \]

This concept is repeatedly emphasized throughout the technique:

...we shall replace the notions of "measure" and "beat" by the feeling of the short value (the sixteenth-note, for example) and its free multiplications...

...interpreters who feel a little strained by the rhythms can mentally count all the short values (the sixteenth-notes, for example), but only at the beginning of their work...

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(60) Ibid., 28.
...whether my music is measured or not, the values there are always notated very exactly... (61)

Two of the notations which Messiaen has devised to express his rhythmic techniques occur in the piano works. These consist of "writing the exact values, without measure or beat, while saving the use of the bar-line only to indicate periods and to make an end to the effect of accidentals", and "writing in a normal meter a rhythm which has no relation to it", producing the effect of the intended rhythm by multiplying "the indications of slurs, dynamics, and especially accents exactly where one wants them". (62)

When Messiaen first spoke of his "inquiétude rythmique", it came as a shock to his students; one which was "provoked by the revelation of the possibility of using rhythmic structures independent of sonorous structures." (63) Two of Messiaen's former students, Michel Fano and Pierre Boulez, have paid tribute to Messiaen's structural use of rhythm. Fano writes as follows:

...il suscita autour de lui, un authentique réveil de la conscience rythmique, autorisant ainsi son intégration ultérieure dans une morphologie sérielle. Il accorda, tout d'abord, une valeur fonctionnelle, à un ensemble de durées (cellules rythmiques) qui pouvait se trouver manié, développé, transformé, au même titre qu'un motif mélodique... (64)


And Boulez states:

Nous devons à Olivier Messiaen d'avoir - à partir de l'étude approfondie qu'il fit du plain-chant, de la rythmique hindoue et de Stravinsky - créé une technique consciente de la durée....
Nous lui devons principalement - entre autres acquisitions - l'idée première d'avoir délié l'écriture rythmique de l'écriture polyphonique. (65)

He emphasizes that the "conscious technique of duration" which Messiaen has introduced into Western music has always been a fundamental precept of Indian music:

Le fait est sans doute d'importance, puisque - à part l'inopérante manie revenant périodiquement, de vouloir reconstituer la métrique grecque - il faut remonter jusqu'au XIVe siècle pour retrouver semblable préoccupation dans la musique occidentale; alors que ce fut une des constantes de la musique dans d'autres civilisations (Afrique noire, Inde, îles de Bali et de Java). (66)

This is confirmed by Curt Sachs as follows:

So essential are the rhythmic patterns in India and so intimately connected with, and responsible for, the character of the piece in which they occur that, where a Westerner would write 'sonata in C major', the Indian composer seldom fails to write a double heading: the raga or melodic pattern plus the tala or rhythmic pattern; say, Bilaval raga Tintal tala. (67)

(65) Boulez, P., 'Eventuellement...', La Revue Musicale, (April, 1952) 141.
(66) Ibid., 141.
(67) Sachs, C., Rhythm and Tempo, 102.
The aim of Messiaen's music accords closely with the aim of Indian music, namely to charm the listener:

Je cherche une musique chatoyante, donnant au sens auditif des plaisirs voluptueusement raffinés... Au concert, l'auditeur subira, sera seulement charmé, amené progressivement à cette sorte d'arc-en-ciel théologique qu'essaye d'être le langage musical dont nous cherchons édification et théorie... (68)

Each of his works sets out to create and maintain a particular emotion based on a specific idea, and the sections within the works also have their own meaning:

La face de Dieu derrière la flamme et le bouillonnement.

La création chante le thème de Dieu.

Battements du cœur de l'Enfant.

La stupeur des anges s'agrandit. (69)

This reflects the Indian notion of rasa whereby each raga has its own significance and determines its own peculiar feeling.

Chou Wen-Chung considers that the verbal imagery which Messiaen uses to prescribe his rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and timbral ideas has a close parallel, not only in the rasa concept, but also in the imagery

(68) Rostand, C., La Musique française contemporaine, (Paris, 1952), 63.

(69) Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus, 38, 42, 81, 107.
of Chinese ch'in music. (70) Examples of this are as follows:

coup de vent sur la mer, (71)

comme un tam-tam lointain, (72)

and his description of added notes in harmony:

...it is a question of foreign notes, with neither preparation nor resolution, without particular expressive accent, which tranquilly make a part of the chord, changing its color, giving it a spice, a new perfume. These notes keep a character of intrusion, of supplement: the bee in the flower! (73)

In The Technique of my Musical Language Messiaen speaks of the direct influence of Hindu ragas upon his melodic lines:

Hindu music abounds in curious, exquisite, unexpected melodic contours which the native improvisers repeat and vary following the rules of the raga. (74)

(71) Le Traquet Rieur, No. XII of Catalogue d'Oiseaux, 17.
(72) La Bouscarle, No. IX of Catalogue d'Oiseaux, 6.
(73) Messiaen, O., Technique, Vol.I, 47.
(74) Ibid., 33.
He quotes two "ravishing" examples of Indian melodies, and then an example from L'Ange aux parfums which echoes them, referring to it as "a theme in which the added value and Hindu melodic colour are united."

The continued repetition of the note C in this example is an illustration of the necessity for reinforcing the tonic in modal music, a characteristic which Daniélou emphasizes:

Modal music is not merely melody without accompaniment, neither has a song or melody, in itself, anything to do with mode.

Indian music, like all truly modal music, is built on the independent relationship of each note to the tonic. The relationship to the tonic determines the meaning of any given sound. The tonic must therefore be constantly heard. It can either be sounded as a drone or repeated at frequent intervals.... (76)

Austin has recognized this as an intrinsic quality of Messiaen's melodic contours:

Unaccompanied melody is frequent in Messiaen's work.... Even more frequent than unaccompanied melody are phrases accompanied by a static rich chord, or by chords in almost parallel motion - chords in either case dependent on a single melody. What is rare is a chord progression motivated by melody or counterpoint. For the melodies loop around a center , without suggesting any such progression. (77)

Bird song has been a rich source of melodic material for Messiaen, and Chou Wen-Chung notes that his use of bird calls relates to the procedures of melodic elaboration and transformation of the raga motives in Indian music. (78) As an illustration, Chou Wen-Chung refers to the variations on the call of the merle in *Amen des anges, des saints, du chant des oiseaux*. (79)

He assesses Messiaen's position in relation to the integration of Western and Eastern music as one of extreme importance:

...Olivier Messiaen [is] the only major composer since Bartok to have successfully integrated what he learned from a non-Western culture with his own tradition... without debasing the newly acquired ideas. (80)

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANCIENT GREEK MUSIC

When I was a student at the Conservatory...I was conscious of the lack of a class in rhythm. Because I felt this need, I began to study rhythm by myself. I became much interested in the Greek metric system and the Deci-Talas of India. (1)

1. Chronos Protos.

In his essay on Greek music in the Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire, Maurice Emmanuel states:

Chez les Anciens, le rythme, au moins autant que la mélodie, s'adapte étroitement aux formes de la pensée... (2)

Greek verse contained two kinds of accents; the melic, concerned with the tonal inflection of the words, and the metric, indicated by long syllables among short ones. (3) Thus the metric accents in melody followed the same principle, the short note being the rhythmic unit:

L'unité rythmique est la durée minima employée; elle correspond au son le plus rapide, à la syllabe la plus courte, au geste le plus prompt. (4)

(1) Messiaen, O., 'Impromptu Remarks', v.
The rhythmic unit as defined by Aristoxenus (5) was the chronos protos, or "first time". The definition is as follows:

On appelle temps premier celui qui ne peut être divisé par aucune matière rhythmique, et sur lequel ne se placent ni deux sons, ni deux syllabes, ni deux moments orchestiques... (6)

'Orchestics' were a unified combination of poetry, music and rhythmical gesture, and so when Aristoxenus defined rhythm itself, he defined it as a certain order in the division of the duration occupied by each of the three elements which go to make up the complete musical phenomenon: melody, word and bodily movement. (7)

The absolute duration of the chronos protos was not clearly fixed, and all that is known is that it was generally given a steady moderate tempo. Variations in tempo were achieved by choosing metric feet which had the requisite number of time units. (8)

The chronos protos as the shortest duration was also not strictly adhered to in practice, for Aristoxenus speaks of irrational

(5) Aristoxenos: Born c.350 B.C. at Tarentum in southern Italy, he was a pupil of the Pythagoreans, and later of Aristotle. Under the impulse of Aristotle's scientific method, he attempted a true descriptive anatomy of music from his knowledge of 4th century practice and of the earlier classics. Of his works, only two books of the Harmonic Elements and fragments of the Elements of Rhythm, presumably put together from pupil's notes of his lectures in Athens soon after 322 B.C., have survived.


(7) Reinach, T., La Musique Crecque, (Paris, 1926), 72.

(8) Sachs, C., Fine of Music, 265.
durations; those which can only be expressed by fractions of the
chronos protos:

...dans la doctrine des rythmes doivent être conçus le
rationnel et l'irrationnel. Par le premier terme on
entendra tout ce qui est rationnel selon la nature due
rhythmne musical; par le dernier, ce qui est rationnel
seulement selon des rapports de nombres (non rhythmiques).(9)

Gevaert lists four such irrational rhythms, the first having the
value of one unit and a half, so that if the unit of duration is
represented by \( \frac{1}{2} \), this irrational duration would be \( \frac{3}{2} \). The
second is \( 1 \frac{1}{3} \) or \( \frac{4}{3} \) of the unit of duration, and is used as
follows: \( \frac{4}{3} = \frac{3}{3} \), where three durations are equal to four
units. The third is equivalent to \( \frac{2}{3} \) of the unit, that is, three
notes equal two chronos protos: \( \frac{2}{3} = \frac{2}{2} \), and the fourth is a short
value, equal to \( \frac{1}{2} \) a chronos protos.(10)

2. The Feet and Metres.

i. Feet.

As the major part of the vocal music in ancient Greece
was intended to follow the text as closely as possible, the verse foot
of the poetry functioned as the elemental pattern of the musical

From Aristoxenus' Elements of Rhythm.
(10) Ibid., 13.
metre. (11) The feet were formed by associating rhythmic units in groups of three, four, five and six. (12) Within each foot there were theoretically only two sizes of syllables, namely, long and short, in the ratio of two units of duration (chronos protos) to one.

Each foot had two phases, which were equal or unequal. They were classified in three groups, according to whether the ratio of the length of the two phases was 1:1, 2:1, 3:2. (13) These rhythmic ratios coincided with the harmonic ratios of the intervals used, which was a natural consequence of Greek thought:

Pythagoras of Samos, in the sixth century B.C., is said to have bequeathed to his disciples the principle of expressing divisions of the monochord by ratios, which founded the original and typical tradition of harmonics. It must be taken at its own valuation, as a self-propelled science, inspired not by a special interest in the musical art but by a general interest in the nature of the universe, seen under the strongly mathematical bias of Greek thought. Its aim was to reach a theoretically satisfying scale, which was conceived as a structural element of the cosmos. (14)

Confirmation of the coincidence of the theories of harmony and rhythm in the case of Aristoxenetus is given by Gevaert as follows:


(12) Emmanuel, M., Op. cit., 477. This explanation differs from that of Sachs (ibid.), who defined the feet as "recurrent groups of two, three or four syllables". As this chapter is examining Greek music for its relevance to Messiaen, and as Emmanuel was one of Messiaen's teachers, his definitions have been followed in all matters of doubt.

(13) Ibid., 477. Sachs, Rise of Music, 261, also tables the seven unit epitritata, whose ratio was 4:3, which, as he states, was very rare.

The rhythmic system as laid out by Aristoxenus is shown in the following table:

**Dactylic feet - duples (isä)**

- prokeleusmatikos 2 + 2
- dactylos 2 + 2
- anapaistos 2 + 2
- spondaios 2 + 2

**Iambic feet - triples (diplasia)**

- trochaeos, choreios 2 + 1
- tribrachys 1 + 2 or 2 + 1
- iambo 1 + 2

**Paeanic feet - quintuples (hemiolia)**

- bakcheios 3 + 2
- kretikos, amphimakros 3 + 2
- antibakcheios
- palmibakcheios 2 + 3

Emmanuel also lists the sextuples: feet composed of six units of time — and gives as an example the Ionic foot: \[\text{ résultat }\] Sachs lists as well the septuples — feet composed of seven units of time — which have


the name epitrata, but which, however, were used very rarely. (17)

Iambs, trochees and anapaests did not exist as individual feet, but only in reduplication, so that an iambic dimetre has four iambs and not two. Also, feet could be enlarged, in principle, to twice and four times their original length by doubling or quadrupling the lengths of the individual notes. A foot which was augmented in this way was generally called epibatos, which means "apt to be ascended"; some, however, were named individually. Thus the double trochee was called a choriamb, the quadruple trochee, a semantos, and the quadruple iamb, an orthios. (18)

ii. Metres.

Les temps ( = pieds) ont été définis une association de 3, 4, 5 ou 6 unités. Or les temps s'agrégent entre eux pour former les mesures [mètres]: celles-ci sont composées de temps comme les temps sont composés d'unités. (19)

As is stated above, the feet composed of units of durations, were in their turn elements of larger structures - the metres. These were arranged according to three categories:

syzgia, a dipody or pair of feet;
kolon, a longer unit containing less than three complete dipodies;
periodos, a complete line, composed of several kola;

(17) Sachs, C., Rhythm and Tempo, 117, 118.
(18) Ibid., 120.
which appeared as:

dimetric or dipodies of two feet,
trimeters or tripodies of three feet,
tetrameters or tetrapodies of four feet,
pentameters or pentapodies of five feet,
hexameters or hexapodies or six feet. (20)

A table of all the metres found in ancient Greek music, based on the
principles enunciated by Aristoxenus, as applied by the theorist,
Aristides Quintilianus about 100 A.D., is given by Emmanuel. (21)

There were two main types of polymetres; homogeneous,
composed of similar feet, and heterogeneous, composed of different
feet. Emmanuel explains this as follows:

Les mesures simples sont constituées par un seul
temps (pied) ...  
Les mesures composées sont faites de l'aggregation
de deux ou plusieurs temps ...  
Les mesures hétéropônes sont produites par la
juxtaposition de pieds appartenant à des genres
rythmiques différents ... (22)

Heterogeneous metres were far more commonly used than homogeneous
metres. One of their peculiarities was that, in application of the
principle of irrational values outlined previously, ternary groups
surrounded by quaternary groups, and vice versa, could be adjusted
to their environment by means of augmentation or diminution. Conse-
sequently, the metre, iambo-anapaest:

22. Ibid., 491.
became

\begin{align*}
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}

(23)

Messiaen specifically mentions the predilection for the rhythms of prime numbers which was instilled in him by the rhythmic patterns of ancient Greece. (24) An example of this is to be found in the dramatic monologues in the works of Euripides, from which the following metres, alternating between iambic and choric, form the basis of a kolon:

\begin{align*}
\text{iambic} & : \quad - - - - - - - - (13 \text{ units}) \\
\text{choric} & : \quad - - - - - - - - (11 \text{ units})
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{choric} & : \quad - - - - - - - - (7 \text{ units}) \\
\text{choric} & : \quad - - - - - - - - (11 \text{ units})
\end{align*}

(25)


3. **Arsis and Thesis.**

Théoriquement, les temps sont rendus sensibles par deux mouvements (abaissement et relèvement du pied, signes de la main, etc.) qui figurent aux yeux le groupement des unités élémentaires. Nous appellerons ces mouvements **posé** et **levé**. Ils sont, en durée, égaux ou inégaux. (26)

Each metrical foot in Greek rhythm was divided into two sections which were equal or unequal, depending on the number of units of duration it contained. The sections in dactylic feet were of equal length (2 + 2), and were therefore called *isa* or 'equals', whereas iambic and paenic feet, consisting of 3 and 5 units of duration, were divided into two unequal sections. **Emmanuel** classifies the sections of the different feet according to three different ratios:

1. Feet of simple ratio - where the ratio of the durations of **posé** to **levé** is equal to 1:1; Dactyl, \[\text{Dactyl}, \quad \text{Anapaest}, \quad \text{Iamb.} \]

2. Feet of double ratio - in which the ratio of the durations of **posé** to **levé** is equal to 2:1; Trochee, \[\text{Iamb.} \]

3. Feet of hemiola or sesquialter ratio - in which the ratio of the durations of **posé** to **levé** is 3:2; Cretic paecn, \[\text{Iamb.}\]

or \[\text{Iamb.}\]

(27)


27. **Ibid., 477.**
As shown above, Emmanuel labels the sections *pose* and *levé*, for, of the two sections, one had a stronger, and the other a weaker weight. The stronger was called the *thesis* or *basis*, which means 'downtread', because it was marked by the dropping of the hand or foot of the conductor, and the weaker was called the *arsis*, meaning 'lifting', which corresponded to the lifting of the hand or foot. (28) As iambics, trochees and anapaestics did not exist as single feet, the functions of *arsis* and *thesis* were spread over the two feet instead of applying to each individual foot.

Emmanuel specifies two types of feet; those beginning with the *thesis*, and those beginning with the *arsis*. He also states that these movements were more often than not obscured by the beat of the metres as a whole, for the polypodies themselves were separated into *arsis* and *thesis*, and these were observed often to the exclusion of the *arsis* and *thesis* of the component feet.

Il y a, d'après l'ordre où s'effectuent ces mouvements théoriques, deux espèces de temps:
(a) les temps qui commencent par le *posé*;
(b) les temps qui commencent par le *levé*.
Pratiquement, la battue des éléments du temps est le plus souvent abolie ou masquée par la battue de la mesure... (29)

However, this situation did not affect the actual time-beating, which followed the individual feet. (30)

Sachs (31) traces the shift in meaning which led to the complete reversal of the meanings of the terms arsis and thesis, established by the fifth century A.D. The change began in the latter part of the Roman era, and arose because the Romans no longer conceived poetry, music and gestures as an organic unity under the term 'orchestics'. Thus the need for marking the accents with the foot was no longer there, and so the terms arsis and thesis were applied to the raising and lowering of the voice. Because of this the meanings were reversed, for the raising of the voice, arsis, strengthened the beat, and the lowering of the voice, thesis, weakened it. Arsis and thesis were used in this sense by the mediaeval grammarians and it has survived into the twentieth century, especially, for the purposes of this dissertation, in the work of Dom Andre Mocquereau. (32)

An essential characteristic of additive as compared with divisive rhythms is illustrated by the occurrence of the arsis and thesis at the beginning of a note only, for no beat could be heard, seen or felt while a note was still sounding. Thus a ternary foot such as an iamb had two, not three beats. (33)


(32) Messiaen has followed Mocquereau in his understanding of the terms arsis and thesis. See Chapter XII.

(33) Sachs, Ibid., 131.
4. **Form.**

One of the important choral forms in Greek music was the dithyrambos, which "was a strophic melody sung by ecstatic worshippers of Dionysos, but raised to the level of a choral art form as early as about 600 B.C. by Arion of Methymna..." At the end of the sixth century it developed in two different areas; as the solo songs of professional virtuosi, and as a dramatic form. In the drama it functioned as the form of the choruses.

The chorus...entered the stage with the parados and left it with the exodos; singing the strophe, it turned to the right to picture the orbit of the stars...; in the antistrophe, it turned in the opposite direction. (35)

Emmanuel lists the Strophes, consisting of strophe and antistrophe, as one type of lyric verse found in Greek poetry. Their characteristic feature was that although different words were used, the longs and shorts of the antistrophe were disposed in the same order as those of the strophe. Emmanuel shows that Pindar used this form, in one instance thirteen times in succession, with an Epode separating each repetition of the strophe and antistrophe. (36) Messiaen has adopted this form for the work Chronochromie. (37)

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(35) Ibid., 269.


(37) See Section 5.
5. **Messiaen and Greek Music.**

Messiaen has asserted repeatedly that to him rhythm is the essential element of music:

> Je considère que le rythme est la partie primordiale et peut-être essentielle de la musique; je pense qu'il a vraisemblablement existé avant la mélodie et l'harmonie, et j'ai enfin une préférence secrète pour cet élément. Je tiens d'autant plus à cette préférence qu'elle a, ma semble-t-il, marqué mon entrée dans la musique contemporaine. (38)

This reflects the Greek attitude to rhythm, an attitude described by Sachs as follows:

> Greece has...been a leading exponent of rhythm - not only in her actual achievements, but in the unparalleled interest that she took in the laws of rhythm, in its classification, and in its terminology. Hellas was the mother of rhythmology. (39)

Lippman ascribes to rhythm the prime position in Greek music:

> There can be no doubt that the union of melody with word and gesture produced an art of extraordinary definition, especially since the uniting factor, rhythm, was identical in all three components; there was not a complex interplay of three patterns, but a single rhythmic expression, which was apparently the most important aspect of Greek music.

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and distinguishes between the Greek concept of rhythm and that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

Nor was this rhythm in itself a layered construction, as in the rhythm of an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century melody, where the sounded pattern is heard against an implied but inaudible measured background. (40)

This distinction applies equally well to the music of Messiaen, for his music does not imply an inaudible measured background, but is in itself a distinct "rhythmic expression".

Lippman also points out that the definitely measured durations of the Greek language led to a music which was constructed like a mosaic:

...the Greek language was...remarkably physical and measured. It could never lose an inherent music which was characterized by precisely defined durations.

The comparison of choral poetry to a mosaic has justly gained a certain currency: the Greek syllables were like unalterable stone tiles which are assembled contiguously in intricate successions of lengths. (41)

In Messiaen's music, where each duration is notated exactly, the same principle applies; rhythms are constructed by arranging successions of durations. This principle is also the foundation of the formal structure of Messiaen's works, for each piece comprises a series of


(41)Ibid., 53, 54.
self-contained sections, a characteristic which Boulez has referred to as follows:

Bref, les recherches de Messiaen ne sauraient s'intégrer à son discours, parce qu'il ne compose pas il juxtapose... (42)

In citing the music of Greece, Messiaen gives another historical precedent, this time from the European tradition, for the principles on which his rhythmic structures are based. Apart from the fundamental conception of a unit of duration from which all values are derived, Indian and Greek music share another common characteristic in the systemization of their rhythmic practice. Messiaen has attempted to emulate their example with his Traité de Rythme, subtitled Histoire de la Musique tout entière, one of the sections of which is devoted to the "Métrique grecque et ses ressources (greco-latine et survivances chez les Bulgares)." His intention in this work is to show his own rhythmic ideas as a logical progression from the rhythmic history of Western and Indian music, from the rhythm of folksong and birdsong, and the symmetrical patterns of the wings of the butterfly, the human body and the formulae of magic. (43)

Greek metres have formed the basis of a number of rhythmic structures in Messiaen's music. One example, the first movement of the Messe de la Pentecôte, is constructed entirely on "Greek rhythms

treated in irrational values". The following is the initial rhythmic statement of the piece:

![Rhythm notation]

(44) A second example occurs in the Apparition de l'Eglise éternelle, where the bass part consists of augmentations and diminutions upon the following rhythmic cell:

![Rhythm notation]

(45) A third, taken from the Amen de la Création, shows the rhythm of the first piano part which is based mainly on the cretic foot in augmentation and diminution:

![Rhythm notation]


The cletic foot is a non-retrogradable rhythm, and in fact, Messiaen refers to this part as a "double pédale rythmique" based on non-retrogradable rhythms. (47) Another example of Messiaen's use of the cletic foot is to be found in Regard de l'Esprit de joie, where it dominates the paeanic rhythm of the middle section. (48)

Messiaen has always felt that because prime numbers are indivisible, a characteristic which, as he says, they share with the divinity, they exert an occult force:

Par ailleurs, j'ai toujours été orienté vers les divisions asymétriques, et vers un élément qui se rencontre dans la métrique grecque et dans les rythmes de l'Inde: les nombres premiers. Quand j'étais enfant, j'aimais déjà les nombres premiers, ces nombres qui, par le simple fait qu'ils ne sont pas divisibles en fractions égales, dégagent une force occulte (puisque vous savez que la divinité n'est pas divisible...) (49)

Inspired by their recurrence in the metres of Greek music, he has made frequent use of rhythms of prime numbers. One particular example is contained in the piece Par lui tout a été fait. The rhythm appears twice and consists of two groups, one of very short duration which is augmented at each repetition, the other of very long duration, diminished at each repetition:

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The influence of ancient Greek music is also revealed in Messiaen's adaptation of the form of the choruses in Greek drama for Chronochromie. Whereas the original Greek antistrophe repeated the same melody and rhythm as the strophe Messiaen uses basically similar but not identical material, in the main bird calls and permutations upon thirty-two durations, in each of the strophes and antistrophes. The epode, "as in the Greek chorus...is quite unlike the other sections". (51) The overall form of the work is as follows:

Introduction
Strophe I
Antistrophe I
Strophe II
Antistrophe II
Epode
Coda.

In his studies and utilization of Greek metres Messiaen follows a well-established tradition of the Conservatoire. His master, Emmanuel, whom he acknowledges as a guiding influence:


(51) Messiaen, O., Notes to recording of Chronochromie, Record Society No. S/6189.
Maurice Emmanuel...knew how to illuminate...the variety of the rhythmic patterns of ancient Greece... (52)

...Emmanuel, les rythmes grecs, très importants pour moi... (53)

in his turn acknowledges his debt to his own teacher at the Conservatoire, Bourgault-Ducoudray:

"Il est temps que l'on tienne compte des faits modaux et rythmiques que présentent la musique des Grecs, le plain-chant et l'art populaire", écrivait Bourgault-Ducoudray, après avoir, durant trente années, prêché cette doctrine au Conservatoire. Élève de Gevaert et de Bourgault, je partage leurs voeux, et m'associe à leur effort. (54)


Bourgault-Ducoudray, Louis Albert: Born Nantes 1840, died Paris 1910. He won the Prix de Rome in 1862 and travelled to Greece and the Orient where he collected folk-songs which he published; Trente mélodies populaires de la Grèce et de l'Orient. He was professor of History of Music at the Cons. from 1878, and he wrote the following studies: Conferences sur la modalité dans la musique grecque, and Etudes sur la musique ecclesiastique grecque.
CHAPTER TWELVE

PLAINSONG.

...Dom Mocquereau knew how to illuminate...the variety of the rhythmic patterns ... of the neumes of plainchant. (1)

Auparavant, j'avais travaillé...l'arsis et la thèsis dans les neumes du plainchant... (2)

1. Theoretical Background.

Theories about the rhythmic basis of plainsong are still open to controversy, as they are based on very limited evidence apart from a number of signs added to the neumes of certain "rhythmic manuscripts". (3) These signs are of two kinds, namely the episema (4) and the Romanian letters. The former is a short line which, when added to a neume, indicates that it should be prolonged, and the latter, written above the neumes, include the following:

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(2) Messiaen, O., Conférence, 4.

(3) Apel, W., Gregorian Chant, (Bloomington, 1958), 126. The signs occur in the notations of St. Gall, Metz, Chartres, Nonantola, Benevento, and Aquitaine.

(4) A Greek word meaning mark or sign.
t ( _trahere_ "to drag", or _tenere_ "to hold"),
x ( _expectare_ "to retard"),
m ( _mediocriter_ "moderately"),
c ( _celeriter_ "quickly"),

which are occasionally combined with the following qualifying indications:

b ( _bene_ "well"),
v ( _valde_ "very, extremely"),
m ( _mediocriter_).

There are also letters denoting various degrees of intensity:

p ( _pressio_),
f ( _cum fragore_),
k ( _clange_).(5)

Plainsong rhythm has been interpreted according to three
main schools of thought which are categorized as either equalist or
mensuralist. The equalist schools are those established by Dom Pothier(6)

(5) Reese, G., _Music in the Middle Ages_ , (London, 1941), 140.
The Romanian letters are found in the St. Gall manuscripts, of which
St. Gall 359, dated c. 900, is the earliest complete manuscript
extent.

(6) Pothier, Dom Joseph: Born Bouzmont 7 December 1835, died Conques,
Belgium, 8 December 1923. He entered Solesmes after his ordination,
and was appointed Abbot of Saint-Wandrille in 1898. In 1856 Dom
Guéranger, Abbot of Solesmes from 1805-1875, invited Pothier
to collaborate in preparing an edition of choir books with Dom
Paul Jausions (1834-1870). These two monks established the
principles for the restoration of Gregorian chant. _Les Mélodies_
grégoriennes d'après la tradition, par le R.P. Dom Pothier was
published as a memorial to Dom Jausions in 1880. In 1883 Dom
Pothier published the _Liber Gradualis_ which comprised the collected
work of the two men. He was president of the commission charged
by Pius X in 1905 to restore Gregorian chant, with Dom Mocquereau
as editor. The commission was dissolved in 1912, and Dom Pothier
rejoined his monastery in exile at Conques.
and Dom Mocquereau. (7) Dom Pothier and his followers maintain that Gregorian chant follows the accentual principle, for around the fifth century, when it was in the process of formation, Greek and Latin prosody became accentual rather than quantitative. They believe that the individual notes of the plainsong melodies are equal in duration, in accordance with the equal duration of the syllables of Latin, and that plainsong rhythm is therefore unmeasured and determined by accent. (8)

The Solesmes School, led by Dom Mocquereau, follow Dom Pothier in so far as they consider that all notes in Gregorian Chant have basically equal value, but they do not subscribe to his accentual theory:

Un rythme parfait ne peut se passer de la force et de la faiblesse des sons; mais dans sa constitution native n'exige une place réservée plus spécialement à l'intensité. (9)

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(7) Mocquereau, Dom André: Born La Tessoualle 6 June 1849, died Solesmes 18 January 1930. He entered the Abbey at Solesmes 22 July 1875, studied under Dom Pothier, and became choirmaster. He founded the Paléographie musicale, the first volume of which appeared in 1889, and in 1891 he wrote the Etude sur l'accent tonique latin et la psalmodie grégorienne. In Vol.VII (1901) of Paléographie musicale he delineated the rhythmic theories which became known as the Solesmes method. In 1903 he published the Paroissien roman with rhythmic signs. He was appointed Prior of the Abbey of St. Pierre at Solesmes, and as a consequence of the expulsion of the Benedictine Order from France, spent the years 1903-1922 at the Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight. Although appointed to the commission charged by Pius X with constructing the Vatican Edition, he resigned and devoted himself to his rhythmic researches, and to assembling in the Solesmes palaeographic studio, manuscripts indispensible for the restoration of Gregorian Chant.


Thus the tonic accent of the Latin words is not necessarily stressed in performance, but is differentiated by other means; either by melodic elevation or by limiting it to a single note. (10)

The third school of thought, the mensuralist, although unified in opposition to the Solesmes school contains many internal differences. Agreement within the school has been reached on the following points. The neumes in the early manuscripts do not represent notes of equal duration, but longs and shorts, the former having twice the value of the latter, and these are arranged in groups of two to eight beats.

Unlike the Solesmes school whose source materials date from the twelfth century, the researches of the mensuralists show that from the time of its origins until the twelfth century, Gregorian Chant was sung in irregularly grouped metres, but that by this time the demands of organum necessitated the equalization of the note values. They do not consider therefore, that equal note values were always an inherent characteristic of plainsong.

The mensuralists also consider that the episema and the Romanian letters were precise indications regarding the duration of the notes, whereas the Solesmes School regard them as rhythmic nuances, dependent on their context. (11)


(11) Ibid., 144.
In spite of their agreement on these points, the mensuralists, in their rhythmical interpretations of plainsong, have arrived at "appalling results...often upon the basis of the same sources". (12)

Messiaen has indicated (13) that his knowledge of plainsong rhythm is based on the theories of the Solesmes School, and so these will be examined in detail.

2. The basis of Plainsong Rhythm.

Mocquereau's definition of rhythm derives from Plato:

Le Rythme est l'ordonnance du mouvement. (14)

and he elaborates this as follows:

Cette définition résume tout ce que les Anciens en ont dit. Une suite de mouvements sonores - syllabes ou sons - ne suffit pas pour constituer un rythme; il faut que ces mouvements soient mis en ordre et harmonieusement disposés. Cette ordonnance, cette mise en ordre est la forme même du rythme. (15)

His conception of rhythm is therefore quantitative, for he defines rhythm solely in terms of the durations of the syllables and the sounds:

    Apel (Ibid. 130) and Hughes, Dom A., Plainsong for English Choirs, (London, 1966), 66, side very strongly with the Pothier School.

(13) See the quotation at the head of this chapter.


(15) Ibid., 31.
...la différence de quantité, de longueur, entre les notes a seule suffi pour produire le mouvement rythmique, sans le secours ni de la force, ni de la mélodie. (16)

Monquereau's theories concerning the rhythm of plainsong have also assumed the Greek concept of a unit of duration:

Temps premier ou temps simple – ... C'est l'unité, l'atome temporel, base de tout le corps rythmique; l'étalon, norme et règle des autres unités dans l'ensemble rythmique. (17)

and in accordance with Aristoxenus, he emphasizes that the unit of duration is indivisible:

Le temps simple...est indivisible, c'est-à-dire que sa durée normale, une fois déterminée, ne peut être divisée en durée plus courte, pas plus, d'ailleurs, que la syllabe latine qui lui sert d'appui et de règle. (18)

Having established these fundamental concepts, Mocquereau enunciates the basic precept of the Solesmes interpretation of plain-song rhythm:

Le rythme grégorien, ou nombre musical grégorien, appartient au rythme libre, dont il est l'une des formes principales. (19)

(17) Ibid., 36.
(18) Ibid., 37.
(19) Ibid., Vol.II, 1.
The theory that plainsong rhythm is free has been approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and thus the Solesmes method has become the official practice of the Roman Catholic Church, a fact which Emmanuel deplored. (20)

Free rhythm comprises binary and ternary groups of notes which are freely arranged to produce larger structures. Mocquereau points out that the principle of free rhythm is to be found in the music and literature of Greece and Rome:

Nous ne disons pas non plus que les rythmes libres poétiques, musicaux ou oratoires des Grecs et des Latins ont été adaptés tels quels aux lectures et aux chants liturgiques; nous disons seulement que les principes essentiels qui constituent la liberté rythmique se retrouvent, et dans l'art grec-latin, et dans l'art musical grégorien. (21)

Each word in Latin has a rhythm of its own; a movement and repose from the accented syllable to the weak penultimate and final syllables. (22)

Similarly each group of notes in plainsong is marked by an ictus, which is described as corresponding to the "temps frappé de la musique moderne." (23)

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(20) Emmanuel, M. and Castoue, A., in a review of Le Nombre musical grégorien, in Tribune de St. Cérvais, Vol.XIV, 258, said:
La tolérance que Dom M. a obtenue de Rome pour ses signes rythmiques lui permet - par un abus singulier - d'aller au bout de son dessin, qui est d'imposer 'au monde entier' son interprétation personelle des rythmes médiévaux. Il est temps de protester contre cette prétention, peu justifiée. Il ne faut pas que les praticiens du plain-chant se laissent regenter par un savant qui défend sa propre gloire, avec trop de partialité. See Apel, W., Op.cit., 128.

(22) The Liber Usualis, (Tournai, 1961), xxx.
The word ictus derives from Latin, where it was used synonymously with percussio to signify the noisy downtread of the foot of the coryphee which marked the thesis. Mocquereau states that the rhythmic ictus are the "temps porteurs" of plainsong rhythm. (24) The ictus can be strong or weak depending on the syllable to which it corresponds and the position which it occupies in the melody. Therefore it does not belong to a dynamic, but to a rhythmic order, and it is felt and intimated by the tone of the voice rather than expressed by any deliberate emphasis. The accented syllables or tonic accents of the Latin words are independent of the ictus. (25) The individual rhythmic groups of plainsong follow the individual words of the Latin texts in that they combine to form the phrases, sections and periods of the plainsong melodies.


The rhythmic sign, episema, is defined by Mocquereau as indicating a prolongation:

L'épisème romanien est presque toujours le signe d'une prolongation. (26)

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(25) Liber Usualis, xxix, xxx.
The duration of the prolongation depends on the position of the note to which the *episema* applies, and it affects only the note which it marks:

...le signe est soumis, comme le neume lui-même, à des règles de position. La note à laquelle il s'attache, la place qu'il occupe dans le neume, le rapport de ce neume avec le texte, le rythme, le mouvement et l'expression de la phrase musicale, sont autant de circonstances qui en augmentent ou en atténuent la valeur. (27)

Mocquereau points out that this applies also to all of the rhythmic indications. (28)

The letters from the St. Gall manuscripts, t, x and m signify, like the *episema*, prolongation: the letter c indicates acceleration. (29) The letters f, and k indicate intensity (forte), however Mocquereau considers that they were rarely used. The letter p also indicates intensity but has other meanings as well. (30)

The Solesmes method incorporates three rhythmic signs: the vertical *episema*, which is placed below the note, marking the rhythmic step or ictus, of the movement; the horizontal *episema,*

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(28) Ibid., 162.

(29) Ibid., 165.

(30) Ibid., 167.
placed above the note, indicating a slight lengthening of the note or group; and the dot, which doubles the value of the note which precedes it. (31)

Other signs are employed in order to mark the phrases, sections and periods of the chants. Endings of short phrases are shown by the two episema placed together, indicating a slight lengthening and the beginning of a rhythmic group. Occasionally a dot is used instead of the episema, and sometimes short phrases are marked by a quarter or half bar. Small sections are shown in the same way. Sections consisting of two or more phrases are indicated by a half bar, and the close of a period is marked by a full bar, or a double bar if it occurs at the end of a piece. (32)


Mocquereau designates the movement and repose of each Latin word as élan and repos, or arsis and thesis:

In the Latin word the accented syllable is the vital arsic element; the final and weak penultimate syllables are soft, relatively weak, and thetic. (33)

(31) Liber Usualis, xx.
(32) Ibid., xxv, xxvi.
(33) Ibid., xxx.
He elucidates his use of these terms as follows:

Dans la danse, ils appelaient elevatio (arsis), le mouvement ascensionnel, l'élan du corps, et positio, depositio (thèse), la déposition, le repos du corps au point terminus de son mouvement.

En conséquence, dans la musique (vocale ou instrumentale) et dans la poésie, ils appelaient arsis, élévation, élan, les sons et les syllabes qui concordaient avec l'élan du corps, et thesis, déposition, repos, les sons et les syllabes qui se chantaient au moment même où les danseurs touchaient le sol, soit pour prendre un simple appui et s'élever du nouveau, soit pour achever leur marche par un repos définitif. C'est du mouvement des danseurs que nous sommes venus les termes d'arsis et de thèse. On appelle arsis le commencement, thèse la fin d'un mouvement orchestique.

Lorsque la poésie et la musique se produisaient sans la danse, les termes d'arsis et de thesis n'étaient nullement modifiés; mais la même, ils correspondaient encore à des mouvements corporels d'élevation et d'abaissement, faits par le chryphée, le maître de choeur qui, avec le pied ou la main, indiquait les onduilations rythmiques. (34)

Not only does each rhythmic group contain an arsis and thesis, but also the larger rhythm of the phrases, sections and periods, each of which comprises successions of arses and theses. The whole movement upward is known as the arsic part of the larger rhythm; correspondingly, the whole movement downward is known as the thetic part. (35)

(35) Liber Usualis, xxvii.
In the preceding chapter(36) it was shown that the original meanings of the terms arsis and thesis had been reversed by the end of the Roman era. Mocquereau has collated a number of theoretical sources to buttress his theory of arsis and thesis, and these illustrate clearly this shift in meaning and Mocquereau's consequent application of the terms. The following are two examples from Mocquereau's sources:

Ad hanc autem rem arsis et thesis sunt necessariae. Nam in unaquaque parte orationis arsis et thesis sunt, non in ordine syllabarum, sed in pronuntiatione: velut in hac parte, natura, (ut) quando dico natu, elevatur vox et est arcis intus; quando vero sequitur ra, vox deponitur, et est thesis deforis. Quantum autem suspenditur vox per arsin, tantum deprimitur per thesin. Sed ipsa vox, quae per dictiones formatur, donec accentus perficiatur, in arsin deputatur; quae autem post accentum sequitur, in thesin. (37)

Pes vero est numeri prima progressio per legtimos et necessarios scnos juncta, cujus partes duae sunt, arsis et thesis. Arsis est elevatio, thesis depositio vocis ac remissio. (38)

In order to assist the conducting and teaching of the rhythm of plainsong, Mocquereau has made extensive use of cheironomic drawings, lines drawn above and between the notes, which indicate the rise and fall, arsis and thesis of the melody. These are called chironomie, and as Mocquereau explains, they show "la marche rythmique et mélodique

(36) See Chapter XI, Section 3 Page 227.
(38) Ibid., 778, from Martianus Capella, De nuptiis, lib. IX, De musica.
de la phrase musicale". (39) He shows the derivation of this practice as follows:

Les anciens ne se contentaient pas d'avoir à leur service une terminologie claire et précise pour exprimer le mouvement rythmique; ils avaient en outre, pour le transmettre au dehors, pour le peindre aux yeux, non seulement les mouvements du corps dans l'orchestique, mais encore le geste. (40)

This is confirmed by Sachs who points out that "all medieval descriptions refer to unaccompanied Gregorian chant and speak of 'depicting' the melody in what is known as cheironomy". (41)

5. Messiaen and Plainsong.

The Solesmes method is based on the rhythmic practice of the Greeks and the Romans, and so the concept of the unit of duration has been adopted. Rhythm is conceived as quantitative and unmeasured, comprising free arrangement of the rhythmic groups. Thus it is consistent also with the music of India and provides a third precedent for Messiaen's rhythmic technique.

The main concept which Messiaen has derived from the theories of Mocquereau is that of arsis and thesis. He describes this as follows:

(40) Ibid., 103.
(41) Sachs, C., Rhythm and Tempo, 217.
C'est le système des arsis et des thésis. Dans tout rythme, vous avez un mouvement d'élan et de chute, comme un danseur qui s'élève et qui retombe. (42)

This accords exactly with Mocquereau's definition, and from this principle Messiaen has drawn one of his most essential structures, that of "upbeat-accent-termination":

J'ai agrandi ce principe par le groupe "anacrouse-accent-désinence". Ces termes ont quelque rapport avec les accents toniques et les muettes du langage parlé. (43)

He elaborates on this as follows:

Let us preserve what is most essential in the appoggiatura: the expressive accent. Let us prepare this accent by an immense upbeat and resolve it by an immense termination; its expressive power will be augmented in the same proportion. We thus obtain the combination: upbeat-accent-termination.

...our combination turns around the expressive accent, which is its center and reason for being... (44)

As an example Messiaen quotes from the Amen de l'agonie de Jésus, explaining the illustration as "course of anguish, of desire, and of horror; in A, panting upbeat; at B, accent; in C, termination":


(43) Ibid., 4.

A more complex example of this combination is found in Cantéyodjayan, where the three components are augmented at each repetition:


(46) Cantéyodjayan, bars 29-34, p.5.
Messiaen also uses plainsong as a source for his melodic material:

Plainchant is an inexhaustible mine of rare and expressive melodic contours...We shall make use of them, forgetting their modes and rhythms for the use of ours. (47)

He quotes a fragment from the Introit for Christmas which he transforms and uses as the basis of the upper part in La Vierge et l'Enfant:

(48)

The organ piece Subtilité des Corps glorieux provides another example of this process of transformation, for it is based on the Antiphon Salve Regina:

(49)

As well as deriving some of his melodic material from plainsong, Messiaen has incorporated a number of plainsong forms in his works. The *Subtilité des Corps glorieux* "is a large ornamented anthem in one voice without any harmonization; each period in it is terminated by a formula of melodic cadence repeated in echo". Its formal structure is: A1, A2, B1, B2, A3, C, A4, D, E. (50) The *Kyrie*, whose structure is A, B, A, C, D, C, E, F, E, is used as the basic formal design of *Mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, (51) and the sequence, "a canticle of popular style", in which "each period is heard twice, either consecutively or alternately; all end on the same note", is adapted as the structure of the second half of *Le Verbe*. (52)

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DEBUSSY, EMMANUEL, DUKAS AND STRAVINSKY

1. Debussy.

When Debussy defined music he did so in terms of natural phenomena:

Music is a mysterious form of mathematics whose elements are derived from the infinite. Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes. There is nothing more musical than a sunset. He who feels what he sees will find no more beautiful example of development in all that book which, alas, musicians read but too little - the book of Nature... (1)

He constantly exhorted musicians to devote their attention to, and to learn from nature, insisting that the artist should:

...take counsel of no man, but only of the passing wind that tells us the story of the world. (2)

for he believed that the path to the future in music was to be found in nature.


(2) Ibid., 8.
We do not listen to the thousand sounds with which nature surrounds us. We are not sufficiently on the alert to hear this varied music which she so generously offers. It envelops us, and yet we have lived in its midst until now, ignoring it. This, to my mind, is the new path. But believe me, I have but caught a glimpse of it. Much remains to be done and he who does it...will be a great man! (3)

This is the path also taken by Messiaen, for he says:

La Nature, les chants d'oiseaux!
Ce sont mes passions. Ce sont aussi mes refuges. (4)

and:

...la Nature, toujours belle, toujours grande, toujours nouvelle, la Nature, trésor inépuisable des couleurs et des sons, des formes et des rythmes, modèle inégalé de développement total et de variation perpétuelle, la Nature est la suprême ressource! (5)

He acknowledges the example Debussy set in indicating this direction, and differentiates his own position as follows:

...Debussy reste le grand amant de l'eau, du vent, et des "reflets dans l'eau". On peut écouter la Nature de différentes façons. Personnellement, j'avais la passion de l'ornithologie. (6)

The following are Messiaen's descriptions of birdsong itself, and the part it plays in his musical inspiration:

(3) Vallas, op.cit., 9.
(6) Ibid., 5.
C'est là que réside pour moi la musique. La musique libre, anonyme, improvisée pour le plaisir, pour saluer le soleil levant, pour séduire la bien-aimée, pour crier à tous que la branche et le pré sont à vous, pour arrêter toute dispute, disension, rivalité, pour dépenser le trop-plein d'énergie qui bouillonne avec l'amour et la joie de vivre, pour trouver le temps et l'espace et faire avec ses voisins d'habitat de généreux et providentiels contrepoints, pour bercer sa fatigue et dire adieu à telle portion de vie quand descend le soir. (7)

Through the mixture of their songs, birds make extremely refined jumbles of rhythmic pedals. Their melodic contours, those of merles especially, surpass the human imagination in fantasy. (8)

Technique rythmique, inspiration retrouvée par les chants d'oiseaux: telle est mon histoire. (9)

Debussy was specific about his approach to nature as a source of inspiration for his music, for he said that music was not intended:

...to reproduce nature more or less exactly, but to receive the mysterious accord that exists between nature and the imagination. (10)

This accords closely with Messiaen's attitude to birdsong:

...as it is ridiculous servilely to copy nature, we are going to give some examples of melodies of the "bird" genre which will be transcription, transformation, and interpretation of the volleys and trills of our little servants of immaterial joy. (11)

(7) Messiaen, O., La nature, 1093.
(9) Messiaen, O., Conférence, 6.
In The Technique of my Musical Language, Messiaen indicates that he has derived certain of his melodic and harmonic procedures from Debussy.

The three notes written by Debussy at the beginning of his Reflets dans l'Eau [Ex.1] will serve us to engender a great number of melodic contours [e.g. Exx.2, 3].

(12)

When speaking of Messiaen's harmony, David Drew suggests that it can be classified according to two categories; chords resulting from superpositions of particular intervals, and chords derived from elaborations upon the idea of the added note, or the appoggiatura. (13) Messiaen elucidates the concept of the added note as follows:

With the advent of Claude Debussy, one spoke of appoggiaturas without resolution, of passing notes with no issue, etc. In fact, one found them in his first works. In Pelléas et Mélisande, les Estampes, les Préludes, les Images for the piano, it is a question of foreign notes, with neither preparation nor resolution, without particular expressive accent... They have, nevertheless, a certain citizenship in the chord, either because they have the same sonority as some classified appoggiatura, or because they issue from the resonance of the fundamental. They are added notes. (14)

(14) Messiaen, O., Technique, Vol.I, 47.
And he draws a parallel between the added note in harmony, and the added value in rhythm:

...the relation of notes added to chords and values added to rhythms strikes us. The same charm, one somewhat perverse, is found in these values of supplement which make the rhythms limp deliciously, in these foreign notes which insidiously transform the tint of the chord. (15)

Messiaen states that the most used of the added notes in harmony is the added sixth, "installed...definitely in the musical language by Debussy and Ravel", (16) and Drew proposes that his predilection for the chord of the added sixth stems from the fact that within it, "consonance and dissonance exist side by side, in a state of mutual frustration". He therefore concludes that it

...satisfies Messiaen's need for musical materials that subvert the traditional tension-relaxation pattern, and hence alter the relationship of the music to the time factor. (17)

Harmonic progressions from Debussy which have generated progressions in Messiaen's harmony are quoted in The Technique of my Musical Language. These include the following chords from Pelléas et Mélisande:

(16) Ibid., 47.
which have given rise to the following (the added notes are ringed):

and a measure from Act IV, scene 4 of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which Messiaen has used as a basis for the following progression:

Taking as his point of departure the whole-tone scale, Messiaen has devised a system of seven modes of limited transpositions. The first is the whole-tone scale itself, of which he says:

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Claude Debussy, in Pelléas et Mélisande, and after him Paul Dukas, in Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, have made such remarkable use of it that there is nothing more to add. Then we shall carefully avoid making use of it, unless it is concealed in a superposition of modes which renders it unrecognizable. (20)

The other six modes are as follows:

Mode II: 2 transpositions.

Mode III: 4 transpositions.

Mode IV: 6 transpositions.

Mode V: 6 transpositions.

Mode VI: 6 transpositions.

Mode VII: 6 transpositions.

The modes are used by Messiaen in such a way that they can modulate to each other, or to different transpositions of the same mode, or be associated with tonalities implied in the modes, or with tonalities or notes foreign to them. (22) This practice parallels Debussy's approach


(22) Ibid., Vol.I, 64, 65.
to modality, which is revealed in the following statement:

Music is neither major nor minor, or rather, it is both at once. What keeps it fresh and supple is a continual fluctuating between major and minor thirds...Mode is what the musician thinks of at any given moment; it is unstable. (23)

Roger Smalley points out that Messiaen's use of the modes of limited transpositions gives to his music a static quality; a quality which is also evident in the music of Debussy. He draws attention to the fact that this quality is found as well in the formal structures of both composers, describing the larger works as accumulations of smaller units. (24) Messiaen refers to the static quality of the modes as the "charm of impossibilities", and compares the modes of limited transpositions with the non-retrogradable rhythms:

Let us think of the hearer of our modal and rhythmic music; he will not have time at the concert to inspect the nontranspositions and the nonretrogradations, and, at that moment, these questions will not interest him further; to becharmed will be his only desire. And that is precisely what will happen; in spite of himself he will submit to the strange charm of impossibilities: a certain effect of tonal ubiquity in the nontranspositions, a certain unity of movement (where beginning and end are confused because identical) in the nonretrogradation, all things which will lead him progressively to that sort of theological rainbow which the musical language, of which we seek edification and theory, attempts to be. (25)

In discussing the harmonic procedures of Messiaen's works, Drew suggests that as there is no cadential impulse, the tonic is like

(23) Austin, W., Op.cit., 14,
a ring to which the harmony is attached, and the modes function as a long
rope which allows the harmony to rove freely while imposing a certain
restraint. He describes the tonality (as does Messiaen in the above
quotation) as ubiquitous and unchanging, "a state of affairs that may be
justifiably regarded as an allegory for the Divine Order". (26) This
observation is reinforced by Messiaen's statement that his music is
"une musique qui touche à tous les sujets sans cesser de toucher à
Dieu". (27)

Messiaen attributes to Debussy a very important position in
the development of rhythm in music:

Pour Debussy, c'est son amour pour la nature, le vent et
l'eau qui l'a conduit à l'irregularité des durées qui est
le propre du rythme, et lui a permis d'éviter les répétitions,
du moins les répétitions "par retour". A force de contrôler
la nature, Debussy en a compris l'aspect mouvant, la
perpétuelle ondulation qu'il a transportée dans sa musique
et, grâce à cela, il fut un des plus grands rythmiciens
de tous les temps. (28)

He also names Debussy as a predecessor when acknowledging Stravinsky's
rhythmic innovations. He states that Debussy opened the way to
superposed time-signatures, and speaks of his use of inexact augmentations:

Debussy lui ouvert la voie des mesures superposées (voyez les combinations de mesures à 6/4 et à 4/4 des Nuages, (29) et comparez avec les Noctes et l'Histoire du soldat). Certaines augmentations rythmiques inexactes et étirées comme on en peut trouver dans le 3e tableau du 1er acte de Pelléas,...nous rapprochent insensiblement de Gärngadeva et du principe vital des rythmes strawinskystes. (30)

Illustrations of Debussy's use of more complex forms of augmentation than simple doublings of the values, and of inexact augmentations are to be found in Reflets dans l'eau. The following shows the initial motives of the piece with the augmented forms of their final statements:

And two examples of inexact augmentations are as follows:

An analogous example of rhythmic variation, consisting of both inexact augmentations and diminutions, is found in Messiaen's Noël:


(31) Reflets dans l'eau, (Durand et Cie., 1905), bars 1, 3, 71, 83, pp.1, 7.

(32) Ibid., bars 66, 69-70, pp.6, 7.
Françoise Gervais summarizes the influence of Debussy on contemporary French composers by saying that, at the deepest level, Messiaen would seem to be his true successor:

Si nous arrivons à un domaine plus profond, il me semble que ceux qui ont suivi Debussy sont très rares. Olivier Messiaen est, peut-être, finalement le plus debussyste. Il y a chez lui non seulement ce châtoiement sonore, ce goût à la fois du complexe horizontal et vertical, mais en même temps une très grande richesse et diversité rythmiques et une sorte de logique serrée dans la structure, qui en font vraiment un successeur de Debussy. Et si l'on cherchait les détails, on trouverait chez lui quelque chose de tout à fait spécial: ce que Vladimir Jankélévitch appelle le "mouvement immobile" ou "l'immobilité dans le mouvement", ce sont des figures mélodiques revenant sans cesse, plus ou moins diversifiées, qui sont axées sur une ou plusieurs notes. (34)

2. Emmanuel.

Messiaen acknowledges the influence which Emmanuel had upon him as follows:

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(33) No.XIII of Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jesus, bars 10-12, p.91.

Etant encore jeune élève au Conservatoire, et tout ému par un cours où Maurice Emmanuel avait développé avec amour ses théories sur les modes antiques, je me précipitai à un festival de ses œuvres. On y donnait justement ces "Trente Chansons": je fus émerveillé - et converti à la musique modale du même coup. (35)

Emmanuel's principal idea, that of polymodality, was laid out in his article La Polymodie, and, as Austin points out, this idea has been further developed in the music of Messiaen. (36)

The aim of Emmanuel's article, and his definition of polymodality, is set out at the beginning of the article:

On voudrait ici, par le secours des faits, sans prétention à vaticiner comme sans espoir de convaincre, rappeler que le Mode est chose vivante, vivace, et donner au barbare néologisme, mi-grec et mi-latin qu'est le mot Polymodie, une signification précise. La Polymodie, c'est un répertoire modal nombreux, illimité, où le musicien peut puiser selon convenances et fantaisies, pourvu qu'il ne se croie plus enserré dans les étroites limites, et raccornies, du Majeur unique et du Mineur bâtard, seuls occupants de nos solièges. Elle a été universellement pratiquée par les musiciens spontanés: elle demeure tout actuelle. (37)

He explains the importance of polymodality in monodic, polyphonic and harmonic music, and to the "spontaneous musician" as follows:


L'importance de la Polymodie et son utilisation dans l'art musical, elle réside, non dans la signification "éthique", toute de commande, que les tenants de tel ou tel régime musical peuvent lui attribuer, mais, - en un art monodique, dans la mobilité, dans l'individualisation qu'elle confère à la mélodie, - en un art polyphonique et harmonique, dans les colorations correspondantes appliquées aux lignes et aux accords. Ce qui se trouve dans le chant populaire français européen, toujours vivant; dans les modes ecclésiastiques; dans les liturgies de toutes les confessions; ce que vient de montrer le folklore des Incas, dont le régime musical s'apparente à celui des Asiatiques du Nord et des Gaéliques; tout ce que, partout, l'instinct libre produit de variétés modales, manifeste que le musicien spontané se réjouit d'avoir à son service des échelles nombreuses et différenciées. La polymodie lui octroie le droit d'adopter, selon des convenances dont il est seul juge, telle ou telle série; et comme le nombre ni la forme n'en peuvent être limitées, de créer à son gré des formules neuves. (38)

Emmanuel recognizes that certain composers, of whom he specifies Debussy and Fauré, have employed polymodality in an attempt to rejuvenate music:

Debussy et Fauré ont employé des touches de couleurs modales inhabituelles, comme si la chanson populaire ou le chant ecclésiastique les leurs avaient prêtes, peut-être à leur insu. Et ces colorations, discrètes, fugitives, ne sont pas les moindres beautés de leur palette sonore. (39)

Messiaen uses the word polymodality in a different sense from Emmanuel, for he uses it to signify the superposition of different modes of limited transpositions, (40) but it is evident that within the limits

(39) Ibid., 212.
of Emmanuel's definition his music is essentially polymodal. The first example of this is his use of the seven modes of limited transpositions. As was pointed out in the preceding section, these are used freely, and Messiaen expands upon their use as follows:

Our modes can be mixed with major tonality... Also, they can oppose it... they have nothing in common with the three great modal systems of India, China, and ancient Greece, no more than with the modes of plainchant - and it is these different modes that I call "modal music". Ours can be opposed to or mixed with all...

... one can mix our modes with atonal music...

... Our modes offer the listener the atmosphere of several tonalities at once, without polytonality... The Chords, the combinations of notes which they call for, can be made equivocal with polytonal sonorities; the modal force always absorbs them. By polymodality..., we superpose our modes, and there again, we are present at the hatching of polytonal aggregations, completely drowned in the chosen polymodality. (42)

This finds very close accord with Emmanuel's intention for polymodality; namely that it is "a manifold, unlimited modal repertoire, where the musician can draw according to suitability and imagination". (43)

Messiaen has summarized his compositional practice, in the following statement, and it can be seen from this that all the melodic sources upon which he draws are treated modally. This includes birdsong, and serial technique, which he consequently does not use according to the practices established by Schoenberg.

(41) See p.259.

(42) Ibid., 67.

Je ne me suis jamais servi "volontairement" d'un procédé d'écriture. J'emploie modes et rythmes de façon automatique et instinctive, sans comprendre même qu'il en puisse être autrement. Et pourquoi bannir ceci ou cela? S'il me plaît d'user du majeur, de le mélanger ou de l'opposer à mes modes? S'il me plaît d'imiter le chant des oiseaux ou les râgas hindous? S'il me plaît d'employer tout à coup la technique sérielle parce que j'en ai besoin tout à coup? J'ai assez travaillé l'harmonie au Conservatoire, comme élève, puis comme professeur, pour avoir la liberté d'écrire à ma fantaisie et selon les nécessités du thème, du sujet, de l'instrumentation, de l'émotion du moment. (44)

As Messiaen states, these are used according to his imagination, and the necessities of the moment. Emmanuel summarizes this procedure as follows:

L'art est un choix. (45)

3. Dukas.

In an article devoted to Dukas' Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, Messiaen describes his former master as a man of immense knowledge, and states that this led to his eventual creative impotence:

Sa première face: une immense culture. Nul système esthétique ou philosophique n'avait échappé à sa lente et patiente exploration. En sortant du Conservatoire, il avait eu le courage de refaire son éducation musicale, relisant, comparant, situant les œuvres des maîtres de tous temps et de tous pays. A l'instar du Dante, du Vinci, il résumait en lui l'effort intellectuel d'une époque. De cette culture quasi trop vaste jaillissaient un doute, une inquiétude, un scepticisme terribles qui s'étendaient jusqu'à ses œuvres et condamnèrent au silence ses vingt dernières années. (46)

(44) Messiaen, O., 'Une Enquête', Contrepoints, No.3, (Mars-Avril, 1946), 74.
He assesses Dukas' position as that of a man who was not an innovator; one who was not concerned with the externals of composition, but who explored "the internal life of music";

Dukas n'est pas un novateur. Je dirai même que les procédés extérieurs de la musique, à l'exception du timbre et de l'orchestration, ne l'intéressaient que mediocrement. Donc, pas de rythmes torturés, pas d'harmonies savamment et délicieusement dissonnées, pas de modes inattendus, de mélodies capricieuses, de contrepoints baroques! Les particularités de son langage s'exercent dans l'ombre. Elles fouillent la vie interne de la musique: tonalité, forme, amplification thématique, superposition des matériaux sonores. (47)

Messiaen reasserts this idea, saying that Dukas worked with materials already in existence, and discusses his use of the whole-tone scale:

Dukas n'est pas plus un chercheur subtil qu'un ardent révolutionnaire. Il prend des matériaux déjà existants et les traite à sa façon. Debussy employait la gamme par tons mélodiquement, harmoniquement et surtout modalement. Dukas en tirera des camaïeux de gris, la disposera en longues grappes d'accords, en "effets de résonances" selon sa propre expression, il en fera un accord-type contenant toutes ses notes. (48)

These procedures find their reflection in Messiaen's works. The first - Dukas' use of clusters of chords - is a strong feature of Messiaen's piano works, particularly up to, and including, the Vingt Regards.


(48) Ibid., 82.
The following are three examples of this technique:

(49) 'La Colombe', No.I of Préludes, bar 1, p.2.

(50) 'Cloches d'angoisse et larmes d'adieu', No. VI of Préludes, bar 5, p.29.
"Effects of resonance" are an integral part of Messiaen's technique, and can be found in all the piano works. Messiaen speaks of these as follows:

Paul Dukas often spoke of "effects of resonance". Effects of pure fantasy, similar by a very distant analogy to the phenomenon of natural resonance. (52)

They are of two kinds, superior resonance and inferior resonance. The first two of the preceding examples are instances of superior resonance. The following is an example of inferior resonance:

It has already been pointed out that Dukas was responsible for introducing Messiaen to the music of Bali. (54) Messiaen mentions the influence which Oriental music had on Dukas' orchestration as follows:

Comme son ami Debussy, Dukas aimait l'Orient. Et il y a quelque chose de l'Orient dans son orchestre. "Ce n'est pas assez groupé", disait-il, devant les travaux malhabiles de ses élèves. Son orchestre est au contraire presque toujours écrit par groupes. (55)

Smalley has drawn attention to the fact that Messiaen's orchestral technique, like Dukas', "is based on the powerful opposition of

(54) See Chap. II, p.16.
(55) Messiaen, O., Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, 85.
Messiaen's approach to nature, as a source for his musical inspiration has a precedent not only in Debussy, but also in Dukas. While discussing Dukas' procedures of melodic transformation in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, Messiaen says:

> Les transformations en sont plus curieuses encore. Ce n'est plus à Bach qu'il en faut demander le secret, c'est à la mère Nature elle-même! "Écoutex les oiseaux, ce sont de grands maîtres", disait Dukas. (57)

He repeats Dukas' counsel in *The Technique of my Musical Language*, with the following comment:

> I confess not having awaited this advice to admire, analyze, and notate some songs of birds. (58)

Drew has noted that Messiaen's use of combinations of rhythmic ostinati appear at first to be extremely complicated. He refers specifically to the first movement of the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*:

> ...the ostinati are only intended as a kind of trellis-work for the two free parts...above them. Despite the apparently complex formalism, the appeal of this music is essentially decorative. The complexity is thus an illusion. (59)

That is, an essential simplicity lies behind the complexity, and thus it reflects another piece of Dukas' advice which Messiaen quotes:

Travaillez dans le complexe plus que dans le compliqué. (60)

4. Stravinsky.

Messiaen credits Stravinsky with having returned rhythm to a place of honour in music after the minimal attention accorded it since the advent of harmony:

Le rythme, depuis l'acquisition de l'harmonie, a été relégué au dernier rang des préoccupations musicales. Les leçons rythmiques de l'Inde, de la Grèce et du plainchant, sont bien oubliées. Hors le divin Mozart, qui, parmi les classiques, a su "respirer" ses rythmes? Remercions Strawinsky d'avoir remis le rythme à l'honneur! Chose curieuse, s'ils ont subi sa puissante influence dans le double domaine de la polytonalité et des somptuosités orchestrales, ses contemporains immédiats ont peu utilisé ses rythmes. (61)

As was shown previously, (62) Messiaen has drawn attention to the similarity in procedure between the Hindu desi-tala simhavikridita and one of Stravinsky's rhythmic techniques in The Rite of Spring. He refers to this again as follows:

(60) Messiaen, O., Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, 81.
(61) Messiaen, O., Le rythme chez Igor Strawinsky, 91.
Dans la série des rythmes hindous que nous a laissés Gārgādeva, on trouve le rythme "simhavikridita", qui est l'application du procédé suivant: augmentation ou diminution d'une valeur sur deux... Stravinsky a considérablement agrandi ce procédé en le transformant en l'augmentation, ou diminution d'un rythme sur deux. Et cela par des répétitions brutales et forceées, d'une puissance effroyablement fébrile et déchirante, où la logique rythmique la plus rigide s'allie aux plus invraisemblables fantaisies. Le Sacre du printemps est absolument typique à cet regard: on trouvera des exemples frappants de variations rythmiques partielles dans la Glorification de l'Elue et dans la fameuse Danse Sacrale. (63)

Drew points out that Messiaen has developed certain of Stravinsky's earlier methods which Stravinsky himself came to discard, and as Messiaen states, Stravinsky did not use this particular rhythmic technique, which he has designated "rhythmic personages", after The Rite of Spring.

Les "personnages rythmiques" n'ont été employés qu'une seule fois par Stravinsky dans le Sacre, dans certains épisodes seulement: notamment la Glorification de l'Elue et la Danse Sacrale... (65)

Messiaen has developed this technique in his own music, and affirms that he is the first to have used it consciously:

Quant à Stravinsky, je ne sais pas s'il s'est rendu compte de la grande innovation du Sacre que j'ai nommée "les personnages rythmiques". Je suis très fier de ce terme parce qu'il semble vraiment explicite....En analysant le Sacre j'ai longuement réfléchi à l'importance rythmique de passages tels que la "Glorification de l'Elue" et la "Danse Sacrale", et j'ai fini par comprendre que le procédé qui conférait à ces deux pièces toute leur force magique était celui des personnages rythmiques.... Mais je suis sans doute le premier à utiliser consciemment ces personnages. (66)

(63) Messiaen, O., Le rythme chez Igor Stravinsky, 92.
(65) Messiaen, O., Conférence, 4.
He explains it as follows:

Supposons une scène de théâtre: trois personnages sont sur le plateau - le premier agit, c'est lui qui mène la scène - le second est mu, est agi par le premier - le troisième assiste au conflit sans intervenir, il regarde et ne bouge pas. De même, trois groupes rythmiques sont en présence: le premier augmente, c'est le personnage attaquant - le deuxième diminue, c'est le personnage attaqué - le troisième ne change jamais, c'est le personnage immobile. (67)

Both Boulez and Barraque have analyzed the refrain from the Danse Sacrale, the analyses being based on the principle enunciated by Messiaen. Barraque prefaces his analysis with the following:

...le discours s'organise ici à partir de cellules rythmiques, mises en lumière par Olivier Messiaen, qui en explique le maniement par ce qu'il appelle des "personnages rythmiques". (68)

The present writer has chosen to illustrate the principle of "rhythmic personages" in The Rite of Spring by quoting the analysis by Boulez. (69)

The Danse Sacrale is a rondo, consisting of a refrain, first couplet, repeat of the refrain a semitone lower, second couplet which

(67) Messiaen, O., Conférence, 4.

Barraqué (Op.cit., 53) in a footnote states:...l'analyse rythmique de la Danse Sacrale, qui paraît ici, deviendra aujourd'hui inutile après la parution de l'étude de Pierre Boulez (Stravinsky demeure).
is divided in the middle by a short restatement of the refrain, and
coda, based on elements from the refrain. The refrain is made up of
three elements. A is composed of repeated chords which form a
preparation for the accent and termination of B. Elements A and B
form the group X. Having been stated twice, they are balanced by the
element C, which forms a preparation followed by an accent and is then
transformed into preparation-accent-termination. The refrain (score
numbers 142 to 149) is divided into three periods as follows:

1st Period

2nd Period

3rd Period

The three elements are disposed so as to form the following
symmetrical arrangements of the groups:
First period: 1. X15  2. X15

Second period: 1. C8  X11  (= 15 - 4)  2. C5  X19  (= 15 + 4)

Third period: 1. \(\frac{X9 \times X6}{(=X15)}\)  X12  2. C5  C7  (= 12)

Of the three elements, A and C vary irregularly, but B includes only two fixed values, B7 and B4 where the second is an elision of the first. In the first period A is varied and B remains constant, and they form the following symmetry:

\[A3 / A5 B7 / / A5 B7 / / A3.\]

The second period uses A4, which is a contraction of A5, as well as the variant A'5 derived from C8. The third period introduces B4, which, as was pointed out above, is a contraction of B7, and the variants C5 and C7 which are used in the coda.

An example of Messiaen's use of "rhythmic personages" is to be found in Le Chocard des Alpes, (70) and this will be analyzed in detail in the section dealing with the rhythmic structures in Messiaen's piano works. (71)

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(70) No.I of Catalogue d'Oiseaux.

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Part II documents Printed Books, Printed Articles, and Dissertations. Its final section consists of Reports and Reviews of concerts and recordings of Messiaen's works, in which short reviews or articles which only briefly mention Messiaen's works are listed under the periodicals in which they occur.

Abbreviations.

ML  Music and Letters, London, 1920-
MQ  The Musical Quarterly, New York, 1915-
MR  The Music Review, Cambridge, 1940-
MT  The Musical Times, London, 1844-
MuK Musik und Kirche, Kassel, 1929-
NZfM Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, Leipzig, 1834-
OMz Oesterreichische Musikzeitschrift, Vienna, 1946-
Abbreviations (Continued)

PNM Perspectivas of New Music, Princeton, N.J., 1962-
RM La Revue Musicale, Paris, 1920-
SMz Schweizerische Musikzeitung, Zurich, 1861-
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