Olivier Messiaen's 'Première Communion de la Vierge' and the translation of religious meaning

Yale Journal of Music & Religion

Volume 11 | Number 2 Article 1

2025

Olivier Messiaen's "Première Communion de la Vierge" and the Translation of Religious Meaning

Robert Sholl
Royal Academy of Music and University of West London

Jean-Rodolphe Kars

Recommended Citation

Sholl, Robert and Kars, Jean-Rodolphe (2025) "Olivier Messiaen's "Première Communion de la Vierge" and the Translation of Religious Meaning," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*: Vol. 11: No. 2, Article 1.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1314

Olivier Messiaen's "Première Communion de la Vierge" and the Translation of Religious Meaning

Robert Sholl and Père Jean-Rodolphe Kars

In 1946, the French Roman Catholic composer Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) made this extraordinary confessional statement:

> I have tried to be a Christian musician and proclaim my faith through song, but without ever succeeding. Without doubt this is because I am unworthy of doing so (and I say this without any sense of false humility!). Pure music, secular [*profane*] music and, above all theological music (not mystical as my listeners believe) alternate in my production. I really do not know if I have an "aesthetic," but I can say that I prefer a music that is iridescent, subtle, even voluptuous (but not sensual, of course!). Music that is tender or violent, full of love and vehemence. A music which soothes and sings, which honors melody and the melodic phrase. Music that is like new blood, a signed gesture, an unknown perfume, an unsleeping bird. Music like a stained-glass window, a whirl of complementary colors. Music that expresses the end of time, ubiquity, glorified bodies and the divine and supernatural mysteries: a "theological rainbow."[1]

The question of how Messiaen's music could communicate the Catholic faith (his own and that of the universal Church) was prescient. Messiaen's statement concerned belief, Surrealist poetic language, and apologetics. It came after *le cas Messiaen*, which featured polarized critical views of the composer following the premiere of his *Visions de l'Amen* (1942–43) for two pianos on May 10, 1943. The length of Messiaen's spoken commentaries, according to the organist Jeanne Demessieux, rivaled the duration of the music.[2]

At the center of *le cas* was a perceived conflict between revolution and tradition, private faith and public testament, religion and sensuality (Messiaen's music was indeed "voluptuous" and "sensual"). Critical responses were marked by an irritation with the mawkish "mystical-poetic" texts "with which he surrounds his works," as Francis Poulenc put it.[3] The religious topoi and apocalypticism of this music also created a disjunction with the realities of wartime depravation and suppression in Paris.

Such concerns were already nascent in the reviews of the Paris premiere of *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (1940–41) on June 24, 1941, which Messiaen had completed at Stalag VIIIA while in a prisoner-of-war camp in Zgorzelec (Görlitz), Poland. The composer Arthur Honegger, later an advocate of Messiaen in *le cas,* commented that "some may find that there is too much literature surrounding this music."[4] The public premiere of *Les Corps Glorieux* (1939) for organ on November 15, 1943 (at L'Église de la Sainte-Trinité, where Messiaen had been organist since September 1931) was greeted by Claude Rostand, also later a significant apologist and advocate for Messiaen, with opprobrium: "Messiaen likes to wrap up his works in elaborate gobbledegook, as if they are not enough by themselves!"[5] The furore of *le cas* continued after the first performances of *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (completed in 1944) on March 26, 1945, and *Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine* (1943–44) on April 21, 1945, both of which took place after the liberation of Paris on August 25, 1944.[6]

Messiaen later described his verbal commentaries at the premiere of *Vingt Regards* as a "bomb" that created more of an effect than the music, a comment that is complementary to Rostand's above. But again, in an apologetic mode that clearly misunderstood his critics, he stated that this perceived reaction occurred because he had expressed himself in a Surrealist language and because he was a "believer."[7] Yet the music (even without commentaries) was understood as radical. While completing *Vingt Regards* at the house of Gabriel Dussurget (the founder of the Aix-en-Provence Festival), Messiaen asked his host what he thought of the music. Much to his chagrin, Dussurget responded that he thought the music exhibited a "torrid eroticism," a criticism in tune with the rhetoric of *le cas* that Messiaen had sought to refute in 1946.[8] More positively, the controversy can be regarded as a public recognition of Messiaen's originality. It pointed the composer to a realization that was important for his subsequent works: that religious meaning could be effectively communicated through shock and a sensuality that radically and necessarily counterpointed contemporaneous concerns, redirecting humanity away from *la vie quotidienne*.

Messiaen's treatise on his own music, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, published in 1944 after *le cas* had begun, revealed his confidence in the intimate connections between his theological and aesthetic scaffolding and his musical techniques. For example, the colors of the apocalypse could be related to stained glass, thence to the coloristic effect his music had on the listener, and to his seven modes of limited transposition (hierarchically-constructed scales which could only be transposed a limited number of times before returning to the same pitches). The apocalypse (the end of human time) could also be related to neo-Platonic ideals of eternity (staticism) in which clockbound time (a property of humanity) is distinct from the immutable time of God. These ideals are inflected in various ways in his rhythmic language, defeating a sense of tactus and upbeat/downbeat, for example, in the avoidance of metrical regularity and the use of extremely slow tempi.

The holistic thinking and systematic reciprocity in Messiaen's thought assume a metaphorical mapping of one domain onto another, founded on a highly subjective vision of Catholicism. In his theory of metaphor, the French Protestant theologian Paul Ricœur described the way "seeing as" on the plain of language is mapped onto "being as" on the ontological plain. Messiaen's exegeses of his works point to a form of actualization, an attempt at 'being with' (God, Christ, Mary, etc.), but how and whether this can be achieved musically requires a critical examination that is rarely demonstrated in the Messiaen literature.[9]

To understand Messiaen's expression of religious meaning through music, this article examines this audacious risk through a hermeneutic and analytical purview of one piano piece: "Première Communion de la Vierge," the eleventh of the *Vingt Regards*. Studies of isolated pieces are rare in the Messiaen literature.[10] Apart from general biographical works, Messiaen scholarship on *Vingt Regards* has particularly focused on pianism. Christopher Dingle, Madeleine Forte (née Hsu), and Caroline Rae have demonstrated Messiaen's engagement with the piano and the antecedents of his textures in piano repertoire (Chopin and Ravel especially).[11] "Première Communion" has been the focus of two previous studies. Julian Hellaby has detailed pianistic interpretative approaches to the work, while Rosemary Walker's analytical study has employed Fortean pitch-class set theory to illuminate internal correspondences.[12] Siglind Bruhn has also written in detail about the relationship between theology and symbolism in Messiaen's

music, but does not discuss the Marian aspects of this piece.[13] Our article builds upon her work while critically examining how structure, technique, and the effects of Messiaen's piece express theological "truths." It assesses how a sense of 'being with' Mary and Christ is created by Messiaen, and how the composer attempted to create the form of ontological actualization signaled by Ricœur.[14]

To build this argument, the first section of the article details different contexts for the piece and revises previous scholarship on *Vingt Regards* using material drawn from the Fonds Olivier Messiaen in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.[15] We first examine the genesis of and primary sources for "Première Communion de la Vierge" and the placement of this piece in the cycle. Further sources are briefly elaborated: the Benedictine monk and theologian Dom Columba Marmion's (1858–1923) theology in his book *Le Christ dans ses Mystères* (1919); the influence of Messiaen's mother, the poet Cécile Sauvage (1883–1927), and the ideals of Surrealism (important to Messiaen).[16] The second section of the article creates a hermeneutic and musical analysis of "Première Communion," examining how the language and symbolism of this piece attempt to create religious meaning.

The symbolic focus in "Première Communion" moves from the interiority and silence of Christ within Mary (and her adoration of Christ) to Mary herself (as *Theotokos*, Mother of God) in the Magnificat. This is then interrupted by an ecstatic musical intimation of the incarnation (for both Mary and the human 'viewer'), followed by an image of the beating heart of the unborn Christ, and a return to the opening idea at the conclusion.[17] Messiaen's piece is therefore, like Marmion's book, fundamentally concerned with the working of God through human beings and their actions.

The question of whether music can proceed beyond such symbolism or portrayal to a form of idealized and even idolatrous actuality (an *experience* or *knowledge* of faith) is crucial to this study. Through his modernist language, Messiaen attempted to extended Marian imagery and to create a radical iconographic vision – a set of 'regards' within this single piece. "Première Communion," we contend, attempts to move beyond traditional aspects of Marian art (praise, supplication, devotion) to create a realization in the viewer/listener of Mary's internal states and her personhood. Messiaen's 'being with' attempts to exceed devotional images in ways that are at once naïve and didactic, supernatural, and Surreal. This study therefore problematizes and expands understanding of the enigmaticism and the complex modernism of Messiaen's art.[18]

The Genesis of *Vingt Regards*: Sources

In an interview in 1962, Messiaen described 1944 as "the most fecund year of my existence" in terms of musical creation, a year that included the composition of a two-hour-long piano cycle, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, his longest work to date.[19] This work almost certainly owed its actualization to Maurice Toesca's request for music to accompany his own *Les Douze regards* – 12 poems on the Nativity written for a series of radio broadcasts, commissioned by the composer Pierre Schaeffer in early January 1944. When Messiaen and Toesca first made contact is unclear.[20]

There is a rich range of material to draw upon in considering *Vingt Regards*. In the *Cahier beige* (1941–44), one of Messiaen's notebooks from the time that contain musical sketches

and commentaries, he notes to himself: "écrire l'œuvre de Toesca pour piano" (write Toesca's work for piano).[21] Messiaen wrote *Vingt Regards* with the virtuoso capacities of Yvonne Loriod (1924–2010) in mind. He first knew her as a student (from 1941), and she became his second wife in 1961. The full title of the work, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus pour piano*, is given on page 27 of Messiaen's first book of sketches. (It is written boldly over some of the sketches and underlined.) There is no date, but the annotation was likely made in 1944.[22]

This book of 32 pages, entitled "Esquisses préparatoires" (RES VMA MS-1983) in the Fonds Messiaen catalogue, contains no sketches for piece XI. The 104-page sketchbook labeled "Esquisses, 1er état complet" (RES VMA MS-1529) is headed by a page with the full titles of the pieces in *Vingt Regards* as finally conceived. Yet immediately on the following page, a list of 12 pieces (crossed out) is given (both pages are unpaginated in the source), which does not include "Première Communion de la Vierge." However, this piece is present in these sketches (only with small differences from the finished product) on pages 55–58 (see below), marked by Messiaen (on p. 58) "Fin – Bien" (double underlined) and "Relu pour mouvements et nuances." Piece XI also appears in a 12-page volume of sketches entitled "Esquisses de plusieurs des *Vingt Regards*" (VMA MS 1533 [2]).This time the full title of the cycle appears on the front cover with a dedication to Yvonne Loriod. This source includes a sketch of the "Note de l'Auteur" and names the musical leitmotifs that inform the cycle (see below). A complete list of the 20 pieces of the cycle with final titles in the correct order is given on page 10 of this sketchbook, marked "Bien" by Messiaen. RES VMA MS-1530 (1-3) (160 pages) is the autograph, written in purple ink (pieces I–IX) and black ink thereafter; piece XI is on pages 55–59. The final printed version is at RES VMA MS-1531. In much of the discussion below, however, we will not focus on these sources because the genesis of what would become "Première Communion de la Vierge" is to be found elsewhere.

Vingt Regards employs a system of leitmotifs – musical ideas that help create meaning and unify the cycle. There is a "theme of chords" and a set of leitmotifs for God, the Cross, and the star represented in recognizable ways. The cycle therefore creates a set of musical stained-glass windows (a prominent image in Messiaen's aesthetics connected to his synaesthesia) and a constellation of musical images surrounding the infant Jesus that attempts to inform the believer about divine action. It traverses immaterial concepts (time, the Word of God, unction), the kiss of the infant and directed love (of God, Christ, the Virgin, the Church). This can be thought of as a form of musical iconography and as an invitation to the listener to participate in the action. Such Catholic imagery and theology aid the unity of the "regards" and the sense of "overflow" and "supernatural intensity" described by Marmion as proper to the "inner life" germane to Messiaen's attempt to exceed mere symbolism in this music.[23]

Messiaen's initial ordering of the 12 pieces (crossed out) for the Toesca project in RES VMA MS-1529 was, with reference to the final named pieces of *Vingt Regards*: I, II, a third piece to be entitled "Regard des bergers et des mages" (which partly relates to the title of piece XVI), then IV, XVIII, V, XIV, X, IX, VII, XVII, and XX. It is unclear when "Première Communion" became a fixture in the cycle.[24] This initial ordering bears some similarity to the final work. Each group of three pieces here contains the leitmotif for God, whereas in the final ordering of the cycle, this idea occurs in pieces I, V, VI, X, XI, XV, XIX (sublimated), and XX, and it acts as a refrain (a little like in a rondo) for four interpolated sets of three other pieces.[25]

Messiaen distributed the work around "marker" pieces for God the Father (I), the Son (V), the Holy Spirit (X), the Incarnation (XV), and, finally, the Church (XX), because the "church is the body of Christ and it continues Christ's [life]."[26]

Vingt Regards was completed between March 23 and September 8, 1944, but earlier sketchbooks demonstrate extensive preparatory research. Sketches show Messiaen working on the cycle with a title but no final order.[27] Messiaen referred to it in a note in his *Cahier vert* (1932–44): "Pour Regards sur la crèche – faire 12 pièces."[28] This source includes early sketches for "'Première Communion."[29] If Messiaen wrote his sketches in the *Cahier vert* in chronological order (there is no suggestion that he didn't do this), filling up the book from beginning to end, this has implications for the way in which the cycle has been dated and understood.[30]

The first sketches for "Première Communion" in the *Cahier vert* are on pages 8–11. The first sketch for *L'Ascension* is on page 22 (an "Alleluia" theme redolent of piece II in that cycle, which undergoes considerable development and is linked to *L'Ascension* in a note at the bottom of page 23, with a clear sketch for much of piece IV of the cycle on page 24). A near-complete version of the unpublished *Messe* for eight sopranos and four violins (marked "Neussargues, Cantal, 1933" by the composer in *Technique de mon langage musicale*) starts on page 32, and sketches for *La Nativité du Seigneur* on page 49 (together with a sketch for a piece entitled "les anges et l'incarnation," not used in the cycle, and one for the opening of piece II with registrations). Messiaen refers to what is likely his future piano cycle as a heading in the *Cahier vert* (p. 49) in a note to himself: "Pour crèche" (underlined).[31] There is mention here of pieces XIX (titled "Danse verbe était la vie" [not in the cycle]) and XVIII ("Noël," which becomes piece XIII in the final score). There is also a provisional list of characteristics of a set of pieces on page 72, including "stalactites and stalagmites" (possibly referring to piece XI). But there is no definitive mention of either the piano or a cycle until page 73, when Messiaen writes clearly, "pour Regards" and "pour les Regards." On page 75 he again returns to what would become piece XI and gives three short notes concerning it, all unconnected to musical material:

> Première Communion de la Vierge – after the birth of Jesus, the Holy Virgin speaks with him . . . that which I have created has reposed in my Tabernacle . . . call to the Regard de la Vierge already made [this is piece IV in the cycle], regard of the Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph – the genesis of the Magnificat and the man of justice; purity without equal, tenderness for the little infant king . . . Interior view (Regard) of the Virgin (underlined) He who was created and reposed in my tabernacle . . . She speaks to herself [within], to her little Jesus, this is the first communion.[32]

This evidence suggests that Messiaen may have been considering a piano work about the Nativity (perhaps even an individual piano piece) well before Toesca's request in 1944, and certainly therefore before his first encounter with Loriod at the home of her godmother, Nelly Eminger-Sivade, in 1941. It also suggests that Messiaen returned to piece XI at a later time after the experience of writing *La Nativité*.[33] Therefore, the *Cahier vert* (supposing that the date span of 1932–44 given in the Bibliothèque nationale de France catalogue, is correct) offers the enticing prospect that Messiaen may have thought of "Première Communion" in 1932 (or even earlier), soon after his confessor recommended that he read Marmion's *Le Christ dans ses Mystères* in anticipation of becoming organist of la Trinité in 1931.[34]

The placement of "Première Communion" as piece XI in the final cycle is important. It can be thought of as a turning point in the cycle between the theological concepts of the "Ad-Intra" and the "Ad-Extra." "Ad-Intra" theologically expresses that which concerns God in Himself – for instance, the Mystery of the "circulation" of Love between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity is "Ad-Intra" in the first part of the piece (see below). This is the same concerning the eternal generation of the Son (expressed musically by Messiaen in the first part of "Le Verbe," piece IV of *La Nativité du Seigneur*), and also, of course, the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son. "Ad-Extra" concerns the Mysteries which are not (or at least not only) related to God in Himself. For instance, God's act of Creation is an act "Ad-Extra" – the same with the Incarnation. It is not separated from the "Ad-Intra," because the source of every act of God is in the mystery of his inner life.

In *Vingt Regards*, the love expressed first in the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is respectively present in pieces I, V, and X (as a "fanfare," p. 69), but in piece XI it can be understood now as expressed through the adoration of a human being, namely Mary's adoration of Christ within her Piece XI can therefore be recognized as the turning point in which the "Ad-Intra" (i.e., within the Trinity) becomes "Ad-Extra," which will be further adumbrated through the eucharistic piece XV, and finally universally expressed fully through the church of love (piece XX). "Première Communion," therefore, can be understood as a hinge in the cycle. First there are the Virgin, the Son, the Cross, and concepts of time and joy (pieces I–X). Then in piece XI there is the sanctity of Mary's intentions and inner being (her purity, obedience, piety, and joy), and an actualization of Christ's presence on earth. This is followed in the cycle by reflections on events and figures surrounding the birth (angels and the magi) and the Church (pieces XII–XX, including Mary in piece XIII). This thought process is expressed differently in Messiaen's *Livre du Saint Sacrement* for organ (1984), which moves from Christ's life (pieces V–XI) to his life in the Church (pieces XII–XVIII).

Further Sources: Dom Columba Marmion, Messiaen's Mother, and Surrealism

Messiaen developed his panoramic set of images in *Vingt Regards* largely from Marmion's *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, which concerns a theological journey through the liturgical year. Marmion's book was given "apostolic benediction" by Benedict XV on October 10, 1919, for its "singular aptitude to excite and maintain in the hearts [of believers] the flame of divine love [*charité*]," giving the "live voice" of Christ to believers. Its textual power perhaps arises from its combination of fervency, personal faith and testament, and its direct biblical exegesis that addressed the central acts of Christ's life.[35] It was reprinted eight times by 1922 and translated into English in 1924.

The score of *Vingt Regards* begins with four pages of theological explanation (for the avoidance of doubt that this music is intended to be religious). Each piece in the cycle has a text beneath the title that informs the work's religious meaning and intent. Messiaen's practice in his previous organ cycles—*L'Ascension*, *La Nativité du Seigneur*, and *Les Corps Glorieux* —was to employ scriptural epigraphs beneath the titles in the scores. The *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, *Visions de l'Amen,* and *Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine* do not employ such epigraphs. In *Vingt Regards,* Messiaen created his own non-scriptural texts for the first time. Placed beneath the title of each piece, they are evidence of the composer's need to explain and contextualize his music.

L'Ascension and *La Nativité* stemmed from Messiaen's reading of Marmion, who, in *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, meditates on the "hidden" mystery of Christ within Mary.[36] The idea of looking ("regard") is present in Marmion's text.[37] Marmion connects Mary's "heart" with what he calls "the supernatural love of the Virgin" and the love of God and Christ as a development of grace. He describes the "incessant exchange" (recalling the title of the third piece of *Vingt Regards,* "L'échange") between "the two souls" (Mary and Christ) that "enlivened their union."[38] He also explicitly discusses the Magnificat, elaborated on by Messiaen in the central section of "Première Communion," as a "song within her heart" that "returns to the Savior all the glories and marvels operating within her."[39] Marmion's rapturous religious rhetoric was an important catalyst for this piano piece.

With regard to "Première Communion de la Vierge," Messiaen stated: "After the Annunciation, Mary adores Jesus within herself . . . my God, my Son, my Magnificat! — my love without the noise of words." This complements the following earlier text concerning the same piece, one of the many notes to self that Messiaen made in the *Cahier vert*: "Première communion de la Vierge – (the virgin: first tabernacle, the Truth speaks there without noise, as the lightness of water speaks of itself . . .)." It also complements the texts given above.[40] Messiaen had therefore settled on the final title of this piece early in this sketchbook. Both notes speak of private faith made public, and of God's action breaking in upon human beings, something Messiaen would later describe with reference to the effect of music, like that of light passing through stained-glass windows, as a "breakthrough toward the beyond."[41] Messiaen's texts emphasize silence and are shaped by different aspects of Marmion's book. The text in the *Cahier vert* refers directly to Mary in a sacramental vein as a "tabernacle," but the final text follows the form of the piece more closely.

The idea of interiority, essential to "Première Communion," was already an important formant of Messiaen's creative life. The "interior life" discussed by Marmion was formed for Messiaen through his attachment to his mother Cécile Sauvage, whom he described as "guiding my hand or my spirit."[42] Sauvage died prematurely of tuberculosis in 1927. The final part of her poetry collection *Tandis que la terre tourne* (As the World Turns), first published in 1910, was a poetic cycle entitled *L'Âme en bourgeon* (The Burgeoning Soul). These 20 poems (a number that is perhaps reflected in Messiaen's piano cycle) were addressed to and about her unborn male child (Messiaen).[43] They are full of joy, anguish, and euphoria, but above all a sense of the impending loss of a close maternal bond to her unborn child.

Messiaen returned to his mother's poetry throughout his life as nourishment, as confirmation of his sense of purpose and destiny, and as inspiration that helped inform the way he communicated religious meaning. Through this Symbolist poetry he understood his own predestination to be a composer who became interested in forms of the supernatural (found in Surrealism) and in birds (featured in the poetry).[44]

The idealization of woman in Surrealist poetry can be regarded as a secular counterpart to the veneration of Mary through the doctrine of her immaculate conception (Pope Pius IX: *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854): sinless, a virgin, and therefore both immaculate as mother and woman.[45] For the Surrealists André Breton and Paul Éluard in their book *L'Immaculée Conception* (1930), the virgin was an exemplar of the serendipity implied in their concept of the "marvellous," a liminal category of beauty and revelation beyond worldly rationality. For the Surrealists,

the "marvellous" was realized through automatic poetic creation, and it occurred through serendipitous encounters and organized disjunctions of objects and images that radiated quasi-gnostic and magical (auratic) qualities.[46] Messiaen regarded himself as a "grand lecteur" of the Surrealists in the late 1940s, but there is much evidence of Surrealist thought in his own poetic texts for his song cycles *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936), *Chants de terre et de ciel* (1938), and especially *Harawi* (1945), which employ images used in the Surrealist poetry of Éluard and the proto-Surrealist poet Pierre Reverdy.[47] Messiaen stated that he was "partial to the fantastic side of surrealism, to the sort of science fiction that goes beyond reality and science itself."[48]

In "Première Communion," Messiaen can be understood as attempting to bring the listening onlooker toward a hearing that metaphorically "sees" Mary adore Christ within herself, embracing them both interiorly as a primal exemplar of religious experience. The listener can be thought of as invited to participate in the interior "communion" discussed by Marmion and Messiaen, an exemplar of the epiphanic Surrealist "marvellous." Marmion's thought on interiority above echoes Saint Augustine's ideal in which interiority is posited as an inward space in which humanity can commune with and become illuminated by God, and in so doing manifest this illumination exteriorly.[49] The following hermeneutic interpretation investigates the symbolism of Messiaen's work. It creates a wager on the possibility that Messiaen is able to move beyond symbolism to create a sense of 'being with' Mary and what is hidden within.

Narrative and Religious Meaning in "Première Communion de la Vierge"

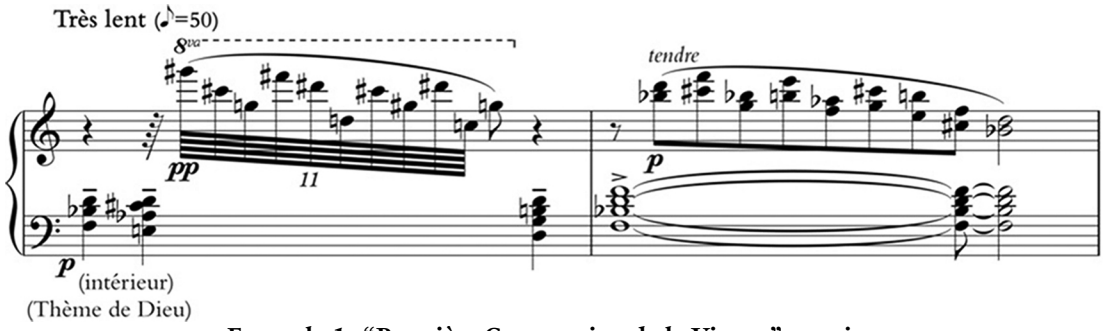
At the beginning and at the conclusion of "Première Communion de la Vierge," Messiaen ascribes the idea of interiority to the *Thème de Dieu* (theme of God). At the start of piece 1, this *Thème* consists of four left-hand chords in B-flat major in the second mode of limited transposition (mode 2^2), a leitmotiv that had appeared in F-sharp major (in mode 2^1) at the beginning of the cycle. A sketch for the opening of the cycle can be found in the *Cahier beige* on page 61, marked by Messiaen as "Très lent avec amour" but not as yet assigned the title or status of *Thème de Dieu*. It reappears on page 65, marked "Extrêmement lent" and attached to the title of the first piece, "Regard du père," with a note: "thème entier [underlined] etc. tout le morceau comme cela."[50] It is clear in the sketches that this theme is to appear in different guises (on the same page it appears in F-sharp in a piece called "Regard du Saint Esprit," not a title used in the cycle), but also in a sketch whose music is redolent of that which occurs in piece XX (p. 172, systems 2–3).[51] It is first given the title *Thème de Dieu* in "Esquisses, 1er ètat complet," connected with the opening of the work, and the leitmotivs are given on page 3 of RES VMA MS-1553 (2).[52]

The mode used for this theme is the octatonic scale, a mode of alternate semitones and tones based (in Messiaen's music) around the four "tonal" centers of the diminished seventh (modes in Messiaen's thought can support tonal centers or be employed independently). This scale is familiar from its use in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* and in works by Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin, Ravel, and other composers, but it is given a different sound here because of Messiaen's bespoke harmonizations.

At the opening of "Première Communion" it is given a specific religious topic and presented very slowly (eighth note = 50) embodying a form of neo-Platonic staticism. As a leitmotiv, the *Thème de Dieu* takes on a quasi-iconic function: music represents an extramusical

figure. Through this wordless piano music, Messiaen attempts to impart religious significance through a specific topic, and to make his music signify beyond the "autonomous, self-contained and wholly self-referential" nature of absolute music defined as hermetic, sublime, liminal, ineffable, and a harbinger of the numinous.[53] While there is no explicit program to Messiaen's piece (even connected to the epigraph discussed above), such information attempts to infuse the score with narrative meaning creating a form of topical absolute music.

Messiaen's sketches in RES VMA 1553 (2), entitled "Esquisses de plusieurs des *Vingt Regards,*" reveal that his first thought for the opening of this piece was in C major and in mode 2[1], without the stalactite idea. The *Thème* in the sketch is immediately connected to the "tendre" idea (b. 2 in the final score). This idea is extended by varied repetition interpolated with the *Thème*. The whole call-and-response pattern is repeated four times in this sketch, with a final diminution of the *Thème* itself as just a C-major 6/4 chord and a response of a major third above. The "tendre" idea (with different notes from the final score) therefore occurs four times in groups of 8, 10, 19, and finally 3 sixteenth notes, a form of what Messiaen, following Vincent d'Indy's thought, called "développement par elimination" in *Technique de mon langage musicale*.[54] This "tendre" figure is played an octave higher than that of the final printed score, where it is only repeated twice (with groups of 8 and 10 sixteenth notes) in bars 2 and 4 (see below for more on this figure).[55] Example 1 shows the beginning of the piece in the final score:[56]

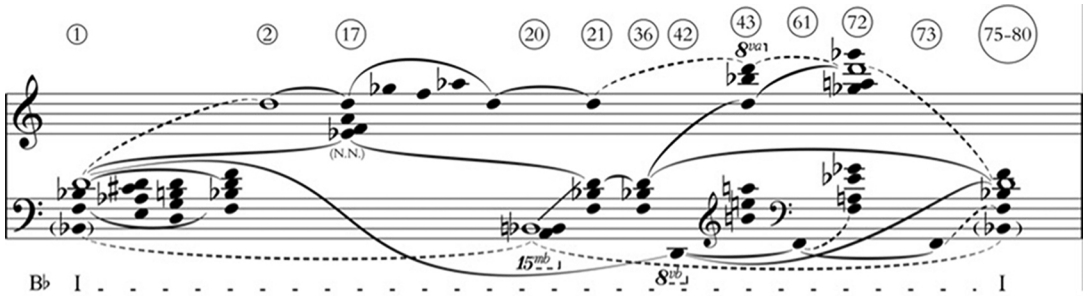


Example 1: "Première Communion de la Vierge," opening

B-flat major anchors the work (without the sense of polarity or tonal mediation essential to tonality). It enables the right-hand dissonances to ornament the left hand, but also centrifugally to pull away from this focus and (both locally and throughout the piece) centripetally to return to it.[57]

This moment at the start of "Première Communion" makes a direct connection with the *Thème* (used in this "key" of B-flat) "victoriously" ("Victorieux et agité" is Messiaen's marking) in "Par Lui tout a été fait" (piece VI, p. 40, systems 1–3 of the score), which could be interpreted as signifying God's triumphal imposition of order over the chaos of the universe (signified through the use of fugal technique). In this piece, B-flat is juxtaposed between F-sharp major before (p. 38, from system 4) and after (where the *Thème* is intensified by diminution and volume from the last bar of p. 42). This juxtaposition is played out on a larger scale throughout *Vingt Regards,* where F-sharp is featured with the *Thème de Dieu* in pieces I, V, VI, X, XV, XIX, and XX. B-flat therefore bifurcates the cycle as an altered lower dominant. This sense of (flat-side) alterity in the cycle underlines its function perhaps as a theological hinge (discussed above).

Example 2 is a "middleground" diagram of "Première Communion" that reveals the sense of "unity" created by this key center. This sense of tonal gravitation is an unusual feature in the cycle, only rivaled by pieces I, XV, and XIX, all in F-sharp major. Such tonal holism is present in other pieces in the cycle; it therefore perhaps signals another relationship between the "Father" (piece 1) and Jesus in piece XI (inside Mary); in piece XV (an image of the sleeping Jesus opening a door to humanity to be embraced through communion); and again, the love of the sleeping Jesus (piece XIX). Example 2 shows that B-flat major is present from the start, and then extended to other structurally significant events in the piece at bars 21, 36, 43, and the end. This B-flat centricity is prolonged by the third above it ('D'), through various registral transfers (indicated by dotted lines), which informs each section of the piece.[58] The *Thème de Dieu* is included at the start of Example 2 in the left hand:



Example 2: Analytical "middleground" of "Première Communion de la Vierge"

Without the "garlands" of "stalactites," as Messiaen calls them, above them in the right hand (see Ex. 1, b. 1), the extreme *lenteur* of the *Thème de Dieu* chords tend toward silence. Marmion associates this silence with "the kingdom of God," and in the philosopher Julia Kristeva's thought about the annunciation, it is "before-the word."[59] These chords help engender a sense of an altered metabolic state that can be thought of as opening the Surrealist "marvellous," in which seemingly ordinary objects can take on extraordinary qualities. Messiaen's *Thème de Dieu* here can be heard in a new context in the cycle, as a harbinger of Christ's hidden appearance within Mary, and as God's action in the world.

Messiaen states that these stalactites are "garlands" that "evoke the drawings of stalactites in the oracle caves."[60] This image of stalactites seems to have occurred very early in the development of the piece. On page 10 of the *Cahier vert,* he writes "stalactites and stalagmites" and makes a little drawing of descending vertical lines of the same length but moving down the page from left to right.[61] This concept of stalactites might be understood in two ways. They could imply the crystalline purity of the Virgin, and perhaps also the fragility of the child. Yet their spectral resonance — half-heard and half-sensed (because of the speed and register of the right-hand figuration and its differentiation from the left hand) above the *Thème de Dieu* — also seems to imply the scopic presence of humanity hovering above the event. While the quasi-mysticism of Example 1 is precisely structured, such interpretations of this texture must be critically understood as both viable and tendentious. The attachment of such constructions and meanings to this music is an issue central to the communication of and understanding of this music as religious. This movement by which absolute music can be understood as (or, more pointedly, not conflated with) 'being with' God/Christ here,

through the medium of such modernist music, is indicative of the fundamental issues that sparked *le cas*.

Mode 2^2 at the opening of "Première Communion" anchors the piece (see Ex. 2). Messiaen had already used this mode (in the same transposition) connected to interiority and love in his organ piece *le Banquet céleste*, written in the summer of 1928, in the wake of his mother's death on August 27, 1927.[62] The chosen scriptural text for this piece was: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him" (John 6:56). This specifically references the ideas of communion in the mass, the memorializing of Christ, and his interior presence in the sacraments. These ideas are explicitly discussed by Marmion in his writings on Mary connected to the "communion" between Christ and Mary as a "tabernacle," cited by Messiaen in his *Cahier vert*.[63]

The distance between the hands and their pitch relationships at the opening of "Première Communion" emphasizes the interiority implicit in this epigraph. The right-hand "stalactites" add three notes to the modal collection in the left hand (F-sharp, D-sharp, and C), creating an incomplete chromatic set (now 11 notes), which might imply human or divine desire for completion. This modal set is then fulfilled in bar 7 in the right-hand bird material (see Ex. 3 below), which includes the missing note (A), possibly implying the agency of the Holy Spirit, something frequently found in medieval depictions of Mary (usually represented by a dove) in the mysterious divine initiative of the incarnation.[64]

The right-hand two voices in Example 1, bar 2 act as a complementary "embrassement intérieur" (interior embrace), as Messiaen calls it, marked "tendre." This indication marks a point of touch. It directs the pianist toward an embodied and sonic sensibility of softness, perhaps to communicate (and experience) the loving feeling of humanity directed toward Christ. The pianist in this sense can be thought of as an intermediary for the mutual touching between humanity and the divinity.[65] *Tendre* was a word explicitly used by Marmion in his description of the Virgin's "regard si pur" (purest view) of Christ.[66] *Tendre* in French, as the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy explains, also implies other meanings such as "to reach" or "to stretch toward," interpretations that complement Messiaen's image of humanity 'being with' Mary.[67]

Messiaen described bar 2 using the following images: "Other garlands, slower, and in double notes, like two ideal [*idéales*] flutes, closing their arms with a great tenderness on this truth which speaks silently within us."[68] What he implies here is that, as with his own sense of artistic and spiritual predestination (from his own mother), this "embrassement intérieur" may remind us of, and confirm in us, our awareness of, in Marmion's words, "grace which makes us God's adoptive children." This idea is present in the scriptural epigraph for "les enfants de Dieu" (*La Nativité du Seigneur,* piece V), a title adapted from Marmion's discussion of adoptive filiation, the idea that humanity is the sons and daughters of God.[69]

The expansion and contraction of intervals in bar 2 forms a tender fan of color. This "embrace" is folded back into the B-flat major of the *Thème de Dieu*; the exterior can be heard as reassimilated into the interior (physical and musical). This "embrace" can be understood as an extraordinary form of musical iconography presenting the physical difference between, but also the spiritual unity of, the mother and child. Its modal unity provides a "view" of the interior movements of the child as a form of *Augenmusik*.[70] When at rest (end of b. 2), Christ

metaphorically returns to his mother's fold as an inner act of reconciliation and unity (the 'D' of the *Thème* in b. 1 is connected to the same pitch in b. 2 in Ex. 1). Such a conjunction of music, imagery, and meaning is arguably symptomatic of Messiaen's desire to enfold and inculcate meaning into a music to engender didactic and spiritual affordances.

The sound of these final right-hand B-flat major chords in bars 2 and 4 joins and prolongs the resonant decay of the left-hand chord underneath, only broken by the beginning of another chord. This passage can be thought of as a continual search for the intimacy of silence. At the conclusion of the work (see Ex. 8 below), B-flat major ceases and silence is temporarily fulfilled. Such an image of interiority also implies a solitude that can only be filled by an invisible and wordless communication through what Messiaen calls a "language of mystical love, varied, powerful, tender."[71] In the language of absolute music, and also with reference to Messiaen's epigraph for the work in the score, this could signify a "love without the noise of words," but as Messiaen put in in his earlier notes: "the Truth speaks there without noise, as the lightness of water speaks of itself."[72]

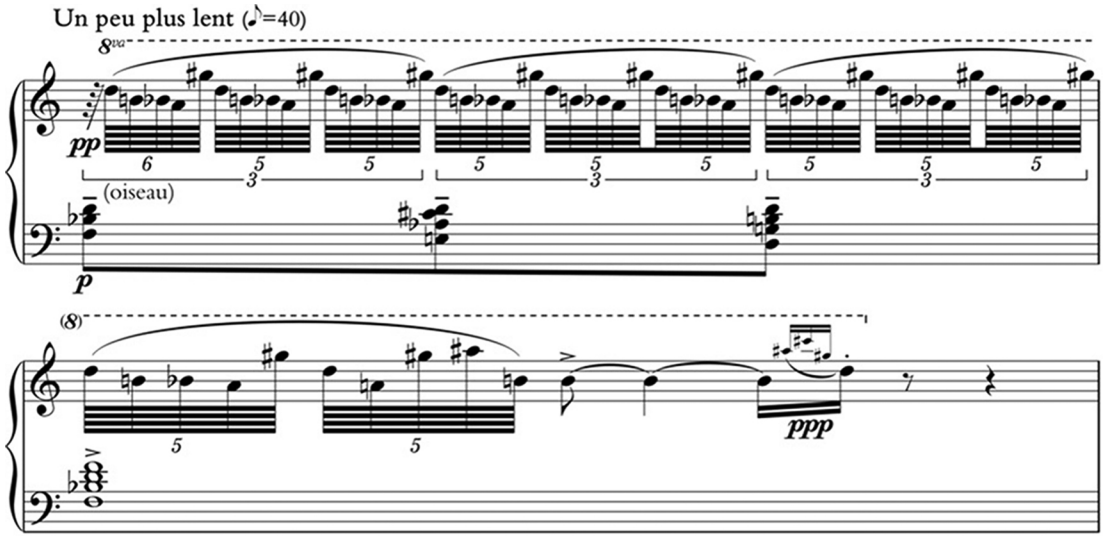
Messiaen arguably attempts here to create an awareness of pure presence in silence that overflows from the reconciliation of the "embrassement intérieur."[73] If this is the case, then the word "regard" can be thought of as commensurate with the Surrealist ideal of eyes, in which meaning overflows objects, connecting two beings serendipitously through love. The silence attempts to figure a seemingly impossible thing – God made man – that opens a space of revelation and the "marvellous" in which God and humanity can be understood as "stretching toward" (Nancy) each other.[74]

The beginning of the piece already signals this possibility. The alternation of the "stalactites" and "interior embrace" finds a corollary image in the liberation of birdsong (b. 7), which can be understood as an expression of the Holy Spirit, the hidden joy of Mary's grace at the Annunciation, and of the ineffable joy of the Resurrection. Mary's connection to the suffering Christ in birth and at his death, at the limits of Christ's ministry on earth, is not the direct subject of this piece.[75] Rather, Messiaen can be thought of as attempting to connect Mary's capacity to receive the Annunciation with our own ability to hear the Word of God understood as the "noise without words" of birdsong.[76]

In his contemporaneous *Technique de mon langage musical*, written between 1942 and 1944, Messiaen states that "birds surpass the human imagination in fantasy," and that they are "our little servants of immaterial joy."[77] In Surrealist poetry, birds have a similar emancipatory topos.[78] As an exterior conduit of adoration and veneration, this passage of birdsong (Ex. 3) can be understood as intimating a moment of revelation that speaks of the unsayable sweetness as "Mary adores the hidden fruit inside her," as Messiaen describes it in the preface to *Vingt Regards*.[79]

The repetitive nature of this stylized birdsong overlaps in pitch-content with the left-hand chords and can be regarded as integrated into the "silence" of the *intérieur* (the *Thème de Dieu* in the left hand). Messiaen's birdsong is therefore actively engaged with the *Thème*: birds can be thought of not merely as harbingers of the beyond and symbols of God, as they are later in his *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1956–58), but as connected to God.

Birdsong here is employed as part of a subtle metrical acceleration. This provides a form of narrative intensification that has a quasi-cadential function: the 12 notes per quarter note



Example 3: "Première Communion de la Vierge," bb. 8–9, *Thème de Dieu* with "oiseau"

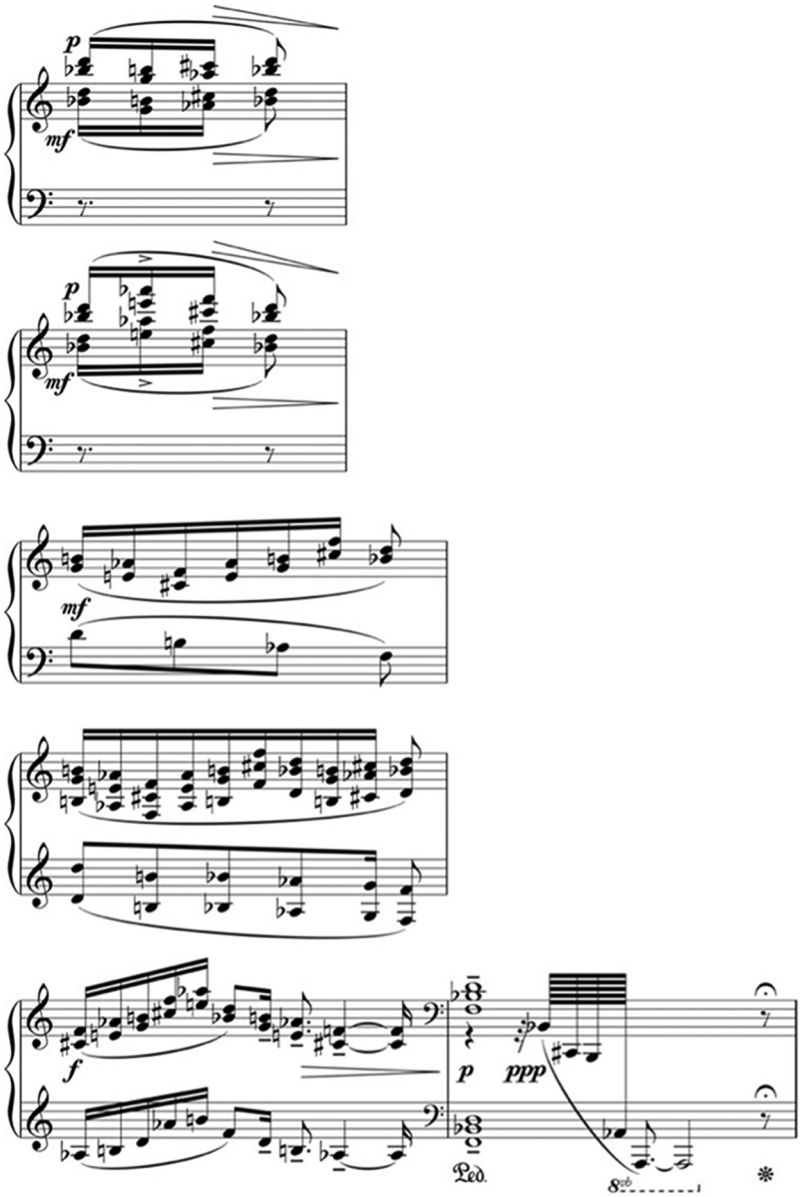
(b. 1) become 14 notes (b. 6), and then 31 notes (in the first quarter note of b. 7, including the sixty-fourth-note rest). This increase in musical information acts as a development of the *Thème de Dieu*. At the same time, the first three chords of the *Thème de Dieu* in bar 7 are halved in value (by comparison with bb. 1, 3 and 5).[80] Messiaen's early sketches for this passage, written in C, show him experimenting with similar principles.[81] His deployment of birdsong here is not a traditional form of motivic teleological musical development, nor does this form of superimposition and accretion of information tally with Pierre Boulez's almost contemporaneous criticism of Messiaen's "juxtaposition" of material.[82] This form of internal musical structuring could be heard as the progressive agency of God working through Mary. It is not therefore an example of the "staticism" that has become a *mot juste* of the Messiaen literature.[83] Rather, there is an unfolding of an interior drama that arguably helps entrain and enrich the viewer/listener's purview of the interaction of different agents in the piece (God, Christ, Mary, and birds).[84]

The return to the "Premier mouvement" (bb. 9–16) is a further development of the opening material that preempts the syncopation that opens the central "Magnificat" section (from b. 21). There is another change of intensity and density of material here (almost as if the child is burning inside Mary). Example 4 presents a paradigmatic diagram showing the development and expansion of the right-hand "ideal flutes" motive (in Ex. 1, b. 2 above). The initial grouping of sixteenth notes changes from 3 to 3 to 6 to 9 to 5 sixteenth notes in Example 4; a sketch for this idea (without durational values and without any dense of development) is given on page 11 of the *Cahier vert*.[85]

There is no change of tempo throughout this passage: motivic intensification acts by implication to develop the "tendre" flutes and the *Thème de Dieu* as a form of "reach" (Nancy) through increased density of sound, expansion and contraction, and metrical instability. This last feature in bars 15–16 is absorbed into a larger palindromic stability (groups of 5 – 3 – 3 – 5 sixteenth notes in b. 15). The development shown in Example 4 enables a stronger sense of an enfolding back into the *Thème de Dieu*, which can be understood and heard as the

evolving action of God within Mary. There is here a sense perhaps of the kingdom of God (*pace* Marmion)—the *Thème de Dieu*—being built up, of avoiding silence through metaphorical expansion of Mary's "communion" and of her role as "tabernacle."

This development of the "embrassement intérieur" is halted by the trombone-like chord in B-flat major (in second inversion) at bar 16, with added resonance at the bottom of the piano, like the resonance of a tam-tam. This instrument is explicitly mentioned by Messiaen in connection with this gesture at the beginning of "La parole toute-puissante" (piece XII) and then used immediately in "Noël" (piece XIII), an inflection of the orchestra onto the piano noted by Loriod.[86] This cadential idea is reiterated at bar 20 in a three-note figure (used in other movements of *Vingt Regards* and seen in Ex. 2 above) at the bottom of the piano keyboard. This



Example 4: "Première Communion de la Vierge," extension of figure from b. 2 in (from top to bottom) bb. 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15–16

gesture is possibly imported from a similar figure in "La Princesse de Bali" from André Jolivet's *Mana* (1935) for solo piano, a work that Messiaen admired and for which he wrote a preface to the published score.[87] Messiaen's sketches, however, reveal that this idea was inspired by the use of such resonance in bars 48, 54, and 58 of Maurice Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (1900). Just as in the Ravel (and the Jolivet), the bottom note of the piano does not relate directly to the harmonies above but provides color through the way its harmonics subtly engage with the dominant sound (B-flat major).[88] This gesture is followed by a long silence in Messiaen's piece.

The use of the bottom of the piano recalls the iconography of "the abyss" elaborated by Ernest Hello, indicative of the deep waters of the soul covered over by consciousness and modernity.[89] This pianistic *profondeur* can be understood again metaphorically as an image that refers to the primordial state of Christ in Mary's womb also discussed in Sauvage's *L'Âme en bourgeon* (poem 5), where Messiaen himself *in utero* is referred to as a "pale embryo."[90] The bass trichord at bar 20 includes B-flat as an "underheard" sound—an acoustic phenomenon described by Messiaen's organ teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, Marcel Dupré. This is the same B-flat that is present in the *Thème de Dieu*.[91] It was an idea that Messiaen had employed in the *Quatuor* (movement 2) and that would later appear as what he called "sons-pédals" (resonating pitches below chords, most often in the lower brass) in *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (1963); in pieces VI, IX, and XII of *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1969); in movements 1, 3, 5, and 7 of *Des canyons aux étoiles…* (1972–74); and in tableau 1, figures 43–46 of Messiaen's opera *Saint François d'Assise* (1975–83), for example. This device functions like Surrealist *objets trouvés* (found objects), but it also metaphorically signifies the colors and awe of the apocalypse in Messiaen's semantic and iconographical lexicon.

After the expansions of the "embrassement intérieur" from bars 13–16, Messiaen allows the listener to perceive another ineffable image of the unborn child at bars 17–19, achieved through corresponding musical iconography. At the start of "la Vierge et l'Enfant" (*La Nativité du Seigneur*, piece I; 1935), there is a development of a five-note (turn-like) motive (see Ex. 2, b. 17) prolonging the opening 'D.' Messiaen attributes this figure to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (1868–73) in several places, including in a sketch entitled "Petit Abrégé de l'Histoire des Intervalles Mélodiques" (Short Summary of the History of Melodic Intervals) on page 41 of the *Cahier beige*.[92] Here Messiaen demonstrates how small musical figures exemplify traits of musical history (beginning with birdsong and plainchant). He connects this turning figure explicitly to "Russian Music and Debussy," and specifically to "Mussorgsky." After musical motives signifying (as shorthand) Debussy, the "Spanish," Schönberg, and Bartók (Stravinsky is notably absent), Messiaen places himself at the (logical) end of this "Histoire" with a tritone (F-sharp – C), which he states "is my preferred interval."[93]

In an alternative interpretation, not assayed by Messiaen, the five-note motive can be heard as a musical depiction of the shape of the Cross in the Baroque *Affektenlehre* tradition. A similar four-note idea is found, for example, at the end of Bach's organ choral prelude "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß," BWV 622, a work Messiaen would almost certainly have known well through his organ studies with Dupré, who was a formidable exponent of Bach's organ works (he played the complete works from memory in 1920 and 1921, and published his own edition of the organ works from 1937 to 1941).[94] In this piece, this motive can be understood as elaborating a text, "wohl an dem Kreuze lange" (the shameful

Cross enduring), indicative of Christ's mission on earth – to die for the sins of the world and thereby redeem it. In the central section of "la Vierge et l'Enfant," Messiaen's figure appears in the pedal as an interversion (a repeating and changing unordered set of notes) registrally positioned, because of the organ registration, within the right-hand elaboration of the plainchant melody "Puer Natus est nobis" (the introit for Christmas Day). The sound of the "Cross" is therefore placed into the joyful deformed plainchant roulades that clarion Christ's birth.[95] From these contexts, the presence of this motive in bar 17 of "Première Communion" could also be heard as creating a similar religious meaning. It can be understood metaphorically as conjoining Christ's birth with his death (his birth is therefore connected to his earthy redemptive mission), an image also created in poems 4 and 10 of Sauvage's *L'Âme en bourgeon* concerning Messiaen himself.[96]

At the opening of *La Nativité du Seigneur*, this five-note motive is presented in mode 2^1 (bb. 1–7), then elaborated through mode 3^1 (b. 8), a ten-note mode based around the augmented triad, before touching on mode 2^2 (associated with divine love and by extension that of the composer's recently deceased mother in *le Banquet céleste*) in bars 11–13. In his sketches for bars 17–20 of "Première Communion," Messiaen presents this motive by superimposing the juxtaposed modal relationship from his organ piece: the left hand in mode 2^1 and the right hand with four-note chords in mode 3^1. It appears with sketches for "Première Communion," but without any relation to previous material, and in fact is marked by Messiaen, in his sketch, as leading to an end of the piece significantly different from that of the printed score.[97] However, on page 10 of the *Cahier vert* it is presented in a way that is close to the original, with the notable exception that the right-hand descending figure is in mode 2^2 and marked to be played two octaves higher than sounding (in the final score it is only one octave higher); it appears this way also in the complete sketch of the piece given on page 55 of RES VMA MS-1529, but is only one octave higher, like the final score, on page 56 of RES VMA MS-1530 (1–3). If the right hand were played two octaves higher, it arguably would have given a greater sense of spectral radiance and made a connection with bar 2 of the final score, but this was not Messiaen's final decision. Messiaen also writes "xyz" in the margin of the *Cahier vert,* making it clear that he understood this musical gesture as "x," that is, the first of three consecutive ideas. This compositional plan, what Messiaen called the "Debussyiste xyz procedure," refers to the opening of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a work Messiaen loved and taught consistently at the Paris Conservatoire, and used at the opening of his organ piece "Dieu parmi nous" (*La Nativité du Seigneur*, piece IX). He describes the procedure on page 61 of the *Cahier vert* and explores different ramifications of the opening of *Pelléas* on pages 46 and 48.[98] Perhaps the second idea ("y") is the trichord at the bottom of the piano, and the third idea is the "Magnificat" syncopated idea shown in Example 5 below (but this is unclear).[99]

In the finished score of this piece, this passage (bb. 17–20) appears as a form of self-referential Surrealist *objet trouvé*. Such devices, seemingly implanted into a piece without relation to the surroundings, are typically found in other Messiaen works of the 1940s. They are present, for example, in the canon in piece IX of *Vingt Regards* (b. 9) and in the canon that begins piece XVII, "Regard du silence."[100] In "Première Communion," bars 17–20 can be heard as a structural interruption of the development of the *Thème de Dieu* that both sets it in relief and provides a new elaboration of the pitch 'D' (shown in Ex. 2 above).

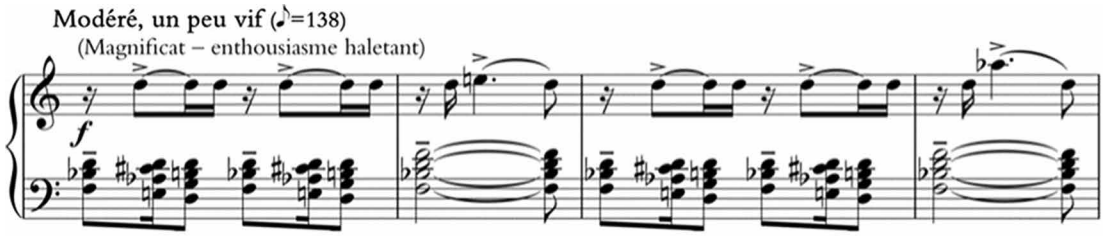
In the score of "Première Communion," the right-hand chords are in the same mode (mode 2^3) as the left-hand, creating what Messiaen calls a "luminous halo hanging over her womb."[101] At the opening of "Dieu parmi nous" (God among Us) (*La Nativité*, piece IX), a title that again derives from Marmion's book, the descending organ pedal motive metaphorically signals God's descent (in the form of Christ).[102] Similarly, in "Première Communion," Messiaen presents an image to the listener/viewer of a heavenly light descending slowly and surrounding the interior warmth of Mary.[103] Both instances function as benedictions in which sound, music, and symbolism are holistically conjoined for Messiaen. Such associations between mode and love, and the correspondence with previous pieces and with religious imagery, create a form of evangelism that is somewhat didactic, but also places significant demands upon the listener to understand fully and even to participate in such meanings.

From "Ad-Intra" to "Ad-Extra:" Mary's "Magnificat"

The first part of Messiaen's "Première Communion de la Vierge" concerns the "Ad-Intra": the perichoretic interaction of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The second section (bb. 21–41) concerns the first manifestation of the "Ad-Extra," a superabundance and outpouring expressed, with "breathless enthusiasm," as Messiaen indicates in Example 5, in Mary's "Magnificat." This section (like the first) takes the form of three developments of the initial musical idea. Virtuosity is employed to symbolize Mary's joy at the Magnificat ("My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour . . . ," Luke 1:46–55).[104] Example 5 is the final version of what is likely the first sketch for the piece on page 8 of the *Cahier vert*. Messiaen marks this as idea "D." The sketch is given with octaves in the right hand that are closer in fact to bars 37–38 (final version). In the sketch there is a blank bar after these two bars, then a quasi-cadential pause over the chord (close to b. 34). There follows a very effective cascade of contrary-motion chords between the left and right hands in mode 2^2 that is not used in the score (Messiaen marks this to be repeated three times) before a scampering cadential figure (also not in the score), a pause, and then a note to self: "then xyz [circled] first bar only [pause mark]," then "refrain from the start."[105]

On page 9 of the *Cahier vert* there is another sketch for Example 5, revealing how it is to be extended and developed, and now clearly marked "Magnificat." This sketch is very close to the final score and is marked "A." It shows that the phrase would be sculpted through the accented highpoints of E, A-flat, and D as in the score (bb. 22, 24, 26) and that there would be a pianistic roulade (the sketch gives different notes from that of b. 27) marked "B." There is then a solitary bar with a bass E-flat (accented), not in the final score. The development of the Magnificat theme in sixteenth notes (up an octave in bb. 28–29) is also briefly sketched (marked "2 times"; in fact this passage is repeated twice and developed in the final score). There is then an instruction to "make 5 large variations [*traits*] in thirty-second notes returning to idea B and idea C" (not in the sketches). There is then a brief sketch in thirty-second notes with a roulade superimposed onto V7 and I 6/4 in B-flat major (as tonal anchors) that is not used in the score. Another small sketch for Example 5 occurs at the bottom of page 10 of the *Cahier vert*, following a clear sketch for bars 17–20 (discussed above).[106] Here is the opening

of the "Magnificat" section as Messiaen finally created it. It is identical to the sketch it in all respects, except that he marks a crescendo under the ends of bars 21 and 24, and uses a sforzando (*sfz*) for the accent in bar 22.[107]

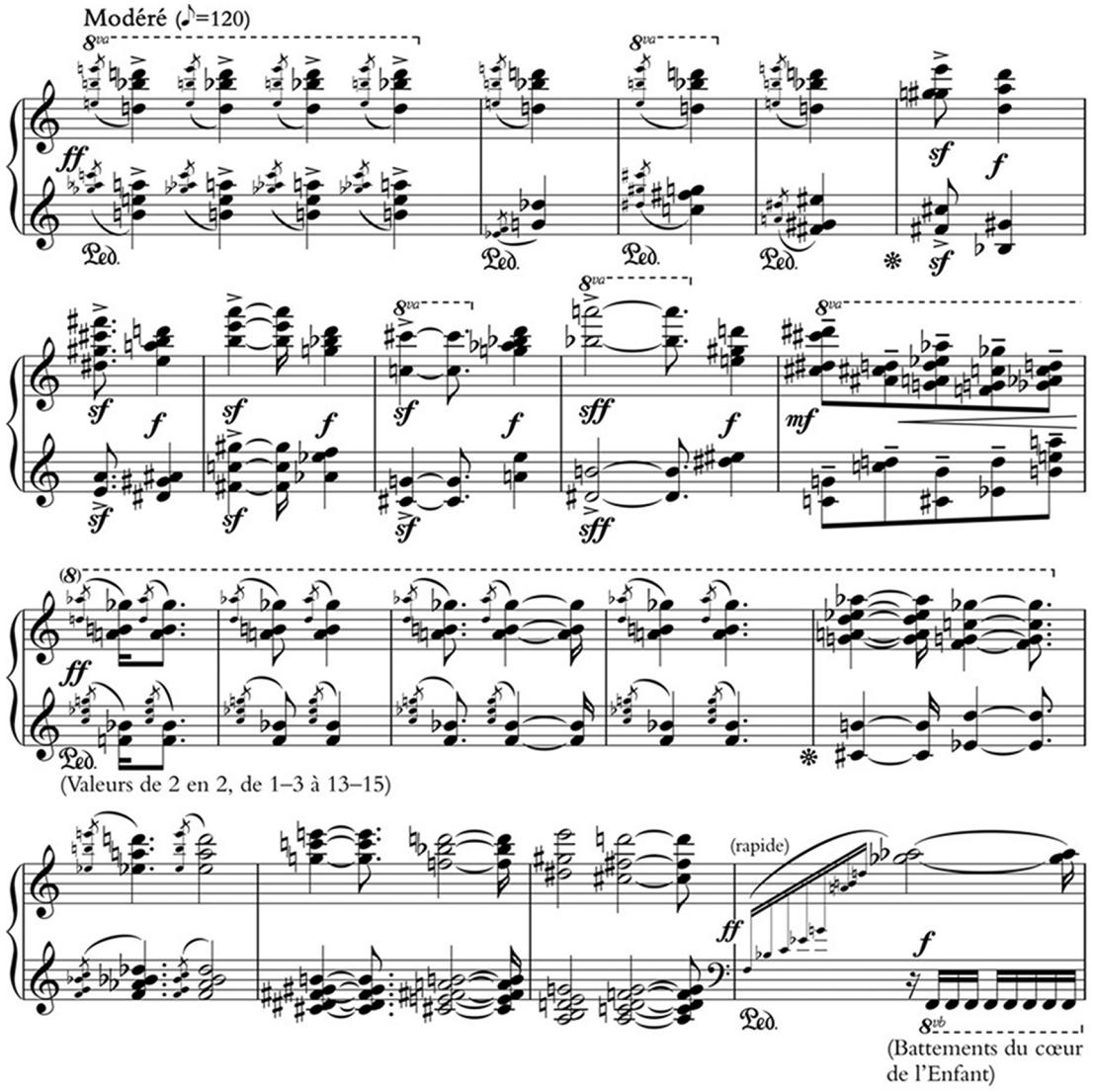


Example 5: "Première Communion de la Vierge," Mary's "Magnificat," bb. 21–24

The reiteration of the note 'D' from bar 21 is prolonged by a registral transfer to bar 43 (shown in Ex. 2 above). Throughout this section, this pitch is supported by the chords of the *Thème de Dieu*. In Example 5 this is developed through the Hindu rhythm Vijaya in the left hand. Vijaya is no. 51 in the table of 120 rhythmic formulae compiled by Śārṅgadeva, a thirteenth-century Indian musician whose table Messiaen knew through the *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire* (1913). Vijaya is a nonretrogradable rhythm (eighth note – sixteenth note – eighth note) which according to Messiaen symbolizes "the Victory."[108] The incantatory quality of the right hand and the use of Mode 2^2 can be metaphorically understood as again connecting the love of God and the "interior embrace" of bar 2 (see Ex. 1) with Mary's joy in the Magnificat (Ex. 5).[109] Her sense of joy is expanded at bar 24 in sixteenth notes 5 (212), 8 (21212), and 8 (233) that can be heard as an extension of Mary's "victory" or her sense of thankfulness and joy. The virtuosic connective passages (bb. 26–27, 34) registrally expand the opening material (b. 21) from within (perhaps an apposite maternal metaphor), while always returning to the repeated 'D's in the right hand and the *Thème de Dieu* as quilting points. This passage can therefore be understood through Messiaen's symbolic language as an image of Mary's joy through her obedience and faithfulness to God.

Thirty-second-note flights of joy (b. 34) conclude with a canonic rhythmic "fanfare" (bb. 39–41) in B-flat emphasizing F as a prolonged quasi-dominant upbeat to bar 43. This passage expands and dramatizes the *Thème de Dieu*, symbolically underlining the power and agency of God working through Mary. It becomes more and more insistent and joyful, leading to a harmonic and timbral form of saturation at bar 43. This striking moment in the piece is preceded by an array of all 12 pitches at bar 42 that breaks the predominance of mode 2^2. It begins on the pitch 'D[1]' in the bass (near the bottom of the keyboard) that connects the opening of the piece (the *Thème de Dieu*) with the ending (shown in Ex. 2 above).[110] A short-form sketch (without the repetitions in b. 43) of bars 43–53 can be found on page 86 of the *Cahier vert* and a longer sketch (again without the chord repetitions) on page 80. Both show the connection to subsequent ideas and the end of piece XI.

The experience of the chords in Example 6 is figured much later by Messiaen as sound-color dazzlement (éblouissement), which can be thought of not as a form of desubjectification, but sacramentally as a heightened form of address that animates interiority.[111] In Messiaen's



Example 6: "Première Communion de la Vierge," bb. 43–61

thought, God breaks into the individual through sound, experienced as color, harmony, rhythm, and timbre in Example 6. In his later description of this phenomenon, Messiaen stated that complexes of sounds

> batter and shock our inner ear, the more these things disturbingly assault and irritate our inner eye, the greater the contact, the rapport (as stated by Rainer Maria Rilke) with another reality: a rapport so powerful that it can transform the most hidden "me," the most profound, the most intimate, so that we are dissolved into a higher truth than we had ever hoped to reach [*atteindre*].[112]

The "shock" of these chords (from bb. 43–60) can be heard as Messiaen's attempt to express the inexpressible; in his thought they can be understood as driving the listener toward "another reality" in both the religious and the Surrealist senses. Such sounds (through harmony, timbre, and color) attempt to move beyond metaphor. The Annunciation ("Magnificat")

can be heard here as an ecstatic realization within Mary, a second manifestation of the "Ad-Extra" (mysteries which are not only related to God in himself).

This new "reality" is configured in a number of ways. In his preface to the score of Jolivet's *Mana*, Messiaen notes the way in which Jolivet uses "sound space," "inharmonic" harmonies, and a sense of "overheard waves" (in contrast to Dupré's "underheard" sounds). Such music embraces acoustic research, but also the "magic spells" commensurate with Surrealist enchantment.[113] Messiaen's harmonies at bars 43–60 of "Première Communion" can be heard as an attempt to figure a form of joy at the limits of being, making the listener a witness to and a participant in Mary's experience. Such music therefore endeavors to move beyond the symbolic; in Messiaen's religious aesthetic world, the configuration of sound itself becomes commensurate with religious experience.

These chords correspond to various archetypal techniques and types of classified chords that inhabit Messiaen's musical language in chapter 14 of *Technique de mon langage musicale*. These include appoggiatura chords (chords that assimilate added notes — see bars 43 and 53; a version of the chords at bar 53 is given on page 79 of the *Cahier vert* unconnected to a particular piece); chords built with fourths (bar 48); chords of superior resonance (chords with notes in the right hand that sound like higher harmonics that come out of more stable left-hand sonorities in bars 50–51); chains of chords (bar 52; chords 3 and 4 of this bar are given in a sketch on page 79 of the *Cahier vert,* again unconnected to a particular piece); the "chord of resonance" (containing all the notes of mode 3 derived, as Messiaen shows, from the harmonic spectrum in bars 53, 58, and 61); transpositions of the "chords on the dominant" with appoggiaturas (bars 59–60); and (at bars 50–52 and 57 especially) what "Paul Dukas often spoke of [as] 'effects of resonance.' Effects of pure fantasy, similar by a very distant analogy to the phenomenon of natural resonance. One will find remarkable ones, mingled with learned variations of rhythm, in the *Danses rituelles* and the *Mana* of André Jolivet."[114] "Natural" phenomena, fantasy, and the full panoply of Messiaen's technical arsenal are therefore reserved for this liminal moment in the piece that attempts to express the mysterious nature of Mary's accession to God.

These "effects of pure fantasy" can be understood as commensurate with the Surrealist notion of *dépaysement*, a form of disorientation from worldly reality that serendipitously allows "another reality"—Mary as the mother of God—to appear.[115] Messiaen's intricate rhythmic language is also arguably configured to disorient any sense of rhythmic differentiation. He removes a sense of metrical hierarchy (upbeat/downbeat), through asymmetry and agogic means, creating a sense of a time out of time commensurate with his neo-Platonic ideal of the human perception of God (outside human, clockbound time) through music.[116]

Messiaen creates this effect of *dépaysement* by both telescoping and expanding material. In bars 43–51 in Example 6, four identical repeated quarter-note chords become increasingly intense as they change. The first acciaccatura chords (bb. 43–46) are augmented from bar 47, from 2, 3, 5, 7, to 11 sixteenth notes—all prime numbers—creating further intensification in bars 47–51. In addition, the first chord of each set of two undergoes registral expansion (especially in the right hand), while the second chord from bars 47–51 remains static as a quarter note and becomes denser in its voicing. This fan-like effect is followed by a quasi-cadential figure at bar 52, chords that again refer to piece VI of *Vingt Regards*.[117]

The second part of Example 6 exacerbates the procedures of the first part. In bars 53–60 there is an expansion by values "2 by 2," where each of the two chords per bar (excluding the acciaccatura chords) increases by a sixteenth note.[118] This strategy was already implicit to some degree in the sketches that Messiaen made for this section, which he later called "personnages rythmiques" in a discussion of Hindu rhythms. Just as in this example, rhythmic values take on discrete actorial roles in relationship to each other.[119] This rhythmic language can be thought of as a form of interiority — "learned variations of rhythm," as Messiaen puts it with reference to Jolivet — that is at once expressive, hermetic, and symbolic.

In the commentary for his *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, Messiaen opines that "all this remains a stammering attempt, if one reflects on the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!"[120] Modernist dissonance throughout this liminal passage attempts to figure the serendipity of the event but also the human alienation from it – a sense of being out of time and place commensurate with *dépaysement*. Such extreme and even obtuse expression, it could be argued, is realized in Messiaen's 1946 statement cited at the beginning of this article: "I have tried to be a Christian musician and proclaim my faith through song, but without ever succeeding." This passage could be considered as commensurate with the "music that is like new blood, a signed gesture, an unknown perfume, an unsleeping bird. Music like a stained-glass window, a whirl of complementary colors. Music that expresses the end of time, ubiquity, glorified bodies and the divine and supernatural mysteries: a 'theological rainbow.'" Such Surrealist language and images attempt to invest Messiaen's music with religious meaning. Yet, even as such commentary helps us perceive the meaning of this music, in a manner commensurate both with the concept of the sublime and with *éblouissement*, the effect both challenges sensible perception and the imagination to map metaphorically such sounds onto religious meaning.[121] Such an issue was at the heart of *le cas Messiaen*. Messiaen's music therefore cannot merely be understood as equated with or as mapping Catholic theology – such as the conservative rhetoric of Marmion, for example – but as refiguring it in unexpected ways. Art does what theology cannot do: it attempts to realize the extraordinary nature of such religious events and personages in complementary, irreal terms.

The Heart of Christ: Music beyond Idolatry

Christ's heart is putatively heard for the first time in an extended passage of musical iconography in "Première Communion de la Vierge" (bb. 61–72). The notion that Christ's heart was made open on the Cross is of course something of an overstatement (based on John 19:34, which speaks of piercing the side of Jesus), but it has become part of Catholic doctrine and iconography. The tradition of the Church states that Jesus allowed (somehow mysteriously) his heart to open so that humanity could receive the totality of his mystery. It traditionally understands the sacred heart to be the culmination of the revelation of the divine and human love of Jesus: a visible outpouring of his love for humanity. For Catholics, the heart of Jesus therefore remains the highest symbol of the love of God for mankind, and this is what is figured at this point in Messiaen's piece.[122]

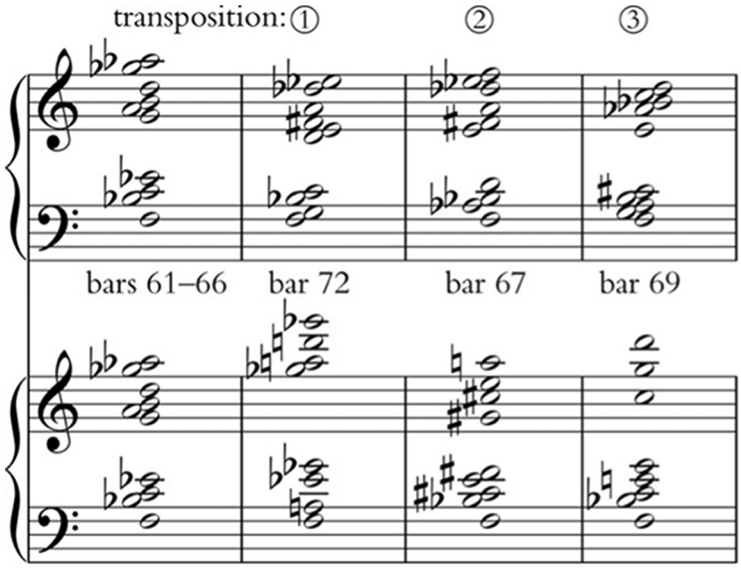
Messiaen's "Première Communion" figures the first manifestation of Jesus in this world: Mary adores her son within herself through his heartbeats. This moment therefore can be understood as an intimation of the whole mystery of Christ's identity (true man and true God),

but also of his divine and human love.[123] As in the "Magnificat," this registers a new conversion point between "Ad-Intra" and "Ad-Extra" in *Vingt Regards,* where what is hidden becomes manifest in the world.

This is an audacious moment in music that is prefigured in poems 5 (connected both to silence and to an inner "embrace") and poem 8 of his mother's *L'Âme en bourgeon,* where Messiaen himself is heard within Sauvage "like a little bird, tapping from within its fragile shell."[124] It is a moment of mimesis in art that the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us "implies that something is represented in such a way that is actually present in sensuous abundance."[125]

Through a repeated low F (shown at the end of Ex. 6), Messiaen attempts to signal the beating of the heart of Jesus within Mary. He therefore adapts a strain of medieval realism (present in plays as much as in paintings) from Marian iconography. Yet Messiaen's modernism arguably moves beyond the "empathy and piety" and "doctrinal orthodoxy" of the Council of Trent's (1545–63) idea of images to attempt to figure something of the shock, mystery, and love that informs the encounter between God and humanity through Christ's birth.[126]

At first, Christ's heartbeat in Messiaen's realization is quite loud, with a deliberate sense of confusion (created by the piano pedaling); it then gradually fades away to silence.[127] Messiaen connects this music to the previous section by refiguring the "chord of resonance" (present in bb. 53, 58, and 61 in Ex. 6).[128] This form of interior technical refiguration attempts to create a form of subdermal connection between Mary's astonishment and the beating heart of Christ. Messiaen's sketches do not show the full working out of this passage, but they reveal that the four different chords used here (see Ex. 7) were clear to him in the *Cahier vert*.[129] The sketches do not show that the four chords are related, but there is a very clear sketch on page 80 showing the material from bar 43 to the end of the piece (Ex. 6).

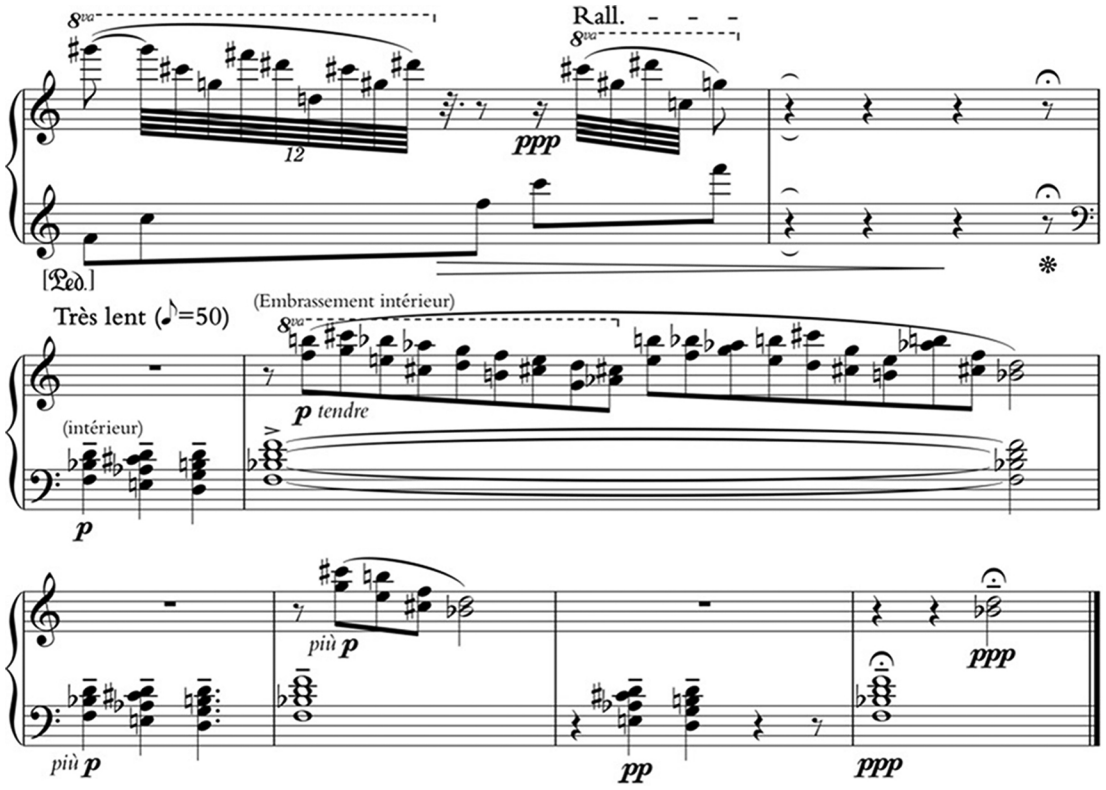


Example 7: "Chord of resonance": transpositions used in bb. 61–72 (top system), and chords as they appear in the score (bottom system)

These chords use Messiaen's "chord of resonance" (with added notes). This is a type of chord described in Example 209 of *Technique de mon langage musicale,* but here it is disposed in different ways. In his *Conférence de Notre-Dame,* Messiaen states that "one does not understand music entirely if one has not experimented with these two phenomena: complementary colors, and the natural resonance of sounding bodies."[130] By using these chords at this moment, this passage can be understood as a moment where Messiaen acts as mediator between natural resonance (with its implications of divine givenness) and what is given by the divine to the world — the "Ad-Extra" — Christ's heart within Mary.

Following the way Messiaen presents these chords in *Technique de mon langage musicale*, they are presented in Example 7 with enharmonic alterations to clarify relationships.[131] The example shows the "chord of resonance" used in bars 61–66 followed by the first three inversions of the chord (top system), and the ordering of the chords as they appear in Messiaen's score (bottom system).

In his score, therefore, Messiaen moves to the second and third transposition and then returns to the first transposition at bar 72, which is also in mode 2^2 (as a subset of the "chord of resonance" with added notes). By doing this, it can be inferred that Messiaen may have been creating a subtle connection to the love of God and the "embrassement intérieur" at the start of the piece (also in mode 2^2). This chord (b. 72, shown in the second bar, bottom system of Ex. 7) is also an extended dominant ninth to the implied B-flat of the *Thème de Dieu*. It can be heard, therefore, as a moment of return and thankfulness to God for the presence of Christ.



Example 8: "Première Communion de la Vierge," conclusion (bb. 73–80)

From the hypnotic beating of the infant's heart, Messiaen changes perspective again, the bell-like *réveille* of the extended F-major ninth chord at bar 72 returns the listener to the silence of contemplation (see Ex. 1), and to the "stalactites" of a soft interior *embrassement* as *éblouissement*. In bars 73–75, Messiaen reverts to the "stalactite" figure from bar 1, now over a pedal-point F (symbolizing the heart of Christ; see Ex. 2 above and Ex. 8). In Messiaen's vision, musical symbolism attempts to move beyond theology as a form of (Sur)realism. This passage can be interpreted as an image of humanity now hovering not over the *Thème de Dieu* but over the actual presence of Christ (the F symbolizing his heart). This profound change is again realized through d'Indyian "développement par elimination" at the end of bar 73, a process that can be discerned in the sketches on page 80 of the *Cahier vert*.[132] This telescoping of musical material acts as a form of quasi-cadential dénouement, and it reveals Messiaen's essential modernist classicism. This two-pronged coda can therefore be thought of as both an elaboration and a vestige of bar 1 (bb. 73–74) and then bar 2 (bb. 75–79), undertaken respectively through "elimination" of material and then expansion and elimination (compare the right hand of bb. 76 and 78).

In Mary's prayer at the end of this piece (also clearly present on page 80 of the *Cahier vert*), the whole universe of joy returns in the tendency to silence. This moment prefigures the epigraph for "Regard du Silence" (piece XVII): ". . . each silence from the crèche reveals music and colors which are the mysteries of Jesus Christ."[133] The return to a sense of adoration and internal contemplation at the end of "Première Communion de la Vierge" can be understood again as a form of 'being with' (*pace* Ricœur) the intra-uterine unity of the mother and the Son. Such music embodies the symbolist sense of drawing out "poetic intentions."[134] For a composer who was avowedly synaesthetic — Messiaen associated specific colors with specific chords and the movement of music — such a mixed-modal sensorial approach to music is perhaps unsurprising. It can be thought of as a devotional aid and, more potently, as an asymptotic and imaginary approach to revelation through art that figures the impossible – actually 'being with' the unborn Christ in Mary's womb.[135]

Conclusion

This study has shown that Messiaen's "Première Communion de la Vierge" had a longer compositional genesis than previously recognized in scholarship, and that Messiaen returned to the work after the experience of writing his organ cycle *La Nativité du Seigneur,* including this singular piece in a larger cycle. It demonstrates that Messiaen's radical musical language, commensurate with the precepts of Surrealism, attempted to move beyond symbolic representation of the incarnation. Although inspired by Marmion's thought, Messiaen's music radically exceeds the conservative nature of his theology. Christ allowed himself to be adored in the womb, as Marmion and later Pope John Paul II stated, and Messiaen recreates this adoration in his own fashion.[136] But the logic of Messiaen's thinking, moving from God and humanity to Mary, and then to the beating heart of Christ within Mary, reveals that the "Ad-Extra" in this piece arrives as a form of welcome trauma, both serendipitous and audacious. This form of excess can also be thought of as a form of artistic fulfilment of the promise of predestination that Messiaen understood from his own mother's poetry: a sense of 'being with' God through art.

Messiaen's piano piece is concerned with a form of interior experiential *knowing*. The "embrassement intérieur" that Messiaen speaks of can be thought of as a form of balm for humanity, and perhaps interpreted as an autobiographical soothing of the loss between mother and child that was experienced by both Messiaen and his mother as a "tragedy."[137] "Première Communion" can be regarded as a hinge in the cycle, as Christological intervention in human history and the moment when the "Ad-Intra" becomes the "Ad-Extra." This radical incision in the cycle operates through inclusion. Through Messiaen's symbolic language, humanity is bidden to look, to desire, and to be with Christ as part of an anthropological need to praise, touch, and venerate God. Human beings are therefore figured by Messiaen, in our interpretation as religious but separated from God and in need of a restoration (realization of God and redemption). Messiaen's eleventh piece attempts to figure this process through its own modernist musical iconography. Yet simultaneously, Messiaen's representations can also be interpreted as an acknowledgment of exclusion: the listener/onlooker is barred from full satisfaction and experiences the impossibility of being with Christ. The complexity of this experience is perhaps one of the most potent aspects of Messiaen's musical legacy.

The issue of how and whether language, and particularly Messiaen's musical language, is sufficient to overcome the gap between the symbolic and the real presence of God was well understood by Messiaen. In the final tableau of his opera *Saint François d'Assise* (partly adapted from Saint Thomas Aquinas), Francis sings: "Savior, Savior, music and poetry have brought me toward you, by image, by symbol, and by default of truth. . . . Deliver me, intoxicate me, dazzle me with your excess of Truth."[138] This sense of being in default of truth is perhaps what Messiaen was already pointing to in 1946. Rather than being crushed by the critical wave of invective that ensued from *le cas* after *Visions de l'Amen*, in *Vingt Regards* Messiaen responded by exacerbating the conflict between revolution and tradition, between public testament and private faith, and between religion and sensuality. His texts provided one layer of context and meaning, but in "Première Communion de la Vierge," what could be considered mawkish, "voluptuous," and "sensual" by some could also be understood as configured by Messiaen as a form of artistic authenticity, leading the would-be believer through different qualities of sound to an experience of the real presence of God.

Messiaen's piece operates on the imaginative premise of this possibility. Each performance reenacts and retriggers this trauma that is inscribed in language, moving from Ricœur's "seeing as" on the plain of language and a "being as" on the ontological plain to a sense of 'being with.'[139] This can be understood as a form of naïveté but also as a form of faith through music, and an act that is perhaps commensurate with what Marmion calls the "supernatural intensity of our inner life."[140]

If we are to understand theological exegesis through musical rhetoric, then Messiaen's piece provides a remarkably fertile ground for the exploration of meaning and resonance. It can be regarded as a devotional tool, an aid to meditation, and as a means to understanding the mystery of the incarnation that (*pace* Messiaen) "increases our awareness by revealing new realities within what is believed to be a reality."[141]

Throughout his life, Messiaen was constantly criticized for not writing music that dealt with the real world.[142] What critics meant by this was perhaps that they wanted Messiaen, especially as a Christian artist, to provide an explanation for the sins of the world or for

why the world appeared to be so "other" than the sacral and religious domain. As a Catholic, Messiaen's reality was another, fueled by a desire (*pace* Messiaen) to locate "our awareness by revealing new realities within what is believed to be a reality." "Première Communion de la Vierge" is one of his most tightly "real" compositions, manifesting his own "certainty" and his faith in the reality of God's love and our ability to receive it.[143]

NOTES

1 Messiaen, "Résponses à une enquête," *Contrepoints* 1/3 (March–April 1946), 73. All translations are by Robert Sholl unless otherwise stated. Our thanks to Jeremy S. Begbie, who read and commented on an early draft of this article; and to Catherine Massip and the Fondation Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod and the librarians of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for their help in preparing this work.

2 Entry for June 22, 1943, in *The Diaries and Selected Letters of Jeanne Demessieux*, ed. Lynn Cavanagh, trans. Stacey Brown and Lynn Cavanagh (n.p., n.d.), 207–08, available at https://opentextbooks.uregina.ca (accessed February 22, 2025).

3 Francis Poulenc, "Y a-t-il un 'Cas Messiaen'?" (April 13, 1946), in *J'écris sur que je me chant: Écrits et entretiens*, ed. Nicholas Southon (Fayard, 2011), 439.

4 Arthur Honegger in *Comœdia* (July 12, 1941), quoted in Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (Yale University Press, 2005), 113. On the *Quatuor* and Messiaen's war, see Robert Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen: A Critical Biography* (Reaktion, 2024), 63–84.

5 See Claude Rostand in *Carrefour* (April 21, 1943), quoted in Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen,* 147.

6 See Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen and the Concerts de la Pléiade: 'A Kind of clandestine revenge against the occupation,'" *Music and Letters* 81/4 (2000); Rebecca Rischin, *For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet* (Cornell University Press, 2003), 81–83, 93; Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, 112–13.

7 Messiaen in a masterclass with Loriod and Nicholas Angelich, in the 1991 documentary *Yvonne Loriod: Pianist and Teacher,* dir. François Manceaux released in 2011 as a video by Harmonia Mundi (hmd 9909032). Messiaen's use of the term *regard* is also contemporary with "gaze" theory, discussed by Jean-Paul Sartre in *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (1943), and later appropriated by film theorists such as Christian Metz to describe the identification (and desire) of the viewer with and for the viewed as a form of dreamlike "perceptual transference" that is consonant with Surrealism. See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Indiana University Press, 1982), 56–68, 101.

8 Philippe Olivier, *Messiaen ou la lumière* (Hermann, 2008), 38.

9 Paul Ricœur, "Intellectual Autobiography," trans. Kathleen Blamey, in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Open Court, 1995), 46.

10 See David Morris, "A Semiotic Investigation of Messiaen's 'Abîme des oiseaux,'" *Music Analysis* 8/1–2 (1989); Christopher Brent Murray, "Olivier Messiaen's *Timbres-Durées*," in *Messiaen Perspectives 1: Sources and Influences*, ed. Christopher Dingle and Robert Fallon (Ashgate, 2013); and Roderick Chadwick, "*La Fauvette des Jardins* and the 'Spectral Attitude,'" in *Messiaen Perspectives 2: Techniques, Influence and Reception*, ed. Dingle and Fallon (Ashgate, 2013).

11 See Madeleine Hsu, *Olivier Messiaen, the Musical Mediator: A Study of the Influence of Liszt, Debussy, and Bartók* (Associated University Presses, 1996); Christopher Dingle, "Messiaen as Pianist: A Romantic in a Modernist World," in *Perspectives on the Performance of French Piano Music*, ed. Scott McCarrey and Lesley Wright (Ashgate, 2014); Caroline Rae, "Messiaen and the Romantic Gesture: Contemplations on His Piano Music and Pianism," in Dingle and Fallon, *Messiaen Perspectives 1*; and Rae, "Pianism and Virtuosity in Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*," in *Messiaen in Context*, ed. Robert Sholl (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

12 Julian Hellaby, *Reading Musical Interpretation: Case Studies in Solo Piano Performance* (Ashgate, 2009), 89–116; Rosemary Walker, "A Brief Discussion of 'Première Communion de la Vierge,'" *Music Analysis* 8/1–2 (1989).

13 Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Contemplations of Covenant and Incarnation: Musical Symbols of Faith in the Two Great Piano Cycles of the 1940s* (Pendragon, 2007), 130–40 and, on *Vingt Regards*, piece XI, 180–86.

14 See Julian Anderson, "Messiaen and the Problem of Communication," in Dingle and Fallon, *Messiaen Perspectives 1*.

15 See Edward Forman, "'L'Harmonie de l'Univers': Maurice Toesca and the Genesis of *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*," in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature* (Ashgate, 2007); and Lucie Kayas, "From Music for Radio to a Piano Cycle: Sources for the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*," in Dingle and Fallon, *Messiaen Perspectives 1*.

16 Messiaen, Preface to Sauvage, *L'Âme en bourgeon* (Séguier Archimbaud, 1987), 9–10. This edition, with corrections in Messiaen's hand, is in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF VM FDS 30 Mes 4 [73]; henceforth the siglum BnF will be omitted). Messiaen later states: "The truths of faith contain a certain surrealist poetry"; see Antoine Golèa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (René Julliard, 1960), 39.

17 See Chris Maunder, "Introduction" to *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (Oxford University Press, 2019), 10–11.

18 Chris Maunder, "Mary and the Gospel Narratives," in ibid. On Marian iconography, see Gary Waller, "The Annunciation from Luke to the Enlightenment: A Cultural History," in ibid. See also Sander van Maas, "Messiaen's Saintly Naïveté," in *Messiaen the Theologian*, ed. Andrew Shenton (Ashgate, 2010); and, especially, Dom Columba Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1922), 156, 184, 192 (chapter 9 is entitled "The Virgin Mary: The Mysteries of Childhood and the Hidden Life").

19 Messiaen, in *Trois jours avec Olivier Messiaen: Une archive de 1962* (program 2/3), in conversation with Micheline Banzet (March 1962), available at radiofrance.fr (accessed December 1, 2023).

20 Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, 134. Toesca appears in Messiaen's diary on January 4, 1944, where he states: "On voit apparaître le nom de Toesca" for Sunday, January 2. See RES VMB MS-122 (2), 16.

21 Messiaen, *Cahier beige*, RES VMA MS-1490, 61.

22 RES VMA MS-1983, 27. The date 1944 is given by Yvonne Loriod; the title on the front of the sketchbook is simply "Regards Esquisses."

23 Marmion writes: "The Kingdom of God is built up in silence; it is, before all, interior, and hidden in the depths of the soul. . . . Undoubtedly, grace possesses a virtue which nearly always overflows in works of charity, but the principle of its power is entirely within. . . . Our outward activity has no stability or supernatural fruitfulness save insofar as it is linked to this interior life. We shall truly only bear fruit outwardly according to the measure of the supernatural intensity of our inner life." Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 203–04.

24 See Messiaen, VMA MS-1529 (unpaginated).

25 On the ordering of the final work, see Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, 134–35. See also Thomas Daniel Schlee, "Olivier Messiaen – Musiker der Verkündigung," https://www.herder.de/stz/wiedergelesen/olivier-messiaen-musiker-der-verkuendigung/ (accessed October 3, 2024).

26 Messiaen speaking with Loriod and Angelich in *Yvonne Loriod: Pianist and Teacher*. See Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 80.

27 Messiaen, *Cahier vert* and four books of other sketches. Hill and Simeone rightly observe that "some movements may have existed earlier in a more concise form." Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, 135.

28 RES VMA MS-1491. See Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 80.

29 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 62, 78.

30 Ibid., 11. On Marmion, *L'Ascension*, and *La Nativité du Seigneur*, see Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 50–55.

31 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, translated as *The Technique of My Musical Language* (Leduc, 2001), 110.

32 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 75.

33 Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 72.

34 Brigitte Massin, *Olivier Messiaen: une poétique du merveilleux* (Alinéa, 1989), 68. On Marmion, see Stephen Schloesser, *Visions of Amen: The Early Life and Music of Olivier Messiaen* (Eerdmans, 2014), 148–52, 178–82, 229–33; and Richard D. E. Burton, *Messiaen: Texts, Contexts, and Intertexts (1937–1948)*, ed. Roger Nichols (Oxford University Press, 2016), 91–95.

35 Pope Benedict XV, letter to Dom Columba Marmion, quoted in *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 12.

36 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 156, 184, 192.

37 Marmion states: "What can we say of the Virgin, when she saw [*quand elle regardait*] Jesus? To what mysterious depths did her view penetrate, so humble, so tender, and so full of compliance! We cannot express how the lights from the soul of Jesus drowned his Mother, and how such sublime adorations, such perfect homage that Mary rendered to her son, to her God, and to all the states and to all of the mysteries to which the incarnation is the substance and the root." Ibid., 155–56; p. 153 is also a source for the titles of Messiaen's pieces in *La Nativité du Seigneur*: "les bergers" (II), "Le Verbe" (IV), and "les anges" (VI).

38 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 188. On the idea of the "exchange" used by Messiaen, see chapter 7. There is a (quite virtuosic) sketch for another piece that would not find its way into the final score of *Vingt Regards* on p. 10 of the *Cahier vert*. It was to be called "L'échange terrible."

39 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 186.

40 Messiaen, score of *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (Durand, 1947), epigraph for "Première Communion de la Vierge," 77. On p. 11 of the *Cahier vert*, Messiaen states: "Première Communion de la Vierge – (la Vierge: première tabernacle, la Vérité y parle sans bruit, comme une eau légère parle d'elle . . .)."

41 Olivier Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame* (Leduc, 1978), 2.

42 Claude Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen: Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*, trans. E. Thomas Glasow (Amadeus Press, 1994), 13–14, 200.

43 Messiaen, in *Trois jours avec Olivier Messiaen* (program 1/3).

44 See Schloesser, *Visions of Amen*, 106. On predestination, see Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), §61, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed October 3, 2024).

45 See https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm (accessed October 1, 2024) and

Carol Engelhardt Herringer, "Mary as Cultural Symbol in the Nineteenth Century," in Maunder, *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, 504–09.

46 See Katharine Conley, *Automatic Women: The Representation of Women in Surrealism* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996). The Surrealist poet Louis Aragon comments on the marvellous: "the relationship which is produced from the negation of the real by the marvellous is essentially ethical, and the marvellous is always the materialisation of a moral symbol in a violent opposition with the morality of the world in whose centre it appears." Aragon in *Le Surréalisme: Sources, histoire, affinités* (Galerie Charpentier, 1964), cited in Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism* (Princeton University Press, 1970), 20. See Sholl, "Love, Mad Love, and the '*point sublime*:' The Surrealist Poetics of Messiaen's *Harawi*," in *Messiaen Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42. Messiaen states: "In the Catholic religion, the marvellous that is given to us is true!" Massin, *Olivier Messiaen*, 31.

47 See Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen*, 155; Sholl, "Love, Mad Love, and the '*point sublime*,'" 34–62.

48 Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen: Music and Color*, 14.

49 St. Augustine describes God as "more inward to me than my most inward part" in *The Confessions of St Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (Dent, 1970), 40.

50 Messiaen, *Cahier beige*, 61.

51 Another sketch for this part of piece 20 appears on p. 22 of the sketches for *Vingt Regards*, RES VMA MS-1983, marked "Complete theme in F-sharp major" by Messiaen. See also RES VMA MS-1529, 29–30, for a definitive version of this music.

52 RES VMA MS-1529, 17; RES VMA MS-1529 (2), 3.

53 Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 1. See Daniel K. L. Chua, "Absolute Music/Absolute Worship," in *God's Song and Music's Meanings: Theology, Liturgy, and Musicology in Dialogue*, ed. James Hawkey, Ben Quash, and Vernon White (Routledge, 2020), 163–81. See also Vladimir Jankélevitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University Press, 2003); Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality through Music* (Ashgate, 2008); and Michael Gallope, *Deep Refrains: Music, Philosophy, and the Ineffable* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

54 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 41.

55 For the version in C, see RES VMA MS-1533 (2), 7. Had Messiaen written the work in C, it would have created a tritonal relational (important to Messiaen) with the opening and end of the cycle; F-sharp major is featured in pieces I, VI, X, XV, XIX, and XX). B-flat major sets up an enharmonic tertian relationship with F-sharp, which bifurcates (enharmonically) the E-flat minor signaled in "L'échange" (piece III), a title that clearly derives from Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 134–58, 188.

56 See RES VMA MS-1553 (2), 7.

57 Arnold Whittall, "Music Analysis as Human Science? *Le Sacre du Printemps*," *Music Analysis* 1 (1982).

58 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme, de Couleur, et d'Ornithologie*, Tome II (Leduc, 1995), 471.

59 Messiaen refers to this right-hand figuration in b. 1 as "rapid garlands that evoke the design of stalactites" (ibid.). See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press, 1982), 125; cited in Waller, "The Annunciation from Luke to the Enlightenment," 401. Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 203.

60 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme*, II, 471.

61 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 10.

62 See Béatrice Marchal, *Les chants du silence: Olivier Messiaen, fils de Cécile Sauvage ou la musique face à l'impossible parole* (Delatour, 2008); and Stephen Schloesser, "The Composer as Commentator: Music and Text in Tournemire's Symbolist Method," in *Mystic Modern: The Music, Thought and Legacy of Charles Tournemire*, ed. Jennifer Donelson and Stephen Schloesser (Church Music Association of America, 2014), 261.

63 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 157. Marmion also states (p. 200): "She [Mary] did not doubt that Jesus was the son of God. This is why she submitted in silence to this divine will . . . it was there [in her heart that was] the tabernacle where she adored the mystery of her son's words while waiting for the full light he would give." This connection is later discussed by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), subtitled *At the School of Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist,"* §55 at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_eccl-de-euch.html (accessed October 3, 2024). The pontiff connects Mary as tabernacle with Christ in the mass and thence to humanity.

64 John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (SCM Press, 1977), 281. Macquarrie attributes this idea to Karl Barth (*Church Dogmatics* 1/2, 177). On Mary and the Holy Spirit as a bird, see Waller, "The Annunciation from Luke to the Enlightenment," 388.

65 See Jacques Derrida, *On Touching — Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford University Press, 2005).

66 Messiaen, "Note de l'Auteur" in the score of *Vingt Regards* (Durand, 1947), iii; Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 155.

67 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Fordham University Press, 2007), 5. Nancy states: "To listen is *tendre l'oreille* – literally, to stretch the ear."

68 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme,* II, 471.

69 Messiaen, "Note de l'Auteur," iii. See Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 169; on filiation, 202–03. See also Matthew Levering, "Mary and Grace," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary.*

70 See Daniel Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 88–90.

71 Messiaen, "Note de l'Auteur," i.

72 Messiaen's epigraph in the score of *Vingt Regards*, 77, and his *Cahier vert*, 11.

73 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme*, II, 471; "Note de l'Auteur," iii.

74 This is implicit in Paul Éluard's "L'œil immobile" from *Capitale de la douleur* (1926), vol. 1 of *Œuvres complètes* (Gallimard, 1968), 196; discussed in Sholl, "Love, Mad Love, and the '*point sublime*,'" 45.

75 Maunder, "Introduction," 3.

76 On this capacity, see Ricœur, "The Addressee of Religion: The Capable Human Being" and "Epilogue: Personal Capacities and Mutual Recognition," in vol. 3 of *Philosophical Anthropology: Writings and Lectures*, ed. Johann Michel and Jérôme Porée, trans. David Pellauer (Polity, 2016).

77 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 38.

78 See Pierre Reverdy, *Le Gant de Crin* (Plon, 1927), 36.

79 Messiaen, "Note de l'Auteur," iii.

80 In *Vingt Regards*, piece V, Messiaen writes a similar style of birdsong, which in the epigraph he calls "les oiseaux du silence."

81 Messiaen, RES VMA MS-1553 (2), 7.

82 Boulez, "Proposals" (1948), in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, trans. Stephen Walsh (Clarendon Press, 1991), 49.

83 See Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen: Music and Color*, 103–04; and Paul Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* (Faber & Faber, 1985), 16. See also Peter Hill and Anthony Pople in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. Peter Hill (Faber & Faber, 1995), 5, 16; Christopher Dingle, *The Life of Messiaen* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22; and Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 136.

84 Pierre Boulez, "Proposals," 49; Boulez, "Olivier Messiaen," in *Orientations*: *Collected Writings*, trans. Martin Cooper (Faber & Faber, 1986), 407.

85 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 11.

86 See Yvonne Loriod, "Programme du domain musical en homage Olivier Messiaen," (1959), cited in Claude Samuel, ed., *Panorama de l'art musical contemporain* (Gallimard, 1962), 309–10. See also Rae, "Pianism and Virtuosity," 207–20.

87 Our thanks to Caroline Potter for this observation. See Messiaen, "Billet parisien: Le *Mana* de Jolivet," *La sirène* (1937), 8–10, in Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism, 1935–1939* (Ashgate, 2012), 34, 96. On Messiaen and *Mana*, see Sholl, *Messiaen*, 127. See also Anderson, "Messiaen and the Notion of Influence," *Tempo* 63/247 (2009), 8–12.

88 In the *Cahier vert*, 11, Messiaen notes: "lire *Jeux d'eau* Ravel."

89 See Hab. 3:10 and Rev. 9:1–12 (NRSV); Ernest Hello, *Paroles de Dieu: Réflexions sur quelques textes sacrés,* ed. François Angélier (Jérôme Millon, 1992 [1877]), 131–32. See also Siglind Bruhn's "Religious Symbolism in the Music of Olivier Messiaen," in *Signs in Musical Hermeneutics*, ed. Siglind Bruhn, *American Journal of Semiotics*, special issue 13/1–4 (1998); and Richard D. E. Burton, *Messiaen: Texts, Contexts, and Intertexts*, 127–36.

90 Sauvage, poem 5, "Enfant, pâle embryon," and poem 10, "L'Agneau," in *Œuvres complètes* (Éditions de la Table Ronde, 2002), 52–54, 63–65.

91 Marcel Dupré, *Cours complet d'improvisation à l'orgue* (Leduc, 1925), 2:27.

92 Messiaen, *Cahier beige*, 41.

93 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 32–33, 89; *Traité de Rythme*, Tome IV (Leduc, 1997), 35; *Cahier vert*, 66.

94 On Dupré and Bach, see Jeremy D. Filsell, "A Contextual and Analytical Investigation of the Organ Music of Marcel Dupré" (Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham City University, 2007).

95 For more on this, see Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 115.

96 See Sauvage, "La tête," and "L'Agneau," in *Œuvres complètes*, 51–52 and 63-65.

97 See RES VMA MS-1553 (2), 7.

98 On the "xyz" idea and its use in *Pelléas* and Messiaen's "Dieu parmi nous," see Sholl, *Olivier Messiaen*, 88; and Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 10.

99 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 10.

100 See Sholl, "Messiaen and Surrealism," 257–66.

101 Messiaen, "Note de l'Auteur," iii.

102 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 500. The title of *La Nativité*, piece III, "Desseins éternels," is here also. On "Dieu parmi nous," see *Traité de Rythme,* Tome III (Leduc, 2002), 244.

103 Both works begin with statements of an idea and then intensifications of that ideas as development.

104 Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §58, praises Mary's "true "Eucharistic attitude," and he comments on "eschatological tension of the Eucharist," something that was fundamental to Messiaen's earlier organ piece *le Banquet céleste* (1928). He states: "The *Magnificat* expresses Mary's spirituality, and there is nothing greater than this spirituality for helping us to experience the mystery of the Eucharist."

105 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 8.

106 Ibid., 10.

107 Ibid., 9.

108 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme*, I, 285–86. Messiaen refers to this rhythm in terms of Greek rhythms: "cretic and trochaic with dotted added values" (ibid., II, 471). For the table of rhythms, see Joanny Grosset, "Inde," in vol. 1 of *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, ed. Albert Lavignac (Delagrave, 1921 [1913]), 301–04.

109 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 8.

110 See Walker, "A Brief Discussion of 'Première Communion de la Vierge,'" 167.

111 See Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*. On desubjectification, see Sander van Maas, *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough toward the Beyond* (Fordham University Press, 2009); and Sholl, "Olivier Messiaen: Spectralist," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spectral Music,* ed. Amy Bauer, Liam Cagney, and William Mason (Oxford University Press, 2025), 60-94.

112 Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*, 11.

113 Messiaen, Introduction to *Mana* by André Jolivet (Costellat, 1946). Messiaen also copied out sections of *Mana* in the *Cahier rouge* (RES VMA MS-1492, 45–46), a book used around 1943 and containing sketches for *Visions de l'Amen* (1943) and *Technique de mon langage musicale* especially.

114 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale,* 71; for descriptions of these chords, see 69–71.

115 Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*, 11; Sholl, "Messiaen and Surrealism," 263–64.

116 Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme,* I, 7–36.

117 Some of the chords used by Messiaen in this passage (b. 52) are used in "Par Lui tout a été fait" (*Vingt Regards,* piece VI): on p. 27 (second and third systems); on pp. 33 and 34 (system 2 in both cases); and again in the "Pressez" flourishes in the bass on pp. 39–41, where they are interpolated between chords (centered around B-flat major, as in "Première Communion de la Vierge") of the *Thème de Dieu*.

118 Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 80.

119 Ibid., 80, 86; Messiaen, *Traité de Rythme*, I, 279 and II, 99–101.

120 Messiaen, Preface to *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, ii.

121 Messiaen, "Résponses à une enquête," 73.

122 See Pope Pius XII (1956): "Full of joy you will drink out of the waters," at https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_15051956_haurietis-aquas.pdf.

123 See Pope John Paul II (June 16, 1985): http://www.totus2us.co.uk/prayer/litany-to-the-sacred-heart-of-jesus/st-john-paul-ii-on-the-litany/ (accessed October 3, 2024).

124 Sauvage, poem 5, "Enfant, pâle embryon," verse 15; and poem 8, "Mon cœur revient à son printemps," verse 7; *Œuvres completes*, 54 and 59.

125 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 36.

126 Waller, "The Annunciation," 388–94.

127 Griffiths alludes to a tempo relationship between the *Thème de Dieu* and other parts of the work, and notes the "progressive measured rallentando in No. 11 . . . so that we may hear the heartbeat of the yet unborn infant . . . at the surely pathological rate of 240 [sixteenth-note beats] per minute." *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, 123.

128 A different configuration of these chords (bb. 53, 58) can be seen in Messiaen, *Cahier vert*, 79.

129 Ibid., 80.

130 Messiaen, *Conférence de Notre-Dame*, 9.

131 Messiaen does clarify this in *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 70; the original chord is returned to as a source for transposition.

132 See Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musicale*, 41.

133 Messiaen, *Vingt Regards*, 128.

134 Heath Lees, *Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poetic Language* (Ashgate, 2007), 76–79.

135 Waller states that such iconography attempts a form of realism as if "it actually occurred within human history and, by extension—especially through the deliberate anachronism of current fashion, terminology, or contemporary references—was alive in the present." Waller, "The Annunciation," 388.

136 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 200, and Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), §55.

137 Messiaen, Preface to Sauvage, *L'Âme en bourgeon*, 9–10.

138 For more on this passage and Aquinas, see Sholl, "The Shock of the Positive: Olivier Messiaen, St Francis, and Redemption through Modernity," in *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology*, ed. Jeremy Begbie and Steve Guthrie (Eerdmans, 2011), 162-89.

139 Ricœur, "Intellectual Autobiography," 46.

140 Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses Mystères*, 170.

141 Messiaen, "Introduction to the Programme Booklet for Paris, 1978," in *Contributions to the Spiritual World of Olivier Messiaen,* ed. Almut Rössler (Gilles und Francke, 1986), 10.

142 Messiaen (April 23, 1979), ibid., 91, 92.

143 Messiaen speaking in *Olivier Messiaen: The Music of Faith*, dir. Alan Benson (London Weekend Television, April 5, 1985).