

MESSIAEN'S FORGOTTEN MIE

Rediscovering the Organ Music of Claire Delbos

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ABSTRACT

While Olivier Messiaen is an increasingly popular figure in music research, the life and works of his first wife Claire Delbos (1906-1959) are still shrouded in obscurity. Her compositional career spanned just over 10 years, blossoming alongside yet remaining independent from technical developments in Messiaen's own music. Delbos wrote at least four works for organ, all of which her husband supervised and performed: *Deux Pièces* (H. Hérelle & Cie, 1935), *Paraphrase* (Lemoine, 1949), *Parce, Domine* (Rouart-Lerolle, 1952), and *L'Offrande à Marie* (unpublished, 1938-1941). This study—the first devoted solely to her life and music—will define and contextualize Delbos's compositional language. Using these four works as case studies, I outline her unique approaches to melodic construction, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, and quotation. Newly available material such as correspondence, diaries, and manuscripts will also offer a more complete narrative of her career than previous scholarship. Although these documents shed light on Delbos's compositional process, they also reveal the extent to which Messiaen played a role in it. Copious annotations and revisions for the La Trinité instrument become new perspectives on his organ career during the 1930s and '40s. Through this combination of musical analysis and archival research, I untangle the story behind Messiaen's forgotten "Mie," an artist who lived and collaborated with one of the twentieth century's most influential composers.

RÉSUMÉ

Bien que Messiaen soit une figure à la popularité croissante dans le domaine de la recherche musicale, la vie et les œuvres de sa première épouse, Claire Delbos (1906-1959), sont demeurées dans l'ombre. Sa carrière en tant que compositrice s'est étalée sur un peu plus de 10 ans, prospérant aux côtés de celle de son mari tout en restant indépendante des développements techniques de sa musique. Delbos a écrit au moins quatre œuvres pour orgue que son époux a supervisées et interprétées : *Deux Pièces* (H. Hérelle & Cie, 1935), *Paraphrase* (Lemoine, 1949), *Parce, Domine* (Rouart-Lerolle, 1952) et *L'Offrande à Marie* (non-publiée, 1938-1941). Cette recherche, la première dédiée uniquement à sa vie et à sa musique, définira et mettra en contexte le langage de composition de Delbos. En utilisant ces quatre œuvres comme études de cas, je souligne son approche unique envers la construction mélodique, l'harmonie, le rythme, le contrepoint et la citation. Des matériels récemment disponibles tels que des correspondances, des agendas et des manuscrits offriront également un récit plus complet de sa carrière que de précédentes études. Ces documents démontrent non seulement le processus de composition de Delbos, mais ils révèlent également l'ampleur du rôle que Messiaen y a joué. Des annotations et révisions abondantes pour l'instrument de La Trinité donnent une nouvelle perspective de la carrière d'orgue de ce dernier pendant les années 1930 et 40. À travers de cette combinaison d'analyse musicale et de recherche d'archives, j'explore l'histoire derrière la « Mie » oubliée de Messiaen, une artiste qui a vécu et collaboré avec l'un des compositeurs les plus influents du vingtième siècle.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship tends to recount stories of Claire Delbos the first wife of Olivier Messiaen rather than Claire Delbos the composer. Most musicians recognize her as a violinist and dedicatee of Messiaen's *Thème et Variations* and *Poèmes pour Mi*, but many are surprised to learn of her own compositions: three song cycles, a large chamber work featuring four ondes Martenot, and four pieces for an instrument she did not play. Her underrepresentation is the result of several factors. The entry "Claire Delbos" does not appear in *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*. Several organ encyclopedias cite wrong dates, and listings of her works are inconsistent and incomplete.¹ She does appear in Delatour France's recent *Compositrices Françaises au XX^e siècle*, although the article does not discuss or analyze her compositions.² Given that scholarship on Messiaen's early career is not as developed as other aspects of his life, it is no wonder that studies contain scattered references to Claire Delbos. Broad 2005 and Schloesser 2014 mention several works and comment on her style; they are precursors of and inspiration for my own study. As far as her biographical details, Hill and Simeone 2005 remains the most authoritative and comprehensive account.

Due to Messiaen's own silence about "Mie" (her beloved nickname and reference to the highest open string on a violin), it is no wonder that her story is veiled in mystery. Claire was one of the most cherished women in Messiaen's life, being only second to his mother, the poetess Cécile Sauvage.³ However, in light of his known efforts to control his

¹ Aaron I. Cohen, "Delbos, Claire," in *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*, 2nd ed. (New York: Books & Music, 1987), vol. 1, 189; Corliss Richard Arnold, "Delbos, Claire," in *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 135; John Henderson, "Delbos, Claire," in *A Directory of Composers for Organ* (Swindon: John Henderson, 1996), n.p.; Adel Heinrich, "Delbos, Claire," in *Organ and Harpsichord Music by Women Composers: An Annotated Catalog* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 265.

² Alexis Galpérine, "Claire Delbos," in *Compositrices Françaises au XX^e siècle*, vol. 2 (Sampzon: Delatour France, 2014), 53-58.

³ In the Preface to his *Technique*, Messiaen writes: "I do not want to close this introduction without thanking: -- my masters: Jean and Noël Gallon...Marcel Dupré...Paul Dukas...;--those who influenced me: my mother (the poetess Cécile Sauvage), my wife (Claire Delbos)..." *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), vol. 1, 8.

public image,⁴ Claire's sad story and eventual death were probably not memories Messiaen wanted to relive, let alone publish in his own narrative. As Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone point out, it was not until 1997 that details of Claire's decline were even clarified; commenting on an article about Messiaen by Lionel Couvignou, Yvonne Loriod briefly recalls the history of Claire's illness.⁵

Logically, Olivier Messiaen's archives are the sole depository of her own. Other outlets would be family and associated institutions, but these are not viable sources at present. Lack of communication with her sole heir, Pascal Messiaen,⁶ as well as any access to the archives of the Schola Cantorum, make research in the Bibliothèque nationale de France all the more important. After Messiaen's death in 1992, his second wife Yvonne Loriod preserved and later bequeathed his archives (e.g. letters, diaries, manuscripts) to the library. Perhaps she is a potential factor in Delbos's misrepresentation; it is possible that many of Claire's letters, pictures, scores, and belongings were sold, lost, or even destroyed.

Another potential issue is the lack of access to Messiaen's original agendas. Messiaen started documenting his appointments and upcoming projects in 1939, which unfortunately makes his earlier life with Claire a mystery. After his death, Loriod made a typewritten transcription of these diaries.⁷ It is the only version currently available to the public. In 2007, Nigel Simeone released his own transcription of Messiaen's 1942 agenda.⁸ Consider their differing amount of detail in Table 1. Loriod never presents false or misleading information, although her agendas are narrations that summarize (what she considers) key events of the

⁴ Stephen Broad argues that scholars should be more critical when examining Messiaen's own articles and interviews, as the composer judiciously censored material published about him. Broad notes that before the pioneering work of Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, "the composer's life has also usually been understood through what he chose to say about it." "Recontextualising Messiaen's early career" (Ph.D. diss., Worcester College, Oxford, 2005), 57.

⁵ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 394.

⁶ Unfortunately, Pascal Messiaen passed away on January 31, 2020. It is currently unclear how legal issues of permission and access to Delbos archives will unfold. Carolyn Shuster Fournier, e-mail to author, March 25, 2020.

⁷ *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMB MS-122, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

⁸ Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen in 1942: A Working Musician in Occupied Paris," in *Messiaen Studies*, edited by Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

year. Likewise, Simeone does not present every detail, admitting his article is an “annotated transcription of significant entries.”⁹ Nevertheless, Simeone’s transcription discloses Messiaen’s rehearsals with his wife and/or her organ music. It is likely, then, that Messiaen recorded more about Claire and her music in other years. However, these details cannot be proven until Messiaen’s original diaries are available for public scrutiny.

Table 1: A Comparison of Messiaen’s 1942 Agenda Transcriptions

Date	Loriod’s Transcription	Simeone’s Transcription
January 17	Il s’occupait de faire éditer chez Lemoine la ‘Paraphrase’ de sa femme. (9) <i>He set about getting his wife’s piece, Paraphrase, published by Lemoine.</i>	
January 26		M. Lemoine prend <i>Paraphrase</i> Mie - Il lui envoie lettre et 1.000 fr en chèque répondre notre acceptation par lettre (Mie et moi) à M. Lemoine. (22) <i>Lemoine takes on Paraphrase by Mie – He sends her a letter and a cheque of 1,000 francs send a letter saying we (Mie and I) accept.</i>
July 15		Trinité Mie (28)
July 20		Trinité Mie (28)
July 26	Papiers à Zilgien...Et c’est le mardi il août qu’et lieu de départ en vacances en Zone libre, à Neussargues. Pourquoi à Neussargues? Et pas Petichet? Sans doute pour faire plaisir à sa femme. O. Messiaen travailla beaucoup à la rédaction de sa ‘Technique de mon langage musical.’ C’est sans doute l’année où les deux soeurs (Claire et Marie-Rose Delbos) se disputèrent, et pour les calmer, Olivier répandit lentement sur le beau parquet bien ciré t ou 5 seaux d’eau! Le calme revint immédiatement et sans faire de	

⁹ Ibid., 20.

	<p>reproches à l'Apprenti sorcier silencieux, mais déterminé, les deux femmes s'ingénierent à éponger le parquet avec force serpillières, ce qui dura plusieurs heures! (11)</p> <p><i>Papers given to Zilgien... On Tuesday off for vacation in the unoccupied zone, in Neussargues. Why Neussargues, and not Petichet? Doubtless to please his wife. O. Messiaen worked a lot on writing his 'Technique of my musical language.' It's without a doubt the year the two sisters (Claire and Marie-Rose Delbos) had an argument, and to calm them down, Olivier slowly spread 4 to 5 bucketfuls of water on the nicely waxed floor! Calm returned immediately and, choosing not to scold the sorcerer's apprentice, the two women (silent and determined) set about mopping the floor, which lasted several hours!"</i></p>	
Week of October 5-11		<p>[note at foot] Trinité: concert orgue: Pierront (<i>Corps glorieux</i>), Zilgien (oeuvres Mie au complet), Tobon-Mejia (oeuvres Mie). (29)</p> <p><i>Trinité: organ concert: Pierront (Corps glorieux), Zilgien (Mie's complete works), Tobon-Mejia (works by Mie).</i></p>
Week of October 19-25		<p>[note at foot] Jouer pièces d'orgue Mie. (30)</p> <p><i>Play organ pieces by Mie.</i></p>

Despite the many challenges of unraveling Claire Delbos's story, my research sheds light on one of history's neglected *compositrices*. This thesis, the first study devoted entirely to her music, brings together previous Messiaen research with recently available material in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Discoveries in the subcategory "Archives Claire Delbos" of the Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod provide a perspective not yet seen

in scholarly literature. Furthermore, my access to materials in private collections, most notably other Delbos manuscripts,¹⁰ makes this study all the more important.

Chapter 1 presents a biographical sketch, but rather than recount every detail found in Hill and Simeone's seminal *Messiaen*, I highlight key events in Claire's personal and professional life. Through letters, newspaper reviews, sketches, and Loriod's agenda transcriptions, this chapter unites strands of her story absent in prior scholarship. I hope that in the coming years, the availability of more documents will further illuminate the couple's relationship.

The following chapters focus on her extant organ works in the order in which they were composed: *Deux Pièces*, *Paraphrase*, *Parce*, *Domine*, and the six-movement cycle *L'Offrande à Marie*. For the sake of clarity, each chapter will follow the same outline:

1. Genesis and Reception
2. Content and Context
3. Analysis
4. Messiaen as Interpreter and/or Editor

I begin with historical and theological contexts surrounding the compositions. Relevant biographical details, as well as programmes and press reviews, contextualize each piece. Delbos's religious faith formed the core inspiration for her organ works, and like Messiaen's, these themes are intimately tied to the music. Rather than explain every note and chord, the subsequent analyses document recurring patterns of melodic construction, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, and chant quotation. While I occasionally draw connections with Messiaen's theoretical writings, I show a distinct musical voice from that of her husband. The fact that Delbos lived with and performed alongside such an influential composer does not imply her reliance on his language. We do not find modes of limited transposition, Hindu rhythms, or birdsong. Nor do we hear the "rainbow timbres," "tonal

¹⁰ Michel Chapuis received manuscripts of several pieces from Line Zilgien, his predecessor at Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, assistant to Messiaen at La Trinité, and close friend of Delbos. Fournier, *Un siècle de vie musicale*, 18. Chapuis made photocopies for Carolyn Shuster Fournier, who graciously shared these materials with me.

enrichment,” or “melodies burning with love” that so uniquely mark his music.¹¹ Whereas Messiaen’s world is warm, colourful, and dynamic, Delbos’s is cold, dark, and concise.

Finally, I will speculate on Messiaen’s role as interpreter (and in some cases, editor) of each piece. Newly available manuscripts and scores, housed in the BnF and private collections, provide evidence of collaboration between the couple. Messiaen’s copious annotations, including registrations and interpretative markings, are windows into his creative imagination at the organ. In fact, the evidence herein is currently the only extant documentation of how Messiaen played contemporaneous organ music aside from his own. More importantly, findings in these documents address questions of “cross fertilization” between the two composers: how did Messiaen’s skill as an organist influence the works of this non-organist? To what extent did Delbos and her music influence Messiaen as an organist and composer?

This document’s six appendices will hopefully prove useful for future research. Using a variety of primary source materials, I have compiled information about Delbos’s student years, performing career, collaborations with Messiaen, and extant manuscripts. Through my research, I hope more organists, scholars, and audiences will turn to this forgotten composer of the twentieth century, an artist dear to one of that century’s greatest.

¹¹ Messiaen uses these terms to describe the ideal religious music, characteristics he no doubt sees in his own. See *La Page musicale* (5 Feb 1937), 1; translated in Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 125.

CHAPTER 1: TOWARDS A BIOGRAPHY OF CLAIRE DELBOS

1.1 EARLY YEARS AND MARRIAGE

Louise Justine Delbos was born in Paris on November 2, 1906. She was the daughter of Lucie Devillez and Victor Delbos, being born after her siblings Gérard (b. 1899) and Marie-Rose (b. 1901). Unfortunately, Louise never met her older brother, who died at the age of four from an illness.¹ She was born into a wealthy, intellectual, and religious family. Victor Delbos was a prominent historian of philosophy, and his extensive bibliography shows a specialty in the philosophers Baruch de Spinoza and Immanuel Kant. From 1902 until his death in 1916, Delbos was a professor of philosophy at Sorbonne University in Paris. Many of his writings were published posthumously, and Delbos remained a key figure in early twentieth-century French philosophy. Victor was also involved in Catholic intellectual circles,² and the Delbos family was devoutly Roman Catholic. In fact, the family's home, 46 Quai Henri IV, was just a few blocks from their parish, Saint-Louis-en-l'Île.³

At some point, Louise enrolled as a music student at the Schola Cantorum in Paris. Exam results in the *Tablettes de la Schola Cantorum* suggest her enrollment as early as fall 1922 until spring 1932.⁴ She was a talented violinist, and her teachers included eminent musicians such as Nestor Lejeune (violin), Guy de Lioncourt (counterpoint), and Vincent d'Indy (chamber music). Prize listings show her success in other disciplines typical of

¹ Joannès Wehrlé, *Victor Delbos, Les Maîtres d'une Génération* (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1932), 78.

² Victor was close friends with Maurice Blondel, a Roman Catholic modernist who edited and published several of his works. Joannès Wehrlé summarizes Delbos's work as a synthesis of Christianity and philosophy: "In emphasizing the case of Delbos, I would just like to point out that here is an example of an indivisible synthesis of both Christianity and philosophy, realized in one man combining an intelligence of a very high order with a most upright conscience. Delbos was a Christian philosopher and a philosophical Christian. He was even a Catholic philosopher." "Mettant en avant l'exemple de Delbos, je me contente de faire observer que, dans une même intelligence très haute et une même conscience très droite, on peut trouver la synthèse indivisiblement réalisée et du christianisme et de la philosophie. Delbos a été un chrétien philosophe et un philosophe chrétien. Il a même été un philosophe catholique." Ibid., 153.

³ Wehrlé's biography notes that this is the church where Victor and Lucie married, their children were baptized and received first communion, as well as the church of Victor's funeral. Ibid., 63, 121, and 153.

⁴ Entries such as "Delbos" and "Mlle Delbos" appear in the listing of prizes found in the *Tablettes de la Schola Cantorum* as early as the June 1923 issue until June/July 1932.

Schola curriculum: harmony, counterpoint, chamber music, solfege, singing, and Gregorian chant. As seen in Appendix 1, Louise's accolades show the natural pacing of a Schola student's formation. First degree courses focused on fundamentals of technique and theory, while interpretation and a wider survey of repertoire occurred in the second degree. Students performed two exams per year, in January and June, and those who displayed the best work received special mention.⁵ Programmes, reviews, and exams⁶ all document Louise's success as a gifted violinist. As early as 1932, Delbos performed solo and collaborative recitals at the Schola, showcasing both her virtuosic talent and diversity of repertoire.⁷

The young violinist eventually met a budding composition student of the Paris Conservatoire: Olivier Messiaen. The exact time and circumstance of their meeting remain mysteries. Given the background of both families, it is possible the two were involved in mutual intellectual and/or Catholic circles. In his memoirs, Messiaen's father Pierre refers to Saint-Louise-en-Île, the Delbos family's church, as his parish.⁸ It is equally plausible that musical activities brought them together. One scholar suggests that the two met via Olivier's younger brother Alain, who briefly attended the Schola Cantorum.⁹ Another writer believes that the prominent violin part in Messiaen's *La Mort du nombre* suggests the couple meeting prior to the piece's composition: fall 1930.¹⁰

⁵ For more information about the Schola curriculum at this time, see Vincent d'Indy, "La Schola Cantorum," *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, edited by Albert Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie, Part 2 (Paris: Delagrave, 1913-1931), 3622-3625.

⁶ One exam notes her repertoire: "Programme des Cours Supérieurs. Violon: M^{lle} Delbos (cl. Lejeune): 4^e Sonate (Ysaye), Concerto (Beethoven); Malaguena (Sarasate), 10^e Sonate (Beethoven); 1^e mouvement et scherzo de la Symphonie espagnole (Lalo). 32 œuvres présentées" *Tablettes de la Schola Cantorum* (June/July 1931), 93.

⁷ One recital on February 5, 1932 featured Delbos along with colleagues Yvonne Pascal and Lucie Amand. A reviewer writes, "brillante violoniste de la Schola, Mlle Louise Delbos, interprétait avec la plus élégante musicalité la sonate en sol mineur pour violon seul de J.S. Bach, la sonate en mi de Haendel, et le concerto en ré de Mozart." *Tablettes* (March 1932), 94. Delbos also played a solo recital on May 28, 1932. *Tablettes* (April/May 1932), 102.

⁸ Pierre Messiaen, *Images* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1944), 255. However, it is not known how early he attended this church.

⁹ Christopher Brent Murray refers to an issue of the *Tablettes* where a "M. Messiaen" receives the distinction "assez bien" in solfege. In the same issue, Delbos receives the distinction "bien" in violin. "Le développement du langage musical d'Olivier Messiaen : Traditions, emprunts, expériences" (Ph.D., diss., Université Lumière-Lyon, 2010), 203.

¹⁰ Stephen Schloesser, *Visions of Amen: The Early Life and Music of Olivier Messiaen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 197.

Regardless of how or when the couple met, their marriage must have been a surprise to close friends, who received invitations shortly before the wedding. In a letter dated April 23, 1932 to Jean Langlais, Messiaen not only announces the upcoming ceremony, but introduces his bride for the first time: “I am engaged and I am to be married on 22 June to Mademoiselle Louise Delbos, a violinist and the daughter of Victor Delbos, the eminent professor at the Sorbonne.”¹¹ The couple were married on June 22, 1932 at the Delbos family’s church, Saint-Louis-en-l’Île. In addition to Jean Langlais, those known to be present included Claude Arrieu (maid of honour)¹² and Daniel Lesur (witness).¹³ Sometime after their wedding, Louise used the pseudonym Claire, as the only surviving documents with the name “Claire Delbos” appear after 1932. One scholar even wonders whether “Claire” was a tribute to her late father—the word “clarté” dominates philosophical discussions of brilliance and clarity.¹⁴ Given that she was still a young girl at the time of Victor’s death, as well as lack of documentation, this comment is mere speculation.

1.2 CLAIRE DELBOS THE VIOLINIST

The couple launched busy performing careers within a few months of their marriage. Messiaen surely exposed Delbos to his budding networks—the intellectual, church, and professional music circles in Paris. In fact, surviving evidence shows that the majority (if not all) of her engagements stem from her husband. Their first public recital as a couple took place on November 22, 1932: the premiere of Messiaen’s *Thème et variations* for the Cercle Musical de Paris. The duo continued to programme joint recitals throughout Paris, such as the one advertised as “concert de musique moderne” in Figure 1.1.¹⁵

¹¹ Quoted in Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 40.

¹² In a letter dated June 27, 1932, Messiaen thanks Claude for being the maid of honour and for her gift of flowers and a crystal decanter. See Hill and Simeone, 41.

¹³ Carolyn Shuster-Fournier, *Un siècle de vie musicale à l’église de la Trinité à Paris: de Théodore Salomé à Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: Harmattan, 2014), 101.

¹⁴ Schloesser, 202.

¹⁵ *La Semaine* (March 15-21, 1935), 37. In a review of this concert, Paul Marcilly writes: “Brillante exécution par l’auteur et Claire Delbos, qui nous montra une belle école de violon.” *La Monde Musical* (March 31, 1935), 102.



Figure 1.1: Ad for Messiaen and Delbos's 1935 recital

Another Schola concert on January 30, 1936 was also dedicated to contemporary music, and it proved particularly rigorous. Delbos performed the *Thème et variations*, Bartók's Second Violin Sonata, and the finale of Jolivet's Violin Sonata, among other pieces. Daniel Lesur wrote a flattering review of the recital, attesting to her virtuosic talent: "Claire Delbos took on the toughest part of this back-breaking programme...[she] demonstrated the highest qualities of energy and fire."¹⁶

Claire frequently played alongside her husband at his new post: Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris. Records as early as November 1932 and as late as January 1946 show a "Mme Messiaen" playing the violin at Low Mass.¹⁷ The couple's duets took place during the meditative moments, Offertory and Communion. As catalogued in Appendix 2, their repertoire consisted of recurring favourites, and it proves Delbos's fluency in different styles: music of J.S. Bach, Handel, Haydn, Paganini, Schumann, Franck, Fauré, and Ysaÿe. When considering her later organ music, Claire's unofficial post not only illustrates a long duo career with her husband, but also an intimate exposure to Messiaen's organ art. She surely witnessed his technical virtuosity, colourful registrations, and imaginative improvisations. Perhaps she even assisted him at the console.

¹⁶ *Tablettes de la Schola Cantorum* (February 1936), quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 58.

¹⁷ *Bulletins paroissiaux de La Sainte Trinité*. Archives Historiques de l'Archevêché de Paris. Paris, France. The archives are missing bulletins from 1937 to 1945 (most likely due to the interruption of WWII). All of these performances took place at the 11:15 AM Mass.

1.3 CLAIRE DELBOS THE COMPOSER

Beyond the list of her extant works, we know little about Claire Delbos the composer. There is no evidence to suggest her studying composition at the Schola Cantorum, and all surviving music dates from after her marriage. The extent to which Messiaen might have been her composition teacher or mentor is even less clear. Given the lack of letters specifically about their compositions, we can only speculate their collaboration from extant manuscripts. Delbos once orchestrated Mozart's march from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Messiaen made corrections over top.¹⁸ The bottom of another manuscript contains a short exercise, the first four measures of which are reconstructed in Example 1; it is a four-part excerpt written in a pseudo-Romantic idiom and contains numerous performance markings throughout.¹⁹ Given Messiaen's penchant for writing pastiches of earlier styles and the fact that this manuscript already bears his annotations, this could have been an opportunity to experiment with his pedagogical method that later surfaces in *Vingt leçons d'harmonie* (1951). The proximity in which the couple composed is even seen in their recycling the same paper. In this same collection of documents, sketches



Example 1: Delbos sketch, mm. 1-4, transc. Capozzoli.

¹⁸ Christopher Dingle, e-mail to author, December 14, 2017. Dingle says that he has seen this manuscript, although its existence in the Fonds Messiaen is presently unknown.

¹⁹ Sketch begins at the end of the third page of *Mère des Pauvres*. This manuscript comes from the private collection of Michel Chapuis and was photocopied for Carolyn Shuster-Fournier. I am grateful for Fournier's permission to use this material.

by Delbos appear alongside some illegible notes and organ registrations by Messiaen for a separate project.²⁰

Messiaen and Delbos were mutual sources of inspiration, and their composition rendezvous produced intimate creations. Messiaen wrote violin music and song cycles for his wife (e.g. *Fantaisie*, *Poèmes pour Mi*, and *Chants et terre et de ciel*), and Delbos composed music for her organist husband, not to mention mélodies based on poetry of his mother Cécile Sauvage.²¹ Some photos even show the couple pouring over scores, most likely analyzing music or discussing their own.²² They often composed while vacationing at their summer home in Petichet, situated beside the Lac de Laffrey in Isère. In the summer of 1933, for instance, Messiaen wrote his Mass for eight sopranos and four violins, while Claire wrote her first of three song cycles, *Primevère*.²³ It was also in this idyllic landscape where the couple completed another collaboration three years later: his *Poèmes pour Mi* and her *L'Âme en bourgeon*.²⁴ Considering the importance of Messiaen's mother and her poetry, Claire's compositions were surely flattering and endearing to him. It is unlikely that Claire met Cécile Sauvage, although she clearly knew the latter's influence on Messiaen's formation.²⁵ In fact, he championed his wife's song cycles throughout the 1930s and '40s (see Appendix 4).

Delbos, along with her husband, was a founding member of La Spirale, and it introduced her to a network of fellow Parisian musicians. Launched in 1935, the group included the composers Georges Migot, Paul Le Flem, André Jolivet, Edouard Sciortino, Daniel-Lesur, and Jules LeFebvre, in addition to Messiaen and Delbos. Many of its members

²⁰ After turning Delbos's page of sketches upside down, one finds erased (or poorly photocopied) notes and registrations in Messiaen's hand. Collection Fournier.

²¹ See Delbos's *Primevère* (Leduc, 1935) and *L'Âme en bourgeon* (Fortin, 1937).

²² See, for instance, Hill and Simeone, 67.

²³ In a letter to Claude Arrieu, dated August 18, 1933, Messiaen writes: "Ma femme se porte bien et a écrit de nouvelles et savillantes mélodies." Fonds Messiaen, VM BOB-19496, 47r.

²⁴ Hill and Simeone, 66.

²⁵ Messiaen often spoke of Sauvage's *L'Âme en bourgeon* as a premonition of his musical future. He regarded this set of poems as his most beloved literature. See Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*, trans. Felix Aprahamian (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976), 1.

also played administrative roles, and Delbos served as “Secrétaire adjoint.” The recently appointed Schola director (and Claire’s former teacher), Nestor Lejeune, was named honorary president.²⁶ In fact, most of the members had connections with the Schola Cantorum, and it was here where many of their concerts were held. The group’s manifesto speaks of their mission to champion contemporary works and encourage musical progress:

The mission of LA SPIRALE is to contribute to the presentation of contemporary musical works by organizing concerts of works by French composers as well as concerts featuring exchanges with composers from other countries. Serving music is its principal concern, and to achieve that goal premieres are less of a priority than giving audiences the chance to hear significant works for a second time. Why has LA SPIRALE chosen to name itself after the SPIRAL? Because though this curve remains firmly attached to its origin, it never stops tracing new paths...²⁷

The group’s inaugural concert took place on December 12, 1935, and it featured music exclusively of its members. As seen in Figure 1.2, Delbos and Messiaen’s latest organ works bookended the programme.²⁸ Reporting in *Guide Musicale*, Jean Douël observes that this concert aptly proved the group’s promotion of significant works: “Several encores demonstrated the interest which an enthusiastic public took in these performances, and I

would like to express a wish to see all the works by these extremely talented musicians enjoy well-deserved success.”²⁹

December 12, 1935 - 9 P.M.

2 Pièces (orgue)	Claire Delbos
Mana (piano)	André Jolivet
Chansons de Croisade	Paul Le Flem
1 ^{er} Quatour à cordes	Jules Le Febvre
Hommage à Albeniz (piano)	Edouard Sciortino
6 Petits Préludes (fl. et viol.)	Georges Migot
3 Lieder (ch. quator. piano)	Daniel Lesur
L’Ascension (orgue)	Olivier Messiaen

²⁶ Nigel Simeone, “La Spirale and La Jeune France: Group Identities,” *The Musical Times*, Vol. 143, No. 1880 (Autumn, 2002), 10.

²⁷ “LA SPIRALE se propose de coopérer à la diffusion des œuvres musicales contemporaines par des concerts d’œuvres françaises et par l’organisation de concerts d’échanges avec les compositeurs des autres pays. Elle veut servir la musique et pour cela se propose moins de donner de “Premières auditions” que de faire réentendre des œuvres significatives. Pourquoi, comme symbole, LA SPIRALE? Parce que cette courbe bien que rattachée constamment à son centre d’origine, ne cesse de se tracer une voie toujours nouvelle...” Quoted in Lucie Kayas, *Portrait(s) d’André Jolivet* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2005), 15.

²⁸ Programme found in *L’Art musical* (December 6, 1935), 116.

²⁹ Quoted and translated in Nigel Simeone, “La Spirale and La Jeune France,” 11.

La Spirale produced 11 concerts between its founding in 1935 and dissolution in 1938. Several events featured the latest music of important French composers, although the majority of programmes were international in scope.³⁰ The group's emphasis on chamber works and transnational programming resulted in few performances of its members' music. Delbos's works were only heard in two events: the premiere concert and April 28, 1937, the first complete performance of *L'Âme en bourgeon*.³¹ Nevertheless, La Spirale promoted works of its members in concerts beyond France. In a letter to André Jolivet, the president of the Viennese society *Musik der Gegenwart* thanks Jolivet for his proposal of an all-French programme, which the society devoted to works of Migot, Messiaen, and Jolivet. President Marcel Rubin wishes to consider other La Spirale composers in the future, mentioning only one of them by name: "Claire Delbos seems pretty talented to me."³²

La Spirale seems to have functioned more as a networking community for Delbos rather than an opportunity for self-promotion. Concurrent with the activities of La Spirale, three members (Lesur, Jolivet, and Messiaen) formed a more famous collective: La Jeune France. Delbos was neither a member nor performer with this group, and its emphasis on new French orchestral music was different from the aims of La Spirale.³³ Regardless, Messiaen arranged for performances of his wife's music with other Parisian societies including the Société Nationale de Musique, Le Triptyque, and La Sérénade. Appendix 4 lists all known concert performances of her music. Note that all performers were either Messiaen or his friends and colleagues. Among Delbos's greatest advocates was Line Zilgien, organist at the Delbos family's church Saint-Louis-en-Île and later assistant to

³⁰ For example, programmes featured music from Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, and America. In the Appendix to the above article, Simeone provides a complete list of La Spirale's programmes. See Simeone, 28-30.

³¹ Lucie Kayas, *André Jolivet* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 191.

³² "Claire Delbos me paraît bien douée." Letter from Marcel Rubin to André Jolivet, February 2, 1937. Quoted in Kayas, 198.

³³ Simeone, "La Spirale," 13.

Messiaen at La Trinité.³⁴ While the list does show support of Delbos's music, it also suggests a limited circle in which her works were played and heard.

Delbos's song cycles were her most frequently performed works, and they were often reviewed by the press. Many critics attest to their intimate atmosphere and illustrative setting of Sauvage's poetry. In a set of programme notes anticipating the premiere of *Primevère*, the anonymous author writes:

These five songs, setting to music poems by Cécile Sauvage (the mother of Olivier Messiaen, the composer's husband), are a reflection of the sweet, shy, and tender soul of a young fiancée. An intimate atmosphere, refined, delicately dissonant harmonic textures and, in the vocal part, a faithful rendering of the inflections of the spoken word. The composer's efforts to achieve these qualities were particularly evident in the last song.³⁵

Two reviews of Delbos's 1936 song cycle, *L'Âme en bourgeon*, are particularly noteworthy for the connections drawn between Delbos, Messiaen, and Cécile Sauvage. The first reviewer speaks of the similar themes between Delbos's mélodies and the other cycle premiered in the concert: Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi*. In the second article, the author observes a common mood evoked by both poetry and music, as if they were conceived by the same person.

For some reason I sensed a deep connection between this collection and its predecessor [*Poèmes pour Mi*]: the same feeling for the serious, weighty, and religious realities of life.³⁶

The eight songs with piano accompaniment of *L'Âme en Bourgeon* by Claire Delbos set to music poems on the subject of maternity by Cécile Sauvage. The music matches so closely with the feverish energy of the poems that it is easy for one to imagine that they were jointly conceived and composed by the sensitive intelligence of a single author.³⁷

³⁴ Inscriptions in Delbos's manuscripts from Zilgien's (now Michel Chapuis's) collection show that the two women were close friends. For more information about Line Zilgien, see "Annexe: Line Zilgien," in *Bulletin de l'Association Maurice et Marie-Madeleine Duruflé* no. 11 (2011): 240-247.

³⁵ "Ces cinq mélodies, écrites sur des poèmes de Cécile Sauvage (mère de M. Messiaen, le mari de l'auteur), reflètent l'âme timide, douce et tendre d'une jeune fiancée. Atmosphère intime, tissu harmonique raffiné, délicatement dissonancé, contours mélodiques très dessinés, et, dans le récit, calque fidèle des inflexions du parlé. L'auteur a essayé de réaliser ces intentions plus particulièrement dans la dernière mélodie." *L'Art musical* (Jan 10, 1936), 226.

³⁶ "Je ne sais pourquoi, mais il m'est apparu qu'une manière de lien profond unissait ce cycle au précédent [*Poèmes pour Mi*]: même sentiment de ce qu'ont de sérieux, d'auguste, de religieux, les grandes réalités de la vie." Roger Vinteuil, *Le Ménestrel* (May 7, 1937), 147.

³⁷ "Les huit mélodies avec accompagnement de piano qui composent *L'Âme en Bourgeon* de Claire Delbos sont écrites sur des poèmes de maternité de Cécile Sauvage. La musique imaginée épouse de façon si étroite la fébrilité de la

Within the span of two years, Claire (or Messiaen) secured all three of her compositions for publication: *Deux Pièces* for organ (Hérelle 1935), *Primevère* (Leduc 1935), and *L'Âme en bourgeon* (Fortin 1937). She listed and submitted these pieces in her application, dated November 26, 1937, to the Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique (SACEM).³⁸ This document's opening statement is particularly curious, as Claire lists two figures of the Paris Conservatoire as her sponsors: Henri Rabaud (director) and Henri Büsser (professor of composition).³⁹ Perhaps Messiaen introduced these men to Delbos and her music, although it is also possible—yet currently indemonstrable—that she later studied composition at the Conservatoire.

Claire's formal recognition as a composer came in January 1938, when she was approved as a member of the association. Messiaen most likely encouraged his wife's application, and he certainly was involved in the process. The form to confirm her admittance begins: "Je, soussignée, Delbos, Louise Justine épouse assistée et autorisée de Mr. Messiaen, Olivier." Messiaen also signed, along with the inscription: "Lu et approuvé, bon pour autorisation maritale."⁴⁰ As a female composer in the 1930s, Claire's status most likely rested on her husband's approval. Nevertheless, her recognition as a SACEM member was public acknowledgement of her artistic projects.

When not composing, Claire seems to have helped her husband with the everyday aspects of his work. Surviving evidence shows that she played more of an administrative role in Messiaen's early career than was previously thought. Scattered throughout the BnF's Fonds Messiaen are programmes for the monthly lineup of La Trinité music, as well as

poésie qu'on les dirait, l'une et l'autre, conçues par le même esprit sensible, réalisées par la même main sensible." Pierre Capdevielle, *Le Monde musical* (May 31, 1937), 140.

³⁸ "Demande d'adhésion de Claire Delbos en qualité de compositrice," Musée SACEM, <https://musee.sacem.fr/index.php/Detail/objects/55061> (accessed January 25, 2020). This document also shows her listing "Claire Delbos" as a pseudonym for "Louise Justine Delbos."

³⁹ "Sous les auspices de messieurs Henri Rabaud, Directeur du Conservatoire de Paris - Henry [sic] Büsser, professeur au Conservatoire de Paris..." Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Acte d'adhésion aux statuts de la Sacem de Claire Delbos - compositrice," Musée SACEM, <https://musee.sacem.fr/index.php/Detail/objects/55071> (accessed January 25, 2020).

payment records, in Claire's hand.⁴¹ She often helped with his correspondence, as many letters supposedly composed and signed by Messiaen are actually in her hand.⁴² Delbos also copied (or wrote) programme notes for a concert of Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur*.⁴³ Finally, Messiaen employed the help of his wife to copy orchestral parts for *L'Ascension*,⁴⁴ and from what I can tell, all epigraphs and a few movements of one *La Nativité* score.⁴⁵ Her dictations and secretarial work were surely welcomed (if not requested) by Messiaen, whose busy schedule of teaching, performing, and composing probably prevented him from attending to these matters.

Despite the successes from her own projects, much of Claire's life was ultimately tied to domestic duties. This was, of course, not uncommon in the 1930s. Claire did not have a day-to-day profession, and most women of her time still had limited social mobility. In fact, Hill and Simeone's *Messiaen* contains numerous pictures of Delbos enjoying other hobbies, namely painting⁴⁶ and tending her cacti.⁴⁷ The couple was also intent on starting a family, yet they faced unfortunate obstacles. Claire suffered several miscarriages, and they certainly affected her well-being.⁴⁸ Eventually, she gave birth to a son, Pascal Messiaen, on July 14, 1937.⁴⁹

⁴¹ *Notes pour la composition des offices à la Trinité, programmes, notes et registration*, Fonds Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMB MS-128, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

⁴² Various letters from Messiaen to Claude Arrieu, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, VM BOB-19496. I am thankful to Christine Jolivet Erlih for sharing similar letters to André Jolivet in her private collection. Additionally, such letters are found in the Carlton Lake Collection of French Manuscripts (Henry Ransom Center, University of North Texas Austin).

⁴³ François Sabatier reproduces programme notes from Messiaen's concert at La Trinité on February 17, 1938, but he does not admit that they are written in a hand other than Messiaen's. It is unclear whether Claire wrote the notes herself or if she simply transcribed them. "Olivier Messiaen, Documents des Archives des Amis de l'Orgue," *L'Orgue: Bulletin des Amis de l'Orgue* no. 295-296 (2011): 112.

⁴⁴ Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen in 1942: A Working Musician in Occupied Paris," in *Messiaen Studies*, edited by Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29.

⁴⁵ *La Nativité du Seigneur*, manuscrit autographe à l'encre, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, MS IFN-55011094. All titles and epigraphs are in her hand, and a few of the early movements seem to be copied by her as well.

⁴⁶ Hill and Simeone, 67-68.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 81. I am grateful to Nigel Simeone for sending me more pictures of Claire with cacti, demonstrating her fascination with these plants.

⁴⁸ Hilda Jolivet recounts an evening at the couple's apartment: "We had heard about the white wedding of these two ethereal beings, so I was astonished when my hostess started to confide in me about her difficulties with pregnancy, and her regret at not having children. The conversation between our two husbands must have been more enthralling, because it went on and on." Quoted in Hill and Simeone, 57.

⁴⁹ Stephen Schloesser posits that the name "Pascal" might either be a reference to the Catholic word for Easter ("Paschal") or to the French philosopher Blaise Pascal; the latter might have been an homage to Victor Delbos. Schloesser, 258.

1.4 THE WAR YEARS

With the beginning of the Second World War, the couple's years of collaborating and performing together were over. The summer of 1939 began like previous ones: a vacation to their home in Petichet. There, Messiaen finished writing his latest organ cycle *Les Corps glorieux* on August 25, just days before France declared war on Germany. He was called into service, while Claire and their two-year old son Pascal fled to her family's château in Neussargues. Shortly after the start of the war, Claire petitioned for Messiaen's reassignment to musical (and less physically demanding) posts. In a letter on October 23, 1939, she calls this a "request of a woman who wants to protect her husband,"⁵⁰ hoping that the recipient's position of power might influence Messiaen's relocation:

So, I am yours, Mr. Meunier, that your notoriety in the world of letters and music would give you easily access to one of the chief of the Radio (Radio-Paris, P.T.T. or others); that your demand, yours, would have the weight that mine could not have... You know my husband's artistic value.⁵¹

For the next two years, the couple lived separate lives. Messiaen was a serviceman and later prisoner in the occupied zone, while Claire raised their son alone in the free zone. The couple exchanged letters regularly during this period,⁵² and surviving correspondence conveys the mutual heartbreak of separation:

Olivier, my pet, I love you so much. May nothing make you suffer, be happy and confident – and brave in the face of days without a letter from me. Keep your spirits up as best you can. To that end, I slip my hand into yours, having first kissed it tenderly. I am your little Mie x Pascal x⁵³

Every day, I pray for Pascal and for you, and ask for all of us to be granted patience, a gift of the Holy Spirit. I long for my home, my music, and above all for your sweet presence and I embrace you with all my heart.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "requête d'une femme qui veut mettre son mari à l'abri."

⁵¹ "Alors, je suis à vous, Monsieur Meunier, que votre notoriété dans le monde des lettres et de la musique vous donnerait facilement accès auprès d'un des chefs de Poste de Radio (Radio-Paris, P.T.T. ou autres) ; que votre demande, à vous, aurait le poids que la mienne ne saurait avoir... Vous connaissez la valeur artistique de mon mari." Claire Messiaen to Mario Meunier, October 23, 1939. Carlton Lake Collection of French Manuscripts. Henry Ransom Center, University of North Texas Austin. 186.1.

⁵² Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone mention "Claire's regular letters to the front," although the BnF currently denies the existence of these documents in the Fonds Messiaen. Hill and Simeone, 87.

⁵³ Letter from Claire Delbos to Olivier Messiaen, November 24, 1939. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 90.

⁵⁴ Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Claire Delbos, August 19, 1940. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 96.

For your part, try not to be as neurasthenic about it as me: you have Pascal and a lovely church very nearby to comfort you and keep you on an even keel.⁵⁵

This final excerpt is all the more interesting, as it foreshadows Claire's eventual mental deterioration. Understandably, the wartime separation and living conditions were difficult for her to bear. Given the link between Claire's early compositions and Messiaen's inspiration, it is all the more curious to find an organ suite primarily composed while nearly 1,000 kilometers away from her husband. Although he certainly continued to play and improvise on the organ,⁵⁶ Messiaen took almost a ten-year hiatus from writing for this instrument. Clearly, this did not deter his wife. It is during this wartime period that she wrote most of her final and largest work for organ: *L'Offrande à Marie*. The bitter cold and loneliness clearly fueled Claire's compositional drive, and she even wrote another work for organ, *Parce, Domine (Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple...)*, in January 1941.

By March 10, 1941, Messiaen was reunited with Claire in Neussargues.⁵⁷ His visit was short-lived, however, and he split the next few weeks between his work with Association Jeune France in Vichy and Neussargues. Later in the spring, Messiaen took up a professorship at the Paris Conservatoire. Claire and Pascal were not allowed to join him until November of that year.⁵⁸ In spite of their long separation, Messiaen continued to support her music. He performed two movements of her latest cycle, "Mère des Pauvres" and "Debout, la Mère des douleurs," on December 28, 1941 at the Palais de Chaillot.⁵⁹ Diary

⁵⁵ Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Claire Delbos, March 28, 1941. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 106.

⁵⁶ In a letter to *L'Orgue*, Messiaen describes his experience as a soldier, writing that he was allowed to play the organ on some Sundays. He mentions improvising as well as playing repertoire such as Bach, Daquin, and Widor. See Miramon Fitz-James, "Les Amis de l'Orgue et la guerre," *L'Orgue*, no. 40-1 (Dec 1939-March 1940): 31. In a letter dated March 12, 1941 to Claire, Messiaen mentions going to Lyon to work out organ registrations, although he does not mention its purpose. See Hill and Simeone, 105.

⁵⁷ "Here...because I am free! with my wife and little Pascal! In Neussargues! (Cantal). Do I need to tell you what joy this gives me? I am gradually getting used to family life again, in fact to life pure and simple...." Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Claude Arrieu, March 10, 1941. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 103.

⁵⁸ "We read on Friday August 1: "DEPART FOR FREE ZONE" ... and on September 29: "RETURN TO PARIS." But he came back alone: despite many attempts, his wife and son were not allowed to return with him!"

"On lit au vendredi 1er août: "DÉPART ZONE LIBRE" ... et au 29 septembre: "RETOUR PARIS." Mais il y revint seul: malgré de nombreuses démarches, sa femme et son fils n'eurent pas le droit de rentrer avec lui!" *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-122 (1), 7.*

⁵⁹ *Transcription des agendas*, 8.

entries in the following year record him rehearsing Claire's music at La Trinité, probably registering her large suite for his instrument. He also arranged for her *Paraphrase* to be published with Lemoine, and he even planned a concert of her complete works.⁶⁰

November 1943 was perhaps the last time Messiaen presented his wife's organ music in a major concert. He performed a recital each evening of the 15th, 17th, and 19th.⁶¹ On November 17, Messiaen premiered her *L'Offrande à Marie*, bookending it with *Transports de joie* and *Le Banquet céleste*. Yvonne Loriod's transcription of his diary records a few details of these marathon concerts:

The three concerts were followed by a Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The three concerts were played by Olivier Messiaen to a full church, despite chilly conditions, and were rapturously received...Numerous rehearsals at La Trinité to prepare for the organ concert series, often with Loriod and Delapierre in attendance as registrants.⁶²

1.5 LATER YEARS AND DEATH

As early as 1945, Claire showed signs of forgetful and erratic behaviour. It was such a disturbance that Messiaen required a separate studio to work overnight:

Claire's health became difficult to cope with: she was in Neussargues in September and until October 1 – and her husband could not keep up his normal composition routine. There was a meeting on September 18 hosted by Delapierre to see if a studio could be rented at Fortin to serve as a workspace for Messiaen. This was arranged, but time was limited: "Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, from 2 to 6."⁶³

⁶⁰ Wednesday, July 15: "Trinité Mie." For the week of October 5-11, there is a note at the foot: "Trinité: concert orgue: Pierront (*Corps glorieux*), Zilgien (œuvres Mie au complet), Tobon-Mejia (œuvres Mie)." For the week of October 19-25, he writes at the foot of the page, "Jouer pièces d'orgue Mie." Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen in 1942," 28-30.

⁶¹ One newspaper announces concerts on November 8, 10, 12 at 6 PM, advertising that two important works (*Les Corps glorieux* and *L'Offrande à Marie*) will be premiered. See "Notes sans mesures," *Comoedia* (October 23, 1943), 7. At some point, the recitals were moved to the following week, as Loriod records concerts on November 15, 17, and 19 at 5:30 PM. *Transcription des agendas*, 15.

⁶² "Les 3 concerts ont été suivis d'un Salut du Très Saint-Sacrement. Les trois concerts ont été joués par Olivier Messiaen - dans une Église comble...et glaciale, et avec un succès immense...Nombreuses répétitions à la Trinité pour préparer les 3 concerts d'orgue avec, souvent, la présence de Loriod et de Delapierre (pour tirer les jeux." *Transcription des agendas*, 15. Guy Bernard-Delapierre was a fellow composer and close friend of Messiaen. See Hill and Simeone, 132 for more information.

⁶³ "La santé de Claire devenait difficile à vivre: elle était à Neussargues en septembre et jusqu'au 1er octobre – et son mari ne pouvait pas composer normalement. Il y eut une réunion le 18 septembre chez G. Delapierre pour voir s'il n'y aurait pas la possibilité de louer un studio chez Fortin pour que O. Messiaen puisse y travailler. Cela s'organisa, mais il n'y a que peu de temps: 'tous les mercredi, jeudi, vendredi, de 2h à 6 heures.'" *Transcription des agendas*, 24. Messiaen was even worried for the safety of his scores, and by 1949, he deposited drafts of pieces in the bank. See Hill and Simeone, 179.

While it remains unclear exactly how this condition affected her mental state, two unpublished chamber works prove that she must have been musically active. Perhaps her most daring and unique project was setting the plaintive Psalm 141 for solo soprano, female choir, four ondes Martenot, and piano.⁶⁴ The work was composed between 1941 and 1945,⁶⁵ and its instrumentation recalls a contemporaneous piece of her husband: *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine*. No surviving evidence suggests a premiere concert, although both manuscripts contain performance markings. Messiaen's previous collaboration with Ginette Martenot's ensemble for the 1937 Paris Exposition—the premiere of his *Fête des belles eaux*—most likely introduced Delbos to the ondes Martenot and its players.⁶⁶

Lamentation and anguish also surface in *Trois aspects de la mort*, a song cycle that draws on texts from Cécile Sauvage (*Fumées*), the Book of Job, and Messiaen's friend René de Obaldia (*Offrande à la Vierge Marie*). Delbos composed this cycle between 1944 and 1946, making its themes of death and desolation all the more poignant.⁶⁷ Messiaen surely played and performed these three movements, as both autograph manuscripts bear his pencil markings (i.e. metronome indications, dynamics, note changes, and timings).

Messiaen made sure to submit the rest of his wife's works to SACEM throughout 1948. A stamp on one manuscript of *Trois aspects de la mort* is dated April 21, 1948,⁶⁸ while the organ manuscripts *Offrande à la Vierge Marie*⁶⁹ and *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*⁷⁰ bear the date July 6 of that year. Clearly, Messiaen encouraged and supported his wife's

⁶⁴ *Psaume CXLI pour soprano solo, chœur (voix de femmes), 4 ondes Martenot et piano*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, VMA-MS-1642 and RES VMA MS-2176.

⁶⁵ At the end of MS-2176, Delbos writes "Oct 41, Mars 45," while the end of MS-1642 states "Oct 41, Mai 45."

⁶⁶ Jacques Tchamkerten, "From *Fête des belles eaux* to *Saint François d'Assise*: the evolution of the writing for Ondes Martenot in the music of Olivier Messiaen," in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art, and Literature*, edited by Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 65.

⁶⁷ *Trois aspects de la mort*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2186.

⁶⁸ *Trois aspects de la mort*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2191. *Psaume CXLI* (RES VMA MS-2176) also bears a 1948 stamp, although I have not recorded its exact date. It likely matches MS 2191's date or that of the organ works.

⁶⁹ Fonds Olivier Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2183.

⁷⁰ Fonds Olivier Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2180.

endeavors until illness made them no longer possible. Even as late as 1952, Messiaen secured Delbos's *Pardonnez Seigneur à votre peuple* for publication by Rouart, Lerolle et Cie.⁷¹

Claire's deterioration most likely began with a hysterectomy in January 1949. For fear of the anesthetic's effects on the brain, the operation was performed with an epidural; this was ultimately blamed for her gradual and debilitating amnesia over the next decade.⁷² One visitor to the Trinité loft in the early '50s recalls the sad, aged, and confused face of Madame Messiaen while her husband played Mass.⁷³ By this point, Messiaen and his teenage son took care of a totally dependent Claire,⁷⁴ and her illness was both distressing and distracting to the composer:

Emergency departure October 25 for Neussargues to go get his wife, whose memory was already failing and who was unsettling the neighbours in countless ways. Messiaen brought her back to Paris and, drawing on his acquaintance with the pianist Pierre Maillard, on October 28 he was able to temporarily place his wife in a nursing home run by the latter's family in L'Haÿ-les-Roses. Tests were ordered, results were not encouraging. 15 days under observation.⁷⁵

Delbos was later moved to the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris for further testing. On December 2, 1953, almost five years after her operation, she was given the following diagnosis:

A slowly-developing illness, an evolving infection that destroys the cerebral convolutions—Gardenal as a sedative, and another orally-administered drug to stimulate another sector—all this could prevent the illness from progressing—has been sick for a long time—could also live for quite a few more years...⁷⁶

⁷¹ Claire Delbos, *Parce, Domine (Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple...)*, Paris: Salabert, 1952.

⁷² *Transcription des agendas*, 38.

⁷³ Christian Lesur, conversation with author, September 16, 2019.

⁷⁴ "August 31 the two men tried to tidy up the Danube villa, messy, filthy, uncomfortable, (due to Claire's illness). Messiaen highly demoralized by his dire spiritual and financial straits...He found a cleaning lady." "31 août les deux hommes essaient de débayer la villa du Danube, désordre, saleté, inconfort, (dûs à la maladie de Claire). Messiaen extrêmement démoralisé par ses horribles soucis matériels, et moraux...Il trouva une femme de ménage." *Transcription des agendas*, 55.

⁷⁵ "Départ le 25 octobre d'urgence à Neussargues pour aller rechercher sa femme qui perdait déjà la mémoire et faisait mille choses qui inquiétaient les voisins. Il la ramène à Paris, et grâce au pianiste Pierre Maillard dont la famille s'occupait d'une maison de santé à l'Haÿ-les-Roses, Messiaen peut y placer momentanément sa femme le 28 octobre. On fit des testes qui furent tous mauvais. 15 jours en observation." *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁶ "Maladie lente, infection évolutive qui détruit des circonvolutions—Gardenal pour calmer, et autre potion buccale pour donner électricité à un autre secteur—le tout peut empêcher l'évolution de la maladie—malade depuis très longtemps—peut vivre aussi encore un grand nombre d'années..." *Ibid.*, 66.

Claire's condition required her living full-time in a nursing home, and Messiaen transferred her to La Varenne. Despite the effects Claire's illness had on his spirit, Messiaen visited her every Sunday after Mass and provided her with the best possible life until the end.⁷⁷ He also used the opportunity to conduct more field work, as numerous birdsong sketches record the location "La Varenne."⁷⁸ Over the course of the next few years, his beloved Mie eventually lost her mobility, eyesight, and ability to reason, being reduced to smiling innocently in a chair and unable to recognize her special visitor.⁷⁹ Due to poor conditions in the nursing home, Messiaen transferred Claire to Maison Molière in Bourg-la-Reine on November 7, 1957.⁸⁰ She lived there for almost two years until her death on April 22, 1959. Messiaen's diary entry three days later—the day of her funeral—records one of his saddest days. It also reveals how important his former student and performing partner Yvonne Loriod was for the grieving widower:

Messiaen was very pale when she [Loriod] met him. In a shaky voice, and with almost a grimace on his face, he said to her, "Something horrible has happened. Claire died on Wednesday, I just got back from the funeral..." Yvonne was very upset and sobbed at his feet. He said, "... Don't leave me, you're young and alive..."⁸¹

Claire's passing ushered in a new era for Olivier Messiaen, and it was one of long-sought renewal. As Christopher Dingle puts it, Messiaen must have felt a "sense of shackles being broken following the death of Claire."⁸² Though he no longer worried for his suffering wife, Messiaen still dealt with issues of her will and the Delbos estate years after her death.⁸³ Memories of her remained with him, as he visited her grave often and even

⁷⁷ Loriod recalls that Messiaen often brought her books and coloured pencils to cheer her. *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁸ See, for example, *Cahier de notations de chants d'oiseaux*, MS 23005, VM BOB-17797, Fonds Messiaen.

⁷⁹ In one diary entry, Loriod describes Claire as a child who smiles but is unable to understand. *Transcription des agendas*, 65.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁸¹ "Elle [Loriod] trouva O. Messiaen très pâle, et, la voix mal assurée, grimaçant presque, lui dit: 'il s'est passé quelque chose d'atroce: Claire est morte mercredi, je reviens de l'enterrement...' Yvonne, très bouleversée, pleura à ses genoux. Il lui dit: '...Il ne faut pas m'abandonner, tu es jeune et vivante...' *Ibid.*, 126.

⁸² Christopher Dingle, *The Life of Messiaen*, Musical Lives (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 156.

⁸³ Hill and Simeone, 257.

kept pictures of her in his work desk.⁸⁴ While no one could replace his beloved Mie, a young, talented pianist rekindled his spirit and musical drive. Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod were married in 1961, and thereafter Messiaen rarely spoke about Claire. In extensive interviews with the composer in the late 1950s, musicologist Antoine Goléa observes Messiaen's peculiar silence about his first wife. What Goléa later writes in *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* becomes the first of few published accounts of Delbos's tragic decline:

For a long time Messiaen kept these terrible things hidden, and when questioned about his wife he limited himself to responding vaguely that she was ill, and that she had been, before her illness, a very fine artist; then, later, unable to hide the truth, he spoke of her as a saint, because of her long and painful martyrdom."⁸⁵

In his newly recharged life with Loriod, Messiaen's career as a composer, pedagogue, and performer skyrocketed to international fame. Throughout all of this, his previous partner, supporter, and fellow musician—not to mention the pain of her “martyrdom”—remained with him. Such memories were, of course, highly personal and secret. Messiaen never publicly mentioned the name Claire Delbos again.

⁸⁴ Dingle, 154.

⁸⁵ “Messiaen a longtemps caché ces terribles choses, et lorsqu'on le questionnait sur sa femme, il se bornait à répondre vaguement qu'elle était malade, et qu'elle avait été, avant sa maladie, une artiste très fine; puis, plus tard, ne pouvant plus dissimuler la vérité, il parlait d'elle comme d'une sainte, à cause de son long et douloureux martyre.” Antoine Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: René Julliard, 1961), 151. Translated in Hill and Simeone, 158. Goléa recounts a story of Messiaen rehearsing *Chants de terre et de ciel* with Colette Herzog right after Claire's funeral. Messiaen supposedly looked calm and peaceful, seeming to come from “another world.” See Goléa, 152.

CHAPTER 2: *DEUX PIÈCES*

2.1 GENESIS AND RECEPTION

Between his revision of *L'Ascension* for solo organ and writing *La Nativité du Seigneur*, Olivier Messiaen did not compose anything for organ. It is during this hiatus (summers of 1934 and 1935) in which his wife most likely composed her first piece for the instrument. At some point before January 29, 1935, Claire Delbos wrote two miniatures under the modest title *Deux Pièces*: “L’homme né de la femme vit peu de jours...” and “La Vierge berce l’Enfant....” The whereabouts of any autograph manuscript are currently unknown, and thus information about the work’s genesis is mere speculation. Stephen Schloesser observes the two movements’ striking juxtaposition of themes: Job’s bemoaning the frailty of life versus a serene vignette of Mary and Jesus. He suggests that this work could have been Claire’s response to several miscarriages or the death of two-week-old Jacques Messiaen (Olivier’s half-brother) in July 1934.¹

Regardless of its origins, Delbos’s *Deux Pièces* were programmed by Messiaen in liturgies and concerts more than any other work of hers. The premiere took place on January 29, 1935 at Saint-Antoine-des-Quinze-Vingts, the church of Messiaen’s close friend Jean Langlais.² Also on the programme were debuts of Messiaen’s latest organ works, *Le Banquet céleste* and *L'Ascension*, alongside the music of his wife. These decisions, however, must not have been long-term plans of the couple. In a letter to André Jolivet just a few weeks before the recital, Messiaen admits that he is still unsure of his programme:

On Tuesday, January 29 I'm giving an organ recital at Saint-Antoine-des-Quinze-Vingts (9 p.m.). I don't know a single piece on the program, as it has all been decided

¹ *Visions of Amen: The Early Life and Music of Olivier Messiaen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 215.

² The full programme was: *O Salutaris Hostia* (Caplet), *Ave Mundi Gloria & Tantum Ergo* (Langlais), *L'Ascension* (Messiaen), Final of *La vie intérieure* (Daniel-Lesur), *Deux Pièces* (Delbos), *Apparition de l'Église éternelle* (Messiaen), Scherzetto (Langlais), *Le Banquet céleste* (Messiaen), *La Nativité* (Langlais), 9th Station of *Le Chemin de la Croix* (Dupré). *La Croix* (January 27-28, 1935), 2.

at the last minute. I request that you come, for I think that it will be of great interest to you.³

Thus, it seems unlikely that Claire wrote these pieces specifically for this event, making Schloesser's hypothesis all the more feasible. Messiaen did, however, programme Langlais's analogous depiction of the manger scene in this concert: "La Nativité" (*Trois Poèmes Évangéliques*, op. 2). This thematic pairing was the first of many conscious efforts to frame his wife's music within the Parisian organ circle. Messiaen continued to champion these pieces well beyond their premiere—*Deux Pièces* were published by Hérelle within that month and were later heard in La Spirale's inaugural concert (see Figure 1.2). He most likely recommended the score to his friends, as both Daniel Lesur⁴ and Lyon organist Guy Lambert⁵ included *Deux Pièces* in their repertoire.

2.2 CONTENT AND CONTEXT

Deux Pièces are Claire's first of several compositions inspired by Biblical stories and quotations. Of course, sacred scripture was a source mutually treasured by other French organists; consider, for instance, contemporaneous works of Charles Tournemire (*L'Orgue mystique*), Jean Langlais (*Trois Poèmes Évangéliques*), and Messiaen (*Le Banquet céleste*). The latter's use of Biblical epigraphs to frame his music are similarly found in Delbos's first movement, itself a quotation of Job 14:1. This is also her first of several works that dwell on bleaker aspects of Christianity. Themes of desolation later surface in her *Psaume CXLI* and song cycle *Trois aspects de la mort*, one movement of which also quotes the Book of Job.

³ "Je donne le mardi 29 janvier un récital d'orgue à Saint-Antoine des quinze vingts [sic] (21 heures). Je ne sais pas un seul morceau du programme, la chose s'étant décidée en dernière minute. Je vous demanderai d'y venir, car je crois que cela vous intéressera vivement." Letter from Olivier Messiaen to André Jolivet, January 5, 1935. I am grateful to Christine Jolivet Erlih for sharing this letter from her collection.

⁴ Lesur played "La Vierge berce l'Enfant" within a Mass at the Abbaye Benedictine in Paris. *L'Art musical* (January 8, 1937), 337.

⁵ In a review for *Le Monde musical*, Messiaen writes: "He regularly performs in Lyon the works of the young organ composers, whether in concert or during services: Duruflé, Langlais, Claire Delbos, Daniel-Lesur, Fleury, Litaize, etc." Quoted in Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 115.

Delbos sharply contrasts the suffering and brevity of human life with the tranquility of the manger scene. Perhaps it is this Catholic's belief in man's redemption through the birth of Jesus. These pieces not only juxtapose a story of the Old Testament with that of the New, but also the terrestrial versus celestial worlds. Much of Messiaen's music from this decade uses the latter narrative, namely "Diptyque" (subtitled "Essai sur la vie terrestre et l'Éternité bienheureuse") and "Combat de la Mort et de la Vie." Both composers connect disparate theological elements—and thus musical material—as a statement on man's relationship with God. Interestingly, in describing Cécile Sauvage's *L'Âme en bourgeon*, Pierre Messiaen references the same quote as his daughter-in-law: "*Homo natus de muliere, brevi vivens tempore. The Budding Soul*, reuniting the crib and the tomb, without the spirit of super-terrestrial hope, can do nothing but scandalize a Christian."⁶ Sauvage's poetic union of death and new life, observed decades later by her husband, resonates with a similar juxtaposition in *Deux Pièces*; note that Claire would revisit this theme just a year later when she set *L'Âme en bourgeon* to music.

While Messiaen and his colleagues did play *Deux Pièces* in concert, most performances were heard within the context of Mass at La Trinité. Messiaen used the theology evoked in Delbos's titles (mortality and the Nativity) to comment on appropriate feasts throughout the liturgical year. As seen in Appendix 3, he repeatedly programmed both movements, and several patterns emerge. The first movement was heard during seasons of penitence (Advent, Lent, Passiontide) as well as feasts with an eschatological focus (All Saints, final Sundays of the year).⁷ As suggested in its title, Messiaen played "La Vierge berce l'Enfant" at Christmas and various feasts for Mary. Two excerpts of his 11 AM Mass programmes not only show a concern for harmony between music and scripture, but

⁶ Pierre Messiaen, *Images* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1944); quoted and translated in Schloesser, *Visions of Amen*, 16.

⁷ *Notes pour la composition des offices à la Trinité, programmes, notes et registration*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMB MS-128, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

also the pairing of his wife's music with that of the contemporary organ scene.⁸ Perhaps most striking is its appearance with Messiaen's own vignette of the Madonna and Child, a piece written several months after Delbos's. Numerous La Trinité programmes feature both pieces, further attesting to the intimacy with which the couple composed.

Entrée: Le Chemin de la Croix (9^e Station) (Dupré)
 Offertoire: L'homme, né de la femme, vit peu de jours (Delbos)
 Communion: Scène de la Passion (Daniel-Lesur)
 Sortie: Jésus accepte la souffrance (Messiaen)

7 Février 1943, 11h - La Purification

Entrée: Offertoire de l'Assomption (Tournemire)
 Offertoire: La Vierge berce l'Enfant (Claire Delbos)
 Communion: La Vierge et l'Enfant (Messiaen)
 Sortie: Toccata sur Ave maris stella (Dupré)

2.3 ANALYSIS

Like their subject matter, Delbos's *Deux Pièces* do not share obvious musical themes or material. Both, however, show the composer's predilection for specific intervals, material seen throughout her entire œuvre: interval class 1 (minor second and its inversive equivalences) and interval class 6 (tritone). The combination of both intervals in set class (016) is one link between both pieces, whose motives exploit the intervals therein: minor second, perfect fourth, and tritone. As seen in Example 2.1, Job's lament figure in the first movement features a descending tritone and perfect fourth, while the *berceuse* motive of the following piece is an upward response to these same intervals. Of course, Delbos's



Example 2.1: (016) Motives in *Deux Pièces*
 "L'homme" (left) and "La Vierge" (right)



Example 2.2: The "Boris motive" in *Technique*
 (Example 76)

⁸ Programmes in Figure 2.1 come from *Notes pour la composition des offices*, 46r and 24v, respectively.

preference for such intervals, particularly the tritone, is not unique. In his *Technique de mon langage musical*, Messiaen documents his fondness for the so-called “Boris motive,” distinct in its half-step turn and descending tritone (Example 2.2).⁹ While Delbos never explicitly quotes her husband’s beloved motive, the contours of her melodies repeatedly highlight intervals that inspired his own material.

2.3.1 “L’HOMME, NÉ DE LA FEMME, VIT PEU DE JOURS...”

Although Delbos employs melodic figures similar to those in contemporaneous works of her husband, her melodies are much more concise. The general shape of the “lament motive” in measure 1 forms the basis of almost every subsequent measure. Such economy of material results in a limited melodic range—no figure leaps more than a perfect fifth. Delbos exploits this constricted tonal space with enharmonicism, as the arrival of a Db-major triad in m. 5 leads to motivic development around another common-tone region: A major (Example 2.3). The accompanimental right hand also stays within a limited range. Its wedge-like motion in mm. 6-8 exemplifies the close, chromatic hovering that dominates much of her music.

R: Voix humaine, Bourdon 8
G: Bourdon 8

Très lent *pp*

Example 2.3: “L’homme...,” mm. 1-8.

⁹ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), vol. 1, 31. On this same page, Messiaen gives his famous defense of the tritone: “Recall that a very fine ear clearly perceives an F-sharp in the natural resonance of a low C. The F-sharp is endowed with an attraction toward the C, which becomes its normal resolution.”

Delbos's phrase construction shows a preference for asymmetry and irregularity, although several techniques from common practice music underlie the structure. A question-answer model begun in the first four measures is soon thwarted with free motivic development, creating irregular phrase lengths. Note the simple use of sequential repetition in Example 2.4, although the 5/8 measures upset any sense of metrical predictability.



Example 2.4: "L'homme...", mm. 13-16.

Phrase endings are often articulated with a harmonic rarity of Delbos: pure triads. Many cadences, such as that in Example 2.5, are formed via contrary motion and the propulsion from a moment of huddled dissonances to temporary stasis. The piece ends with an unprecedented, optimistic shift up the keyboard, although the comparatively wide descent of a fifth in m. 20 gives way to one more proclamation of the weeping motive (Example 2.6). Note also that the transition between m. 16 and these final measures reveal more enharmonicism ($A\flat = G\sharp$) and a subsequent hovering around E-based sonorities. Within a pitch space relatively far from the beginning, this ending negates any sense of tonal unity.



Example 2.5: "L'homme...", mm. 11-12.



Example 2.6: "L'homme...", mm. 18-21.

Like much of Delbos's output, chromatic meandering and triadic constructions outside of a tonal context dominate this miniature. One reviewer even ponders Claire's style and this scriptural quotation, defining the movement as "a harsh, slow, and short piece, undoubtedly to illustrate its title."¹⁰ Although its brevity and harshness certainly serve the title, the piece's sparse texture aptly describes Delbos's overall language.

2.3.2 "LA VIERGE BERCE L'ENFANT..."

The illusion of phrase regularity is also found in the second movement, which coupled with recurring dotted rhythms, conjure the atmosphere of a *berceuse*. The question-answer model in the opening two measures is expanded and then contracted to create an asymmetrical phrase (Example 2.7). Her use of one 3/4 bar in an otherwise 2/4 piece further contributes to the phrase's irregular construction. Like the preceding piece, Delbos exploits a limited pitch space through enharmonic reinterpretation. Although she never tonicizes a key in the traditional sense of the word, she does suggest and hover between close pitch regions. Oscillation between flat and sharp key areas occurs via common tones; note the repeated use of C# / Db in the example below. Similarly, the left-hand accompaniment hovers within a limited range. The alternation of chromatic neighbors, seen in the opening A-Ab motion, contributes to a gentle rocking feeling already suggested by the rhythm and phrase structure.

R: Voix céleste, Gambe, Flûte 8

G: Flûte harm.

Péd: 16, 8 doux, Tir. R.

Presque lent

R *pp*

legato

1 + 1 2 + 1 1.5 3 (bars of 2 beats)

Example 2.7: "La Vierge...", mm. 1-9.

¹⁰ "une pièce âpre, lente et courte, sans doute pour illustrer son titre." W[anda] L. Landowski, "Radio Paris," *L'Art Musical* (November 22, 1935), 48.

The fan-like gesture at the end of the first phrase demonstrates a recurring voice leading technique in Delbos's music: chromaticism in contrary motion. Compare this wedge progression to an earlier piece of Delbos: the opening movement of *Primevère* (Example 2.8). Smooth, stepwise ascent and descent resolve the tightly compact sonority into a harmonic point of arrival. The chromatic techniques in Figures 2.7 and 2.8 are substitutions for traditional cadential motion, and they often articulate moments of arrival.



Example 2.8: *Primevère/i*, mm. 1-4.

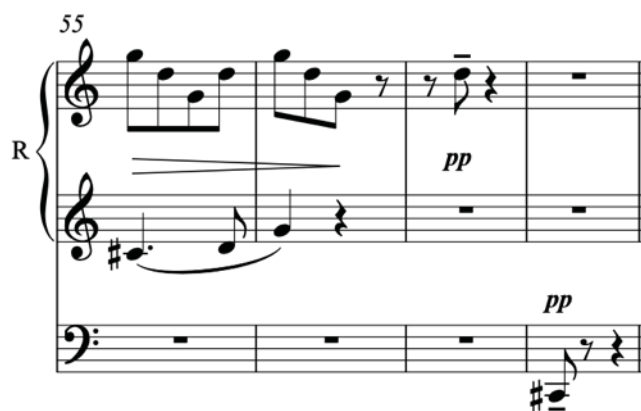
The berceuse figure's initial ascent to G foreshadows an eventual G-based ostinato to accompany a reprise of the theme (Example 2.9). Like the earlier rocking motion, the oscillation between G and D creates a hypnotic atmosphere above which the opening theme and A-Ab (now G#) motive occur. The pedal's entrance further illustrates Delbos's economic use of material, as the theme now appears fragmented and in augmentation. Note too that the pedal's C#-D ascent counters the downward rocking of A to G#—chromatic wedges now appear on another structural level.



Example 2.9: "La Vierge...", mm. 37-40.

Delbos's use of an ostinato as a trope for the ethereal is not uncommon, and examples in pieces of similar subject matter are found in French organ literature of the time. Both Jean Langlais's "La Nativité" (played by Messiaen) and George Migot's "Bergerie à la

crèche” (reviewed by Messiaen)¹¹ exploit the harmonic and rhythmic stasis of an ostinato. While the compositional technique is not original, Delbos employs it within her own delicate, stark atmosphere. Like the first movement, the piece ends with a sudden reduction in texture (Example 2.10). The ostinato figure ends one eighth note too soon, and amid rests and octave displacements, the berceuse motive—now in retrograde—sounds for a final time: G-D-C#.



Example 2.10: “La Vierge...,” mm. 55-58.

2.4 MESSIAEN AS INTERPRETER

As previously mentioned, an autograph manuscript of *Deux Pièces* has not yet surfaced. Such a document might reveal the extent to which Claire’s conception aligns with the printed edition. As will be shown in later chapters, Messiaen was heavily involved in the editing process of her organ works. Many of his annotations in early drafts were copied by Delbos in later versions, and these indications ultimately surface in the publication. Perhaps Messiaen did the same for his wife’s very first composition. While the registration of the second piece (undulating strings and flutes) abounds in other organ works of the time, the combination prescribed in the first movement does not. The pairing of the *Récit* Voix humaine and Bourdon without a tremulant creates a cold, stale atmosphere. The lack of undulation and sparsity of stops certainly illustrate the text from which the title is derived. There are no stop changes, and the *Récit*’s dynamic range hovers between *piano* and *pianissimo*.

¹¹ Reviewing George Migot’s *Premier livre d’orgue* (1938) in *La Revue Musicale*, Messiaen writes: “‘Bergerie à la crèche’ has a sweet and mysterious poetry. The Virgin rocks the baby Jesus. A pedal ostinato in a semi-chromatic mode prolongs the rhythmic gradation of the berceuse through its alternation between four and five quavers.” Quoted and translated in Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 85.

The registrations in the printed score, while generic and relatively pale, are all possible at the organs of Saint-Antoine-des-Quinze-Vingts and La Trinité. Interestingly, the pieces only call for two manuals (Récit and Grand Orgue) and are thus flexible among different instruments. Documentary evidence of Messiaen's own scheme does exist, and it reveals a creative and liberal approach to registration. Of the two copies of *Deux Pièces* currently in a private collection, one score contains Messiaen's markings for the organ at the Schola Cantorum; his performances at this venue likely date the document to March and/or December 1935.¹² The registration annotations resemble his customary procedure at La Trinité: "[location] Départ:" followed by registrations and swell box positions. Additionally, he uses red and blue pencils to indicate stop changes—one colour for each side of the instrument. This visual aid for registrants is similarly found in scores for his own music at La Trinité, documents now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The first movement does not bear any extra annotations by Messiaen beyond his registration scheme (Table 2.1). Note that the organ in the Schola Cantorum¹³ did not have a Voix humaine, resulting in Messiaen's curious substitute: a string and four-foot flute. He also abides by the score's narrow dynamic spectrum, even adding a reminder not to use the full range of the swell box.

Table 2.1: A Comparison of Registration for Delbos's "L'homme..."

Edition (Hérelle 1935)	Messiaen's Schola Cantorum Score (Collection Christian Lesur)
R: Voix humaine, Bourdon 8 G: Bourdon 8	Schola Départ: R: gbe et fl 4 > (faire très peu les nuances) P: cor de nuit >

¹² The two scores are currently in the collection of Christian Lesur, son of Messiaen's friend and colleague Daniel Lesur. I am grateful for Mr. Lesur's permission to use this material. One score does not contain any markings and, at the top, bears the inscription: "À Daniel-Lesur avec toute ma sympathie et mes sentiments amicaux - Claire Delbos."

¹³ For a stoplist of the Schola Cantorum instrument, see Vincent Hildebrandt, "Schola Cantorum," Organs of Paris, <https://www.organsparisaz4.vhhil.nl/Schola%20Cantorum.htm> (accessed January 25, 2020).

Messiaen's annotations in "La Vierge berce l'Enfant" are more abundant, and they reveal a freer approach to the printed instructions. As evident in Table 2.2 (page 39), Messiaen exploits all three manuals to create a more nuanced sound. Unlike the score's indication for the Récit Gambe and Voix céleste throughout, Messiaen primarily uses the Positif Dulciane without undulation. Not until measure 24 does he couple the Récit division (at 16' pitch), an effect which gives the sound more gravitas than adding the 16' Bourdon as prescribed. Messiaen also modifies the edition's manual distributions in order to solo out lines. His use of the Positif and Grand Orgue in the ostinato section beginning in m. 35 allow for a Récit "echo" of the A-G# oscillation in m. 51. Finally, as seen in Figure 2.2, the repetition of the F#-D# descent in m. 23—sweetened with a cadence in B major—is highlighted with another echo effect: the Positif Cor de nuit temporarily substitutes for the Dulciane.

The figure displays three systems of musical notation for organ. The top-left system, measures 21-23, is in 2/4 time and features a Récit division (labeled 'R'). Above the staff, red text indicates 'Pos: Dulciane' and '- Dulc + Cor de nuit' with a red arrow pointing to measure 23. The top-right system, measures 55-56, also shows a Récit division ('R') with a red line connecting the two measures. The bottom system, measures 47-49, shows two staves: 'Pos' (Positif) and 'G.R.' (Grand Orgue). A red '7' is marked in measure 48 of the G.R. staff.

Figure 2.2: Messiaen's Annotations in "La Vierge..." (Collection Christian Lesur)

The two other markings in Figure 2.2 confirm Messiaen's upbringing in the French organ school, particularly as a disciple of his teacher Marcel Dupré. Messiaen ties the two G's between measures 55 and 56, a case of *notes communes* repeatedly championed

by Dupré and his colleagues.¹⁴ In addition, Messiaen reminds himself of the repeated C# between measures 48 and 49. His insertion of an eighth rest calls to mind another rule of his maître: repeated notes lose exactly half their value.¹⁵ Such techniques were understood as commonplace and idiomatic to any expert, and these annotations are most likely reminders for a newly minted organist. Therefore, Messiaen's annotations throughout his wife's *Deux Pièces* not only show a flexible approach to the printed material, but also a glimpse into his relatively recent training at the Paris Conservatoire.

¹⁴ "The first of two repeated notes loses half of its value."

"On enlèvera à la première des deux notes répétées la moitié de sa valeur." Marcel Dupré, *Méthode d'Orgue* (Paris: Leduc, 1927), 7. In fact, Messiaen entered Dupré's organ class in the same year as this treatise's publication.

¹⁵ "When two voices succeed each other on a same note which is called "common," this note should be tied."
 "Lorsque deux voix se succèdent sur une même note, dite "commune", cette note doit être liée." Ibid., 62.

Table 2.2:
Olivier Messiaen's Annotations versus the Published Edition of Delbos's "La Vierge berce l'Enfant"

Measure(s)	Edition (Hérelle 1935)	Messiaen's Schola Cantorum Score (Collection Christian Lesur)
Opening registration	R: Voix céleste, Gambe, Flûte 8 G: Flûte harm. Péd: 16, 8 doux, Tir. R.	Schola Départ: R: gbe, v. cél > P: dulciane > G: bourdon 8 (Intr G) Péd: sb 16 tir. Pos.
1 (and all analogous measures)	Both hands on Récit	Both hands on Positif
2 (and all analogous measures)	Right hand on GR	Right hand on G (uncoupled)
9, beat 3	All notes on GR	Only soprano C# on G (rest of chord on Pos)
23	Both hands on Récit	Pos: - dulc + cor de nuit
24	Right hand: GR (G: - Fl. harm. + bourdon 16)	Right hand: G - bourdon 8 + PG et RG en 16 Pos: - cor de nuit + dulc
35	Right hand: R (Fl. 8) Left hand: G.R. (G - Bourdon 16 + Salicional et Fl. harm.)	Right hand: Pos (- dulc + cor de nuit) Left hand: G (+ RG, - PG et RG en 16)
48, beat 2		Left hand: Eighth rest between repeated C#'s
51-52	Left hand: G.R.	Left hand: Récit
54		"dim." above RH
55-56	Both hands on Récit	Both hands on Positif
56		Tie between beats 1 and 2 G's
58	Pedal: <i>pp</i>	Pedal: - Tir Pos (TSF*: en 8 ^{ve})

*It is not clear what "TSF" means. Perhaps it was an acronym for another venue where he played the pedal one octave higher.

CHAPTER 3: *PARAPHRASE*

3.1 GENESIS AND RECEPTION

On March 14, 1939, Olivier Messiaen played a particularly extravagant recital at La Trinité for the music society La Sérénade. He performed music of society members Francis Poulenc and Henri Sauguet, earlier repertoire of Nicolas de Grigny and Erik Satie, as well the premiere of his wife's latest organ work.¹ This recital, and especially Delbos's four-movement *Paraphrase sur le jugement dernier*, was heavily reviewed by the press.² As evident in Appendix 5, her apocalyptic piece was met with mixed reactions; some found it highly original, while others were surprised by a female composer's evocation of the Last Judgement.³ Among its biggest supporters was Jean Langlais, who wrote an analysis and flattering critique of the work. Another advocate of this suite was Claire's friend and Messiaen's assistant at La Trinité, Line Zilgien (1906-1954). She played *Paraphrase* as well as other works of Delbos in concert, and one manuscript includes a dedication to this performer:

To Line Zilgien: this "too small" of a thank you for the magnificent interpretation on May 28, 1946 in all admiration and friendship. Claire Delbos⁴

This score, like the other surviving versions of this piece, is curiously written in the hand of Olivier Messiaen. Claire's original manuscript is not found within her archives at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, so information about the work's timeline is lacking. This missing document also raises questions of Delbos's contributions to the score: who

¹ Works included Satie's *Messe des pauvres*, Delbos's *Paraphrase*, six movements of Messiaen's *La Nativité*, Sauguet's *Petite Messe pastorale*, Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge Noire*, and de Grigny's *Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux*. Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 82.

² Just a few weeks after the recital, Claire (writing as Messiaen) requests two copies of each article mentioning the names Olivier Messiaen and Claire Delbos. She cites three articles found in Appendix 5. Olivier Messiaen to Lit. Tout, April 2, 1939. Carlton Lake Collection of French Manuscripts. Henry Ransom Center, University of North Texas Austin. 186.1.

³ See in particular Suzanne Demarquez, *L'Art musical* (March 24, 1939), 757, found in Appendix 5.

⁴ "À Line Zilgien: ce "trop petit" remerciement [sic] pour la magnifique interprétation de 28 Mai 1946 en tout [sic] admiration et amitié. Claire Delbos." Private collection of Michel Chapuis. I am grateful to Carolyn Shuster Fournier for copies of documents in this collection.

conceived of the registrations, articulations, and performance markings in the printed edition? A 1942 diary entry does confirm Messiaen securing this piece for publication by Lemoine, and the work was eventually published in 1949.⁵ As will be discussed later, he most likely translated these apocalyptic visions into his own registrations at La Trinité. Delbos did, however, write the programme notes now attached to one autograph manuscript in the BnF. While brief, the descriptions in Figure 3.1 point to her preoccupation with musical material, not organ sound.

Figure 3.1: Delbos's Programme Notes to *Paraphrase*
(RES VMA MS-2187)

Paraphrase pour orgue – Claire Delbos
A trait au jugement dernier. Quatre parties enchaînées.
Paraphrase for organ - Claire Delbos
On the Last Judgment. Four parts, attacca

I – La résurrection des morts – Ébranlement, sonnerie de trompette, appels de la rapture [sic] à la résurrection; puis les morts se levèrent (thème ascendant) et vont au devant du juste Juge (le même thème descendant). Angoisse universelle – Clameurs: “Pardonnez, Ô Christ, à vos serviteurs, pour qui aux tribunal de la clémence du Père – Marie notre patronne, prie.”
(Hymne de la Toussaint)
I – The resurrection of the dead – earthquake, trumpet blasts, calls of the rapture to the resurrection; then, the dead rise (ascending theme) and go before the just Judge (same theme, descending). Universal anguish – Cries of: “Forgive, O Christ, your servants, for whom our Virgin protectress begs for mercy before the judgment of the Father.” (Hymn for All Saints)

II – Marie, toute puissance suppliante – Phrase tendre et obstinée.
II – Mary, all supplicating power – A tender and persistent phrase.

III – Foi en la médiation de Marie – bien court choral qui reprend la dernière phrase de l’hymne
III – Faith in the mediation of Mary – a rather short chorale which takes up the last phrase of the hymn

IV – Cantique à l’Agneau – Deux thèmes essentiels: Sanctus de la Messe des Anges (Cantique des Anges) et psaume “Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo” (cantique des hommes)
IV – Song of the Lamb – Two core themes: Sanctus from the Missa de Angelis (Song of angels) and the Psalm, “Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo” (Song of men)

⁵ January 17, 1942: “He set about getting his wife’s piece, *Paraphrase*, published by Lemoine.”

“Il s’occupait de faire éditer chez Lemoine la “Paraphrase” de sa femme.” *Transcription des agendas d’Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-122 (1), 9.*

II. CONTENT AND CONTEXT

The subtitle in the printed edition states *Paraphrase's* inspiration from eschatological feasts of the Church: "Pour la Fête de tous les Saints, le jour des Morts, les Dimanches 24^e après la Pentecôte et 1^{er} de l'Avent."⁶ The appointed readings for these Sundays speak of the faithful departed, the Second Coming, and the afterlife—commemorations of the Church on earth and in heaven. As in *Deux Pièces*, Delbos juxtaposes matters of terrestrial and celestial life. The Book of Revelation's song of the Lamb is pitted against the Old Testament's 89th Psalm, in which the psalmist sings of God's eternal mercy. Moreover, the first movement's depiction of death is answered in an optimistic vision of the New Jerusalem, a theological statement already seen at the end of Messiaen's recent *Chants de terre et de ciel*: "Minuit pile et face (pour la mort)" and "Résurrection (pour le jour de Pâques)."

Consider also Delbos's choice of title. Musical paraphrasing was the central role of French liturgical organists, most notably her contemporary Charles Tournemire.⁷ His mammoth cycle of 51 offices, *L'Orgue mystique* (1927-32), is a commentary on prescribed texts in the liturgical calendar. In fact, the title "Paraphrase" can be found in contemporaneous organ compositions: several *sorties* of Tournemire as well as works of Tournemire's disciples.⁸ Claire's introduction to liturgical organ playing surely came from her frequent visits to the La Trinité loft. In fact, Messiaen once spoke of his role as musical commentator on scripture and liturgical action:

As an organist, it's my job to comment on the texts of the daily office. These texts glorify very different truths, express very different feelings, and also instill very

⁶ Claire Delbos, *Paraphrase* (Paris: Lemoine, 1949).

⁷ Delbos mostly like met Tournemire, as her husband played and reviewed his organ works. In one letter, dated December 1932, Messiaen and Delbos even planned to visit Tournemire: "I wanted to go see you at your place with my wife so that she could play for you one of my latest works for violin and piano and also to ask you for comments on a new symphonic poem." "Je désirais aller vous voir chez vous avec ma femme afin qu'elle vous joue une de mes dernières œuvres pour violon et piano et aussi pour vous demander vos critiques sur un nouveau poème symphonique." Joël-Marie Fauquet, ed., "Correspondance inédite: Lettres d'Olivier Messiaen à Charles Tournemire," *L'Orgue: Cahiers et mémoires, Charles Tournemire (1870-1939)* no. 41 (Paris: Association des Amis de l'orgue, 1989), 84.

⁸ *Paraphrase-Carillon* (*L'Assomption*, op. 57 no. 35), *Paraphrase* (Noël, op. 55 no. 3), *Paraphrases sur un choral* (*L'Ascension*, op. 56 no. 23). Consider also the opus 5 of his successor at Ste-Clotilde, Jean Langlais: *Trois paraphrase grégoriennes* (1935).

different states of grace, depending on the particular nuances of the relevant liturgical season.⁹

If we consider Delbos's titles as theological commentary, these evocative headings resonate with traditional Catholic doctrine. The feasts of All Saints and All Souls connect the Church of the living with that in heaven (angels and saints). Delbos begins her cycle with an apocalyptic depiction of the rapture and ends with the joyful song of the angels: the Sanctus. This text from the Ordinary of the Mass describes Isaiah's vision of the throne of God, and it is believed to be sung ceaselessly by the angels. In her description of the finale, Delbos notes a second theme, the sixth psalm tone sung to the text of Psalm 89. Although this psalm has no liturgical function within any feasts mentioned in the subtitle, its reference to eternity allies itself with the finale's first theme, the angels' perpetual song. Both of the aforementioned feasts anticipate Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year, and a time when Catholics contemplate both the historical and future comings of Christ. The literary basis for Tournemire's cycle, Dom Prosper Guéranger's *L'Année liturgique*, offers a contemporaneous perspective of this season: "But the day of this last Coming to her [the Church], will be a day of terror. The Church frequently trembles at the very thought of that awful judgment, in which all mankind is to be tried."¹⁰

Upon initial impression, the inner movements' references to Mary seems incongruous with other themes in *Paraphrase*. However, her role as intercessor between God and mankind results in robust Marian devotion throughout the year. Guéranger connects the feasts of All Saints and All Souls with the Virgin Mary, and the Gregorian hymn quoted in the first movement (loosely translated by Delbos in Figure 3), pleads for Mary's

⁹ "En tant qu'organiste, j'ai le devoir de commenter les textes propres à l'office du jour. Ces textes exaltent des vérités très différentes, expriment des sentiments très différents et suscitent des grâces également très différentes, suivant la couleur spéciale du temps dont l'office fait partie." Antoine Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: René Julliard, 1961), 38.

¹⁰ Dom Prosper Guéranger, *L'Année liturgique*, translated as *The Liturgical Year* by Laurence Shepherd, vol. 1 (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1870), 34.

intercession.¹¹ Guéranger also recommends a “special Prayer, which the Church says, during Advent” in honour of Mary, and he asks her to “give ear to our humble petitions, and grant that we who believe her to be truly the Mother of God, may be helped by her prayers.”¹² Delbos’s references to the clemency of Mary shows a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother, and this theme will dominate her final work for organ.

Despite *Paraphrase*’s inspiration from liturgical and devotional practices, Messiaen programmed it only once at Mass (see Appendix 3). The score’s indication for each movement to be played successively (*enchainez*) would have made a performance during the Mass impractical. Note too that by the time these specific feasts were celebrated in 1939, the war uprooted Messiaen from his post. Nevertheless, Claire’s latest organ cycle must have stimulated conversations of Catholic theology with her husband. Their mutual faith certainly fueled projects after this decade, beginning with a new organ work of Messiaen. Within a few months of *Paraphrase*’s premiere, Messiaen rendered his own illustration of death and resurrection: *Les Corps glorieux*.

3.3 ANALYSIS

After the delicacy of Delbos’s previous two pieces comes a more experimental approach to harmony, texture, and rhythm in *Paraphrase*. Jean Langlais’s lengthy review in *Le Monde musical* observes its progressive aspects and compares her music with that of the past and present. Its illustrative depiction of the rapture and overall thematic material remind him of J.S. Bach’s “Aus tiefer Not,” while the “presence of a series” (octatonic collection) shows Delbos’s affiliation with the modern school:

¹¹ Guéranger notes that All Saints “is indeed a sequel to Mary’s triumph [Assumption].” He later writes, “We must understand, then, why we sing the *Magnificat* in the Office of the Dead: it is the loyal homage to Mary of the souls that are entering heaven, and the sweet hope of those still detained in the region of expiation.” *Ibid.*, vol. 15, 75 and 93.

¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 52.

This composition, precise in form and symbolic in import, takes inspiration from certain Bach chorale preludes for organ (Book VI no. 31) and from the bold sonorities of atonal composers, a relationship evident from the presence of a series."¹³

3.3.1 "LA RÉSURRECTION DES MORTS"

Most of the material in the opening movement comes from a single pitch collection: OCT (1,2). Within this limited framework, Delbos constructs and expounds upon her themes described in Figure 3. A growling cluster in the feet provide a pedal point above the solemn trumpet call (m. 2) and resurrection motive (m. 3). This contrast between the extremely low and high registers of the organ creates a relatively transparent texture, though clouded by the 32' Bourdon.

Example 3.1: "La résurrection des morts," mm. 1-3.

A rising ostinato gradually thickens the texture using pitches solely from OCT (1,2). The Last Judgement interrupts this *marche funèbre*, and it appears as a retrograde version of the resurrection motive (Example 3.2). This climax also shows Delbos's use of uneven values (added and halved), a technique that dominates the rest of this cycle. Its asymmetry

Example 3.2: "La résurrection des morts," mm. 15-17.

¹³ "Cette œuvre, précise de forme et symbolique de tendance, tient à la fois de certain choral de Bach pour orgue (Livre VI n° 31) et des audacieuses élaborations sonores des musiciens de l'atonalité auxquels elle s'apparente par la présence d'une Série." Jean Langlais, *Le Monde musical* (March 1939), 95. Langlais most likely refers to BWV 686 or 687. See Appendix 5 for the complete review.

undermines the steadiness of the previous ostinato, while its dramatic intensity is heightened by an *accelerando* down the keyboard.

The following section exhibits a rhythmic technique unique to Delbos's music, a term I call a "rhythmic stutter." This always occurs in tandem with a chromatic cluster, and in the case of Example 3.3, Delbos repeats the same octatonic aggregate in unequal durations. While the figure implies harmonic stasis, its syncopation results in a chaotic, unsettling effect. Perhaps it is due to the relatively lean texture and narrow range that Delbos so often employs these relentless figures; they provide another layer of interest and animation to the music. This particular instance creates a certain symmetrical shape in the left hand, what Messiaen calls "non-retrogradable rhythm."¹⁴ The chord's steady diminution and subsequent augmentation complement the regularity of the pedal's ostinato and harmonic stasis of a single pitch collection. Though used here as an evocation of the

Example 3.3: "La résurrection des morts," mm. 18-20.

Example 3.4: "La résurrection des morts," left hand, mm. 18-20.

¹⁴ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), vol. 1, 20. However, this is the only example of a non-retrogradable rhythm that I have found in the music of Delbos.

ébranlement described in Figure 3, the stutter's appearance throughout her music makes it a Delbos trademark.

The right hand presents a rhythmicized version of the All Saints hymn *Placare Christe servulis* and Delbos harmonizes it with stammering Grand Orgue clusters as well as (01) and (02) dyads. Note that Delbos also retains the mode of the original melody; this quotation technique is not shared by her husband, who often conceals a chant within his own modes.¹⁵ The chant's modal purity further highlights the significance of its quotation—white-key melodies come as relief from an otherwise octatonic landscape. Furthermore, Claire's highly syncopated use of plainsong is unique among contemporaneous organ repertoire. A survey of her quotations proves that they are consciously calculated to render the same number of syllables as if sung; repeated notes are never tied, and notes with added values (dots and ties) mimic the ebb and flow of sung chant. Also unique to Delbos are dyads that colour her chants. The clusters in this section do not fall within the OCT (1,2) collection, and they move chromatically with the contour of *Placare Christe servulis*. Although written in a compact texture, the dissonance of this section results from a layering of simple processes: an octatonic ostinato, octatonic stutters, dyads of major/minor seconds, and a highly rhythmicized melody. Perhaps this amalgamation into chaotic sound prompted this quotation of Paul Dukas in Langlais's review: "Disorder is depicted through order."¹⁶

3.3.2 "MARIE, TOUTE PUISSANCE SUPPLIANTE"

Like *Deux Pièces*, this lyrical second movement exploits a single (016) motive. Compare her economical use of this set class with the fourth movement of her earlier *Primevère* (Example 3.5). Both excerpts exhibit a rather narrow range, although her organ

¹⁵ See, for example, the second half of "Le Verbe," in which he quotes *Victimae paschali laudes*, as well as "Subtilité des Corps glorieux," an ornamented version of *Salve Regina*. In one performance score, Messiaen writes the title for each of Delbos's quotations. Claire Delbos, *Paraphrase*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Liorod, RES VMA MS-2181, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

¹⁶ C'est par l'ordre que se peint le désordre." Jean Langlais, *Le Monde musical* (March 1939), 95.

movement develops the minor second and perfect fourth intervals through inversion (m. 8) and added values (m. 14). The theme's reprise in m. 14 creates a traditional ABA' form, albeit with irregular phrase lengths.

Très lent
p expressif

Je suis née à l'amour comme un lys au matin Et mon cœur a fleuri len-te-ment sous ta main.

Example 3.5: "Marie, toute puissance suppliante," right hand melody (above)
and "Je suis née à l'amour," soprano melody (below)

Delbos accompanies her contemplative melody with sparse chords, although the use of a 32' pedal adds more gravitas to the sound. In fact, many of the sonorities in this movement resemble major and minor triads with added notes. Consider the opening measure's evocation of F major with an added second and appoggiatura (Example 3.6). These triads, however, are results of contrary voice leading rather than tonal syntax. As the right-hand dyads ascend in mm. 1-7, the downward pedal line outlines a tritone. The pedal quickens its descent during the reprise in m. 17, masking any familiar sonority heard in the beginning. The melody's final leap from Ab to E is softened by Ab's reappearance as G# in the pedal. Although G# is simply a continuation of the chromatic bass line, it results in a closing octatonic sonority reminiscent of E major.

Très Lent
 G.P. (Pos: Quintaton 16 et Cor de nuit G: Bourdon 8)

mf expressif legato

R: Gambe, Voix céleste et Bourdon 16
pp legato

Bourdons 16 et 32, Tir. R.
pp legato

17 *rall.*

Example 3.6: "Marie, toute puissance suppliante," mm. 1-7; 17-20.

3.3.3 "FOI EN LA MÉDIATION DE MARIE"

Delbos's brief third movement harmonizes the final portion of *Placare Christe servulis*, providing a sense of unity between movements. The closing phrase, presented in full in the last two measures, is first fragmented (m. 1) and transposed (m. 2). As in the previous piece, each sonority can be read as some elaboration of a major or minor triad. Example 3.7 suggests one possible reading of Delbos's chant harmonization (for the sake of clarity, chordal inversions are not considered). An examination of the left hand's upper line and the pedal reveals a tendency for parallel motion in augmented unisons or diminished octaves. This bountiful use of interval class 1, as well as the fragile counterpoint that creates them, are trademarks of Delbos's concise harmonic language.

Très Modéré

GPR *ff legato*

ff

C^9 $F\#8/4$ C^9 $d^9/7$ $G\#7$ $F\#8/b7$ C^9 F^7 $Eb\#8/\#6$ $f\#5$ $G/g^{b9}/\#7$

Example 3.7: "Foi en la médiation de Marie," complete.

3.3.4 CANTIQUE À L'AGNEAU

As in the first movement, Delbos quotes plainsong in an unaltered, rhythmicized form and harmonizes it with a foreign pitch collection. The Sanctus from Mass VIII is accompanied by two octatonic collections—OCT (1,2) and (0,1)—and serves as the theme of an ensuing toccata-like passage (Example 3.8). Notice how the figurations beginning in m. 4 yield more appearances of (016) and her preferred intervals. As seen in Example 3.9, Delbos sharply contrasts this song of the angels with the song of man via distant pitch space. A quasi F-based harmonization of the sixth psalm tone distinguishes itself from the otherwise sharp-key material. While it eventually settles on F in m. 11, the pedal sounds the psalm's

Modéré *ad. lib.*
Pos: Cornet

f

R: Fonds 8

p

Soubasse 16, Tir. R.

4 *Vif*

G.P.R. *ff staccato*

Example 3.8: "Cantique à l'Agneau," mm. 1-5.

intonation in augmentation beginning a semitone above the final. Note too how Delbos's quotation of the psalm tone fits exactly with Psalm 89's pointing in the *Liber Usualis*. As in the case of all her quoted chants, Delbos's use of pre-existing material is always direct and authentic to its source.

The movement's two themes never appear with finals other than C# and F. One could argue that these pitch spaces and their relative harmonic language are further examples of juxtaposition, this time of historical styles. The Sanctus, wrapped in modern octatonicism, clashes against an organum-like psalm rendition. In fact, Delbos's use of an F final conforms to traditional uses of this specific tone; theoretical and practical literature from the 17th century onwards present Tone 6 as a quasi F major.¹⁷ Delbos eventually exploits the drama of these dueling tonal spaces by pitting the chants directly against each other. As seen in Example 3.10, polymodality results from the quotation of "pleni sunt coeli et terra" (right hand) above a white-note harmonization of Psalm Tone 6 (pedals). The simultaneity is further enriched with chromatic embroidery around a C# "pedal" in the left

I. Mi-se-ricórdi-as Dómi-ni * in aetérnum cantá-bo.

Moins vif

10

G.P.R. *ff legato*

Example 3.9: "Cantique à l'Agneau," mm. 10-11.

¹⁷ See, for example, Andriano Banchieri's *Cartella musicale* (1614), Nicolas Lebègue's *Premier Livre d'orgue* (1676), Louise Niedermeyer's *Traité théorique et pratique de l'accompagnement du plain-chant* (1856), and Henri Potiron's *Cours d'accompagnement du chant grégorien* (1925).

Example 3.10: "Cantique à l'Agneau," m. 24.

hand. Moreover, added values in both chants result in syncopation, granting each staff its unique identity while producing a richer, more lively effect.

Syncopation often occurs in the context of canonic imitation, where the *dux* and *comes* are separated by an uneven durational value. The suite ends with a final statement of the psalm tone, this time in canon with itself (Example 3.11). Although not a strict canon, this contrapuntal device results in the highly syncopated and dissonant sonorities characteristic of Delbos's style. She retains the original harmonization of this second theme, although its treatment in the reprise creates a more fitting conclusion. Whereas hands and feet are often cast unusually far apart, this ending is one of Delbos's few passages idiomatic to the organ.

Example 3.11: "Cantique à l'Agneau," mm. 35-39.

3.4.1 MESSIAEN AS INTERPRETER

No copies of *Paraphrase* exist in the hand of the composer. Messiaen most likely arranged this music for the instrument (as in the case of her later two works). If we consider the notes, textures, and rhythms to be those of Claire Delbos, then her husband provided what we now see in the 1949 Lemoine edition. This editorial role might explain why he copied out this work in the first place, and his autograph manuscript is now available in the BnF.¹⁸ In fact, many performance directives are found in Messiaen's own organ works of the time. One such marking is "louré" (see Example 3.11). This detached, yet stressed touch is unique to Messiaen, and he most likely added it as a reminder for his own performances. Flexibility of tempo, seen in the plethora of *accel.* and *rall.* indications, are likewise found in other Delbos scores edited by Messiaen (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The edition's registrations all match Messiaen's annotations in his autograph manuscript. As was his custom for works performed at La Trinité, he wrote the exact stop changes in red and blue pencils.¹⁹ Several combinations are strikingly familiar, and they are summarized in Table 3.1. He always paired the Positif Clarinette with (at least) the Nazard, adding a shimmer to the reed sound. The use of the 16' Quintaton in lyrical melodies is especially common in Messiaen's organ works. In fact, he once referred to this stop as possessing a "poetic timbre," "unique charm," and "unique sweetness."²⁰ His wife's serene depiction of Mary surely inspired a combination found in tender moments of his own music. Except for the Grand Orgue registration in the first movement (see Table 3.2), the printed edition does not deviate from Messiaen's own combinations. Thus, it seems likely that the registrations of his wife's music stem directly from customs at La Trinité.

¹⁸ Claire Delbos, *Paraphrase*, Fonds Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMA MS-2187, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

¹⁹ At the beginning of one score, Messiaen writes, "Code = gauche: bleu, droite: rouge, exécutant: noir." RES VMA MS 2178.

²⁰ Olivier Messiaen, "Les Grandes Orgues de l'Église de la Sainte-Trinité à Paris," October 1980. Translated in Jon Gillock, *Performing Messiaen's Organ Music: 66 Masterclasses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 355.

Table 3.1: Registrations in Paraphrase and Contemporaneous Works of Messiaen

Registration	Paraphrase movement	Function	Example in Messiaen's Music
Positif: Cornet	"Cantique à l'Agneau"	Plainsong quotation	"Le Verbe" (<i>La Nativité du Seigneur</i>) "Subtilité des corps glorieux" (<i>Les Corps glorieux</i>)
Positif: Clarinette et Nazard	"La résurrection des morts"	Monody	"Les Bergers" (<i>La Nativité du Seigneur</i>) "L'Ange aux parfums" (<i>Les Corps glorieux</i>)
Positif: Quintaton 16' et Cor de nuit 8'	"Marie, toute puissance suppliante"	Lyrical solo (against Récit Gambe, Voix céleste, 16' Bourdon and 32' Ped)	"Desseins éternels" (<i>La Nativité du Seigneur</i>)

Table 3.2: Messiaen's Score Annotations in Paraphrase

Movement	Measure(s)	Annotation	Source(s)*
1		G: fds 8 (sans montre 8), montre 16 et bourdon 16 (trpt, bombarde, clairon et cornet préparés) [Printed score indicates "G: Fonds 8, 16"]	A
-	19	Pedal: last eighth note changed to G [error in printed score]	A
-	21	Right hand: FG dyad tied between beats 2 and 3	A
-	25	Right hand: EF dyad on beat 3 ½ is changed to a sixteenth note [sounding with soprano A]	A
-	25	Right hand: EF dyad on beat 3 ½ is an eighth note [as printed]	B
-	26	Right hand: D naturals tied	B
3		Récit closed [despite score's <i>ff</i> marking]	A
4	7, 12, 13	Right hand: high G#'s changed to G-natural [At the bottom of this page in Source A, Messiaen writes: "À moins d'absence du sol #, jouer sol ♮ – deux passages similaires"]	A and B
-	20	Récit closed then opened with Pedal entrance	B
-	26	Left hand, beat 2: + GPR	A and B
-	28-29	Left hand: "Presque lié" [despite score's <i>staccato</i> marking]	B
-	33	Dots crossed out on all keyboard's last notes	B

-	35	R + cymbale Pos + Nazard, Piccolo et 3 ^{ce} GO + Trpette, Clairon et 5 ^{te} Péd + Oct 4 et SB 32 [score indicates <i>fff</i>]	A and B
-	35	Right hand <i>legato</i> indication crossed out	B

*For clarity, Source A refers to RES VMA MS-2178 and Source B is RES VMA MS-2181. Both are contained in the Fonds Olivier Messiaen of the BnF.

There are, however, other details in Messiaen's personal scores that deviate from the printed edition. The markings catalogued in Table 3.2—while occasionally trivial—reveal Messiaen as interpreter and editor of his wife's music. In general, he abides by the edition's indications, further implying that they were his in the first place. His annotations also show that when composing the cycle, Delbos must not have had the La Trinité organ in mind. The high G#'s in the finale exceed its manual compass, and though integral to the Sanctus chant, Messiaen plays G-natural's.²¹ Line Zilgien's personal score, a copy of Messiaen's autograph manuscript, bears these indications (Figure 3.2). Additionally, both Messiaen and Zilgien couple the Récit and Positif to the Grand Orgue on the low C# of m. 26. While this directive is not in the published edition, an amplified sound highlights the return of the resurrection motive from the first movement. Disguised beneath a quotation of "Pleni sunt coeli," its reappearance provides some thematic unity to the cycle.

²¹ Another possibility is that Claire simply did not know the range of the compass. Messiaen probably retained the G#'s as both an idealized version and a passage possible on other instruments.



Figure 3.2: Two Excerpts from Line Zilgien's *Paraphrase* Score (Collection Fournier)

3.4.2 MESSIAEN AS TRANSCRIBER

At some point after its composition, Messiaen arranged the second movement of *Paraphrase* for four ondes Martenot. Its serenity must have suited the bewitching timbre of an instrument that he associated with the supernatural:

[the *jeu au ruban*'s] moving vibrato is evocative of the violin and cello; its phrasing and melodic charm have the same presence as a male or female voice with a touch of the inhuman and a small dosage of the immaterial.²²

His score, neatly copied in pencil, is an exact transcription of Delbos's "Marie, toute puissance suppliante."²³ However, Messiaen's arrangement adds a plethora of expressive markings not found in the published edition. His opening indication "Très expressif" is realized via *jeu au ruban* by all four ondes. Messiaen then animates the music via crescendos

²² Messiaen, *Traité*, vol. 2 (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1994–2002), 156. Translated in Jacques Tchamkerten, "From *Fête des belles eaux* to *Saint François d'Assise*: the evolution of the writing for Ondes Martenot in the music of Olivier Messiaen," in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art, and Literature*, ed. Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 70.

²³ Claire Delbos, *Marie, toute-puissance*, RES VMA MS-2179. Curiously, the only altered note is the second to last pedal note: now B-natural.

within each phrase (Example 3.12). Similar intentions are heard in Messiaen's own recording of a piece contemporaneous with his wife's: "Combat de la Mort et de la Vie" from *Les Corps glorieux*.²⁴ His deviations from the printed score, namely tempo modification and crescendo/ diminuendi within phrases, render a freer, more expressive interpretation. Perhaps Messiaen's own performance practice, partly documented in the above transcription, surfaced in his playing of Claire's music. On the other hand, the hairpins in this ondes Martenot version are absent from his organ scores of *Paraphrase*.

Example 3.12: "Marie, toute puissance suppliante," transc. Messiaen, mm. 10-13.

No date accompanies this document, and considering the arranger's opinion of transcriptions, its mere existence is curious:

Claude Samuel: Have you been tempted by transcriptions? ... I was particularly alluding to works by other composers that you could have transcribed: Schoenberg transcribing Bach chorale preludes, for example.

Messiaen: No, such an idea never entered my head. I can see no use at all in this, unless it happens to be an academic task for learning orchestration.²⁵

It is unlikely that "Marie, toute puissance suppliante" was Messiaen's exercise in writing for an instrument with which he was already familiar. However, it could have been

²⁴ Olivier Messiaen, *Messiaen: par lui-même*. Olivier Messiaen, CD, disc 3, Warner Classics, 67400, © 1957.

²⁵ Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*, trans. Felix Aprahamian (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976), 99-100.

arranged for Ginette Martenot's ensemble, with whom Messiaen recently collaborated during the 1937 Paris Exposition.²⁶ Regardless of its possible performance history, Messiaen's arrangement shows him translating Delbos's sparse score into an ultra-Romantic interpretation for a highly expressive instrument. In fact, Claire would turn to this timbre in just a few years—her setting of Psalm 141 calls for solo soprano, female choir, piano, and four ondes Martenot.²⁷

²⁶ It was during this event in which Messiaen premiered his *Fête des belles eaux*. Tchamkerten, 65.

²⁷ *Psaume CXLI pour soprano solo, chœur (voix de femmes), 4 ondes Martenot et piano*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, VMA-MS-1642 and RES VMA MS-2176.

CHAPTER 4: *PARCE, DOMINE* (*PARDONNEZ, SEIGNEUR, À VOTRE PEUPLE...*)

4.1 GENESIS AND RECEPTION

In January 1941 and while working on another organ project, Claire Delbos composed a short piece entitled *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*. She was now entering her second year of separation from Olivier Messiaen, who had been imprisoned in Görlitz since July 1940.¹ The couple exchanged letters regularly, and surviving correspondence reveals a lonely Claire clinging to scripture for comfort:

An excellent lesson in trusting to the protective power of the Almighty, this psalm, my Zouvier, is even more consoling and fortifying because it takes account of all possible outcomes of events – the thought that directs it is an unbelieve and infinite goodness.²

A diary entry from just a few month's after this piece's creation speaks of Claire's depressive state as she hopes for Messiaen's return to Neussargues:

Mie must have been depressed that summer, and saddened by the fact that her husband was unsure he would come to Neussargues, for on June 15, 1941 her husband wrote to her saying, "Please confirm to me that you at least have the intention of returning to Paris at the end of September."³

Anxious about her and her husband's future, she turned to composition and faith. Messiaen probably never saw *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple* until after the couple's reunion in March 1941,⁴ and no evidence suggests any manuscripts left the Neussargues château. Moreover, Messiaen was preoccupied with his own projects, namely his *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* premiered within the same month as Delbos's newest composition.

¹ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 93.

² Letter from Claire Delbos to Olivier Messiaen, November 24, 1939. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 87.

³ "Mie devait être dépressive cet été et triste que son mari ne soit pas sûr de venir à Neussargues, car son mari lui écrivit le 15 juin 1941: 'assure-moi, de ton intention au moins, de revenir fin septembre à Paris.'" *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod*, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-122 (1), 5.

⁴ "...because I am free! With my wife and little Pascal! In Neussargues! (Cantal). Do I need to tell you what joy this gives me?" "...car je suis libéré! Avec ma femme et mon petit Pascal! À Neussargues! (Cantal) Dois-je vous dire ma joie?" Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Claude Arrieu, March 10, 1941, Fonds Messiaen, VM BOB-19496, 71r.

Delbos's autograph manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France contains copious markings in Messiaen's hand, although there are no records of him programming the work in liturgies or concerts. 1942 diary entries record Messiaen rehearsing Claire's music at La Trinité and even organizing a concert of her complete organ works. While this project never came to fruition, these plans surely included this piece.⁵ Nevertheless, Messiaen clearly supported Claire's composition. He arranged for this work's submission to SACEM, and a stamp dated July 6, 1948 appears in the BnF manuscript.⁶ He also secured the piece for publication by Rouart, Lerolle et Cie (now Éditions Salabert), although this was not until the early 1950s. In a letter on February 13, 1952, the publisher asks Claire for corrections to the proofs. Given her rapid decline in health by this point, Messiaen undoubtedly handled it.

Dear Madam,
Attached you will find the manuscript of "Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple" along with its galley proofs. I would be very much obliged if you could return them to me with your corrections.
Sincerely,
P. Rouart⁷

Among the piece's interpreters was Delbos's close friend Line Zilgien. Her personal copy, a manuscript in Claire's hand, shows piston changes for the organ at the Salle Pleyel in Paris.⁸ One particular revelation is gleaned from the cover page of this score: "*Trois Pièces pour le Carême* / III. Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre Peuple...."⁹ The whereabouts of the other

⁵ Wednesday, July 15: "Trinité Mie." For the week of October 5-11, there is a note at the foot: "Trinité: concert orgue: Pierront (*Corps glorieux*), Zilgien (oeuvres Mie au complet), Tobon-Mejia (oeuvres Mie)." For the week of October 19-25, he writes at the foot of the page, "Jouer pièces d'orgue Mie." Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen in 1942: A Working Musician in Occupied Paris," in *Messiaen Studies*, edited by Robert Sholl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28-30.

⁶ Fonds Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMA MS-2180, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

⁷ "Chère Madame, Je vous remets sous ce pli le manuscrit de "Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple" avec les épreuves que je vous serais très obligé de bien vouloir me retourner après corrections. Veuillez agréer, chère Madame, l'assurance de mes sentiments respectueux. P. Rouart" Letter from P. Rouart to Madame Olivier Messiaen, February 13, 1952. Enclosed within RES VMA MS 2182.

⁸ For more information about this large instrument, see Marcel Dupré, "Le grand orgue de la Salle Pleyel," *Le Monde musical*, 31 mars 1930, 99-100.

⁹ Manuscript in the private collection of Michel Chapuis, formerly Line Zilgien. I am grateful to Carolyn Shuster Fournier for copies of this material.

two movements are currently unknown. If they were composed at all, the pieces were probably written some time before January 1941.

4.2 CONTENT AND CONTEXT

The subtitle of the printed edition, “pour le Temps du Carême,” further testifies to Delbos’s inspiration from readings and rites of the liturgical year. This score also clarifies “Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple” as a French translation of the Gregorian antiphon *Parce Domine*. Quoting Joel 2:17, this chant is sung during the penitential season of Lent. Its prayer for God’s mercy can thus be read in the context of Claire’s wartime years—poor living conditions, the bitter cold of winter, and prolonged isolation might explain her choice of material. The work’s construction as a set of variations also calls to mind the chant’s original function: a refrain sung between verses. Successive, insistent repetitions of *Parce Domine* are Claire’s musical expressions of prayer.

As in her earlier works, Delbos’s bleak subject matter sharply contrasts with content set by her husband. Messiaen and his colleagues confirmed the composer’s preference for joyful stories of Christianity—Christ’s birth, Resurrection, Ascension, Second Coming, etc. Messiaen’s expressions of his faith even earned him the title “musician of joy.”¹⁰ Andrew Shenton observes that the themes Messiaen chose *not* to set are just as important to note as those he did set. Stories of the Old Testament, as well as themes of suffering, hell, and the final judgement were not dwelt upon in the works of Messiaen.¹¹ Such matters happened to be addressed by his wife, and one cannot help but draw parallels between Delbos’s life and the themes prevalent in her œuvre.

¹⁰ Messiaen once said, “In principle I am a musician of joy and it pleases me above all to meditate on the glorious mysteries.” Quoted in Nigel Simeone, “‘Chez Messiaen, tout est prière’: Messiaen’s Appointment at the Trinité,” *The Musical Times* 145, No. 1889 (2004): 53. His poet friend, René de Obaldia, also called him a “musician of joy.” *Église de la Trinité. Olivier Messiaen, homme de foi: Regard sur son oeuvre d’orgue* (Paris: Trinité Média Communication, 1995), 95. Finally, Yvonne Loriod recalled him saying, “‘Death? That exists, but I myself emphasize the Resurrection.’ He always said, ‘I have no wish to waste my time on harrowing subjects. I am a musician of joy.’” Peter Hill, “Interview with Yvonne Loriod.” In Peter Hill, *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. Peter Hill (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995) 294-5.

¹¹ Andrew Shenton, *Olivier Messiaen’s System of Signs: Notes Towards Understanding His Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 27.

4.3 ANALYSIS

This brief piece demonstrates Delbos's highly economical use of material. The insistence implied by a variation form is further seen in its obstinate presentation of *Parce Domine*—the chant is continually heard in D Dorian. With this limited pitch material, she experiments with ways of harmonizing and rhythmicizing the Gregorian antiphon. The opening measures exhibit Claire's typical chromatic motion via parallel and contrary motion. A note-against-note counterpoint colours this chant in pitches distant from D Dorian. The resulting verticalities further demonstrate her preference for interval classes 1 and 2. Delbos retains these same two voices in the following variation (Example 4.1), but now adds another *Parce Domine* quotation below it. Notice the layering of simple processes: a modally pure and rhythmicized chant, an accompanimental voice, and the same chant with different rhythm and distant finals. Minor-third transpositions of the pedal result in a colourful journey from the F Dorian entry back to the original D final. As in "Cantique à

12 Pos: Basson 16 seul

Péd: tir. G et R (G prestant 4, fl. 4, R cymbale)

16

21

Example 4.1: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 12-26.

l'Agneau," profuse syncopation and polymodality are two of Delbos's solutions to develop a given motive.

The following variation presents a quiet, fragile harmonization of the antiphon. A long F pedal point pervades most of the 14 measures, above which chromatic clusters accompany another presentation of the D Dorian melody. As seen in Example 4.2, repeated material is treated with slightly different harmonizations. The huddled, semitone motion throughout this variation offers a contrast from the wide-spaced textures of the preceding ones.



Example 4.2: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 27 and 32.

The next two variations form a pair: chromatic embroidery around the mode's dominant passes directly from the right hand to the feet (Example 4.3). Rhythmicized flourishes around the right-hand A provide an inverted pedal point against a sparse harmonization. While the registration is idiomatic to the instrument and traditionally French, the bareness of Delbos's texture is neither. Even when the manuals accompany the chromatic pedal line, voice leading is restricted to stepwise motion by half and whole steps (Example 4.4). This simultaneity of neighbor motion, coupled with a growing crescendo, make the variation in m. 47 the natural climax of this piece. As seen in the other works of Delbos, a sudden reduction in texture results in this variation's abrupt end (see Example 4.9 at the end of the chapter).

The following variation, excerpted in Example 4.5, returns to the purity of D Dorian. Off-beat echoes of the chant create a dialogue based on limited pitch material; this is the only variation that stays strictly within the antiphon's mode. After a serene settling back to D, Delbos ends with one final, yet abridged, iteration (Example 4.6). A sudden change in

dynamic and texture accompany this tonally ambiguous excerpt—the right hand’s quartal structure moves parallel with sixths in the left hand. This harmonization does not confirm the mode prevalent throughout the piece. Instead, we are left jolted by a faint suggestion of F major.

R: fonds 16, 8, 4, trpt et clairon <
Pos: fds 16, 8, 4
G: fonds 16, 8, 4 et plein-jeu
Péd: tir R et Pos

44 *ff staccato loured* un peu ralenti a tempo ,
ff legato ,
ff legato , tir G seule
più *f legato*
- tir RP + tir G

Example 4.3: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 44-46.

Example 4.4: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 47-51 (manuals).

Un peu plus lent
R: bourdon 16, octavin, nazard >
ppp

60 *p* Pos: fl 8 - RP
legato

Example 4.5: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 60-61.

67 *Modéré* *arraché*
G: Fonds et Anches
16, 8, 4
fff

Example 4.6: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 67-68.

4.4 MESSIAEN AS INTERPRETER AND EDITOR

While this unassuming variation set does not exhibit any new techniques of the composer, its manuscript evidence is highly instructive. Claire's original copies of *Deux Pièces* and *Paraphrase* are missing, making her autograph manuscript of *Parce, Domine* all the more significant. The plethora of markings to be discussed address two key questions: to what extent was Claire Delbos a composer for organ? How much influence did Messiaen have in editing and publishing her music?

Delbos's manuscript, now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, shows that only the title, notes, and opening indication "Plutôt lent" are hers.¹² In pencil at the top left, Messiaen writes "vérifié pour l'orgue, bon à copier," proving his role as arranger, registrant, and editor of this piece. Markings throughout show Messiaen preparing the work for publication. Projected page numbers appear above the appropriate staves, and his registration ideas hover above their corresponding music. Messiaen also performed from this copy, explaining why it is particularly cluttered. Blue and red stop changes for La Trinité appear in the margins (in addition to these same registrations that appear above staves). Exact swell box positions are noted ($\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{2}{3}$), and he gives a timing at the end (5'40").

In addition to the composer's tempo marking, Messiaen writes his own indication "Assez Lent" above it, which ultimately surfaces in the published edition. He then arranges the opening two-part texture for contrasting manuals: Grand Orgue Montre and Bourdon 8' against the Clarinette and Nazard, a Positif combination previously seen in "La résurrection des morts." All of his subsequent combinations can be found in the published edition. Many of these sounds exploit and amplify Claire's original conceptions. In the opening, for instance, a sense of otherness heard between the modal chant and chromatic lower voice is

¹² Claire Delbos, *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, Fonds Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMA MS-2180, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France. Examples 4.7-4.9 are transcriptions from this source.

augmented via sounds in different stop families. The syncopated dialogue already seen in Example 4.5 is cast in contrasting pitch levels: Bourdon 16, Octavin, and Nazard of the Récit versus the Positif Flûte 8'. Such a sound maximizes the intervallic distance already present in Delbos's writing.

Many of these combinations are found in contemporaneous works of Messiaen, although his registration in m. 12 is particularly innovative for its time (Example 4.7). Respecting the register of his wife's original conception, he imagines *Parce, Domine* with a sound he genuinely considered apocalyptic: the Basson 16' of the Positif.¹³ This contrast of low and high sounds (and keyboards not traditionally associated with these pitch levels) is progressive for its time. Decades later, Olivier Glandaz recalled some of Messiaen's registration tricks, and descriptions resemble these *Parce, Domine* plans:

During the Offices he would use the pedal coupled only to the manual with one or two high-pitched stops or even a Cymbale alone... sound groups in the low pedal region, deep legato lines in the Positif, ultra-high sparks in the Récit, followed by a lone Cymbale in the pedal while an isolated Montre 16' played in mid-compass.¹⁴

The image displays two musical staves for measures 12 and 13 of the piece 'Parce, Domine'. The left staff represents the original registration, and the right staff represents Messiaen's revision. Both staves are in 2/4 time and feature a treble and bass clef. The right staff includes specific registration instructions: 'Pos: basson 16 seul' (Positif: bassoon 16' alone) and 'Péd: tir G et R (G: prestant et fl 4 R: cymbale >)' (Pedal: draw G and R (G: prestant and fl 4 R: cymbale >)). The right staff also includes dynamic markings 'f legato' and 'etc.'.







Example 4.7: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 12-13.
Original (left), Messiaen's revision (right)

¹³ "The Basson 16 of the Positif is very powerful: it possesses an extraordinarily profound timbre in the extreme bass and can admirably evoke the dragon Fafner or the Beast of Revelation." Olivier Messiaen, "Les Grandes Orgues de l'Église de la Sainte-Trinité à Paris," October 1980. Translated in Jon Gillock, *Performing Messiaen's Organ Music: 66 Masterclasses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 355.

¹⁴ Olivier Glandaz, "Olivier Messiaen's Views on the Organ," *The American Organist* 28, no. 9 (1994): 58.

Example 4.7 also shows Messiaen adding articulation markings for clarity. Repeated notes throughout this piece are given staccato dots, while accents show the “appoggiaturas” in the chant. All of Messiaen’s added touch and tempo indications from the BnF manuscript later surface in the edition; curiously, the metronome markings of the printed score do not appear in any manuscript, and it is possible these were later sent to the editor. However, if we believe Messiaen to be the author of these metronome markings, they resemble those found in his own keyboard music. The BPM’s catalogued in Table 4 are never proportional. Rather, the music is always supple, ever-flowing, and unpredictable.

Table 4: Metronome Markings in Parce, Domine (Salabert 1952)

Measure	Metronome marking
1	 = 66
12	 = 50
27	 = 42
41	 = 50
47	 = 63
60	 = 46

Two particular passages show Messiaen revising the actual text of Claire’s music. As found in Example 4.8, Claire’s sudden release of the accompanying chord in m. 46 is changed by Messiaen. In pencil, he indicates for these notes to be sustained until the release of the right hand’s final A. Delbos’s version of m. 46 also ends in a G-A dyad, which Messiaen revises as two separate quarter notes. Furthermore, note the addition of his characteristic “louré” as well as tempo markings that animate her music.

44

R: fonds 16, 8, 4, trpt et clairon <
 Pos: fds 16, 8, 4
 G: fonds 16, 8, 4 et plein-jeu
 Péd: tir R et Pos

44

ff staccato louré un peu ralenti a tempo

ff legato

ff legato

' tir G seule
più f legato
 - tir RP + tir G

Example 4.8: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 44-46.
 Original (top), Messiaen's revision (bottom)

Example 4.9 documents another revision by Messiaen, and it ultimately surfaces in the published edition. Delbos originally sustains then gradually releases dyads in the feet. Messiaen's revision removes these clusters. Regardless of whether he found this unidiomatic or unsuccessful for the organ, his alteration appears in the printed edition.

57

p court

57

p legato PR rall. ----- court

Example 4.9: *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*, mm. 57-59.
 Original (left), Messiaen's revision (right)

Line Zilgien's personal score, a manuscript prepared by Delbos herself, testifies to Messiaen's influence in her editing process. In pen, Delbos deliberately annotates all registrations, articulations, and tempo markings. If it were not for the aforementioned evidence, one could not prove Olivier Messiaen as the source of these directives. Figure 4 shows how she not only copies Messiaen's exact registrations as they appear in MS-2180, but also incorporates his revision from Example 4.9. While it is impossible to know whether the two discussed these ideas, Delbos prepared her music from recommendations of her organist husband. Therefore, this particular document reveals the outcome of collaborations between Claire Delbos and Olivier Messiaen.



Figure 4: Two Excerpts from Line Zilgien's *Parce, Domine* Score (Collection Fournier)

CHAPTER 5: *L'OFFRANDE À MARIE*

5.1 GENESIS AND RECEPTION

Between October 1938 and August 1941, Claire Delbos composed six pieces that would eventually form her last and largest work for organ: *L'Offrande à Marie*. The majority of this project coincided with a harrowing period in the couple's life. From September 1939 to March 1941, Messiaen was either in the army, a government worker, or prisoner in a war camp. His release from Görlitz resulted in a temporary reunion at the couple's Neussargues château,¹ although Delbos and their son Pascal did not join him in Paris until the late fall of 1941.² Thus, her project for organ was primarily written while nearly 1,000 kilometers away from her organist husband. Although Messiaen certainly continued to play and improvise on the organ,³ he took almost a ten-year hiatus from writing for this instrument. The impetus for Delbos composing such a work is not known, but it is obvious that her husband's other duties did not deter her. Faith and music fueled these troubling war years, as conveyed in this letter just a few weeks after the start of the war:

My vanity promised you yesterday a copy of various passages from *The Book of Wisdom*, which relate to a Mie-type character. Here they are: 'the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her...She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands...She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she buyeth a vineyard (Petichet, rue du Danube)...Her candle goeth not out by night...**She hath set her hand (or her mind) to important matters and her fingers hold the distaff (composition; my Zouvier's sweater)**...She maketh herself coverings of tapestry (Mie's dear little bonnets)...Her husband is known in the gates of the city (the works of Zouvier are becoming ever more powerful and filled with life)...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of

¹ "...because I am free! With my wife and little Pascal! In Neussargues! (Cantal). Do I need to tell you what joy this gives me?"

"...car je suis libéré! Avec ma femme et mon petit Pascal! À Neussargues! (Cantal) Dois-je vous dire ma joie?" Letter from Olivier Messiaen to Claude Arrieu, March 10, 1941, Fonds Messiaen, VM BOB-19496, 71r.

² November 30, 1941: "'The Pio's [Pierre Messiaen and his wife] dined with us' - this means that wife and son have finally returned to the free zone."

"'Les Pio-dîner chez nous' - cela veut dire que femme et fils sont enfin rentrés de la zone libre." *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod*, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-122 (1), 8.

³ In a letter to *L'Orgue*, Messiaen describes his experience as a soldier, writing that he was allowed to play the organ on some Sundays. He mentions improvising as well as playing repertoire such as Bach, Daquin, and Widor. See Miramon Fitz-James, "Les Amis de l'Orgue et la guerre," *L'Orgue*, no. 40-1 (Dec 1939-March 1940): 31. In a letter dated March 12, 1941 to Claire, Messiaen mentions going to Lyon to work out organ registrations, although he does not mention its purpose. See Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 105.

idleness...Her sons arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.⁴

Drafts of several movements exist in private collections,⁵ but the only copy of the entire suite is an autograph manuscript now located within the Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod.⁶ This was also Messiaen's performance copy, as it contains profuse markings for the organ at La Trinité. The document also reveals this project's timeline, as Delbos records each movement's exact dates and locations of composition (Figure 5.1). The movements as they appear in the manuscript are not arranged in chronological order, so she must have compiled these individual pieces sometime after August 1941. Delbos consciously ordered them to form a suite, as the movements were copied out in pen to succeed one another. Also enclosed within this manuscript is a completed SACEM slip, although it is unsigned and undated. A SACEM stamp dated July 6, 1948—the same time stamp as that in *Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple*—proves that Claire (or Messiaen) presented this work to the association.

The most interesting discovery gleaned from this work's timeline concerns the final movement. Both "Secours des Chrétiens" and *Les Corps glorieux* were begun in Petichet and interrupted by the war.⁷ Claire surely knew what Messiaen's cycle sounded like before anyone else. In a letter to Ginette Martenot, dated February 3, 1940, Delbos speaks of the "harsh dissonances" of "Combat de la Mort et de la Vie."⁸ When seeing and hearing the

⁴ Claire Delbos to Olivier Messiaen, November 24, 1939. Quoted and translated in Hill and Nigel Simeone, 88.

⁵ Michel Chapuis received manuscripts of several movements from Line Zilgien. Fournier, *Un siècle de vie musicale*, 18. Chapuis gave photocopies to Carolyn Shuster Fournier, to whom I am grateful for these documents.

⁶ Claire Delbos, *L'Offrande à Marie*, Fonds Oliver Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMA MS-2183, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

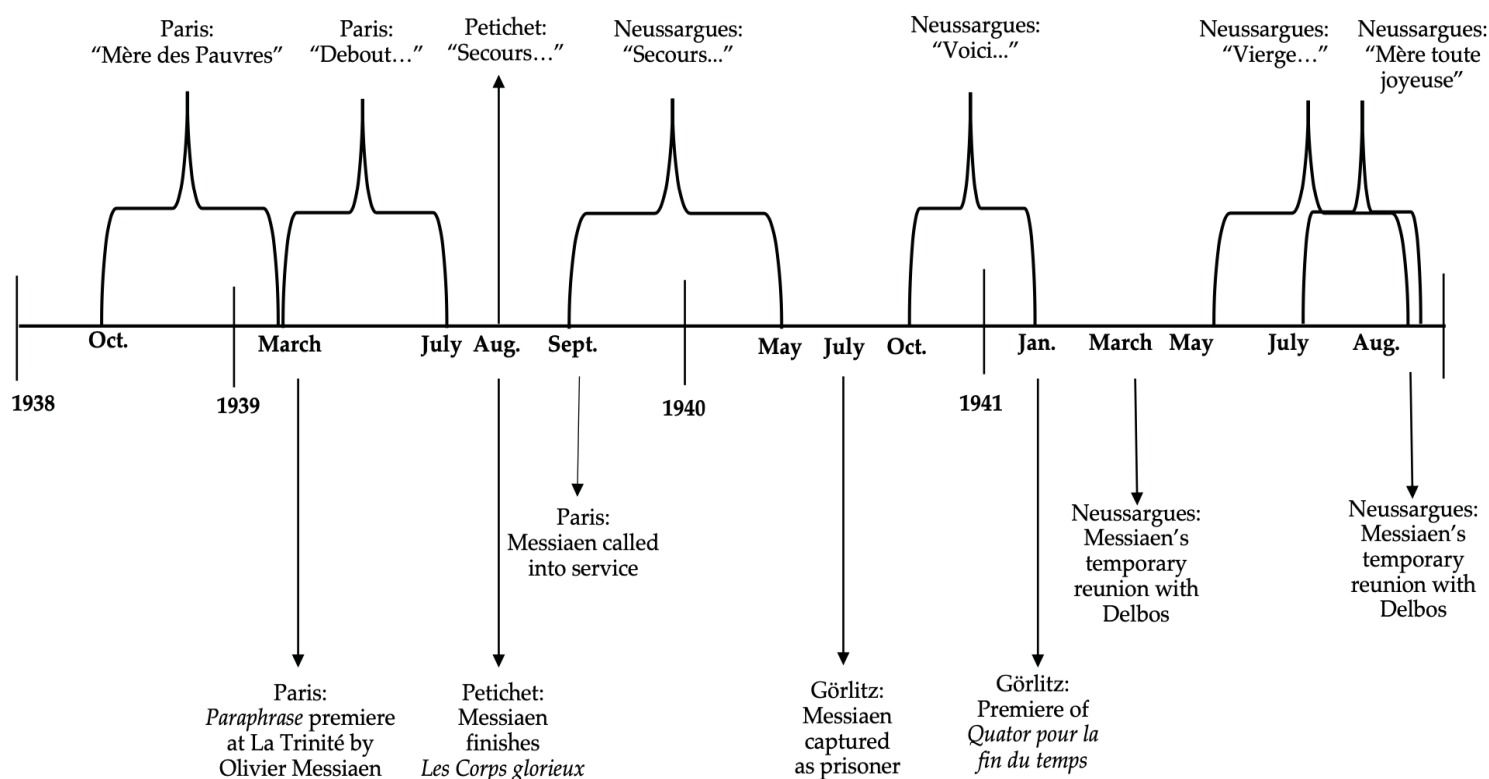
⁷ In one interview, Messiaen explains that *Les Corps glorieux* was "finished" in Petichet. See Brigitte Massin, *Olivier Messiaen: une poétique du merveilleux* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989), 152. However, in letters to Jean Langlais and André Jolivet, he refers to it as "unfinished." See Hill and Simeone, 86. I am grateful to Christine Jolivet Erlih for sharing one letter from her private collection.

⁸ "Latest works: in July, August, presenting the miseries of his "Frère le Corps," O. Messiaen had written the "harsh dissonances" of a "Combat de la Mort et de la Vie."

"Derniers travaux : en juillet, août, présentant les misères de son « Frère le Corps » O. Messiaen avait écrit les rudes dissonances d'un « Combat de la Mort et de la Vie ... »." Quoted in Christopher Brent Murray, "Le développement du langage musical d'Olivier Messiaen : Traditions, emprunts, expériences" (Ph.D. diss., Université Lumière-Lyon, 2010), 349.

opening of this final movement, one wonders if she did indeed have Messiaen's epic central movement in mind. In fact, in the earliest known version of her piece, the word "guerre" in Claire's hand prefates several staves (see a transcription in Figure 5.2).⁹ Extreme dissonances in its opening, coupled with the pedal's frequent martial rhythms, evoke a war-torn world. Later in the piece, Delbos quotes the chant *Sub tuum praesidium*, a traditional Catholic prayer for protection against danger. Messiaen surely saw these foreboding annotations, as he added his own markings on top of hers. Given Messiaen's documented association between the war and *his* most recent cycle,¹⁰ "Secours des Chrétiens" offers a

Figure 5.1: *L'Offrande à Marie: A Timeline of Composition*



⁹ Collection Fournier.

¹⁰ "I often find myself singing certain melodies, certain favourite rhythms, and going over in my head the most important parts of my latest organ work, interrupted by the war ... Whether it was a presentiment or a painful irony, I don't know - but it deals with the Resurrection of the bodies." Translated in Hill and Simeone, 92.

"Je me suis souvent chanté à moi-même certaines mélodies, certains rythmes aimés, repassant aussi dans ma tête les pages principales de ma dernière œuvre d'orgue, interrompue par la guerre... et qui traite – presentiment ou douloureuse ironie? je ne sais – de la Résurrection des corps." Miramon Fitz-James, 31.

However, in a later interview, Messiaen dismisses Brigitte Massin's attempt to associate this work with premonition of war. See Massin, 152-153.

new perspective from which one not only can compare the couple's wartime experience, but also speculate a dialogue between *L'Offrande à Marie* and *Les Corps glorieux*. Did his wife's recent Marian pieces inspire Messiaen's hidden quotation of the Marian chant *Salve Regina* in "Subtilité des corps glorieux"?¹¹

Figure 5.2: Claire Delbos's Annotation in "Secours des Chrétiens"
(Collection Fournier)



As mentioned in Chapter 4, 1942 diary entries record Messiaen practicing Claire's music at La Trinité, and his plans for a complete works concert never came to fruition. Nonetheless, he undoubtedly saw and rehearsed his wife's latest cycle at this time.¹² He later performed two movements, "Mère des Pauvres" and "Debout, la Mère des Douleurs," at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris on December 28, 1941.¹³ In a review of the recital, Norbert Dufourcq briefly mentions their appearance in a programme of contemporaneous favourites of Messiaen:

In the first part of his organ recital, Olivier Messiaen played pieces by Marcel Dupré and Charles Tournemire, a tip of the hat to his direct or spiritual teachers; in addition, he premiered two works by Claire Delbos; the soft theme of the first piece, *Mère des Pauvres*, contrasted sharply with the asperity and bitter lamentations of the second, *Debout, la Mère des Douleurs*.¹⁴

¹¹ Olivier Latry and Loïc Mallié were the first to acknowledge Messiaen's use of the antiphon: "Using this melody gives the author the freedom to take advantage of its main features, whether they be melodic (it is almost systematically grounded on the final (D), while the transposition of the tenor (A) to G# makes the tritone interval an integral component of the piece) or rhythmic (alternating long-short values)." "L'utilisation de cette mélodie offre à l'auteur le loisir de profiter de ses principales caractéristiques, qu'elles soient mélodiques (notamment avec le repos presque systématique sur la finale Ré, tout en transposant la teneur La sur Sol # pour asseoir son discours sur l'intervalle de triton) ou rythmiques (alternance brèves-longues)." *L'œuvre d'orgue d'Olivier Messiaen: Œuvres d'avant-guerre* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2008), 189.

¹² See Chapter 4, footnote 5.

¹³ *Transcription des agendas*, 8.

¹⁴ "Dans la première partie de son récital d'orgue, O. Messiaen, en hommage à ceux dont il est le disciple direct ou spirituel, fit entendre des pages de M. Dupré et Ch. Tournemire; il y annexa deux œuvres en première audition de Claire Delbos, l'une, *Mère des Pauvres*, contrastant par la douce plainte de son thème avec la rudesse et les plaintes

Messiaen's annotations for this recital are found in a manuscript currently in a private collection, and the heading reads "Trocadéro, bonne registration."¹⁵ These markings, to be later unpacked, clearly predate those in Delbos's autograph manuscript of the entire piece. This score was eventually given to Line Zilgien, as her own markings for the Salle Pleyel appear alongside Messiaen's.

Messiaen premiered the entire *L'Offrande à Marie* on November 17, 1943. He programmed her cycle in the middle of a three-day marathon at La Trinité, the rest of which was dedicated to his own music. Figure 5.3 reproduces the original programme, which clearly shows the organist framing two of his own works around this suite.¹⁶ Yvonne Loriod summarizes this event in her transcription of Messiaen's diaries:

The three concerts were followed by a Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The three concerts were played by Olivier Messiaen to a full church, despite chilly conditions, and were rapturously received...Numerous rehearsals at La Trinité to prepare for the organ concert series, often with Loriod and Delapierre in attendance as registrants.¹⁷

Figure 5.3: *L'Offrande à M.
Première, La Trinité, 1943*

Mercredi 17 Novembre, 17h 30	
Transports de joie d'une âme devant la Gloire du Christ qui est la sienne (1933)	Olivier Messia
L'Offrande à Marie	Claire Delbos
1. Voici la Servante du Seigneur. 2. Vierge digne de louanges. 3. Mère des Pauvres. 4. Mère Toute-joyeuse. 5. Debout, la Mère des Douleurs... 6. Secours des Chrétiens, Reine de la Paix.	
<u>Première audition</u>	
Le Banquet Céleste (1928)	Olivier Messia

amères de l'autre, *Debout, la Mère des Douleurs*." Norbert Dufourcq, "Olivier Messiaen," *L'Information Musicale* (January 23, 1942), 644.

¹⁵ "Mère des Pauvres," Collection Fournier. His score for "Debout..." has not been found.

¹⁶ A photograph of the programme can be found in Latry and Mallié, 186. The authors do not cite the original document's location. One newspaper announces concerts on November 8, 10, 12 at 6 PM, advertising that two important works (*Les Corps glorieux* and *L'Offrande à Marie*) will be premiered. See "Notes sans mesures," *Comoedia* (October 23, 1943), 7. At some point, the recitals were moved to the following week, as Messiaen's diaries record concerts on November 15, 17, and 19 at 5:30 PM.

¹⁷ "Les 3 concerts ont été suivis d'un Salut du Très Saint-Sacrement. Les trois concerts ont été joués par Olivier Messiaen - dans une Église comble...et glaciale, et avec un succès immense. Nombreuses répétitions à la Trinité pour préparer les 3 concerts d'orgue avec, souvent, la présence de Loriod et de Delapierre (pour tirer les jeux)." *Transcription des agendas*, 15.

Despite the significance of this marathon, only one review mentions Delbos's music. The writer dismisses any further discussion of the work, as he continues to criticize Messiaen's own pieces. Interestingly, the critic observes similarities between the couple's music:

Olivier Messiaen just performed three concerts on the organ of La Trinité dedicated to his own works and to works by his wife, Claire Delbos. I will not tarry to give an analysis of the latter's compositions, which follow the rocky path so dear to modern contrapuntalists, a path which she embellishes here and there (and not without skill) with a couple of flowers taken from her husband's bouquet. I believe it is urgent to set out the Messiaen problem.¹⁸

Besides a few appearances in La Trinité Masses (see Appendix 3), there are no known performances of this work after its premiere. However, surviving manuscripts prove Line Zilgien performing "Mère des Pauvres" and "Vierge digne de louanges" at the Salle Pleyel. At the top left of the score to the latter, Delbos writes a dedication to her interpreter:

To Line Zilgien, for whom I hold as much admiration as I do friendship. I thank her from the bottom of my heart for the beautiful execution of my pieces.¹⁹

L'Offrande à Marie was never printed, although several organ literature encyclopedias oddly cite the suite's publication by Hérelle in 1935.²⁰ A consultation of the dates in the autograph manuscript proves this impossible, and the source of this misinformation is not known. However, Messiaen's choice not to publish his wife's final and largest work for organ is curious. Perhaps he found the project to be too intimate and personal. After all, Delbos composed most of it while separated from her husband, and her

¹⁸ "Olivier Messiaen vient de donner sur les grandes orgues de la Trinité trois concerts consacrés à ses œuvres et à celles de sa femme, Mme Claire Delbos. Je ne m'attarderai pas à l'étude des compositions de cette dernière qui suit le chemin rocailleux cher aux contrapuntistes modernes qu'elle émaille, non sans grâce, de quelques fleurs tombées du bouquet de son mari. Je crois, en effet, urgent de poser le problème Messiaen." Serge Moreux, "Olivier Messiaen," *La Gerbe* (December 9, 1943), 7. For a discussion of the so-called "Messiaen problem," or "Le Cas Messiaen," see Hill and Simeone, 144.

¹⁹ "À Line Zilgien, pour laquelle j'ai autant d'admiration que d'amitié. En la remerciant de tout cœur pour les belles exécutions de mes pièces." Collection Fournier.

²⁰ See Aaron I. Cohen, "Delbos, Claire," in *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: Books & Music, 1987), 189; Corliss Richard Arnold, "Delbos, Claire," in *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 135; John Henderson, "Delbos, Claire," in *A Directory of Composers for Organ* (Swindon: John Henderson, 1996), n.p.

documented association of the finale with war might explain its suppression. It is unfortunate that this work was not shared with the public—some of Delbos’s most advanced writing is found within its pages. Highly progressive and original for its times, *L’Offrande à Marie* is the summit of Claire Delbos’s compositions for organ.

5.2 CONTENT AND CONTEXT

As previously mentioned, there is no obvious pattern in Delbos’s ordering of these movements. The image of Mary as the mother of both God and mankind is central to Roman Catholic doctrine, and the Church continually celebrates her with liturgical feasts, prayers, and music. Despite Messiaen’s professed devotion to the Blessed Mother,²¹ Marian references rarely surface in his output of this time. In fact, the composer once spoke of his inability to express the relationship between mother and child.²² Delbos’s subject matter, like that of her other pieces, was inspired independently of her husband’s beliefs. Claire was a practicing Catholic herself, and the titles and chants woven throughout this cycle prove a strong devotion to the Virgin Mary. As summarized in Table 5.1, each title references a Biblical story, hymn, or prayer. These strands of Marian salutations were surely familiar to any practicing Catholic of the time.

Table 5.1: Sources of Titles in *L’Offrande à Marie*

Movement	Title	Source or Reference
1	Voici la servante du Seigneur	Luke 1:38
2	Vierge digne de louanges	Litanies de Lorette
3	Mère des Pauvres	Litanies de Lorette
4	Mère toute joyeuse	Seven Joys of Mary
5	Debout, la Mère des Douleurs	Stabat Mater
6	Secours des Chrétiens, Reine de la Paix	Litanies de Lorette

²¹ “Contrary to what you think, I love the Blessed Virgin very much. I claim that women are superior to men. I am a convinced feminist.” “Contrairement à ce que vous pensez, j’aime énormément la Sainte Vierge. Je prétends que les femmes sont supérieures aux hommes. Je suis un féministe convaincu.” Massin, 53. “... the image of the Virgin, very present in the Nativity. It is an image that is dear to me.” “...l’image de la Vierge, très présente dans la Nativité. C’est une image qui m’est chère.” Ibid., 172.

²² “A man is not able to express the feelings of motherhood. There is an incomparable state of union there, which a man is by nature incapable of experiencing.” “...un homme n’est pas capable d’exprimer les sentiments de la maternité. Il y a là un état d’union incomparable, qu’un homme est par nature dans l’incapacité d’éprouver.” Ibid., 54.

Like previous works of Delbos, two movements show the composer's intimate familiarity with Gregorian chant. "Vierge digne de louanges" is a fantasy on four plainsong themes, Marian chants that are sung during the Church year: *Ave Maria*, *Ave maris stella*, *Ave regina coelorum*, and *Salve Regina*. As shown in Figure 5.4, the final movement quotes a recurring melody throughout the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Litanies de Lorette*). Delbos inserts the invocations "Auxilium Christianorum" and "Regina Pacis" and in one manuscript, annotates the Latin and French words above these melodies. The Latin text dictated Delbos's choice of rhythm and note repetitions, and they are written as if the litany was sung. Note too that their French translations ultimately resulted in the piece's title: "Secours des Chrétiens, Reine de la Paix." Figure 5.4 also shows Delbos quoting *Sub tuum praesidium*, the oldest known prayer to Mary. The entire chant forms the basis of this finale, and one cannot help but compare its words to wartime anxieties:

Figure 5.4: Chant Quotations and Annotations in "Secours des Chrétiens" (Collection Fournier)

The figure displays three musical excerpts from the piece "Secours des Chrétiens".

The first excerpt is a plainsong melody on a four-line staff. The notes are square and the rhythm is indicated by dots. The text below the staff is "Sáncta Ma-rí-a, óra pro nóbis."

The second excerpt is a more complex melody on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The text above the staff is "Re - gi - na Pa - cis o - ra pro no - bis".

The third excerpt is also on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. It begins with the label "Ant. VII" and a large "S" time signature. The text below the staff is "UB tu- um prae-sí-di- um confú-gimus, *". The melody features triplets and a quintuplet, with the numbers "3" and "5" written below the notes to indicate these groupings. The text "Sub tu - um prae - si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus" is written below the staff, with the numbers "3" and "5" placed under the corresponding notes.

We fly to your protection, O holy Mother of God. Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.²³

The finale's timeline also merits attention. As gleaned from Figure 5.1, it took the longest to complete, and Delbos worked on it over the course of several months. "Secours des Chrétiens" is divided into clear and distinct sections, although it is impossible to determine the order in which they were composed. Equally curious is the fact that unlike the other movements, Delbos recorded the exact day she finished it: May 27, 1940. While it might be coincidental, this date is just three days after a certain Catholic feast: Our Lady Help of Christians.

Regardless of its compositional history, "Secours des Chrétiens" is significant for bearing the most obvious references to its wartime climate. The entire cycle's pleas for Mary's intercession resonate with other forms of Marian devotion at this time. Consider, for instance, the poem "Prière à Notre-Dame" reprinted in a book by one of Claire's teachers at the Schola, Guy de Lioncourt.²⁴ While it is unclear whether de Lioncourt actually wrote this long poem, its date (May 1940) and subject matter (prayers for forgiveness, defense, and peace) is an analogous example of Marian worship in popular culture during the Second World War.

Our Lady of Mercy, — Forget that not all of us pray to you! — But cast a glance at your sons on their knees — And save our dear France! — ... And since we are all in this together, — Make God, in all his grace, — even to men who are not of good will — grant peace on earth!²⁵

²³ "Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genitrix; nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta. Amen." "Nous avons recours à votre protection, sainte Mère de Dieu. Ne rejetez pas les prières que nous vous adressons dans nos besoins, mais délivrez-nous toujours de tous les dangers, ô Vierge comblée de gloire et de bénédiction. Ainsi soit-il." *Nouveau missel quotidien à l'usage de tous les diocèses avec le propre de France et du Canada* (Montreal: R.P. Morin, 1939), 543.

²⁴ Guy de Lioncourt, *Un témoignage sur la musique et sur la vie au XXe siècle: Dessins de Paul Guimezanes* (Paris: L'Arche de Noé, 1956), 365.

²⁵ "Notre-Dame de clémence, — Oubliez que nous ne vous prions pas tous ! — mais jetez un regard sur vos fils à genoux - Et sauvez votre France !...Et puisque nous sommes tous solidaires, — Obtenez que Dieu, dans sa magnanimité, — même aux hommes qui n'ont pas bonne volonté — accorde la paix sur la terre !" The heading reads "Extrait du "Fayard" Chabret, mai 1940." See de Lioncourt, 365.

Another contemporaneous poem might clarify Delbos's choice of title for the entire suite. Although tenuous, it is possible to make a connection with a lengthy poem by Messiaen's close friend René de Obaldia.²⁶ Obaldia wrote *Offrande à la Vierge Marie* during his captivity in Stalag VIII C in 1941.²⁷ The poet interweaves invocations to Mary with bleak descriptions of war. Considering that Delbos must have compiled the suite after August 1941, as well as the fact that no draft bears the cycle's title, it is possible that Obaldia's poem served as inspiration. Regardless of this organ work, Delbos surely knew Obaldia's poetry; she set this entire text in her later song cycle *Trois aspects de la mort*.

5.3 ANALYSIS

Similar to its lack of an overarching narrative, no single theme or tonality pervades *L'Offrande à Marie*. The Aeolian theme of the first movement does reappear in free monody later, and this is the only suggestion of cyclical unity. Rather, each movement is another window into Delbos's unique sound world: avoidance of traditional tonal and modal language, transparent textures, economic use of material, complex polyrhythms, and sophisticated counterpoint.

5.3.1 "VOICI LA SERVANTE DU SEIGNEUR"

The cycle begins with a nod to Mary's first appearance in the Bible: the Annunciation. As quoted in the Gospel of Luke, her consent to bear God's Son serves as the title for Delbos's opening movement. Mary's statement is embodied in the opening monody, an outline of A Aeolian. Note too her use of semitones and tritones to colour the opening measure—yet another appearance of (016) figures. The rhythm and general shape of the first bar form the basis of the entire piece, an economy of motivic material seen in her other works. This succinctness, however, does not equate with motionless, monotonous

²⁶ For more information about their relationship, see René de Obaldia, "Mon ami Olivier Messiaen," in *La Cité céleste: Olivier Messiaen zum Gedächtnis*, edited by Christine Wassermann Beirão, Thomas Daniel Schlee, and Elmar Budde (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2006), 165.

²⁷ René de Obaldia, *Sur le ventre des veuves* (Paris: Editions Grasset, 1996), 21.

music. As seen in Example 5.1, Delbos avoids strict repetition through slight variations in interval quality, motivic fragmentation at the end, and a registral shift in the last bar.²⁸

The introduction of the left hand in m. 4 thwarts the previous suggestion of a mode—the bass line begins a half-step below the final and descends chromatically. The resulting harmonies rarely create any familiar consonances with the right-hand melody. As seen in Example 5.2, pure major or minor chords are reserved for special effect. The chords beginning in m. 18 coincide with the piece’s dynamic climax as well as the moment when the pattern of thematic repetition stops. The chromatic motion that forms these left-hand chords is another illustration of parsimonious voice leading. With the exception of the progression from m. 9 to 10, common tones connect each chord to the next. Notes that are

Example 5.1: Right hand of “Voici la servante du Seigneur” (complete)

²⁸ The last two techniques, fragmentation (or what Messiaen calls “elimination”) and change of register, are discussed in Messiaen’s chapter on melodic development. See *Technique de mon langage musical*, 35–36.

not common move no more than a major second. The result is a smooth crawl up the keyboard, a gesture that augments the insistence implied by the melody's repetition.



Example 5.2: Left hand of "Voici la servante du Seigneur" (complete)

5.3.2 "VIERGE DIGNE DE LOUANGES"

Concision also dominates the following movement, a fantasy on four Marian chants. Her quotations respect the original mode of the melodies, although they are wrapped in her own rhythmic language. As seen in two of the chants (Example 5.3), the addition or subtraction of a short value produces a lively asymmetry. Her use of the added value, previously seen in *Paraphrase*, likely stems from her familiarity with Gregorian chant. The supple ebb and flow of plainsong is mimicked in these freely written melodies. Of course, this source was mutually treasured by her husband, whose writings repeatedly champion Gregorian chant as inspiration for tonal enrichment and, what he calls, "rhythmic music."²⁹

²⁹ "Today I believe that rather than destroying it, we should enrich tonality. And in this sense, we have neglected too much the still living source of Gregorian chant." "Je crois aujourd'hui qu'il faudrait, plutôt que de la détruire, enrichir la tonalité. Et dans ce sens, on a trop négligé la source toujours vive du chant grégorien." José Bruyr, "Olivier Messiaen," in *L'Ecran des musiciens, seconde série* (Paris: José Corti, 1933), 127.

"Plainchant, the official language of the Church, is certainly the most living, the most original, and the most joyously free of religious works." Olivier Messiaen, "De la Musique sacrée," *Carrefour* (June-July 1939), 75; quoted and translated in Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935-1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 136.



Example 5.3: *Ave Maria* (top) and *Ave regina coelorum* (bottom) in “*Vierge digne de louanges*”

Citing the theories of Dom André Mocquereau,³⁰ Messiaen proposes that one animates chant by varying the lengths of certain notes, and he notates this with added values.³¹ As verified in Example 5.3, Messiaen’s ideas that later surface in his *Traité* resonate with Delbos’s own approach to plainsong. However, whereas Messiaen often conceals a chant within his own modes, Delbos’s quotation is always direct: the material is either extremely rhythmicized, fragmented into motives, or the subject of contrapuntal imitation. She does not incorporate Messiaen’s techniques of elaborate ornamentation (*Victimae paschali laudes* in “*Le Verbe*”³²) or intervallic distortion (*Salve Regina* in “*Subtilité des corps glorieux*”³³).

While these chants retain their identity, the underlying harmonies are from Delbos’s own language. Chromatic clusters often colour the Gregorian melodies, a technique that dominates the recurring motive throughout “*Vierge digne de louanges*.” A descending fourth, taken from the “*Ave*” of *Ave Maria*, pervades the entire movement. As shown in Example 5.4, her characteristic semitone clash always accompanies this motive.

³⁰ In order to make music rhythmic, he argues that one “must give life, animation, élan, movement to the first sound and to the second, a length, slight, infinitely slight, or rather perhaps the feeling of a temporary alighting, a touch, a mere support.” Dom André Mocquereau, *“Le Nombre Musical Grégorien”: A Study of Gregorian Musical Rhythm*, trans. Aileen Tone, vol. 1 (Rome, Tournay, and Paris: Société de Saint Jean l’Évangéliste, Desclée & Cie, 1932), 62.

³¹ Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de rythme, de couleur et d’ornithologie* (1949–1992), vol. 4 (Paris: Leduc, 1994–2002): 46.

³² Latry and Mallié, 149.

³³ *Ibid.*, 188.



Example 5.4: (015) and (016) motives in “Vierge digne de louanges”

Delbos uses the Ave motive as a unifying device among the piece’s ever-shifting keys and tempi; it is a tonal bridge that connects one section to the next. Example 5.5 shows how the conclusion of *Ave Maria* in m. 31 ushers in a subsequent quotation of *Ave regina coelorum* in m. 32. The final of the former chant (B) serves as the bass of the harmony underlying both the end of m. 31 and beginning of the next. Excerpt for the B-flat, a common chord links these two sections. One of its pitches, F#, serves as the final of the next chant, which Delbos then follows with another statement of the Ave motive (m. 37). Measures 36 and 37 are similarly bridged via a common harmony. Throughout this piece, the Ave motive affirms the tonality of the preceding material by beginning on the same note as that chant’s final (in the case of Example 5.5, F#). In doing so, a single motive relates sections of vastly different pitch spaces, tempi, and registrations. The ending also provides a sense of unity to this movement; one final iteration of *Ave Maria* ends on C#, which serves as an inverted pedal point above F-C motives from the opening (see Example 5.7).

Example 5.5: "Vierge digne de louanges," mm. 31-32; 36-37.

In addition to Delbos's profuse use of chant, several techniques throughout this movement are similarly found in Charles Tournemire's *L'Orgue mystique*. Delbos was surely familiar with this composer, as her husband wrote about and played his music.³⁴ Kaleidoscopic changes in key, coupled with fluctuating tempi, echo the arabesques unique to this composer. Moreover, the ostinatos that permeate this movement recall those in many pages of *L'Orgue mystique*. Tournemire often employs recurring melodic patterns to create stasis, and Example 5.6 shows their appearance in "Vierge digne de louanges." However, Delbos manages to add her own irregularities. Within the descending tetrachord, she oscillates between different qualities of D's and C's. These alterations do not reveal any pattern, yet they serve as a subtle variant within an otherwise static section.

³⁴ On April 25, 1932, Messiaen joined numerous colleagues in a concert devoted to *L'Orgue Mystique* at Ste-Clotilde. For a reprint of Messiaen's review of *L'Orgue Mystique*, see Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935-1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 101-102.

Lent ♩ = 63 (OM)

65 Pos: quintaton 16 et cor de nuit *legato*

R: gbe et vx céleste *pp*

legato

Péd: bourdon 8 seul
- Tir Pos (OM)

Example 5.6: “Vierge digne de louanges,” mm. 65-67.

Example 5.7: “Vierge digne de louanges,” mm. 1-7.

A similar notion of stasis is heard at the beginning and end of the piece. Repetitions of the Ave motive precede an initial presentation of *Ave Maria* (Example 5.7). As in her chant quotations, Delbos uses added values to vary a stagnant context. A gradual diminution occurs in both the descending fourth motive as well as the rests between measures. Conversely, rests between “Ave” iterations at the very end of the piece gradually

increase by a sixteenth note. Momentary augmentation, such as that in m. 7, often articulate phrase and section endings.

5.3.3 "MÈRE DES PAUVRES"

After a harmonically rich exploration of Marian chants comes a more delicate movement. A lone melody in the left hand serves as ostinato material for this short piece. The right hand's answer in m. 2 introduces a different recurring motive. As seen in Example 5.8, both melodies maintain rhythmic independence, and their added values defy traditional meter. When vertically aligned, they yield the syncopations that characterize Delbos's music.

In the following section, the feet take up the opening theme while Delbos elaborates the secondary one above it (Example 5.9). She develops both materials via melodic fragmentation; the pedals repeat G-Ab-F while the manuals mimic the right hand's gestures in m. 2. Furthermore, the pedal presents the theme in irregular durations, undermining the placidity implied by repetition.

Example 5.8: "Mère des Pauvres," mm. 2-3.

Example 5.9: "Mère des Pauvres," mm. 11-12.

The movement concludes with an (almost) exact canon based on the secondary theme (Example 5.10). In an ending similar to that of “La Vierge berce l’Enfant,” Delbos abruptly ends this moment of stasis. An extreme shift of register and long rest sever the theme’s final E-D-C descent.

OM:
R: bourdon
Pos: cor de nuit
Ped: sb 16, bd 8
R (OM)

20

poco rall. (OM)

rall. molto (OM)

Pos (OM)

ppp

Example 5.10: “Mère des Pauvres,” mm. 20-22.

5.3.4 “MÈRE TOUTE JOYEUSE”

As a fervent Catholic and longtime student of a religious institution, Delbos knew the rich corpus of plainsong. One sees this directly in the amount of quotation throughout her organ works. It is also possible to consider her own melodies, particularly the opening flourish in “Mère toute joyeuse,” as Gregorian evocations. Over the course of one long bar, Delbos ornaments Mary’s theme heard at the beginning of the cycle. Stepwise ascents and descents, as well as recurring melodic cadences, evoke gestures similar to those in plainsong.

Delbos’s monody, no doubt illustrative of a joyful Mary, is perhaps the most Messiaen-esque passage in her œuvre. Both composers were clearly inspired by the turns and shapes of Gregorian chant. In his *Technique de mon langage musical*, Messiaen documents the ways he incorporates chant in musical form and melodic gestures. He systematically presents forms (such as sequences, psalms, Alleluias) and gives “examples” of these chants in his compositions. In discussing the Alleluia, Messiaen presents a melismatic excerpt

alongside terms such as “rapid,” “supple,” and “joyous,” descriptors traditionally ascribed to Gregorian Alleluias.³⁵ One finds several similarities in Example 5.11. Notice how the long vocalise is accompanied by Messiaen’s performance directives suggesting the same alleluiatic speed, freedom, and joy. As indicated in this example, his monodic gestures in *Technique* (itself an excerpt from *Chants de terre et de ciel*), are not unlike Delbos’s own.

In his *Traité*, Messiaen classifies different neumatic groups, and he gives examples of these figures in his music as well as that from the past. Consider his identification of the *scandicus flexus* and *climacus resupinus* in a melody of Debussy (Example 5.12).³⁶ A survey of Messiaen’s numerous examples proves that shapes constitute his classification criteria rather than exact intervallic content. We find these same gestures in the alleluiatic passage from “Mère toute joyeuse.” While it is not possible to prove Delbos taking inspiration directly from Messiaen, a comparison of her monody with his later writings shows mutual inspirations. Both composers’ familiarity with Gregorian chant undoubtedly shaped their conceptions of melody and rhythm. This measure is one of Delbos’s most unique constructions, as its range and rhythmic suppleness contrast with otherwise narrow and succinct melodies.

³⁵ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), vol. 1, 44.

³⁶ Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d’ornithologie* (1949–1992), vol. 4 (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1994–2002), 37.

174
Résurrection
Chant
Soprano

Vif
ff

"Je suis res-sus-ci-té je suis res-sus-ci-té.
Je mon-te: vers toi, mon Père,
vers toi, mon Dieu, Al-le-lu-ia. De terre à ciel je pas-se."

Trinité départ (OM):

R: fl. 4

Pos: fl. 8

G: bd 8

Ped: oct 4 ♩ = 66 assez vif, très libre - avec enthousiasme (OM)

Pos

The rest of this movement is a virtuosic display of parsimonious writing, not to mention a virtuosic feat for the organist. The opening monody is cast in imitation with itself, first in two voices and then in three at the pedal's entry. Tightly controlled counterpoint is made unpredictable with irregular note values that clash against irregularly spaced entries (Example 5.13). Many passages begin like a strict canon, although these subtle changes in duration negate any sense of consistency. Foreign notes are either elaborations of a given motive or, in the case of Example 5.13, accompaniments in contrary motion with the theme. In fact, these chromatic wedges are integral to the development of the piece. When the pedals enter, every thematic entry in the manuals is harmonized with such a voice. In just under four minutes, Delbos uses and maximizes simple techniques of composition—repetition, imitation, and syncopation create a complex wash of sound. Note

The image shows a musical score for measures 15 and 16 of the piece "Mère toute joyeuse". The score is written for three staves: two for the manuals (treble and bass clef) and one for the pedals (bass clef). Measure 15 begins with a trill in the right manual, marked "(tr: la)". The pedal part enters in measure 15 with the instruction "Péd: fl. 4 seul". Measure 16 features a complex texture with the right manual playing a rapid chromatic scale, the left manual playing a similar but more complex pattern, and the pedals providing a steady bass line. The right manual part in measure 16 is marked "R: fl. 4, nazard, octavin *pp* (OM)". Blue brackets highlight specific entries in the manuals and the pedal part across the two measures.

Example 5.13: "Mère toute joyeuse," mm. 15-16.

too Messiaen's registration in Example 5.13; the sparkle of four-foots and upperwork complement the playful energy of this movement.

5.3.5 "DEBOUT, LA MÈRE DES DOULEURS"

As in the opening movement, concision lies at the heart of "Debout, la Mère des Douleurs." Inspired by the Gregorian hymn *Stabat Mater*, Delbos portrays the darkest aspect of Mary's life: her son's crucifixion. The right-hand melody, excerpted in Example 5.14, develops the ideas of semitone oscillation and tritone leaps, intervals both typical of her style and illustrative of Mary weeping at the foot of the Cross. The Bb-A-Ab motive is repeated incessantly, and it makes wider leaps all the more expressive. As found in his *Technique de mon langage musical*, Messiaen documents his fondness for a similar technique: returning chromaticism (*chromatisme retourné*).³⁷ However, he incorporates this gesture in the context of long, expansive melodies, such as in the second halves of "Le Verbe" and "Combat de la Mort et de la Vie." Note that these melodies are in sharp contrast to this one by his wife; her lines are narrower and more concise.



Example 5.14: Right hand of "Debout, la Mère des Douleurs," mm. 1-13.

³⁷ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), vol. 1, 31-32.

The left-hand accompaniment throughout this movement exhibits voice-leading techniques already seen in “Voici la servante du Seigneur.” As evident in Example 5.15, Delbos favors clashes of interval class 1 between different voices (such as the soprano and bass in m. 7). Common tones in the left hand, such as B-natural from mm. 7-9 and D from mm. 8-10, result in minimal motion between chords. Voices that move do so in parallel and contrary motion by half-step. These processes yield the compact texture and dissonant harmonic language that dominates this composer’s music.



Example 5.15: “Debout, la Mère des Douleurs,” mm. 7-10.

Delbos thwarts any sense of consonant arrival, even in the piece’s climax—a high Bb in the right hand clashes against a G major triad in the left hand. What follows is a sparse concluding measure (Example 5.16). Parallel motion accompanies her characteristic “off-kilter octaves,” and the left hand’s premature silence results in yet another single-note ending.

This musical score shows measure 28. It is written for piano with a grand staff. The right hand has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The left hand has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The right hand plays a series of notes, including a high Bb. The left hand plays a G major triad. The texture is sparse, with a single-note ending. The notation includes various accidentals and ties. There are performance instructions: 'R: bd 8 -Trem (OM)' for the right hand and 'G: bd 8' for the left hand. A dynamic marking 'ppp' is present, along with the instruction 'peu à peu (OM)'. A tempo marking '4'45" (OM)' is also shown.

Paris, mars-juillet 1939

Example 5.16: “Debout, la Mère des Douleurs,” m. 28.

5.3.6 “SECOURS DES CHRÉTIENS, REINE DE LA PAIX”

The finale of *L’Offrande à Marie*, about 14 minutes of music, is Claire Delbos’s most ambitious piece for the instrument. As previously discussed, wartime anxieties fueled this movement’s composition—one manuscript’s profuse “guerre” annotations prove this. Delbos begins with yet another dissonant clash between hands; each utterance on the Grand Orgue is a semitone above the given chord’s root (Example 5.17). However, the drama of the opening lies in the pedal. Sounding both martial rhythms and a rising flourish, the line climbs and varies slightly with each repetition. A litany, annotated by Delbos as “Secours des Chrétiens, priez pour nous,” appears in a modally pure, yet syncopated form. In Example 5.18, a final trumpet call in the left hand and piling of (01) clashes announce the climax of this first section.

Example 5.17: “Secours des Chrétiens,” mm. 1-4.

Example 5.18: “Secours des Chrétiens,” m. 15.

Next comes Delbos's most complex writing. While the result is a highly compact and dissonant texture, this section is composed of several simple processes. It is the constant repetition and layering of these processes, however, that create an astringent and chaotic effect. The chant *Sub tuum praesidium* is either presented in canon with itself or harmonized with Delbos's characteristic dyads (01) or (02). The other hand expounds upon the earlier pedal flourish with escalating lines of semitones and minor thirds. Often scored for three voices, the pedal features rising (01) and (02) dyads and also outlines the shape of m. 3's motive. The result is an atonal mass of sound, with the only point of reference being the unaltered *Sub tuum praesidium*.

Example 5.19 illustrates these layers at work. Close seconds appear in the right hand, left hand, and left foot. These compressed chord structures follow the general direction of the m. 3 flourish, and their simultaneous appearances muddy the sound. Profuse syncopation prevents any keyboard from regularly sounding with another. Additionally, the progression of the left hand and pedal dyads in Example 5.19 exhibits a technique seen at the beginning of the cycle: parsimonious voice leading. In fact, most of the accompaniment throughout this section is simply dyads of seconds or thirds slithering up and down. This common-tone crawling allows Delbos to travel rather quickly from one end of the compass to the other.

Example 5.19: "Secours des Chrétiens," mm. 40-41.

In addition to her characteristic dyads that colour the chant, this section also features an “off-kilter organum” effect. A given line is doubled a fifth below (perfect or diminished), while a semitone or whole tone is added above the organal voice (see Figure 5.4). Of course, these parallel chord spacings are not unique to this piece, as they previously surfaced in “Vierge digne de louanges” (Example 5.4). A final chant technique in this section is contrapuntal imitation. As seen in Example 5.20, the fragment “nostras deprecationes ne desprecias” is answered in canon at the fifth. The upper voice is delayed by a sixteenth note and mostly harmonized in tritones. This process yields further instances of her distinctive syncopation as well as chord spacings with seconds. In fact, one surviving sketch shows the composer working out imitation using this same melodic fragment.³⁸ While this specific passage does not make it into the movement, it attests to her preoccupation with canonic devices.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a vocal line beginning at measure 31, marked with a '7' time signature. It features a series of chords and intervals, with lyrics 'Nos - tras de - pre - ca - ti - o - nes' written above. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment, also starting at measure 31, with lyrics 'nos - tras de - pre - ca - ti - o - nes' written below. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals, illustrating the contrapuntal imitation described in the text.

Example 5.20: “Secours des Chrétiens,” mm. 31-33 (top) and Delbos sketch (bottom)
Sketch: Collection Fournier

³⁸ Private collection of Michel Chapuis, transferred to Carolyn Shuster-Fournier, and reproduced for this author.

In addition to syncopation, polyrhythms animate the texture and create ceaseless commotion. Example 5.21 shows the combination of independent materials, layers distinguished by different keyboards. Each voice always moves on another voice's off beat. The pedal progresses in steady eighth notes, while the right hand rhythmizes the plainchant in triplets and sixteenth-note figures. Note too the left hand's illustration of the "Delbos stutter," used this time as an evocation of war.

Example 5.21: "Secours des Chrétiens," mm. 47-48.

The advanced harmonic and rhythmic experiments found in this middle section of "Secours des Chrétiens" seemed to inspire Delbos's future projects. Excerpted in Example 5.22, Delbos's later song cycle³⁹ and setting of Psalm 141⁴⁰ incorporate techniques seen in the finale: added values, stutters, compressed and parallel structures, as well as consistent use

³⁹ Transcribed from *Trois aspects de la mort*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2186.

⁴⁰ Transcribed from *Psaume CXLI pour soprano solo, chœur (voix de femmes), 4 ondes Martenot et piano*, Fonds Olivier Messiaen, VMA-MS-1642.

of interval class 1. In fact, the same C-C#-D#-E aggregate that pervades this section of her organ work later paints the words “pitié de moi” in her song cycle *Trois aspects de la mort*.

The image displays three musical excerpts. The top excerpt is a single melodic line in treble clef, featuring a series of chords and intervals, with dynamic markings *mf* and *p*. The middle excerpt is a vocal setting of 'Pitié de moi! pi-tié de moi!' in treble clef, with a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The bottom excerpt is a piano piece in 4/4 time, featuring a complex texture with multiple voices and dynamic markings *p*, *mf*, and *decresc.*.

Example 5.22: Two excerpts from *Trois aspects de la mort*/ii (top)
and one excerpt from *Psaume CXLI* (bottom)

After a gradual reduction in texture and descent down to the lowest note of the keyboard, Delbos begins a new passage based on the fragment “Virgo gloriosa et benedicta” from *Sub tuum praesidium*. A monodic statement of the theme gives way to imitative entries. The result is a profuse layering of the chant, and each entry is tonally distant from the others. While traditional rules of counterpoint are not applied, Delbos meticulously works out each line. One can trace the entire “Virgo gloriosa et benedicta”

melody in every voice that appears—a profuse, if not excessive, use of counterpoint to develop a given melody.

Example 5.23: “Secours des Chrétiens,” mm. 83-86.

The finale’s jagged lines, clamours, intense dissonances, and constant quotations of *Sub tuum praesidium* are surely evocations of Delbos’s wartime torment. There is, however, a glimmer of hope at the end. A solemn carillon spins around five notes in complex rhythms across all keyboards—perhaps the pinnacle of her musical minimalism (Example 5.24). Besides the unceasing use of “Virgo gloriosa et benedicta” from the chant, this final section is particularly unique from the rest of the movement. It is surprisingly euphonious after the atonal complexities that preceded it. Wrapped in the shimmer of the organ’s bright mixtures, this passage might even suggest the peal of victory bells. In fact, in a letter written within the period of this movement’s composition, Claire writes:

I’d been thinking of Peace and I suddenly said to Pascal: “Just wait, my darling, when the war’s over the bells in Jesus’s House will ring really loudly,” and thinking about that hour of deliverance made me sob even as I spoke (I’m still weeping as I write this).⁴¹

Although this is just one explanation for the piece’s uncharacteristic ending, this passage is a deliberate break from the frenzied dissonances that precede it. Pure modality, a transparent texture, and polyrhythm are surely rhetorical devices—a solemn and joyful

⁴¹ Letter from Claire Delbos to Olivier Messiaen, November 25, 1939. Quoted and translated in Hill and Simeone, 87.

Example 5.24: “Secours des Chrétiens,” mm. 164-165.

message of hope. The pleas for Mary’s intercession that are woven throughout the cycle culminate with her redemption of mankind in the finale. These petitions intersect a particular era of European history, not to mention Claire’s own life—the many letters to her husband were words of hope and comfort amid wartime tragedy. Therefore, *L’Offrande à Marie* is not just an expression of Marian theology and pinnacle of Delbos’s organ writing. The cycle is a time capsule that offers a unique glimpse into one French composer’s life during the Second World War.

5.4 MESSIAEN AS INTERPRETER AND EDITOR






Delbos’s autograph manuscript of the entire cycle was also Messiaen’s score, and it reveals several insights into his own playing.⁴² His indications for the organ at La Trinité bear abundant tempo, touch, and interpretive markings. Many annotations, such as his inscriptions in “Mère toute joyeuse” (Example 5.11), show the organist bringing his wife’s music to life. Accelerandi signal moments of stasis, sequential repetition, or successive imitation.⁴³ Conversely, long, drawn-out rallentandi imbue gravitas into the ends of larger

⁴² Claire Delbos, *L’Offrande à Marie*, Fonds Oliver Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod, RES VMA MS-2183, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

⁴³ Recordings and personal scores show how Messiaen progressively increased the tempo in slow music of his as well. Olivier Latry and Loïc Maillé explain how Messiaen’s recording speeds up over the course of “Le Verbe” and

sections. Consider his annotation in the penultimate movement (Example 5.27): “Lent - ralentir les fins de phrase.” His preference for tempo evolution is most evident in the fantasy-like second movement. As shown in Table 5.2, sections with a new theme, key area, or motivic idea are uniquely profiled. The metronome markings, like those in *Parce, Domine*, are never proportional. Furthermore, occurrences of “Vif” and “Modéré” throughout this movement show that these terms are relative rather than tied to a particular BPM. A “Vif” section, for Messiaen, is not necessarily fast, but more animated than the music that precedes it.

Table 5.2: Messiaen’s Tempo Changes in “Vierge digne de louanges”

Section	Metronome and Tempo Marking
mm. 25-57	 = 60
mm. 28-31	 = 69 <i>Vif</i>
mm. 32-36	 = 44 <i>Modéré</i>
mm. 37-42	 = 72 <i>Vif</i>
mm. 43-46	 = 80

The final movement documents a phenomenon absent from Messiaen’s other organ scores: a duet. The final carillon section is cast on four staves, and Messiaen writes, “Zilgien joue le Récit.” Line Zilgien’s assistance undoubtedly made the passage easier to play. In an earlier manuscript of the movement, Delbos writes the two upper lines of this passage on one staff. Messiaen then arranges these lines for two different manuals, experimenting with a thumbing technique: “jouer Pos. avec les pouces.”⁴⁴ Considering the complexity of the

“Combat de la Mort et de la Vie.” *L’œuvre d’orgue d’Olivier Messiaen: Œuvres d’avant-guerre* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2008), 152; 207.

⁴⁴ Collection Fournier.

counterpoint, it is unlikely Messiaen ever played it this way. In the later BnF copy, Delbos writes the two parts on different staves to create the version in Example 5.24.

However, a successful use of “thumbing down” is found in the previous contrapuntal section of “Secours des Chrétiens” (see Example 5.23). Messiaen slithers from one manual to the next to solo out entries of the “Virgo gloriosa et benedicta” fragment. Such a technique is not found in his own works, and it attests to his creative imagination as orchestrator—Messiaen transforms the complexity of Delbos’s writing into something comprehensible on his instrument. It also attests to his virtuosic talent, as the thumbing technique was still novel and advanced for the French organ school.

Among his copious annotations, two markings show Messiaen revising the actual text of Delbos’s music. Consider his pencil markings in one measure of “Mère toute joyeuse,” reproduced in Example 5.25. Moving the accent to the high note and quickening the descending figure ally this passage more with its chant-like evocation. Similar markings throughout MS 2183 also show Messiaen altering the duration of a figure to create a slight *accelerando* or *rallentando*.



Example 5.25: “Mère toute joyeuse,” original (left) and Messiaen’s revision (right)
RES VMA MS-2183

Perhaps his most drastic revision is that of the cycle’s final measure. In Example 2.26, we see Delbos’s original ending at the top, fortissimo yet forthright. In the earliest manuscript of the piece, Messiaen rewrites his own version below this measure.⁴⁵ Without altering the harmony, he exploits the available range of the organ by filling out the chords, moving the right hand higher, and doubling the bottom voice in the pedal. The fact that the

⁴⁵ Collection Fournier.

final bar of the later autograph manuscript incorporates this revision is further proof of Messiaen's influence in his wife's editing process.

The image displays a comparison between two musical versions of the ending of "Secours des Chrétiens". The top version is the original manuscript, featuring a grand staff with two staves. The bottom version is Messiaen's revision, also in grand staff. An arrow points from the original to the revision. The revision includes several annotations: "bonne version:" above the first staff, "legato" on the left of the first and third staves, "GPR *ffff*" above the second staff, "tir GPR et anches pédale *ffff*" below the third staff, and an "8va" marking with a dashed line above the second staff. The original manuscript has a "ff" marking at the beginning.

Example 5.26: Ending of "Secours des Chrétiens," original (top) and Messiaen's revision (bottom)
Collection Fournier

Although the couple's compositional voices are worlds apart, Messiaen's registrations for La Trinité reveal several similarities in the sound of Delbos's organ music and his own. He favours the Clarinette and Nazard combination, as well as a registration often heard in tender moments of his music: the Positif Quintaton 16' and Cor de nuit 8' against Récit strings. The Positif Cornet, used for monody and chant soli in his music, is similarly used in the quotation of *Ave maris stella* in Delbos's second movement.

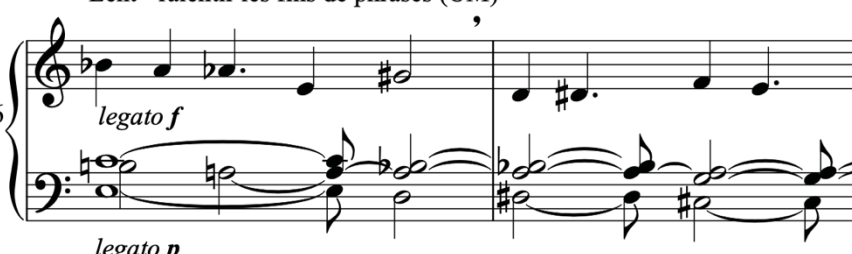
One particularly Tournemire-esque combination is found in "Debout, la Mère des Douleurs" (Example 5.27). The pairing of the voix humaine and célestes was unique to Charles Tournemire, and there are numerous examples in his music. In fact, he cites it in his

organ method, noting that this registration against a 16' Bourdon evokes a "very mysterious and poetic effect."⁴⁶ This example also records various annotations added by Messiaen (marked "OM"). In pencil, he adds the tremulant to the prescribed registration, either as his suggestion or as a way to make it more idiomatic to the instrument.⁴⁷

Lent - ralentir les fins de phrases (OM)

R: voix humaine,
voix céleste et
gambe, bourdon 16
(+trem, OM)

G: bourdons 8, 16



— jusqu'à la dernière mesure (OM)

Example 5.27: "Debout, la Mère des Douleurs," mm. 1-2.

This example is one of the many pale registrations that mark Delbos's music. She often calls for a lone Cromorne, Bourdon or Montre. Rarely do we hear sounds typical of other French composers, such as a rich set of fonds, bright mutations, or tiered addition of anches. In many ways, this pale sound complements the nakedness of her organ writing. Hands and feet are often cast unusually far apart, and the relatively lean textures do not make use of the organ's full compass. She also seems to not always have the La Trinité organ in mind, as certain passages exceed its pedal compass and others indicate stops not available (e.g. Positif Cromorne, Pedal Bourdon 4', and Pedal Flute 4').⁴⁸

But, how much of the organ's sound in *L'Offrande à Marie* actually comes from Claire Delbos? Is it possible that as a creative organist, her husband had more to do with the registrations? Leafing through her autograph manuscript in the BnF reveals that in addition to notes, the registrations in ink are actually in the hand of Claire Delbos.

⁴⁶ Charles Tournemire, *Précis d'exécution, de registration, et d'improvisation à l'orgue* (Paris: Eschig, 1936), 92.

⁴⁷ Nineteenth and twentieth-century French registration practices automatically included the tremulant with the Voix humaine.

⁴⁸ All of these stops (as well as a high F# and G in the pedal) were found on another organ frequently played by Messiaen: a four-manual Cavaillé-Coll in the Salle Pleyel. For a stoplist, see Marcel Dupré, "Le grand orgue de la Salle Pleyel," *Le Monde musical*, 31 mars 1930, 99-100.

However, a closer examination of “her” registrations, coupled with evidence from private collections, suggest another scenario: Delbos wrote the notes, Messiaen played and registered the music, and she recorded these combinations from his copy.

When comparing the autograph manuscript with earlier copies bequeathed to Line Zilgien, there are numerous examples of Delbos replicating annotations made by Messiaen for a previous performance: registration, touch and tempo markings, as well as the position of the swell box. The fact that she places markings from these drafts in the exact same locations as the autograph manuscript attests to Messiaen’s editorial influence. Sometimes, her duplication proved unhelpful to Messiaen, as he modified these registrations to his instrument at La Trinité.

Perhaps the most obvious case of Messiaen’s influence is found in “Secours des Chrétiens.” A comparison of handwriting and markings in three different copies of the opening measures will show the chronology of his editorial role. Claire begins only with her notes, the annotation “guerre,” and dynamic indications (Example 5.28). She does mark *ff* for the off-beat D’s, yet their relationship with the C-F# dyads is unclear. Her curious

The image shows a musical score for the opening of "Secours des Chrétiens" by Messiaen, stage 1. The score is in 8/8 time and features a piano with a swell box. The left hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the right hand plays a melodic line. The word "guerre" is written above the first measure. Dynamic markings include "f" and "ff". The score is divided into two systems, with a measure number "4" at the start of the second system.

Example 5.28: Opening of “Secours des Chrétiens,” stage 1
Collection Fournier

notation in measures 5 and 6 leaves questions of how to distribute these dyads at the organ: are they part of the *f*, *ff*, or pedal sound? It also possible that she was not familiar with La Trinité's pedal compass, which lacks a high F#. Her notation, like that in the autograph manuscript of *Parce, Domine*, is quite bare.

Registration Trinité
 R: fonds et anches 16, 8, 4, octavin <
 Pos: fds 16, 8, 4 G: fds 16, 8, 4 (PG et RG)
 Ped: fonds 16, 8, 32, tir GPR

Example 5.29: Opening of “Secours des Chrétiens,” stage 2
 Collection Fournier

Messiaen orchestrates Delbos's initial draft and prescribes a full, traditionally French registration (Example 5.29). Against the repeating chords, he places the dissonant, off-beat D's on a louder manual. In a later manuscript (Example 5.30), Delbos copies these annotations into a clearer notation—the manuals are distributed across two staves. Messiaen also conceives of a large-scale *accelerando*, moving from a stately *Très modéré* to faster tempi as the music intensifies. Finally, in an incomplete single sheet (Example 5.31), Delbos writes the cleanest version.⁴⁹ She takes into account the clear distribution of voices

⁴⁹ Collection Fournier.

and includes the BnF copy's *Très modéré* and accent markings. Although incomplete, the neatness of this copy suggests the latest, most refined version.

♩ = 42 *Très modéré* (OM)

R *f*

G *ff* (OM)

(OM)

5 R (OM)

50 (OM)

R, G (OM)

R, G

R, G

- Tir GP (OM) + Tir GP (OM)

OM: *accel.* ----- *a poco*

Example 5.30: Opening of “Secours des Chrétiens,” stage 3
Fonds Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2183

R: forte et ardent 16, R, 4, 8, 16, 32

Pos. f. 16, 8, 4 - G: f. 16, 8, 4

Pos. f. 16, 8, 32 - Tir GP R

(PG et R G)

très modéré

R *f*

G *ff*

3

5

50 (OM)

R (OM)

R, G (OM)

R, G

R, G

- Tir GP (OM) + Tir GP (OM)

OM: *accel.* ----- *a poco*

Example 5.31: Opening of “Secours des Chrétiens,” incomplete
Collection Fournier

Not all movements of *L'Offrande à Marie* have surviving versions with Messiaen's annotations. It is possible that these documents simply have not surfaced, as I believe that the detailed specifications in "Vierge digne de louanges," for instance, do not directly stem from Claire Delbos. Of course, she was a frequent visitor of the La Trinité loft and heard Messiaen play the organ, but exact swell box positions in the first few measures ($\frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{1}{3}$) seem like an organist's work. In fact, the BnF contains one incomplete version of the movement in which Messiaen seems to be asking Claire (or himself) the kind of sound he wants for one measure: "avec la quintaton 8^{va}?"⁵⁰

As previously noted, Messiaen recorded several registrations in *L'Offrande à Marie* that are found in his other works of the time. However, there are many curious ones (in his hand) that sound nowhere near those published in his own music. Consider the slow opening of the "Virgo gloriosa et benedicta" fragment 70 in Delbos's finale (Example 5.32). On the organ of La Trinité, the gambe and octavin produce a velvety shimmer in the low registers. Consider also the ending carillon that Messiaen casts in a luminous trio: a Récit plenum, Positif Quintaton 16' and Flute 4', Grand Orgue Montre 8', and the Récit coupled to a 32' pedal. Whereas Messiaen paints the majority of her works in monochromatic colours, these passages contain some of his most experimental combinations.





Example 5.32: "Secours des Chrétiens," m. 70.

The above gap registrations, particularly the use of extremely high and low pitches in the pedal, are unlike any of Messiaen's own at the time. Perhaps he saved very specific, beloved combinations for his own music and felt that his wife's should retain a separate identity. On the other hand, newly released plans for his improvisations at Vespers reveal

⁵⁰ Fonds Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2188. The BnF catalogue refers to this two-page manuscript as "preparatory work," although it contains two complete, neatly written movements. The back of the second page contains just a few measures of "Vierge digne de louanges," and they are crossed out in pencil.

that Messiaen had a much more diverse sonic palette than his published music suggests. Figure 5.5 documents his use of the above combinations (gambe et octavin and quintaton 16' et flûte 4') as well as a similar registration to "Debout la Mère des Douleurs."⁵¹ Like these improvisation plans, Delbos's organ music was an opportunity for experimentation—particularly during a time in which he himself was not composing for the instrument.

Figure 5.5: Two Improvisation Registrations at Vespers (RES VMB MS-128)

Registrations Psaumes	
1	R gambe v. cél v. humaine trem <i>pp</i> harmonies P quintaton 16 fl 4 en solo (plainchant rythmé) G bd 16 (RG) harmonies (et solo) Ped 8 16 32 <i>pp</i>
2	R gambe octavin > trait rapide à 1 voix médium (en ) G bd à 2 voix chant (et contrepoint en )

As evident in the above examples, *L'Offrande à Marie* is an artifact of the collaboration between Claire Delbos and Olivier Messiaen. Surviving evidence shows Messiaen's meticulous revisions, annotations, and registrations to his wife's cycle. Instances of his editorial decisions are too vast to list here, but the cited examples are a few glimpses into his interpretative imagination. Given these similarities to drafts of *Parce, Domine*, I believe that early copies of her other works (if they still exist) reveal similar markings.

No extant correspondence mentions any discussion of this particular work, although one wonders whether Delbos offered feedback to Messiaen's ideas, revisions, and performances. The autograph manuscript of this cycle contains only one inscription by Delbos, and it is clearly directed toward her husband.⁵² Writing at the bottom of the first page of the "Secours des Chrétiens," Claire ponders the dissonant, off-beat D's (Example 5.33). While it does show Claire's involvement in matters of execution, this brief inscription

⁵¹ *Notes pour la composition des offices à la Trinité, programmes, notes et registration*, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-128, 81r.

⁵² Fonds Messiaen, RES VMA MS-2183, 14.

does not compare to the hundreds of annotations by Olivier Messiaen. The rest of this score bears the fingerprints of his definitive interpretations—all for music that was far from his style yet near to his heart.

♩ = 42 Très modéré (OM)

R *f*

G ** ff* (OM)

(OM)

(OM)

*voir s'il faut tenir la note vif ré aussi longtemps. [See if you have to hold the quick note D for that long.]

Example 5.33: Delbos's Annotation in "Secours des Chrétiens," mm. 1-4.
RES VMA MS-2183

CONCLUSION

Almost a decade after completing her final and largest work for organ, Claire Delbos was amnesiac and nearly chairbound. Olivier Messiaen no longer played her music in public and by all accounts spoke little about her. Her death in 1959 was the close of one chapter in Messiaen's life and beginning of a new one with the pianist Yvonne Loriod. Scholars have pointed to his more famous second wife as a "compositional catalyst" in Messiaen's later career. Christopher Dingle even posits the question: "Would Messiaen have simply composed less music without the positive creative spur of Loriod's pianism?"¹ Considering my previous case studies, I would like to re-phrase this question for Messiaen's first wife: would Claire Delbos have composed organ music (or music at all) without Olivier Messiaen?

Given a lack of documented organ training, her introduction to the instrument was surely through her husband and his colleagues Marcel Dupré, Jean Langlais, Daniel Lesur, and Charles Tournemire. Her inexperience with the instrument, however, did not equate with amateurism. We see and hear a dark, astringent voice very different from her husband, the self-proclaimed "musician of joy."² The couple's marriage coincided with vast developments in Messiaen's compositional language, and Claire was intimately familiar with his works of the 1930s and '40s. Nevertheless, no examples of modes of limited transposition, Hindu rhythms, or birdsong are found in her music. Additionally, the added sixths, thick chords, and full textures that give his music its unique shimmer are not the objectives of his wife.³

¹ "Yvonne Loriod as Source and Influence," in *Messiaen Perspectives 1: Sources and Influences*, ed. Christopher Dingle and Robert Fallon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 204.

² See Chapter 4, footnote 10.

³ "These chord-clusters give my writing an aspect of precious stones, a shimmer, a stained-glass quality which is rather characteristic." Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*, trans. Felix Aprahamian (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976), 74.

Any attempt to find Messiaen-isms in the music of Claire Delbos proves futile. Lasting just over 10 years, her compositional career remained independent from that of her husband. Her entire output—song cycles and organ music—bears his interpretational influence, yet the music is certainly not his. Furthermore, one must not assume that Delbos’s music *should* sound like Messiaen’s, as the maître did not expect pastiches of his music:

Above all, I’ve never forced them [my students] to imitate my music. Indeed, I’d have been very unhappy if I had, as it would seem monstrous to me to manufacture little Messiaens. Each time I’d to deal with a pupil, there stood a personality who often didn’t know himself what he wanted and needed the teacher to find it out. Therefore, I had to push the pupil in the direction in which he himself or she herself was interested.⁴

While Messiaen most likely did not teach Claire how to compose, his presence clearly inspired her projects of the 1930s and ‘40s. All of Delbos’s organ music, summarized in the table below, bookended Messiaen’s major organ works from the ‘30s. Her impetus to write these pieces in the first place is not known, although it is clear Messiaen encouraged and championed her entire output.

Table 6: A Timeline Comparison of Delbos and Messiaen’s Organ Works

Year	Claire Delbos	Olivier Messiaen
1934		<i>L’Ascension</i> organ version completed in summer
1935	<i>Deux Pièces</i> premiered January 29	<i>La Nativité</i> completed in summer
1939	<i>Paraphrase</i> premiered March 14 <i>Offrande</i> /iii completed in March <i>Offrande</i> /v completed in July <i>Offrande</i> /vi started in August	 <i>Les Corps glorieux</i> completed August 25
1940	<i>Offrande</i> /vi completed in May	

⁴ Quoted in Almut Rößler, *Contributions to the Spiritual World of Olivier Messiaen*, trans. Barbara Dagg and Nancy Poland (Duisberg: Gilles & Francke, 1986), 81.

1941	<i>Parce, Domine</i> completed in January <i>Offrande/i</i> completed in January <i>Offrande/ii</i> completed in August <i>Offrande/iv</i> completed in August
------	---

My survey of these works reveals several patterns in Claire Delbos's compositional language. Economical concision lies at the heart of her vocabulary, whether in the narrow and chromatic melodies, obsessive use of a motive, or parsimonious voice leading. Tropes such as the evocation of a *berceuse*, Last Judgment, or war are represented in obvious rhetorical gestures; covert leitmotifs and symbolisms are absent from these scores. Additionally, melodic lines hover around her favoured intervals: the tritone and semitone. These limited pitch ranges rarely stem from traditional collections (tonal, modal, whole tone, octatonic), but as seen throughout this study, they can generate the entire harmonic material of a piece.

Like Messiaen, all of Delbos's artistic expressions were deeply rooted in faith. Gregorian chant is heard throughout her works, although unlike those of her husband, these melodies are never altered or "hidden" in the score. Rather, she colours them in stark harmonizations, either with dyads or compact chord sequences in parallel motion. Inspirations from the freedom and flexibility of plainsong also explain Delbos's prolific use of additive rhythm. Figures with added values undermine any sense of traditional meter, and their simultaneous layering yields syncopations and the "Delbos stutter."

Delbos composed her organ music within just a few years, so discussions of early versus late styles are not appropriate to this composer. Of course, her music did grow in complexity over time. From her two delicate vignettes to apocalyptic clamours came her most advanced writing in "Secours des Chrétiens." However, all of these works point to the same tendencies and aspirations. Lean textures, disregard for the organ's full compass, and unidiomatic use of pedal all reveal a composer outside of the Parisian organ circle. A




survey of her non-organ music, excerpted throughout this study, proves the aforementioned devices to be her general keyboard techniques. Future research into her song cycles and psalm setting should address the similarities and differences between Delbos's approaches to the voice, piano, ondes Martenot, and organ.

While the music shows an autonomous style, other aspects of the score do not stem from the composer herself. Manuscript evidence proves Delbos's original conceptions to be quite bare in notation. With her notes and a few tempo markings, Messiaen applied great interpretative imagination to animate this music. Markings throughout his scores show both favourite and experimental registrations at La Trinité and Salle Pleyel. These copies are also windows into Messiaen's performance practice, as they are currently the only extant documentation of how he played contemporaneous organ works aside from his own. His scores of Tournemire, Lesur, Dupré, and others would likely reveal the same colourful sounds and flexible pacing that these documents show. Moreover, a comparison of Messiaen's annotations with Delbos's later versions of pieces shows his dominating role in her editing process. In many ways, what we see in the published editions are Olivier Messiaen's organ transcriptions of music by Claire Delbos.

While Messiaen's presence in his wife's career and music is evident, the extent to which the opposite held true is not. One must wonder whether the years of performing her works influenced any of his later activities. In a notebook about services and registrations at La Trinité, one of Messiaen's psalm improvisations calls to mind a certain violinist (see Figure 6). Perhaps Delbos's frequent performances in the loft inspired this organist's later plans at Vespers.⁵ Such a claim, however, cannot be proved for certain. The lack of music-related correspondence, records from the Schola Cantorum, and other manuscripts stifle further speculation about any "cross fertilization."

⁵ *Notes pour la composition des offices à la Trinité, programmes, notes et registration*, Fonds Messiaen, RES VMB MS-128, 81r.

Figure 6: Two Improvisation Registrations at Vespers (RES VMB-MS-128)

Autres registrations:	
7	R v. cél + gambe (trait, genre violon et alto) P quint 16 fl 4 (thème en 3es détachées G fl harm (accords détachés, genre cors)  alternez ces 2 claviers Ped sb 16, tir R (genre pizzacato)
8	R v. cél gambe (accords en détaché) en  genre quatour P fl 4 et piccolo (thème en détaché en ) Ped tir Positif (double Positif)

Neither his wife's name nor works appear in recently discovered "dictionaries" compiled by Messiaen, in which he catalogues excerpts of other composers for reference or future projects (e.g. Mozart, Debussy, Berg, and Jolivet).⁶ Despite his predilection for quotation, it is not yet possible to identify Claire Delbos as another source. The BnF catalogue claims that these documents date from 1950, the time when Claire was already slipping away from her husband. Perhaps these personal difficulties prevented any reminiscence of his life in the 1930s and '40s. Claire's music was inevitably tied to memories of her life, their many years together, and her premature passing. It is no surprise, then, that Messiaen barely mentioned his beloved Mie after 1959.

Today, with the release of her archives for public scrutiny, we can draw our own conclusions about Claire Delbos—deductions unclouded by what Olivier Messiaen chose to say (and not to say) about her. The scores and manuscripts cited herein, hopefully just some of more to be found, testify to a collaboration previously unexplored: music from one of the twentieth century's forgotten voices, as interpreted by one of that century's most influential composers.

⁶ *Petit Dictionnaire mélodique* (IFN-55011099), *Petit Dictionnaire harmonique* (IFN-55011098), and *Rythme Messiaen* (IFN-55013248) of the Fonds Messiaen, BnF.

APPENDIX 1: STUDENT PRIZES OF CLAIRE DELBOS, 1923-1932

YEAR	PRIZE	CATEGORY
1923	Cours du 1er degré/2e division "bien"	Solfege
1924	Cours du 1er degré "très bien"	Viola
1924	Cours du 1er degré "très bien"	Solfege
1925	Cours du 2e degré "assez bien"	Chamber music
1925	Cours du 1er degré/1re division "bien"	Harmony
1926	Cours du 2e degré "bien"	Violin
1926	Cours du 2e degré "bien"	Chamber music
1927	Cours du 2e degré "très bien"	Chamber music
1928	Cours du 2e degré "très bien"	Violin
1928	Cours du 1er degré "bien"	Harmony
1929	Cours du 1er degré "bien"	Singing (chant)
1929	Cours du 2e degré "assez bien"	Counterpoint
1930	Cours supérieur "bien"	Violin
1930	Cours du 2e degré "assez bien"	Counterpoint
1931	Cours supérieur "très bien"	Violin
1931	Cours du 2e degré "très bien"	Counterpoint
1931	Cours du 1e degré "assez bien"	Singing (chant)
1932	Cours du 1er degré "très bien"	Gregorian chant

Source: *Tablettes de la Schola Cantorum*. Issues 1923-1932. Paris, France.

APPENDIX 2: REPERTOIRE PERFORMED BY CLAIRE DELBOS AT LA TRINITÉ MASSES, 1932-1946

YEAR	DATE*	WORK
1932	November 1	Andantino pour violon et orgue (Franck)
	November 13	Aria pour violon et orgue (Bach)
	December 11	Adagio pour violon et orgue (Bach)
	December 25	Allegretto pour violon et orgue (Franck)
1933	January 8	Andante pour violon et orgue (Bach)
	January 22	Largo en fa dièse (Handel)
	January 29	Prière à Notre-Dame (Boëllmann)
	February 12	Canon pour violon et orgue (Bach)
	February 26	Allegretto pour violon et orgue (Franck)
	March 12	Canon pour violon et orgue (Bach)
	November 1	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
	November 5	Te Deum (Handel)
	November 26	Andantino en la majeur (Bach)
1934	January 7	Adagio de la 6 ^e Sonate (Bach)
	January 14	Largo (Paganini)
	February 4	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	February 25	Largo en ré mineur (Haydn)
	April 15	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	April 22	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	May 10	Largo en ré mineur (Haydn)
	May 13	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
	June 10	Adagio en fa majeur (Schumann)
	June 24	Largo en ré mineur (Haydn)
	November 1	Allegretto en la (Franck)
	November 4	Te Deum (Handel)
	November 11	Te Deum (Handel)
	November 18	Andante en ré majeur (Bach)
	December 2	Adagio en mi mineur (Ysaÿe)
	December 24	Largo en sol mineur (Haydn)
	December 30	Allegro en la (Fauré)
1935	January 13	Adagio de la 1 ^{re} Sonate (Bach)
	January 27	Andante en ré majeur (Bach)
	February 3	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	February 24	Andantino de la 2 ^e Sonate (Bach)
	March 17	Adagio en mi mineur (Ysaÿe)

	March 31	Final de la 2e Sonate (Bach)
	April 14	Largo en ré mineur (Haydn)
	April 21	Allegretto en la (Franck)
	May 5	3e Sonate (1er mouvement) (Bach)
	June 9	Largo de la 4e Sonate (Bach)
	June 16	Adagio de la 4e Sonate (Bach)
	June 23	Finale de la 4e Sonate (Bach)
	October 6	Adagio en fa (Schumann)
	October 27	Te Deum (Handel)
	November 1	Finale en la majeur (Franck)
	November 10	II ^e Mouvement de la 1 ^{re} Sonate (Bach)
	November 24	Andante en canon (Bach)
	December 8	Andante en fa (Schumann)
	December 25	Final en la majeur (Franck)
1936	February 16	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	February 23	Largo (Pugnani); Aria (Mondonville)
	March 8	Lamento (Handel)
	March 15	Adagio en mi mineur (Ysaÿe)
	March 22	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
	April 19	Final de Sonate (Franck)
	April 26	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
	May 3	Adagio de la 8e Sonate (Haydn)
	May 17	Allegro en si majeur (Bach)
	June 7	Andante en fa majeur (Schumann)
	November 8	2 ^e mouvement de la 1 ^{re} Sonate (Bach)
	November 15	1 ^{er} mouvement de la 2 ^e Sonate (Bach)
	December 6	Adagio en mi mineur (Ysaÿe)
	December 20	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
1945	May 10	Largo en re mineur (Handel)
	May 13	Canon en fa dièse mineur (Bach)
1946	January 13	Largo (Paganini)

*Performances took place at the 11:15 AM Mass.

Sources:

Bulletins paroissiaux de La Sainte Trinité. Archives Historiques de l'Archevêché de Paris. Paris, France.
L'Art musical: théâtres, concerts, TSE, disques, cinéma. Various issues. Paris, France. Accessed by BnF Gallica.

Notes pour la composition des offices à la Trinité, programmes, notes et registration. Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod. RES VMB MS-128. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département de la Musique, Paris, France.

Shuster-Fournier, Carolyn. *Un siècle de vie musicale à l'église de la Trinité à Paris: de Théodore Salomé à Olivier Messiaen*. Preface by Michel Chapuis. Paris: Harmattan, 2014.

APPENDIX 3: DELBOS WORKS PERFORMED BY OLIVIER MESSIAEN AT LA TRINITÉ MASSES, 1935-1948

DEUX PIÈCES

I. L'homme, né de la femme, vit peu de jours

1935: October 20, December 15

1936: March 29, November 1

1937: January 24

1939: March 26

1943: December 12

II. La Vierge berce l'Enfant

1935: December 29

1936: February 2, December 25

1937: February 2, February 7, December 25

1938: January 2

1943: February 7

1946: January 20

PARAPHRASE

1946: February 17

L'OFFRANDE À MARIE

III. Mère des pauvres

1946: May 26

1947: May 18

IV. Mère toute joyeuse

1947: December 25

1948: December 25

Sources:

Bulletins paroissiaux de La Sainte Trinité. Archives Historiques de l'Archevêché de Paris. Paris, France.
Shuster-Fournier, Carolyn. *Un siècle de vie musicale à l'église de la Trinité à Paris: de Théodore Salomé à Olivier Messiaen*. Preface by Michel Chapuis. Paris: Harmattan, 2014.

APPENDIX 4: CONCERT PERFORMANCES OF CLAIRE DELBOS'S MUSIC

DATE	LOCATION	WORK	PERFORMER(S)
January 25, 1935	Saint-Antoine-des-Quinze-Vingts	<i>Deux Pièces</i>	Olivier Messiaen
March 18, 1935	Schola Cantorum	<i>Deux Pièces</i>	Olivier Messiaen
May 14, 1935	Saint-Pierre-de-Montrouge	<i>Deux Pièces</i> /ii	Olivier Messiaen
December 12, 1935	Schola Cantorum	<i>Deux Pièces</i>	Olivier Messiaen
January 11, 1936	Salle Chopin	<i>Primevère</i>	Madeleine Chardon Olivier Messiaen
January 30, 1936	Schola Cantorum	<i>Primevère</i>	Marcelle Gérard Olivier Messiaen
May 5, 1936	Salle Debussy	<i>Primevère</i>	Jane Hérault-Harlé Olivier Messiaen
May 18, 1936	Conservatoire Russe	<i>Primevère</i>	Henriette Quéru-Bedel Olivier Messiaen
June 5, 1936	Salon des Tuileries	<i>Primevère</i>	Madeleine Chardon Olivier Messiaen
March 6, 1937	Ecole Normale de Musique	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i> (excerpts)	Renée Mahé Olivier Messiaen
April 28, 1937	Schola Cantorum	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i>	Marcelle Bunlet Olivier Messiaen
January 22, 1938	Salle Chopin	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i>	Marcelle Bunlet Olivier Messiaen
January 29, 1938	Schola Cantorum	<i>Deux Pièces</i> /ii	Rosa Tobon-Méjia
March 7, 1938	Maison des Étudiantes	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i> (excerpts)	Marcelle Bunlet Olivier Messiaen
March 14, 1939	La Trinité	<i>Paraphrase</i>	Olivier Messiaen
May 23, 1939	Home of Marcelle Bunlet	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i> (excerpts)	Marcelle Bunlet Olivier Messiaen
December 28, 1941	Palais de Chaillot	<i>L'Offrande à Marie</i> (excerpts)	Olivier Messiaen
June 3, 1942	Salle Chopin	<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i>	Renée Dyonis Olivier Messiaen
November 17, 1943	La Trinité	<i>L'Offrande à Marie</i>	Olivier Messiaen
March 24, 1945	Ecole Normale de Musique	Mélodies (title unspecified in agenda)	Marcelle Bunlet Olivier Messiaen
May 28, 1946	La Trinité	<i>Paraphrase</i>	Line Zilgien
April 25, 1947	Ecole Normale de Musique	<i>Trois aspects de la mort</i>	Ginette Guillamat Olivier Messiaen

Sources:

Hill, Peter and Nigel Simeone. *Messiaen*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod. RES VMB MS-122. Fonds Olivier Messiaen. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Paris, France.

APPENDIX 5: SELECTED REVIEWS OF CLAIRE DELBOS'S *PARAPHRASE*

Carol-Berard, *L'Époque* (March 16, 1939), 6.

En quatre parties enchaînées, l'orgue nous propose *La Résurrection des morts, Marie, toute-puissance suppliante, Foi en la méditation de Marie et Cantique à l'Agneau*. Quelle banalité, hélas! Mon cœur et mon cerveau restent fermés aux appels de Mme Delbos. Je ressentais l'impression d'être happé par le vacarme d'un carrefour embouteillé. M. Olivier Messiaen, admirable organiste et sincère musicien, entoura cette paraphrase de la *Messe des pauvres*, d'Erik Satie et de sa *Nativité du Seigneur* dont le finale est, à notre avis, la partie la plus caractéristique.

Four movements were performed attacca: *La Résurrection des morts, Marie, toute-puissance suppliante, Foi en la méditation de Marie*, and *Cantique à l'Agneau*. What a banal enterprise, alas! I was unmoved in both heart and mind by the appeals of Madame Delbos. To me, it sounded like a traffic jam in a busy intersection. Olivier Messiaen, a remarkable organist and a sincere musician, book-ended this paraphrase with the *Messe des pauvres* by Erik Satie and with his very own *Nativité du Seigneur*, the last part of which is, in our view, the most characteristic.

Suzanne Demarquez, *L'Art musical* (March 24, 1939), 757.

La première des nouveautés inscrites au programme était une *Paraphrase* pour orgue, de Mme Claire Delbos, faite de quatre parties enchaînées et ayant trait au *Jugement dernier*. Il semble que ce n'est guère un sujet convenant à une femme et l'on aurait davantage compris que Mme Delbos chantât la Nativité, et que M. Messiaen déchaînât les terreurs du dernier des jours terrestres. En l'occurrence, Mme Claire Delbos a fait ce qu'elle a pu, mais le résultat a paru d'une évocation peu concluante, malgré les violences et les clameurs des jeux. La partie la mieux venue, la plus poétique, a été l'invocation à *Marie, toute puissance*, où les qualités féminines de l'auteur pouvaient davantage s'extérioriser.

The first new work in the program was a *Paraphrase* for organ, by Madame Claire Delbos, made up of four movements (played *attacca*) on the theme of the Last Judgment. The subject is probably far from being suitable for a woman composer, and it would have made more sense for Madame Delbos to have taken the Nativity as her theme, leaving the terrors of the Last Day to Olivier Messiaen. As it happens, she did what she could, but overall the result was not very convincing, despite the violent cries and clamour coming from the organ. The part that came off best was the prayer to *Marie, toute puissance*, where the composer's womanly qualities were able to shine to a greater degree.

Michel-Leon Hirsch, *Le Ménestrel* (March 24, 1939), 84.

La *Paraphrase* de Mme Claire Delbos, qui reflète de l'application et de la sincérité dans une forme que l'auteur a voulue ardue, apparaît en dernière analyse creuse, boursoufflée et d'une emphase quelque peu cinématographique.

Although the composer's dedication and sincerity shine through in the intentionally difficult form of this piece, the *Paraphrase* by Claire Delbos is on final inspection hollow, turgid, and a little on the cinematic side.

Pierre Leroi, *Excelsior* (March 27, 1939), 4.

...et la tumultueuse et heurtée *Paraphrase* de Claire Delbos qui, évidemment, oriente l'orgue vers des destinées inquiétantes.

...tumultuous, halting *Paraphrase* by Claire Delbos, who is clearly taking the organ in worrying directions.

S.R., *La Revue Musicale* (March 1939), 131.

Une autre première audition est encore donnée, intitulée: *Paraphrase*, de Claire Delbos. L'orgue devient ici dramatique, puisqu'il s'agit du Jugement dernier; comme celui de Bach dans le fameux Choral "Aus tiefer Noth", [sic] il marque l'angoisse des morts, leur résurrection, leurs clameurs, et la sonnerie de Trompettes ébranlant le monde. En opposition vient ensuite l'appel à Marie, d'une douceur obstinée, puis les cantiques: celui des hommes, celui des anges...Parlant de la musique religieuse, en général, l'un des membres du Comité de cette même Sérénade, disait, une fois, qu'il existe des *Requiem*, comme celui de Fauré, où "les choses s'arrangent", s'apaisent; d'autres, tels ceux de Verdi ou de Berlioz, donnent la victoire au drama. La présente *Paraphrase*—pour notre plus grande espérance—est de la première catégorie.

Another premiere, this time of a work titled *Paraphrase*, by Claire Delbos. Here, the organ shows off its dramatic side, as befits a piece on the Last Judgment; like Bach in his famous chorale prelude, "Aus tiefer Noth," it portrays the anguish of the dead, their resurrection, their cries, and the blast of Trumpets, shaking the earth. Afterwards there comes a prayer to Mary, taking a different tack with its persistent sweetness, and finally two songs: one of men, the other of angels ... In a discussion of religious music in general, one of the committee members of this very *Sérénade* once remarked that there are some *Requiems*, like the Fauré *Requiem*, where everything "falls into place", calms down; in others, such as those of Verdi or Berlioz, the dramatic element clearly prevails. We are happy to report that the *Paraphrase* under discussion falls into the former category.

Jean Langlais, *Le Monde musical* (March 1939), 94-95.

En première audition, Messiaen fit entendre une *Paraphrase sur le jugement dernier*, œuvre importante de Claire Delbos qui traite l'orgue de façon adroitement orchestrale. Quatre parties sont enchaînées: 1° La résurrection des morts: après ébranlements, sonneries et appels, les morts se lèvent et vont au jugement suprême. Effet curieusement traduit par la longue tenue d'un accord de quatre notes, jouées à la pédale avec les jeux de fonds dont un 32 pieds. Pendant ce sinistre grondement, le thème générateur est entendu sur un cromorne, après effort des habitants de la tombe qui se disposent à en sortir. Un thème ascendant symbolise ce macabre relèvement, le même thème descendant peint la charité du Tout Puissant qui consent à s'aventurer sur le chemin de l'injustice humaine avant que de la juger. "Pardonnez, Ô Christ, à vos serviteurs pour qui, au tribunal de la clémence, Marie, notre Patronne, prie" (Hymne de la Toussaint). Ce thème grégorien est exposé sur une trompette qui alterne avec la sonorité profonde d'un Récit complet, alors que le fond harmonique et rythmique repose sur un mélange de bourdons 16 et 4. Cet ensemble est particulièrement réussi. 2° Marie, toute-puissante [sic] suppliante, phrase à la fois extatique et obstinée, confiée à un quintaton solo, soutenu par une voix céleste. Cette phrase laisse transparaître le côté particulier du mysticisme féminin, et ce n'est point péjorativement que nous faisons cette remarque. 3° Foi en la médiation de Marie; dernière phrase de l'hymne "Placare Christe" jouée sur un cornet, jeu organistique par excellence. 4° Cantique à l'Agneau, traité sous deux aspects, l'aspect angélique ("Sanctus de la Messe des Anges"),

aspect humain ("Psaume Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo"). Grâce à des procédés polyphoniques tels que canons par augmentation, par diminution, etc., l'auteur traduit le côté effroyable, désordonné et formidable de la Résurrection imposée aux Morts avant leur jugement. Ainsi se vérifie la justesse de cette phrase de Paul Dukas: "C'est par l'ordre que se peint le désordre." Cette œuvre, précise de forme et symbolique de tendance, tient à la fois de certain choral de Bach pour orgue (Livre VI n° 31) et des audacieuses élaborations sonores des musiciens de l'atonalité auxquels elle s'apparente par la présence d'une Série.

Messiaen premiered *Paraphrase sur le jugement dernier*, an important work by Claire Delbos featuring skilful orchestral writing for the organ. Its four movements are played *attacca*. 1. La résurrection des morts: after earthquakes, trumpet blasts, and cries, the dead rise and present themselves at the Last Judgment. Delbos represents this using a curious musical effect, a sustained four-note chord played on foundation stops in the pedal, including a 32 foot. During this sinister-sounding rumble, the main theme is heard on a cromorne—the dead are about to rise from their tombs. The theme in its ascending version symbolizes this gruesome resurrection, while the same theme but descending depicts the charity of the Almighty, agreeing to venture forth along the path of human injustice before rendering judgment upon it. "Forgive, O Christ, your servants, for whom our Virgin protectress begs for mercy before the judgment of the Father" (Hymn for All Saints). This Gregorian theme is played on a trumpet which alternates with the deep sound of the full Récit, while the harmonic and rhythmic backdrop is played on a 16- and 4-foot Bourdon combination. This ensemble comes off particularly well. 2. Marie, toute-puissance suppliante, an ecstatic and persistent phrase, entrusted to a solo Quintaton and accompanied by a Voix céleste. This phrase reveals the unique aspects of feminine mysticism, a remark which is made with no pejorative intention in mind. 3. Foi en la médiation de Marie; last line of the hymn "Placare Christe" played on a cornet, the organ stop *par excellence*. 4. Cantique à l'Agneau, which features two sides, the angelic side (Sanctus from the "Missa de angelis"), and the human side (the Psalm "Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo"). Thanks to contrapuntal procedures such as canons in augmentation, diminution, etc., the composer brings across the frightening, chaotic, and awful side of the Resurrection that the Dead must endure before being handed down their sentence. This confirms the accuracy of Paul Dukas' remark, "Disorder is depicted through order." This composition, precise in form and symbolic in import, takes inspiration from certain Bach chorale preludes for organ (Book VI no. 31) and from the bold sonorities of atonal composers, a relationship evident from the presence of a series.

Paul Dambly, *Le Petit Journal* (April 21, 1939), 6.

N'oublions pas la fulgurante *Paraphrase sur le Jugement dernier* pour orgue, de Mme Claire Delbos, dont le seul défaut est de nous révéler, si j'ose dire, que le cœur féminin ne recèle pas toujours des trésors d'indulgence.

Not to forget the scintillating *Paraphrase sur le Jugement dernier* for organ by Claire Delbos, whose only defect, if I may say so, is that it reveals that the female heart is not necessarily a treasure-store of indulgence.

Virgil Thompson, "More and More from Paris," *Modern Music* (May-June 1939), 233.

Another organ piece, *Paraphrase* by Claire Delbos (Madame Olivier Messiaen) pleased me a great deal. It is intended for use in churches on all occasions when the end of the world is a subject of the day. It is full of interesting chaos.

APPENDIX 6: COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGUE OF CLAIRE DELBOS MANUSCRIPTS AND SCORES

Abbreviations:

CD	Claire Delbos
OM	Olivier Messiaen
LZ	Line Zilgien
BnF-Mus	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique
CNSMDP	Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris
PC	Private collection

VOCAL WORKS

WORK	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
<i>L'Âme en bourgeon</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2184	Autograph MS in ink; annotations in pencil by OM
<i>Primevère</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2185	Autograph MS in ink; annotations in pencil by OM
<i>Psaume CXLI</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2176	Autograph MS in ink; annotations in pencil by OM
	VMA-MS-1642	Not available for consultation*
<i>Trois aspects de la mort</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2186	Autograph MS in ink; annotations in pencil by unknown hand
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2191	Autograph MS in ink; annotations in pencil by OM (title page: "exemplaire Messiaen")

*The BnF catalogue deems it "musique imprimée" with three enclosed scores (most likely parts for voices, piano, and ondes Martenot). The catalogue also cites a publication date of "197.?" and identifies its previous owner as ondiste Jeanne Loriod.

ORGAN WORKS

WORK	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
<i>Deux Pièces</i>	Manuscript(s) not found	
	PC	2 copies of the printed edition in a private collection of Christian Lesur. One copy bears CD's dedication to Daniel Lesur. Other copy has OM's annotations for organ at the Schola Cantorum
<i>Paraphrase</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2177	MS in pencil by OM; registrations in pencil by OM; preparatory notes to edition by OM; not available for consultation
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2178	Printed edition; annotations in pencil by OM
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2179	Arrangement in pencil of second movement by OM for 4 ondes Martenot
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2181	Printed edition; annotations in pencil by OM (different from 2178)
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2187	Autograph MS in ink by OM; registrations in pencil by OM
	PC*	Copy of MS-2187 by OM. LZ annotations for Salle Pleyel
<i>L'Offrande à Marie</i>	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2183	Autograph MS in ink by CD; annotations in pencil by OM
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2188	"Debout," "Voici," and beginning of "Vierge digne" mvts; Preparatory MS in ink by CD; annotations in pencil by OM
	PC	"Vierge digne de louanges" MS by CD; annotations by LZ for Salle Pleyel

	PC	"Mère des Pauvres" MS by CD; annotations by OM for Palais de Chaillot and LZ for Salle Pleyel
	PC	"Secours des Chrétiens" MS by CD; annotations by OM
	PC	"Secours des Chrétiens" MS by CD; incomplete after m. 13
<i>Parce, Domine</i> (<i>Pardonnez, Seigneur, à votre peuple</i>)	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS-2180	Autograph MS in ink by CD; annotations in pencil by OM
	BnF-Mus: RES VMA MS 2182	Printed edition; annotations in pencil by OM
	PC	MS by CD; annotations by LZ for Salle Pleyel Cover page deems it third piece of <i>Trois Pièces pour le Carême</i> [other two missing]

*Hereafter, this private collection refers to documents originally owned by Line Zilgien, Messiaen's assistant at La Trinité and close friend of Delbos. Zilgien then bequeathed these materials to her successor at Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, Michel Chapuis. Chapuis gave photocopies to Carolyn Shuster Fournier, who graciously provided copies to this author.

OTHER SCORES OWNED BY CLAIRE DELBOS

WORK	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
J.S. Bach Violin Concerto in E, BWV 1042	CNSMDP: Médiathèque Hector Berlioz, Legs Messiaen, Rmb 945	Arr. piano and violin (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1931) Annotations in pencil by CD
Ernest Chausson <i>Poème pour violon et orchestra</i> , op. 25	CNSMDP: Médiathèque Hector Berlioz, Legs Messiaen, Rmb 946	Arr. piano and violin (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1921) Annotations in pencil by CD. Inscription: "Dédié Delbos, Schola Cantorum, cours de Mr. Lejeune"

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Fonds Olivier Messiaen et Yvonne Loriod. VM FONDS 30 MES, VM FONDS 30 LOR. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département de la Musique. Paris, France.

Fonds SACEM. Musée SACEM. Paris, France. <https://musee.sacem.fr>.

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