

FROM RECORDED SOUND TO MUSICAL NOTATION

Reconstructing Olivier Messiaen's Improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon*

Adrian Foster

Department of Organ and Church Music
Schulich School of Music, McGill University

May 2017

A paper submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of D.Mus. Performance Studies

© Adrian Foster 2017

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract / Résumé</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Introduction: L'Âme en bourgeon and the legacy of Cécile Sauvage</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1. From recorded sound to musical notation: Reconstructing Messiaen's improvisations on L'Âme en bourgeon</i>	<i>3</i>
1.1 A review of the sources	3
1.2 Objectives	4
1.3 Methodology	4
1.3.1 Digitizing the recording	4
1.3.2 Notation issues	5
1.3.3 From sketch to improvisation: Messiaen's preparatory materials	6
1.3.4 Transcription and reconstruction	7
1.4 From improvisation to composition: L'Âme en bourgeon and the Livre du Saint Sacrement	12
1.5 Registrations	15
1.5.1 Programmed Combinations	15
1.5.2 Crescendo Pedal	19
<i>2. Materials</i>	<i>21</i>
2.1 Modes of Limited Transposition	21
2.2 Special chords	24
2.2.1 Accords tournants	25
2.2.2 Accord du total chromatique	28
2.3 Generating principles	31
2.3.1 White and black-key alternation	31
2.3.2 "Geometric" patterns	36
2.4 Thème de l'ombre	39
2.4.1 Origins	39
2.4.2 Thème de l'ombre in the L'Âme en bourgeon improvisations	43
2.4.3 Derivative themes	45
2.5 Borrowing and transformation	49
2.6 Birdsong	53
2.6.1 Nightingale (rossignol)	54
2.6.2 Skylark (alouette des champs)	56
<i>3. Intertextuality and meaning in the L'Âme en bourgeon themes</i>	<i>60</i>
3.1 Things visible and invisible	60
<i>4. Conclusion: Improvisation, Transcription, and Reinterpretation</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Appendix A: Excerpts from Pelléas et Mélisande (Claude Debussy)</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Appendix B: Nightingale solo (in thematic sketches and MS 23125)</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Appendix C: Poems featured on the recording (with translations)</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Index of Musical Examples</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>85</i>

Abstract / Résumé

This paper examines Olivier Messiaen's 1977 (Érato STU 71104) recording of improvised "musical commentary" on *L'Âme en bourgeon*—a collection of poems written by his mother, Cécile Sauvage, while she was pregnant with the future composer. This recording is unique among Messiaen's *œuvre*, as it is the only surviving example of spoken text paired with music and the only recording of improvisations explicitly authorized by Messiaen for public release, from its inception all the way to its publication. The present discussion of this work takes the form of a contextual study and an analysis of its musical content, based on Messiaen's detailed preparatory sketches and the author's complete reconstruction. This analysis demonstrates numerous connections between Messiaen's improvisational and compositional styles, focusing in particular on the close relationship between these improvisations and the composer's final organ cycle, the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*.

Cette thèse explore l'enregistrement (datant de 1977, Érato STU 71104) de « commentaires musicaux » improvisés par Olivier Messiaen sur les textes du recueil de poésie *L'Âme en bourgeon* (écrit par sa propre mère encore enceinte du futur compositeur en question). Cet enregistrement est unique parmi les œuvres de Messiaen, puisqu'il est le seul exemple survivant de textes parlés agencés à de la musique et parce qu'il est également le seul enregistrement disponible au grand public dès sa création. Cette discussion prend la forme d'une étude contextuelle et d'une analyse du contenu musical de l'œuvre, toutes les deux basées sur les notes préparatoires détaillés de Messiaen et la reconstruction complète de l'auteur. Cette analyse démontre de nombreuses connexions entre le style d'improvisation et celui de composition de Messiaen, en se concentrant notamment sur la relation étroite entre ces improvisations sur *L'Âme en bourgeon* et le *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, cycle final d'orgue du compositeur.

Introduction: *L'Âme en bourgeon* and the legacy of Cécile Sauvage

*Sans ma mère je ne serais pas là où j'en suis, non seulement sur le plan humain mais aussi et surtout sur le plan artistique. Je reste absolument convaincu que les pensées qu'elle a nourries lorsqu'elle était enceinte et me portait, ont influencé ma destinée.*¹

In November of 1976, an aging Olivier Messiaen was preoccupied with two projects of professional and personal interest, neither of which would see its completion until well into the following decade. First, he was completely devoted to the composition of his opera and magnum opus *Saint François d'Assise*, with which he would firmly solidify his own legacy as a composer. Amid this massive undertaking (in addition to his continuing obligations at the Paris Conservatory and the church of the Sainte-Trinité), Messiaen was enormously concerned with a second, more personal project: preserving the decaying legacy of his mother, the poet Cécile Sauvage, by seeking to republish her work *L'Âme en bourgeon* (*The Budding Soul*). Dedicated to Messiaen, this collection of twenty poems was written by Sauvage while she was pregnant with the future composer. Long out of print since its original publication, Messiaen hoped to find any publisher interested in producing a new edition of the work. Frustrations grew, as meeting after meeting yielded the same cold response—Not interested...nobody reads poetry anymore.² Ultimately, Messiaen would personally finance the edition, which would not see its release for another eleven years.³

It was during this same period that the composer first sought permission from the Érato label to embark on a recording project which would feature twelve of the twenty poems from *L'Âme en bourgeon* (recited by the actress Gisèle Casadesus) along with musical pairings. The question of what exactly the musical component would consist of, however, remained undecided. In Messiaen's mind, his mother's collection was nothing short of prophetic. It was his single greatest achievement in life to have inspired it while yet unborn⁴; but as a *man*, he simply would not entertain the idea of setting these poems to music:

¹ Brigitte Massin, *Olivier Messiaen : Une poétique du merveilleux* (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions Alinéa, 1989), 53. "Without my mother, I would not be here where I am, not only on my human journey, but also and especially on my artistic journey. I remain absolutely convinced that the thoughts she nourished when she was pregnant and carrying me have influenced my destiny." (All translations by Adrian Foster, unless otherwise noted)

² Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod, *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992*, par Yvonne Loriod, Res Vmb ms-122 (3), Fonds Olivier Messiaen (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France), 462.

³ Cécile Sauvage, *L'Âme en bourgeon*, preface by Olivier Messiaen, postface by Marie Dormoy (Boulogne-sur-Seine: Librairie Séguier Archimbaud, 1987).

⁴ See footnote 84 on p. 64.

Mettre en musique *L'Âme en bourgeon*, c'est impossible, tout simplement parce qu'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.⁵

Initially, Messiaen thought to accompany the poems with some of his own pre-existing compositions, including *Oiseaux exotiques* and *Chronochromie*.⁶ Ultimately, the record would feature *commentaires musicaux* (musical commentary), in the form of organ improvisations performed by Messiaen on his beloved instrument at the church of the Trinité in Paris. Perhaps he felt that in this way he could convey his own feelings regarding his mother's poetry in a manner that was humble and above all *discreet*. In one agenda entry he was careful to note, “orgue *ppp* sous le poème”⁷—a point which he reiterated on the few occasions in which these improvisations came up as a topic of discussion for interviews:

Une seule fois, une seule, j'ai accepté d'improviser à l'orgue sur quelques poèmes que récitait Gisèle Casadesus. Mais l'improvisation reste très, très discrète, c'est à peine si on entend l'orgue sous les paroles.⁸

Though the recording has never been re-released in any format and remains (as of the publication of this paper) out of print, Messiaen cherished it as a testament to his own musical achievements as well as his mother's legacy:

I didn't intend to produce a finished “work.” There's no question of that. The whole thing is very unobtrusive, but it is the best improvisation of my whole life, because it's a very beautiful poem, and I was deeply moved.⁹

⁵ Massin, 54. “To put *L'Âme en bourgeon* into music is impossible, very simply because a man is not capable of expressing sentiments of maternity. There is a state of incomparable union there, which a man is by nature incapable of experiencing.” In fact, Messiaen's first wife, Claire Delbos, penned her own song cycle in 1937, featuring extracts of 8 poems from *L'Âme en bourgeon*. Messiaen wrote an enthusiastic review for the journal *La Sirène*, in which he stated, “This cycle, of a passionate, tender and sad feminine sensibility, ornaments and delightfully embraces Cécile Sauvage's maternity poems.” – Stephen Broad, *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935–1939* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 92.

⁶ Agendas, 452–453. “Première face : introduction parlée, par moi — 5 minutes — puis 10' de poèmes — et 10' de musique. Deuxième face : 10' de poèmes — et 15' de musique — (musique sous les poèmes — et sans les poèmes — de mes œuvres déjà enregistrées—plus les « Exotiques » de Lille, par J.C. Casadesus [et “Chronochromie” par les mêmes ?]).” J.C. refers to the conductor Jean-Claude Casadesus (father of the actress Gisèle Casadesus), who had, on December 18, 1976, led a performance by the Orchestre Philharmonie de Lille (with pianist Yvonne Loriod) of these two works.

⁷ Ibid., 467. “Organ *ppp* underneath the poem.”

⁸ Massin, 54. “One single time, only once, I agreed to improvise at the organ on some poems recited by Gisèle Casadesus. But the improvisation remains very, very discreet. It is with great difficulty if one hears the organ under the words.”

⁹ Roger Nichols, “Messiaen at 70: Roger Nichols Talks to the Composer, Who is 70 on December 10,” *Music and Musicians* 27/4 (December 1978), 22. This is presumably an English translation of an interview conducted originally in French. However, the original French text is not provided in Nichols' article.

1. From recorded sound to musical notation: Reconstructing Messiaen's improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon*

1.1 A review of the sources

More than three hours of Messiaen's recorded improvisations have been publicly released, including a video recording from October 21, 1985, a two-disc CD featuring audio recordings from the mid-1980s, and this 1977 recording of improvised musical commentary on *L'Âme en bourgeon*. Many additional recordings are contained in the Messiaen archives at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, as well as in private hands. Despite this seeming abundance of materials, these documents have sadly remained almost completely ignored in the secondary literature.

Numerous books and articles have been written pertaining to Messiaen as a church organist, with many references to and accounts of Messiaen's improvisational skills. Moreover, the role of improvisation in Messiaen's composed works for organ has been widely documented—particularly in relation to the *Messe de la Pentecôte*, the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, and the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. There has nevertheless been only one published attempt to analyze a specific recorded improvisation: an article by Vincent Benitez titled “Messiaen as Improviser.”¹⁰ This article begins with a summary of Messiaen's improvisational training, looking particularly at the influence of Marcel Dupré and Charles Tournemire. A section titled “Improvisational Elements in Messiaen's Organ Music” forms the bulk of Benitez' article. Here he examines some of Messiaen's compositional techniques (such as Modes of Limited Transposition, Special Chords, and a number of rhythmic devices), with examples drawn from several of the composer's written works. Finally, Benitez offers a brief analysis of the first of Messiaen's recorded improvisations on *Puer natus est* from October of 1985. However, while he includes detailed form diagrams that illustrate how Messiaen progresses through tonal centers and utilizes the plainchant materials, Benitez does not attempt to connect this improvisation to any of the specific elements of Messiaen's musical language that he mentioned earlier.

¹⁰ Vincent Benitez, “Messiaen as Improviser,” *Dutch Journal of Music Theory*, Volume 13, Number 2 (2008), 129–44. In addition to this article, Benitez' website indicates that a further article titled “Messiaen and Improvisation” has been submitted for publication. This article is not yet accessible at the time of the publication of this paper. However, a PowerPoint presentation related to the contents of this future article is presently available online. It appears that the article discusses Messiaen's improvisation techniques in much further detail than Benitez' previous one, including an examination of preparatory notes for a set of improvisations that Messiaen performed in concert on December 18, 1991. static1.squarespace.com/static/53e962d8e4b02fed9221e8f7/t/55456367e4b01a9d5ad34e59/1430610791941/AMS-York+Univ.+Lecture+-+Messiaen+and+Improvisation+5-2-15.Presentation-1.pdf (Accessed April 14, 2017).

1.2 Objectives

In contrast to Benitez' work, my research begins with a comprehensive transcription of Messiaen's improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon*. This serves as the point of departure for a rigorous study of these improvisations. My primary objective is to provide new insights into Messiaen's improvisational techniques, while demonstrating the many ways in which improvisation facilitated Messiaen's compositional process and vice versa.

There are several features of this particular recording that stand out in relation to Messiaen's other recorded improvisations and his body of work as a whole. First of all, it is the only extant example, in print or on tape, of spoken text paired with music by the composer.¹¹ Cécile Sauvage's poems provide an especially noteworthy backdrop in this case due to their influence on Messiaen's creative development. The second significant feature is the formal unity of these improvisations, which creates a marked contrast to other isolated improvisation recordings that have largely been removed from their original contexts within the mass. Finally, this is the only recording of improvisations explicitly authorized by Messiaen for public release, from its inception all the way to its publication.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Digitizing the recording

In the preliminary stages of my project I located and digitized two different copies of the original 1979 Érato LP.¹² The second copy offered me an alternative reference point in instances where pops, distortion, and other LP artifacts made one of the two recordings indecipherable. After digitizing these LPs, I imported the audio files into the Digital Audio Workstation *Digital Performer*, which gave me flexibility in editing, processing, and playback. I created markers to delineate themes, phrases, and sections, so that I could efficiently cycle between them. The two chief processes that I employed when listening to and transcribing the improvisations were equalization and playback loops.

¹¹ There is, in fact, another known instance of Messiaen improvising an incidental backdrop to spoken text. This was for the 1948 (and also 1953) production of Roger Michael's poem "Matins du monde," for two narrators and spoken chorus, at the church of the Trinité. While the improvisation was not recorded, Messiaen did write a few brief paragraphs of "Notes de travail" concerning these improvisations, which were included with the published libretto. Curiously, he writes, "Dois-je dire que je n'approuve pas la superposition du texte et de la musique ? Ils veulent régner, chacun de son côté, et tiraillent inutilement l'auditeur soit vers l'un soit vers l'autre." ("Should I say that I do not approve of the superposition of text and music? They each want to dominate individually, and vainly pull the listener toward one or the other.") – Roger Michael, *Matins du Monde*, "Oratorio pour deux récitants et chœur parlé à plusieurs parties" (Paris: Bordas, 1949), libretto.

¹² Olivier Messiaen, *L'Âme en bourgeon : Poèmes de Cécile Sauvage dits par Gisèle Casadesus avec des commentaires musicaux improvisés à l'orgue par Olivier Messiaen* (Érato STU 71104, 1979), LP.

Equalization served three important purposes. First, it was used to reduce background noise contained in the recording and surface noise caused by the LP. The second purpose was to reduce or increase individual frequency bands within the organ part itself (for example, to make an accompanying harmonization more audible underneath a melodic voice). Finally, it allowed me to increase the overall level of the organ part in instances where it is obscured by the spoken text. Playback loops enabled me to isolate very small segments of the recording and put them on a repeating cycle while I transcribed these passages. This was particularly useful for sections in which the music moves very quickly, and it was far more effective in this regard than time-stretching (a process which I had initially thought would be useful but proved to be largely ineffective¹³). However, despite the numerous technological tools at my disposal, there remain certain passages that are simply not possible to decipher with absolute certainty. Since the organ improvisations were recorded separately from the narration, the level of the organ track is often reduced to the point that it is barely audible (in accordance with Messiaen's wishes for the organ to remain as discreet as possible) when the two occur simultaneously. Furthermore, there are occasions where the organ track fades out and disappears on the LP, while it is evident that Messiaen continues to improvise beyond that point. It is therefore crucial for future refinement of my transcriptions to have access to the source tapes (if in fact they still exist), as these may offer the possibility of increasing the level of the organ part or listening to it in isolation, without the spoken text.

1.3.2 Notation issues

There are a number of important considerations for re-notating Messiaen's organ music, including the placement of barlines, note values, beaming, slurring, articulations, enharmonic spellings, and tempo indications. For such decisions, I have defaulted to Messiaen's thematic sketches whenever applicable.¹⁴ For example, when a tempo is indicated in the sketches, I have retained it. When Messiaen uses a particular beaming or barring for a theme or thematic fragment, I have retained these as well. In instances where Messiaen's improvisational materials are not found in the sketches, I have relied on careful and repeated listening. For further questions regarding stylistic conventions and score formatting, Messiaen's written organ scores (particularly his final two cycles, the *Méditations sur le mystère*

¹³ I used the SoundShifter plugin by *Waves* in my experiments with time stretching.

¹⁴ See section 1.3.3 (p. 6).

While both fascinating and enlightening, this document contrasts greatly with the meticulous *L'Âme en bourgeon* thematic sketches.¹⁹ Notated across six pages of sixteen-staff manuscript paper, these sketches stand as perhaps the greatest testament to Messiaen's devotion to these improvisations and the resulting recording. In them he notates themes, birdsongs, and chords, along with organ registrations, modes and their corresponding sound-colors, tempos, articulations, fingerings, and more.

The degree of care that Messiaen put into crafting his thematic ideas and preparing these sketches can be deduced from the timeline of events presented in Yvonne Loriod's transcriptions of Messiaen's agendas. The idea for the project emerged in November of 1976, and by December 7 of that year, Messiaen had met with the actress Gisèle Casadesus in order to finalize the choice of poems that would be read. Three months later, on March 23, 1977, Messiaen accompanied Casadesus to the studio to record the poems. A recording session for the organ improvisations was scheduled for sometime between April 18 and 27, meaning that Messiaen may have already been planning his thematic materials at this point in late March. However, this session had to be postponed due to a serious leg injury that Messiaen sustained on March 30.²⁰

Messiaen's agendas indicate that he actively worked on his themes during his recovery. A note from April 29, 1977, states, "Préparer les thèmes pour « L'Âme en bourgeon » — et recherches à la Trinité des registrations, lorsque l'église ferme."²¹ The recording would finally take place on June 3, 1977, and it is presumably during the period between April 29 and June 3 that Messiaen completed his sketches. Even so, his involvement in the project did not end with the recording. Yvonne Loriod notes, "Messiaen a tant lutté, bataillé, pour faire aimer et reconnaître le génie poétique de sa mère, qu'il ne veut rien laisser au hasard pour ce disque qui lui tient à cœur."²² Messiaen oversaw or approved nearly every detail of the packaging and release of the LP, including the cover artwork, color scheme, liner notes, and presentation of the text on the sleeve.

1.3.4 Transcription and reconstruction

As stated above, I have relied whenever possible on Messiaen's thematic sketches as a foundation for any decisions regarding my transcriptions. While the sketches are by no means

¹⁹ Olivier Messiaen, *Thèmes pour improvisations « L'Âme en bourgeon »*, 6 pages (1977), uncatalogued (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France), Photocopy of original manuscript.

²⁰ Agendas, 452–463.

²¹ Ibid., 467. "Prepare the themes for *L'Âme en bourgeon*—and investigate registrations at the Trinité, when the church closes."

²² Ibid., 485–486. "Messiaen fought so much, battled so much, to make the poetic genius of his mother loved and known, that he did not want to leave anything to chance regarding this cherished disk."

exhaustive, they have proven to be invaluable resources. In several cases Messiaen wrote his themes out in their entirety, including six of the cyclical themes, two of the birdsongs, and some isolated themes from the 4th and 6th improvisations. Much of my work has therefore fallen under the category of recopying Messiaen's pre-written notes and placing them within the context and timeline of the recorded improvisations. While this process is the most directly verifiable means of transcribing the recording, it still leaves some room for doubt. For example, how might one distinguish between intentional deviations from the sketched themes and supposed *mistakes*? To illustrate this, I refer to the following mode 2² theme (Example 3: "Theme C"), which recurs throughout the 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 12th improvisations:

Example 3. Messiaen, "Theme C," *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches. Note the difference in the duration of the first boxed chord in comparison to

Example 5.

Un peu lent

The musical score is for a piano introduction of 'Theme C'. It is marked 'Un peu lent' and 'mf'. The score consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. A bracket in the treble staff highlights the first chord, which is a dotted eighth note. A curved line connects this bracketed chord to the first chord in the bass staff, indicating a comparison of duration. The bass staff begins with a 'Pos' marking.

The pitch content of "Theme C" is identical in nearly every one of its appearances. The sole exception is one instance in the 5th improvisation (shown in Example 4 [bottom]) where Messiaen simply prolongs the original theme by beginning on the 7th and 8th chords before looping back to the 2nd chord (as illustrated by the arrows in this example). There are, however, several rhythmic variations between the different occurrences of "Theme C" within the sketches and improvisations. While the initial chord in the sketched version (Example 3) is written as an eighth note, this chord is prolonged and consistently played as a dotted eighth note each time "Theme C" appears on the recording (as in Example 5). This leads one to suspect an intentional rhythmic alteration, rather than an isolated instance of mistaken counting by Messiaen. An additional rhythmic variation, involving the duration of the final three chords, is found in Example 4. The extent to which these chords are prolonged (more than doubled in relation to Example 5) seems to once again imply a conscious decision.

Example 4. [top] Messiaen, “Theme C,” *L’Âme en bourgeon* sketches; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Adrian Foster), “Theme C” in improvisation 5, “Tu tettes le lait pur.” Note the first and second chords of the bottom example, which correspond to the 7th and 8th chords of “Theme C” (top). Note also the duration of the final three chords in the bottom example.

The image displays two musical staves for piano, both marked "Un peu lent". The top staff is a sketch of "Theme C" from *L'Âme en bourgeon*, featuring a circled section of the first two chords. The bottom staff is "Theme C" from improvisation 5, also featuring a circled section of the first two chords. An arrow points from the circled section of the top staff to the circled section of the bottom staff. Both staves include a "Pos" marking and a "mf" dynamic. The bottom staff also includes a "legato" marking.

Example 5. Messiaen (tr. Foster), “Theme C,” improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.” Note the prolonged first chord in comparison with Example 3.

The image displays a musical staff for piano, marked "Un peu lent". It shows "Theme C" from improvisation 3, featuring a prolonged first chord. The staff includes a "Pos" marking and a "mf" dynamic. The word "legato" is written below the staff.

In addition to recopying the themes as they appear in Messiaen's sketches, much of my work has involved carefully reconstructing themes that are presented as fragments or are not sketched at all. Since Messiaen provides only a brief incipit for his more developed themes, this has been my primary working method. There is a wide range of variation in this regard. Among the more detailed thematic outlines in Messiaen's sketches is that of the second theme ("Theme Z") in the 9th improvisation on "La Tasse" (Example 6). Though far from exhaustive, this sketch provides enough information to reconstruct this improvisation with a very high degree of certainty, while accounting for pitch and rhythmic discrepancies between the sketch and recording.

In my reconstruction of this passage (shown in Example 7) I opted not to include any barlines (in keeping with the presentation of "Theme Z" in its sketched form), although I did add slurs to the left-hand part which do not appear in the sketch. The purpose of this was to distinguish between continuous-legato playing and the clear articulations that are heard on the recording (in the second and third systems of Example 7). There are a few instances where rhythms in the improvisation deviate from Messiaen's sketch, including the durations of left-hand and pedal notes and the alignment of the right-hand and left-hand voices. The core motivic materials are virtually identical: a descending trilled chromatic line in the right hand, a left-hand motive featuring two descending semitones separated by a minor third, and a pedal motive alternating between an ascending minor sixth and tritone. There is, however, one significant variant which can be observed in the expanded left-hand motive outlined by the boxes in Example 6 and Example 7.

Example 6. Messiaen, "Theme Z," *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches. Note the discrepancy in the boxed portion, compared with Messiaen's sketch in Example 7.

The image displays a musical score for 'Theme Z' from Messiaen's *L'Âme en bourgeon*. The score is written for piano and includes three staves: a right-hand staff (treble clef), a left-hand staff (treble clef), and a bass staff (bass clef). The right-hand staff begins with a trill marked 'pp legato' and a 'G' above it. The left-hand staff also begins with a trill marked 'pp legato'. The bass staff features a pedal line with notes marked 'legato' and 'mf'. A rectangular box highlights a specific section of the left-hand staff, indicating a discrepancy between the sketch and the recording. The notation includes various accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 7. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: “La Tasse.” Note the discrepancy in the boxed portion, compared with Messiaen’s sketch in Example 6.

Un peu vif

The musical score is for a piece titled "Un peu vif". It is written for piano and mezzo-forte. The tempo is marked "Un peu vif". The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 3/4. The score consists of three systems. The first system shows the piano part (pp) and the mezzo-forte part (mf). The piano part has a melodic line with trills and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The mezzo-forte part has a melodic line with trills and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. A boxed portion in the mezzo-forte part shows a discrepancy from the sketch in Example 6. The second system continues the melodic and bass lines. The third system shows the piano part with a melodic line and a bass line, and the mezzo-forte part with a melodic line and a bass line. A boxed portion in the piano part shows a discrepancy from the sketch in Example 6.

The reconstructed excerpt presented in Example 7 shows only the first B section of the 9th improvisation (which follows an A-B-A'-B' form), and there are indeed additional variants in B' when these motivic materials are further developed. Nevertheless, in both cases the process of dissecting Messiaen’s thematic sketch and cross-referencing it with the recorded improvisation serves to clarify the context, texture, hand distribution, and registration of “Theme Z.” Accounting for the deviations mentioned above, this leaves little room for doubt concerning the reconstruction as an accurate reflection of what Messiaen actually played.

1.4 From improvisation to composition: *L'Âme en bourgeon* and the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*

Pendant ce grand temps d'absence de toute composition, je n'en continuais pas moins à tenir mon rôle d'organiste titulaire à l'église de la Sainte-Trinité. J'étais donc tenu d'improviser. Au début je ne réagissais même pas sur ce que je venais de faire. Puis, peu à peu, je me suis rendu compte que je commençais à réfléchir, après coup, sur tel ou tel point de ce que je venais de jouer ; je me suis mis à prendre quelques notes. C'est à partir de là que j'ai commencé à organiser une œuvre qui devait devenir mon Livre du Saint Sacrement. La flamme m'est alors revenue, mais vraiment comme à l'improvisiste, grâce aux improvisations.²³

The *Livre du Saint Sacrement* was the first work published by Messiaen following a roughly eight-year period between 1975 and 1983 during which he worked on composing and editing his opera *Saint François d'Assise*. The influence of improvisation on the composition of the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* has been widely detailed by Messiaen and others, but the borrowing of specific themes and materials from the improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon* has remained largely overlooked. Moreover, the composer's own remarks are misleading in this regard. Messiaen has claimed to have begun composing the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* in 1984, following an inspired Holy Thursday improvisation that would become the cycle's 8th movement ("L'Institution de l'Euchariste").²⁴ However, as Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone point out, this improvisation actually took place on Holy Thursday of 1981 (a fact that is confirmed by an early sketch of this movement).²⁵ Furthermore, references to a new organ cycle can be found in

²³ Massin, 202. "During this long period without doing any composing, I continued no less to hold my post as titular organist at the church of the Sainte-Trinité. I was then obliged to improvise. At first I didn't react to what I had just done. Then, little by little, I realized that I was beginning to reflect, after the fact, on this or that spot within what I had just played; I was led to take a few notes. It is from that point that I began to put together a work that would become my *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. Enthusiasm then returned to me, but truly as an improviser, thanks to improvisations."

²⁴ Jean-Christophe Marti and Olivier Messiaen, "C'est un secret d'amour : Un entretien avec Olivier Messiaen," in *Messiaen : Saint François d'Assise*, CD liner notes (Deutsche Grammophon, 20/21 Series, 1999), 69. "Un soir de Jeudi Saint...j'avais trois minutes à remplir en jouant, et voici que j'ai eu une inspiration subite. J'ai joué une pièce qui n'a l'air de rien du tout au premier abord...mais j'ai eu brusquement conscience, en me réécoutant, que cette musique n'était pas comme les autres. Je crois avoir été inspiré par le moment, touché par cet office qui était très beau. J'ai réécrit ce morceau, je l'ai intitulé *L'Institution de l'Euchariste*, et j'ai commencé à écrire le *Livre du Saint Sacrement* : dix-huit pièces pour orgue, d'une durée de deux heures et demi en tout ! C'était plus d'un an après *Saint François*."

"One Holy Thursday evening...I had three minutes to fill with playing, and suddenly I had a moment of inspiration. I played a piece that seemed like nothing upon first listen...But I suddenly became aware, upon re-listening, that this music was not like others. I think I was inspired by the moment, moved by this office that was very beautiful. I rewrote this piece, I titled it *L'Institution de l'Euchariste*, and I began to write the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*: 18 pieces for organ, with a duration of two and a half hours! It was more than a year after *Saint François*."

²⁵ Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 343. See also: Luke Berryman (2010) and Christopher Dingle (2013).

the composer's agendas as early as 1979. Here, in an end-of-year "to-do list," Messiaen reminds himself to revisit his improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon* when preparing materials for an upcoming organ work featuring "several pieces for the Holy Sacrament":

*Faire : « Études » pour orgue — sur couleurs complémentaires — sur acciaccatura — sur cluster — sur clair obscur — sur contrastes simultanés — avec une pièce sur la « traversée de la mer Rouge » — plusieurs pièces pour le Saint Sacrement — voir les thèmes de « L'Âme en bourgeon ».*²⁶

A similar reference appears five years later (in February of 1984), where Messiaen writes a checklist of items to bring with him before departing on a brief vacation to work on the cycle:

*Emporter tous mes brouillons pour Livre d'orgue, la grande boîte des couleurs d'accords et des chants d'oiseaux — la serviette métrique grecque et déci-tâlas, un livre de Plain chant — Bible — Imitation — Improvisations « Âme en bourgeon » — Bible — Urs von Balthasar — Plan de l'orgue — livres sur la Rose — livres sur les fleurs — sur les vitraux — papier à musique 20 portées, crayons, gommes...*²⁷

It is certainly not surprising, then, that there are no fewer than four distinct themes from the improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon* that were recycled in the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. The clearest and most extensive examples of this are contained in the 5th movement ("Puer natus est": Example 8) and the 11th movement ("L'Apparition du Christ rescussité à Marie Madeleine").²⁸ Other examples appear in movement 13 ("Les deux murailles d'eau").²⁹

Whenever Messiaen recycles these themes, he also alters various aspects of the original. In comparing "Puer natus est" (Example 8), for example, to the 9th improvisation on "La Tasse" (Example 9), several such alterations can be observed. In the improvisation the theme is written in eighth notes, along with the indication *Bien modéré*. The re-composed version found in "Puer natus est," however, is marked *Un peu vif* and is notated in sixteenth notes. Though the registration remains the same for both examples (16' and 8' bourdons of the Grand Orgue, along with 4' flûte of the Pedal), the dynamic indications differ. Messiaen writes *pianissimo* in "Puer natus est," and *mezzo forte* for the

²⁶ Agendas, 531. "To do: 'Études' for organ—on complementary colors—on acciaccatura—on cluster—on bright dark—on simultaneous contrasts—with a piece on the 'parting of the Red Sea'—several pieces for the Holy Sacrament—see themes for *L'Âme en bourgeon*."

²⁷ Ibid., 639. "Take all my sketches for *Livre d'orgue*, the big box of chord colors and birdsongs, the briefcase with Greek meters and deci-tâlas, a book of plainchant—Bible—Imitation [of Christ]—Improvisations 'Âme en bourgeon'—Bible—Urs von Balthasar—organ specification—books on roses—books on flowers—on stained-glass windows—20-stave manuscript paper, pencils, erasers..."

²⁸ See section 2.3.1 (p. 31)

²⁹ See sections 2.3.1 (p. 31) and 2.3.2 (p. 36)

improvisation theme.³⁰ Finally, while the pitches are virtually identical between the two themes in this opening fragment, there are a few notable discrepancies. For example, the high manual D-natural and the pedal F-sharp in the improvisation appear as D-sharp and F-natural in “Puer natus est.” Furthermore, the initial pedal fifth (with its D-natural and A-natural) in “Puer natus est” is not present at all in the improvisation. Consequently, the improvisation theme remains consistently within mode 3¹.

Example 8. Messiaen, “Puer natus est,” *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (p. 27, s. 2). Note the pitch discrepancies in comparison to the improvisation on “La Tasse.”

Un peu vif

Example 9. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: “La Tasse”

Bien modéré

³⁰ In fact, such inconsistencies abound in Messiaen’s organ compositions, where there are numerous instances in which passages with identical registrations contain different dynamic markings. In this case, I have retained the indication *mezzo forte* for my transcriptions, in keeping with Messiaen’s sketches.

1.5 Registrations

Avec les classiques, nous sommes toujours en présence d'ensembles soutenus par le son fondamental. J'enlève ce son fondamental et je me sers des fausses quintes, des fausses tierces, en association avec leurs mixtures composées, ce qui donne des résonances artificielles. L'orgue n'est pas un instrument traditionnel contrairement à une vieille idée reçue, il est au contraire très moderne par le son qu'on peut obtenir avec les compositions de mixtures et les mutations.³¹

L'orgue en lui-même n'est pas standard. Il n'y a donc pas de registration standard. Rien dans l'expression artistique ne doit être standardisé ou uniformisé !³²

Apart from re-notating pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and expressive indications, organ music presents its own unique challenges for transcription. A large part of the transcriber's task involves orchestration, by way of indicating the specific organ stops that are employed throughout the recording. Adding another layer of difficulty to this endeavor is the problem of distinguishing between played and sounding pitches, due to the abundance of non-unison and non-octave registers. Fortunately, most of the organ registrations used by Messiaen in his *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations are printed in his thematic sketches. With very few exceptions, the passages that are not contained therein are registered using the twelve-step crescendo pedal that was added to the Trinité organ during the 1963–1966 renovations (carried out by the firm Beuchet-Debierre), in which the original mechanical console was replaced with an electric one and six adjustable combination pistons were added.

1.5.1 Programmed Combinations

In keeping with Messiaen's desire for the organ to remain as quiet and discreet as possible whenever it is directly superimposed on the poems, these improvisations are often registered very delicately, as is the case with the combination of 16' and 8' bourdons featured in Example 9 (above). Several additional themes are played on 8' stopped flutes (bourdons or cor de nuit) alone and with boxes closed, as in Example 10. Furthermore, a variety of coloristic effects are obtained with gap

³¹ Glandaz, 32. "With Classical works, we are always in the presence of ensembles supported by the fundamental. I remove the fundamental and take advantage of the false fifths, false thirds, in association with their combined mixtures, which gives artificial resonances. The organ is not a traditional instrument, contrary to a long-standing preconception. To the contrary it is very modern due to the sound one can obtain with the make-up of mixtures and mutations."

³² Ibid., 60. "The organ, in and of itself, is not standard. There is therefore no standard registration. No part of artistic expression should be standardized or uniform!"

registrations (such as the combination of 16' quintaton with doublette in Example 11), reed combinations (such as clarinette, 16' quintaton, and nazard, in Example 12), mutations (such as 4' flûte, nazard, octavin, and tierce, in Example 13), and mixtures.

Example 10. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.” Bourdon 8 seul (Récit), box closed.

R : bourdon 8 seul > |

Lent

legato

R { *pp* *mf*

legato

Example 11. Messiaen, *Scherzando* theme (improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur”), *L’Âme en bourgeon* sketches. 16' quintaton and 2' doublette (Positif).

Pos : quintaton 16, doublette 2 < |

G : bourdon 16, flûte 4, quinte 2⅔ |

stacc.

Pos { *mf* *f*

stacc.

Example 12. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps” (*Thème PM4*). Clarinette, 16' quintaton, and nazard.

R : flûte 8, bourdon 8, gambe < |

Pos : clarinette, quintaton 16, nazard 2⅔ < |

G : montre 8, flûte 8, bourdon 8 |

Ped : sb 16, bourdon 8 | tire R |

(« ...Gigote comme sur un lit... »)

Lent

(vijaya)

MAN. { *mf* *mf legato*

PED. { *mf legato*

Example 13. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.” 4' flûte, nazard, octavin, and tierce.

R : flûte 4, nazard 2 $\frac{2}{3}$, octavin 2, tierce 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ > |

Un peu vif (♩=132)

legato 8^{va}

MAN. R { pp

legato

Messiaen expressed his affinity for mixtures on numerous occasions, stating for example, “Ce qui est intéressant avec une mixture, c’est la luminosité apportée, une couleur originale.”³³ He has further noted the coloristic possibilities offered by mixtures when they are used alone or without their corresponding fundamental pitches:

Je vous rappellerai, en effet, que l'orgue possède une famille extraordinaire de sonorités, la famille des mixtures, qui produit non pas les sons réels joués par l'instrumentiste, mais leurs harmoniques, octaves, quintes, tierces. Les anciens ont employé ces harmoniques artificiels pour éclairer les timbres. Pour moi, la tentation était forte d'utiliser ces harmoniques artificiels sans les sons réels. J'ai obtenu ainsi un matériau nouveau, tout à fait étrange, qui annonçait déjà les sonorités de la musique électronique.³⁴

Initially possessing only one mixture (in addition to two cornets), the organ of the Trinité has undergone three major renovations—two of which occurred during Messiaen’s tenure. In the second 1934 renovation a cymbale was added to the Récit, while in 1967 a fourniture was added to the Positif. In addition, the Grand-Orgue plein jeu (the only original Cavaillé-Coll mixture on the organ) was recomposed and divided into a separate plein jeu and cymbale. Finally, during this same 1967 renovation, the plein jeu of the pedal was added.

The 10th improvisation on “Te voilà, mon petit amant” is undoubtedly one of the most striking in the collection due to its unusual musical content and registrational colors—featuring the mixtures

³³ Glandaz, 34. “What is interesting with a mixture is the luminosity that it brings, an original color.”

³⁴ Claude Samuel and Olivier Messiaen, *Musique et couleur : nouveaux entretiens avec Claude Samuel*. (Paris: P. Belfond, 1986), 131. “I will remind you, in fact, that the organ possesses an extraordinary family of sonorities, the mixture family, that produces not the actual pitches played by the instrumentalist, but their harmonics, octaves, fifths, and thirds. Classical composers used these artificial harmonics in order to illuminate the timbres. For me, there was a strong temptation to use these artificial harmonics without the actual pitch. I thus obtained a new kind of material, quite foreign, that already foreshadowed the sounds of electronic music.”

alone of all four divisions of the organ, played in dialog (Example 14). The differences between the four mixtures are especially apparent, due to their distinctive compositions, breaks, and dynamics. The kaleidoscopic texture that results from Messiaen's buoyant theme and registrational colors evokes the poem's text, with its imagery of "powders of light that dance in the bright room"; and indeed, Messiaen prints this excerpt alongside the theme when it appears in his sketches.

Example 14. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 10: "Te voilà, mon petit amant"

R : cymbale 3 rangs seule < |
 Pos : fourniture seule |
 G : cymbale seule |
 Ped : plein jeu seul |

Un peu vif (« poudres de lumière qui danse dans la chambre claire »)

The musical score is written for organ and consists of three systems. The first system is marked 'stacc.' and 'f'. It features a complex texture with multiple registers and dynamics. The second system is also marked 'stacc.' and 'f'. The third system is marked 'Pos' and 'R'. The score features a complex texture with multiple registers and dynamics.

Despite the thorough documentation of registrations in Messiaen's thematic sketches, these are not always entirely consistent with what appears on the recording. For example, in the second theme of the 9th improvisation (on the poem "La Tasse"), Messiaen's sketch indicate Positif *tirasses* at 8' and 4' pitch. In reality, Messiaen only uses the unison *tirasse* in the improvisation (registration shown in Example 15). In another notable example, though Messiaen's sketch calls for the 16' and 8' Récit bourdons for the opening theme of his first improvisation (on the poem "Nature, laisse-moi"), he adds the 4' flute to this combination on the recording. Perhaps he felt that the original registration offered too little clarity—particularly in the lowest octave of the organ with the swell box closed.³⁵

Example 15. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: "La Tasse" (pedal registration)

Pos : flageolet 2, tierce 1½ < |
 G : bourdon 8 seul |
 Ped : sb 32, sb 16 | tirasse Pos |

Un peu vif

harmonic flutes, gambes, and finally principals are added to complete the 8' foundations in steps two through four. The 4' flutes and principals of the manuals and pedal enter at step five. The 2's, quintes, and nazards are then added simultaneously in step six, along with the 16' bourdon of the Récit. Afterward, there is a staggered addition of mixtures and 16' flues. The 8' and 4' reeds of the Récit and Positif are introduced in step nine, together with the Grand-Orgue mixtures. Finally, the remaining reeds enter progressively, along with the tierces and cornets, in steps ten through twelve.

While this pedal is undeniably a useful improvisational tool (particularly at the time of this 1977 recording, when the organ contained only six adjustable pistons), Messiaen himself admitted that the progression of the crescendo was not always ideal and experimented with other possibilities:

Le crescendo est fixe, le crescendo est construit d'une manière définie. Avec le combineur, je construis un crescendo différent, je fais entrer le hautbois et la clarinette juste après le principal positif pour donner du mordant, puis la bombarde du récit avec des mixtures.³⁷

There are indeed a few abrupt transitions in this fixed sequence, due largely to the fact that the mixtures enter prior to any reeds (thus Messiaen's experimentation of adding the hautbois and clarinette in the early stages of the crescendo). In addition, the pedal is difficult to control with precision. Even though it makes a perceptible click at each stage, this is not always consistent and at times requires two clicks in order to advance. This lack of precision can be heard in the present recording, where changes often occur a split second before or after they are seemingly intended.³⁸

The notation of the crescendo pedal in my transcription score (prefaced by the indication "sur crescendo" and followed by the number of the crescendo stage)³⁹ is meant only to reflect the resources available to Messiaen during this period and to offer a precise indication of how Messiaen used the instrument on this recording. This in no way implies that an organist wishing to reinterpret the improvisations should feel obliged to use a crescendo pedal in place of combinations—or even necessarily to follow a similar crescendo sequence to Messiaen's. Rather, the goal should be to create a crescendo in whatever way is most idiomatic to the instrument in question.

³⁷ Glandaz 32–33. "The crescendo is fixed, the crescendo is constructed in a defined manner. With the combinations, I make a different crescendo, I add the hautbois and clarinette just after the Positif principal to give an edge, then the Récit bombarde with the mixtures."

³⁸ A similar observation can be made regarding Messiaen's own recording of the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (Érato STU 70750-70751, 1973). Not only is the timing of the crescendo pedal occasionally inconsistent with the score, but the stage of the crescendo is often inconsistent as well.

³⁹ Just as Messiaen himself notated it in the only written work in which it is employed: *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*

2. Materials

For the purpose of this analysis, I have grouped Messiaen's core thematic materials into six categories. These include (1) Modes of Limited Transposition, (2) Special Chords, (3) generating principles, (4) the *Thème de l'ombre* and its derivatives, (5) borrowings, and (6) birdsong. One of the most remarkable features of these improvisations is the sheer economy of materials. Messiaen achieves this in large part by using cyclical themes that recur multiple times throughout the recording, often with slight variations.⁴⁰ Several passages from the recording illustrate the influence and significance of improvisation on Messiaen's development as a composer and the many ways in which Messiaen's improvisations and compositions mutually influenced and shaped each other. This is most evident in the direct recycling of materials from the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations in the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (which will be discussed further in section 2.3, p. 31⁴¹), along with the *Thème de l'ombre* and its abundance of manifestations throughout Messiaen's *œuvre* (as will be discussed in section 2.4, p. 39).

2.1 Modes of Limited Transposition

*En effet, certaines personnes considèrent que les modes sont des échelles, des gammes que l'on monte et que l'on descend—surtout que l'on descend—tandis que l'utilisation de mes modes n'est pas d'ordre mélodique. Je dirai plus : leur emploi est coloré, ce ne sont pas des harmonies dans le sens classique du terme, ce ne sont évidemment pas des harmonies tonales, ce ne sont même pas des accords classés, ce sont des couleurs et leur force jaillit d'abord de l'impossibilité des transpositions et aussi de la couleur qui est d'ailleurs liée à cette impossibilité. Les deux phénomènes sont simultanés.*⁴²

Olivier Messiaen first expounded his modes in the preface to *La Nativité du Seigneur*, published in 1936. He then added a few supplementary remarks in the *Technique de mon langage musical*, published eight years later in 1944. By the late 1970s, when he began writing the chapter on *Son-couleur* and Modes of Limited Transposition that would appear in volume 7 of his *Traité*, Messiaen's understanding of the

⁴⁰ This is something that is by no means unique to this recording in relation to Messiaen's body of work as a whole (and particularly his larger cycles, such as the *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* for piano, *Turangalila-Symphonie*, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte-Trinité*, and his opera *Saint François d'Assise*).

⁴¹ Refer also to section 1.4 (p. 12)

⁴² Samuel, 52. "Indeed, certain people view the modes as scales that ascend and descend—especially that descend—whereas the utilization of my modes is not of a melodic nature. I will say more: their usage is for coloration, they are not harmonies in the classical sense of the term, they are clearly not tonal harmonies, they are equally not functional chords, they are colors and their power arises first of all from the impossibility of transpositions and also from the color that is incidentally linked to this impossibility. The two phenomena are simultaneous."

modes had evolved considerably.⁴³ In the *Technique de mon langage musical* the composer notes, “Tous les « modes à transpositions limitées » peuvent être utilisés mélodiquement—et surtout harmoniquement, mélodie et harmonies ne sortant jamais des notes du mode.”⁴⁴ However, Messiaen later rejected any assumed harmonic or melodic function. Instead, the role of *son-couleur* gained supreme importance:

Les « Modes à transpositions limitées » n’ont pas de ton initial. Tout est transposition. Il n’y a ni tonique, ni initiale, ni finale, les échelles mélodiques ne sont là que pour l’exposé. Les accords choisis sont frappants, mais on peut en faire beaucoup d’autres. Ces modes ne sont ni mélodiques, ni harmoniques : **ce sont des couleurs**.⁴⁵

Messiaen is very careful (with a few exceptions) to indicate not only the number and transposition of his modes but also their corresponding colors whenever they appear in his *L’Âme en bourgeon* sketches. These colors are even described using the same adjectives laid out in the *Tableaux et couleurs* for modes 2, 3, 4, and 6 in Messiaen’s *Traité*.

In these tables, the modes are presented in all of their possible transpositions, along with a corresponding sequence of parallel chords (although, as Messiaen states, these chords were not conceived of *harmonically*). The chord voicings are unique for each mode. While one might imagine the chords as *models* for composition or improvisation within these modes (and indeed, they appear frequently in Messiaen’s written compositions), the composer is careful to note, “Les accords choisis sont frappants, mais on peut en faire beaucoup d’autres.” However, most of the modal themes within Messiaen’s *L’Âme en bourgeon* improvisations do, in fact, adhere strictly (or very closely) to these tables—due, perhaps, to the formulaic consistency and consequent adaptability for improvisation that they offer. In the following mode-4⁴ theme (Example 16: “Theme X”), for example, each of Messiaen’s chords directly correspond to the *Traité* table (shown in Example 17):

⁴³ According to a footnote by Yvonne Loriod, Messiaen began writing the chapter on Modes of Limited Transposition in 1978—the year following the recording of the *L’Âme en bourgeon* improvisations. Loriod notes also the Messiaen’s evolution concerning the topic of the Modes—not in relation to the role of color, but rather the number of modes (*Traité*, 7:99). In the *Technique de mon langage musicale*, Messiaen outlines all seven of the modes. However, as Loriod points out, in the *Traité*, he omits modes 5 and 7 (mode 1—the whole-tone scale—is discussed in an earlier chapter within this volume). According to Loriod, this omission is due to the close similarities between these modes and mode 4.

⁴⁴ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical: Texte avec exemples musicaux* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 2000), 85. “All the modes of limited transpositions can be used melodically—and especially harmonically, melody and harmonies never straying from the notes of the mode.”

⁴⁵ *Traité*, 7:107. “Modes of limited transposition have no starting pitch. Everything is transposition. There is neither tonic, nor starting pitch, nor final, the melodic scales are there only to set it forward. The chosen chords are striking, but one can make many others. These modes are neither melodic nor harmonic: **they are colors**.” A similar quote appears in an earlier chapter within this volume (p. 51), where Messiaen adds, “Ils sont des **couleurs**, et des **couleurs** harmoniques” (“They are colors, and harmonic colors”). Bolded text is shown as it appears in the *Traité*.

Example 16. Messiaen, “Theme X” (Mode 4⁴), *L’Âme en bourgeon* sketches

Example 17. Messiaen, Mode 4⁴ parallel chords, *Traité*, 7:129. The three boxed chords correspond to those found in Example 16.

Mode 4⁴, en accords parallèles :

4⁴, Couleur générale : un peu comme les fleurs de pétunia : violet sombre, blanc à dessin violet, violet pourpre.

Even in instances where the modal themes in the improvisations seem to diverge from the *Traité* tables, they can often be traced back to this source with very little effort. In Example 18, the right-hand chords in Messiaen’s improvisation on “Mon cœur revient à son printemps” retain precisely the same pitch classes as the mode-4¹ chords in Messiaen’s *Traité*, although the spacing is slightly different. In fact, Messiaen’s only alteration (ignoring register) is to lower the top chord voice in the *Traité* example by an octave, as illustrated by the dotted arrow.

Example 18. [top] Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”; [bottom] Messiaen, Mode 4¹ parallel chords, *Traité*, 7:128

Lent

Pos

legato

MAN.

p

R

legato

pp

Mode 4¹

Mode 4¹, en accords parallèles :

4¹, Couleur générale : gris et or.

2.2 Special chords

Much like his Modes of Limited Transposition, Messiaen’s *Special Chords* serve a primarily coloristic function. Using similar language to his remarks concerning the modes, the composer is careful to indicate, “Tous ces accords ne sont pas vraiment des accords, ce sont même pas des complexes de sons : **ce sont des couleurs.**”⁴⁶ Messiaen describes and outlines six types of chords in the 7th volume of his *Traité*, including the *Chord of Transposed Inversions on the same bass note*; 1st and 2nd *Chord of Contracted Resonance*; *Turning Chords*; *Turning Chords treated as Chords of Transposed Inversions*; and

⁴⁶ *Traité*, 7:107. “All of these chords are not really chords, and they are equally not sound complexes: **they are colors.**” Once again, the bolded text is presented as it appears in the published *Traité*.

the *Complete-Chromatic Chord*. For our discussion of the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations, I will focus on two of these: Turning Chords and the Complete-Chromatic Chord.⁴⁷

2.2.1 Accords tournants

Example 19. Messiaen, Turning Chords (10th transposition), *Traité*, 7:171

10	A	B	C
	gris, rose saumon, rouge –	gris d'acier pointillé de rouge –	jaune et noir –
	jaune éclatant –	rose et gris –	orangé rouge très chaud –

Effet coloré global :

Cercles enlacés jaunes, noirs, et gris, entourant un escalier orangé rouge à double révolution.

Dominante : **JAUNE, NOIR, ORANGÉ.**

Turning Chords are a core element of the fourth improvisation on the poem “La Tête,” which is pre-composed, almost in its entirety, in Messiaen’s sketches. The composer offers the following description of these chords in the *Traité*:

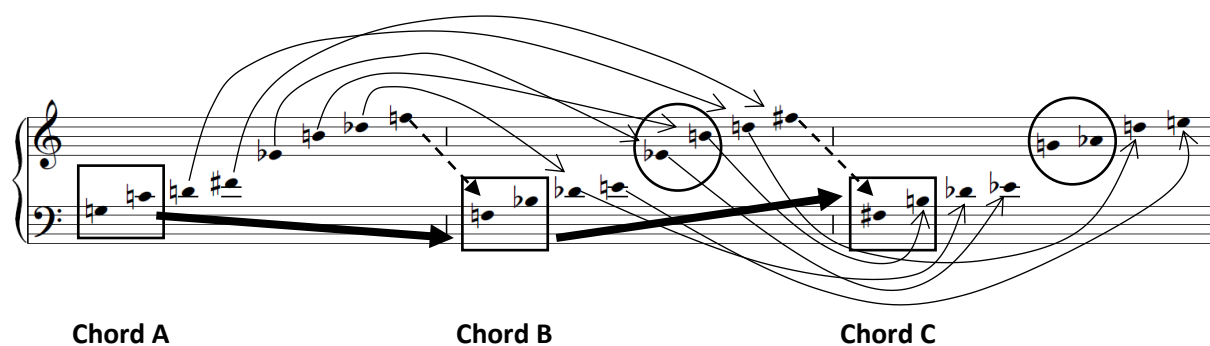
Cela ressemble à un octaèdre en opale translucide ou plus simplement en verre irisé : chaque face de l’octaèdre (1 son parmi les 8 de chaque accord) à la possibilité de **trois changements** suivant les incidences de lumière (ce qui donne 3 combinaisons de 8 sons, soit 24 sons répartis en 3 accords). Il y a une seule colonne de sons qui tourne en changeant, la mémoire enregistrant une sonorité globale qui est le fruit des trois

⁴⁷ In addition to these chords, a theme contained in the sketches (but not on the final recording) features the 1st Chord of Contracted Resonance. Since the publication of the *Traité* (from 1994–2002), much has been written about the origins, functions, and appearances of Messiaen’s Special Chords, including notable articles by Cheong Wai-Ling (2003) and Allen Forte (2007). See the complete Bibliography on page 85 for full citations.

accords. De même, un seul complexe coloré jaillit du triple aspect de l'accord de couleurs.⁴⁸

Though colorful and evocative, this description is not particularly useful for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the chords. Using the diagram below (Example 20), in which the 10th transposition of Messiaen's turning chords is presented linearly with identical enharmonic spellings, there are four key observations that can be made concerning the motion and relationship between chords. First, the lowest two voices form a perfect fourth that moves initially down by two semitones (between chords A and B) and then up by one semitone (between chords B and C), as illustrated by the thick arrows. Second, the highest note of each chord becomes the lowest note of the following chord (illustrated by the dotted arrows). Third, excluding the perfect fourth at the root of each chord, all of the pitch classes of a given chord are shared in common with the chord that follows it (illustrated by solid arrows). The uniformity resulting from the common pitch classes undoubtedly reflects Messiaen's remark that "a single colored complex springs up from the triple aspect of the colored chord." Finally, for the fourth observation, each chord voice remains the same or moves by step in either direction (echoing Messiaen's description of three possible transformations for each of the eight pitches) between chords A and B and chords B and C (with the exception of the two circled voices moving by a third).

Example 20. Messiaen's Turning Chords (10th transposition) presented linearly with identical enharmonic spellings. Boxes indicate the perfect fourth at the root of each chord. Thick arrows indicate the motion between these fourths (first down by two semitones, then up by a semitone). Dotted arrows indicate the common tone between the highest pitch of one chord and the lowest pitch of the chord that follows. Solid arrows indicate common tones between an initial and subsequent chord. Circles indicate motion of a third, rather than a second, between the same voices of chords B and C.



⁴⁸ *Traité*, 7:166. "This resembles an octahedron in translucent opal, or, more simply, iridescent glass: Each side of the octahedron (1 pitch among the 8 in each chord) has the possibility of **three transformations** following the incidence of light (which gives 3 combinations of 8 pitches, equaling 24 pitches divided among 3 chords). There is one single column of pitches that changes by turning, the memory recording a global sonority that is the fruit of the tree chords. Likewise, a single colored complex springs up from the triple aspect of the colored chord."

The improvisation on “La Tête” consists of staccato Turning Chords, alternating with a melodic theme (the *Thème de l'ombre*: see section 2.4, p. 39) played on the 16' basson of the Positif (Example 21). The manner in which these materials are juxtaposed is strikingly similar to the 5th movement of the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte-Trinité* (Example 22). Not only does Messiaen employ Turning Chords here with a similar organ registration (dominated by the reeds of the Récit), but also a melodic theme (a rhythmic variant of the recurring *Thème de Dieu*) that bears many similarities to the *Thème de l'ombre* and is likewise presented on the Positif basson.⁴⁹

Example 21. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Improvisation 4: “La Tête” (Turning Chords in first two measures)

R : bourdon 16, flute 8, gambe 8, bombarde 16, trompette 8 < |
 Pos : basson 16 seul < |
 Ped : sb 32, sb 16, cb 16 | tir. R |

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the organ part with staccato turning chords in the first two measures, and the piano part with a melodic theme marked *ff legato*. The second system shows the organ part with a rest in the first measure and the piano part continuing the melodic theme.

⁴⁹ I am not arguing that the theme in Messiaen’s improvisation on “La Tête” is an instance of the composer recycling material from his 5th *Méditation*. Rather, I am demonstrating an instance where Messiaen uses distinct-but-similar thematic materials in a like manner.

Example 22. Messiaen, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, Movement 5, p. 68, ss. 1–2 (Turning Chords in box)

(Pos: basson 16 seul – <)

(Dieu est immense)

Très lent



(R: bombarde 16, Trp. 8, clairon 4, et cymbale 3 rangs – <)

(Dieu est éternel)

Très modéré

2.2.2 Accord du total chromatique

The *Complete-Chromatic Chord* contains all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale in a prescribed spacing. It is shown here in its ninth transposition, as presented in volume 7 of the *Traité*:

Example 23. Messiaen, Accord du total chromatique (9th transposition), *Traité*, 7:182

deux zones rouges côte à côte : une grande zone rouge rubis, une zone rouge carmin plus petite –
les 4 notes supplémentaires ajoutent tout autour un cercle bleu gris, clair et brillant.

This chord makes its first appearance in works by Messiaen dating from the mid-1960s, although it bears many similarities to the famous passage that initiates the development section in the fourth movement of Mozart's Symphony in G Minor, K. 550 (Example 24, top). While Messiaen claims in the *Traité*⁵⁰ not to have discovered this association until several years after he created the Complete-Chromatic Chord, this statement should be viewed with a great deal of suspicion—particularly in light

⁵⁰ *Traité*, 7:182–83.

of the fact that the notes of Messiaen's chord and the Mozart excerpt are spaced identically. Furthermore, the Mozart passage contains the notes of the chord in the same transposition as the Complete-Chromatic Chord that appears in the movement "Quam dilecta tabernacula tua" of Messiaen's *La Transfiguration de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (which he claims in the *Traité* to be the first ever instance of the chord).⁵¹

The Mozart excerpt is shown in Example 24,⁵² together with the Complete-Chromatic Chord (in the dashed box underneath) broken into its three core components: (1) an E-major triad in second inversion, with an added C-natural on top; (2) an E-flat minor triad in first inversion, with an added F-natural on top; and (3) the "secondary harmonics" (D-natural, C-sharp, A-natural, and G-natural). The solid boxes and arrows indicate the melodic fragments of the Mozart excerpt that make up components 1 and 2, as Messiaen explains in the *Traité*,⁵³ while the descending thirds found in the dotted box contain all the notes of component 3 (with the exception of G-natural: the only pitch that does not appear anywhere in this passage).

Example 24. [top] Mozart, Symphony in G Minor, K. 550, IV. Allegro assai, mm. 125–34 (oboe); [bottom] Complete-Chromatic Chord (in the dashed box), broken into three components. The origin of each component of the chord can be traced to the boxed fragments from the Mozart passage.

The image displays musical notation for Example 24. The top staff is the oboe part from Mozart's Symphony in G Minor, K. 550, IV, measures 125-34. The bottom staff shows the Complete-Chromatic Chord, broken into three components. Arrows indicate the origin of each component of the chord from the boxed fragments in the Mozart passage.

⁵¹ The suspicions regarding Messiaen's purported chronology are further justified considering the fact that, as Christopher Dingle (2013) points out in his book, the chord was used in *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (and even indicated by Messiaen in his own analysis of this work in Volume 7, p. 221, of the *Traité*), composed two years prior to the *Transfiguration*, in 1963.

⁵² This passage is played tutti (except for horns) in Mozart's score. In Messiaen's *Traité*, he shows the 1st-violin line. I have chosen to show the oboe line solely because of the octave disposition, which aligns more closely with the spacing of Messiaen's chord.

⁵³ *Traité*, 7:183–84.

While this chord appears a few times in the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, the 10th *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisation (on the poem “Te voilà, mon petit amant”) marks its first usage in a published organ work. Here Messiaen cycles through three transpositions of the chord, each progressing upward by a semitone. Due to the organ’s inability to sustain pitches after they are released, the notes of the aggregate do not actually sound simultaneously in this example. Perhaps Messiaen found that the Trinité’s generous acoustic sufficiently compensated for the interruption in sound. This is contrasted with the presentation of the Complete-Chromatic Chord in the 6th movement (“La manne et le Pain de Vie”) of the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. Messiaen offers an alternate solution here, in which the secondary-harmonic notes are played by the pedal at 4’ pitch. While the pedal notes in this case sound underneath the manual chord, this compromise enables all twelve chromatic pitches to be heard at the same time.⁵⁴

Example 25. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 10: “Te voilà, mon petit amant” (opening)

R : gambe seul < |
G : flûte 4 seule |

Modéré
(Accord du total chromatique)

MAN. R { f G { f R { f G { f R { f G { f

Example 26. Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, mouvement 6 (“La manne et le Pain de Vie”), p. 38, s. 4

R : gambe seule > | Ped : flûte 4 seule |

Modéré, un peu vif

MAN. R { pp PED. { p

stacc. lourd

⁵⁴ Furthermore, the pitches of the upper pedal voice (D-natural and C-natural) are reversed in comparison with the original chord spacing. This is clearly illustrated by comparing Example 26 with the second measure of Example 25 (which features the chord in the same transposition).

2.3 Generating principles

In his article “Hamburg Organists in Lutheran Worship” (2002), William Porter discusses the concept of the *generating principle* as it relates to 17th-century keyboard improvisation. He notes the inseparable connection between so-called *improvisational* and *compositional* styles among organists of that era and at the same time argues for an understanding of improvisation that is built around the notion of *composition-in-performance*—not as something that was completely spontaneous, but rather something that was carefully practiced by accumulating and memorizing a wide vocabulary of patterns and formulas. According to Porter, “A generating principle is any simple procedure or pattern that can be internalized by the performer to produce a variety of realizations, *a mente*.”⁵⁵ He elaborates on this definition with a number of additional characteristics:

Such generating principles tend to be formulaic in nature and include characteristic melodic patterns and gestures, contrapuntal relationships and movements, and procedures for developing a whole musical texture from just one element of it (as in the harmonic bass). The important thing is that a given generating principle can be realized in a variety of ways, in varying degrees of complexity.

The usage of generating principles as underlying impetuses for improvisation is by no means limited to 16th and 17th-century keyboard practice. Indeed, two varieties of spatially oriented improvisational patterns that appear in Messiaen’s improvisations on *L’Âme en bourgeon* fit neatly into this model. The first involves rotation or alternation between white and black-key clusters or dyads on the keyboard, and the second involves arpeggios converging from the extremes of the keyboard

2.3.1 White and black-key alternation

There are three distinct themes within the improvisations that feature Messiaen’s technique of white and black-key alternation. This kind of pattern is one that is already frequently encountered within Messiaen’s piano repertoire. Yvonne Loriod (1996) refers to it as the *double-pouce* (or *double-thumb*) technique, due to the manner in which the thumb, playing two adjacent white keys, serves as a central pivot for the fingers, which play on the black keys. Loriod claims that the technique has its origins in the movement “Scarbo” (Example 27) from Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit*. She goes on to cite

⁵⁵ William Porter, “Hamburg Organists in Lutheran Worship,” in *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time: North European Reflections, 1610–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 72.

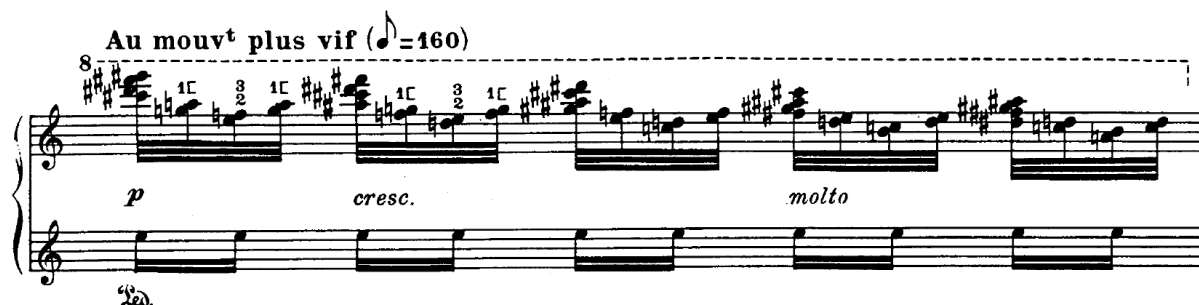
an excerpt from the 10th of the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* ("Regard de l'Esprit de joie": Example 28) as a characteristic instance of its usage by Messiaen.⁵⁶

Example 27. Ravel, "Scarbo," from *Gaspard de la nuit*, mm. 370–387 (p. 38, ss. 1–4)

The musical score for Ravel's "Scarbo" from *Gaspard de la nuit*, measures 370–387, is presented in four systems. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/8. The score is for piano and right-hand staves. The first system is marked *p* and "Toujours en accélérant". The second system is marked "1^{er} Mouvt (Vif)". The third system is marked *f*. The fourth system is marked *ppp* and ends with a fermata and a double bar line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

⁵⁶ Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen, "Étude sur l'œuvre pianistique d'Olivier Messiaen," in *Portrait(s) d'Olivier Messiaen*, edited by Catherine Massip (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1996), 102.

Example 28. Messiaen, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, Movement 10 (“Regard de l'Esprit de joie”), p. 63, s. 3



This passage from “Regard de l'Esprit de joie” is very similar to a theme that appears in the 5th (“Tu tettes le lait pur”) and 12th (“Viens, je veux t'expliquer”) *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations (see

Example 29)—a variant of which is found in movement 13 (“Les Deux murailles d'eau”) of the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (Example 30). The improvisation theme (marked *scherzando* in Messiaen's sketches) features rapid gestures that oscillate between the fingers and thumbs of both hands. The left hand plays only white keys, while the right hand plays black-key clusters with the fingers and an adjacent white key with the thumb. “Les deux murailles d'eau” features materials that are nearly identical but juxtaposed in a slightly different manner (in this case the right and left hands overlap), along with a sustained pedal melody that is reminiscent of the alternating tritones that Messiaen plays in the improvisations. However, the theme's presentation in “Les deux murailles d'eau” as a fiery *fff* toccata contrasts sharply with the light and colorful character of the *scherzando* theme. In both cases, the underlying gestural foundation of the *double-pouce* technique serves as a generating principle from which the *scherzando* improvisation and composed toccata unweave and develop.

Example 29. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur” (*Scherzando* excerpt)

R : flûte 4, nazard $2\frac{2}{3}$, octavin, tierce $1\frac{1}{3}$ > |
 Pos : quintaton 16, doublette 2 < |
 G : bourdon 16, flûte 4, quinte $2\frac{2}{3}$ |
 Ped : flute 4 seule |

Très vif (Scherzando)

Example 30. Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, Movement 13 (“Les Deux murailles d’eau”), p. 93, ss. 3–4

A variant of the *double-pouce* technique (the so-called *Thème de la terre*⁵⁷) serves as the basis for the opening improvisation on “Nature, laisse-moi.” The technique’s utility as an improvisational tool or generating principle is immediately apparent when this improvisation is considered alongside the 11th movement of the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, “L’Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine,” in which the *Thème de la terre* is recycled (along with its accompanying secondary theme played on the clarinette, 16' quintaton, and nazard of the Positif). Using Messiaen’s improvisation sketches, the transformation of this theme can be viewed across three distinct stages: sketch, improvisation, and composition. Example 31 shows the entirety of what Messiaen notates for the *Thème de la terre* in his sketches; Example 32 shows a transcribed excerpt from the recorded improvisation; and finally Example 33 shows the first two measures of “L’Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine.” A comparison of these excerpts reveals that the sketched version of the theme is almost identical to the movement from the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. In the improvisation, on the other hand, Messiaen retains the contour and character of the sketch and composition but replaces their unpredictable chromaticism with the *double-pouce* technique, rotating between white and black-key dyads on the keyboard.

⁵⁷ This label is printed alongside the theme in Messiaen’s sketches.

Example 31. Messiaen, "Thème de la Terre," *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches

R : bourdons 16, 8 \rightrightarrows Ped : sb 16, 32, Tir R -
 Pos : clarinette, nazard, quintaton 16 \rightrightarrows

modéré

th.
de la Terre

R { *pp*

Pos : *mf*

Example 32. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 1: "Nature, laisse-moi"

Pos : *mf*

Example 33. Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, Movement 11 (“L’Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine”), p. 65, s. 1

R : bourdon 16, bourdon 8, gambe \rightrightarrows |
 Pos : clarinette, nazard $2\frac{2}{3}$, quintaton 16 \rightrightarrows |
 G : bourdon 16, flûte 8, bourdon 8 | RG |
 Ped : sb 32, sb 16, tir. R |

(fin de la nuit)

Modéré **Bien modéré**

legato ppp p

R { ppp Pos :

legato ppp p

tir. R \wedge \wedge \wedge

This is somewhat paradoxical considering the timeline of these materials. The sketches, after all, were written *prior to* the improvisations, and the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* was not completed until well after, in 1984. One can only speculate regarding the question of why Messiaen sketched the theme in one way and then improvised it in an entirely different manner. Indeed, this is the only theme from the sketches that differs to such an extent in the improvisations. One might imagine that the sketched version depicts this theme in an *idealized* form, and that Messiaen perhaps struggled with the technical demands of its execution and development in the context of improvisation. Withholding judgment regarding questions of complexity, however, the advantage of the *double-pouce* technique in this context as an improvisational tool and generating principle is clear, due to its formulaic, easily-memorized, and idiomatic nature. At the same time, the movement from the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* illustrates Messiaen’s freedom as a composer to explore alternate variations of this theme within the framework of a much longer composed movement, despite increased technical demands.

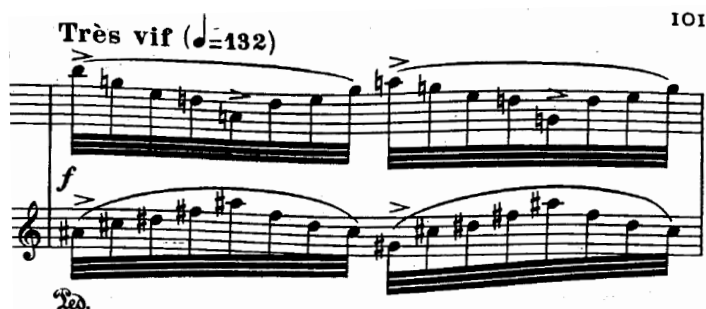
2.3.2 “Geometric” patterns

In addition to the *double-pouce* technique, Loriod refers to another manner of keyboard writing which she describes as *mouvements géométriques*.⁵⁸ Among the many examples that she provides (taken from Messiaen’s works for piano), there are passages containing superimposed arpeggios in contrary

⁵⁸ Loriod, 84–87.

motion (as in Example 34: “Regard des Anges”) and the so-called *accords arrachés* (literally, *ripped-apart* chords—as in Example 35: “Regard de l’Onction terrible”).

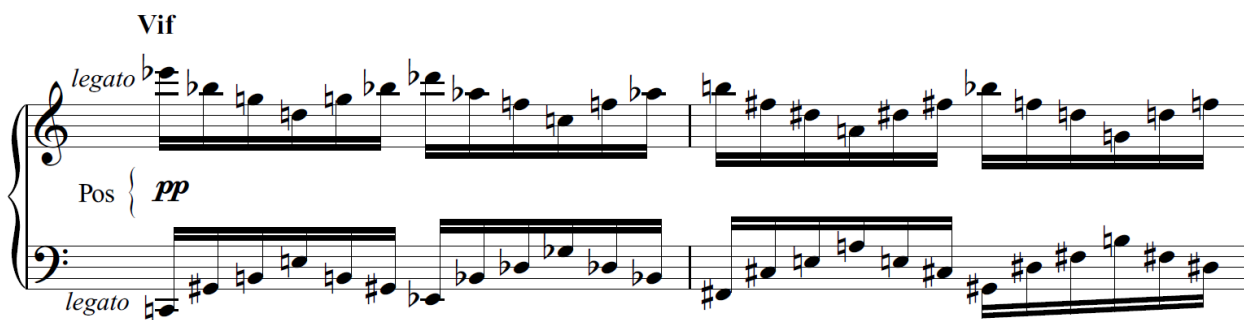
Example 34. Messiaen, *Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus*, Movement 14 (“Regard des Anges”), p. 101, s. 1, m. 2



Example 35. Messiaen, *Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus*, Movement 18 (“Regard de l’Onction terrible”), p. 139, s. 2



Example 36. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon”



In the 3rd *L’Âme en bourgeon* improvisation on the poem “Enfant, pâle embryon” (Example 36), Messiaen plays a theme that resembles very closely the pattern featured in “Regard des Anges.” The arpeggios in the improvisation are similarly bidirectional, meaning that they extend inward and then circle back to their starting point. However, unlike Example 34 or Example 35, the right and left hands in Example 36 are not superimposed but begin at opposite extremes of the keyboard and continue their pattern until they converge and overlap. Furthermore, this improvisation theme stems from a clear spatial and harmonic generating principle in which the right hand arpeggiates major triads

downward from the root, with the chordal seventh (or occasionally sixth) on the bottom, and the left hand mirrors this motion—beginning on the chordal sixth and arpeggiating upward to the root.

The *arraché* gesture in Example 35 differs from Example 34 primarily in that the arpeggios are unidirectional, rather than circling back to their points of origin. In their article “Messiaen the Borrower: Recomposing Debussy through the Deforming Prism,” Yves Balmer, Thomàs Lacôte, and Christopher Brent Murray discuss the *arraché* gesture in great detail. They look not only at its provenance (as a gesture borrowed from two works by Debussy: the *Étude* “Pour les Sonorités opposes” and the *Prélude* “La Puerta del vino”) but also at its appearance in “Les deux murailles d’eau” from the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (Example 37).⁵⁹ In fact, there is also a clear relation between this excerpt and Messiaen’s improvisation on “Enfant, pâle embryon,” despite the fact that the dynamics and registrations contrast greatly between the two examples. This is most evident when comparing Messiaen’s harmonic treatment of the right-hand gestures in Example 36 and Example 37. In “Les deux murailles d’eau” Messiaen begins in a different transposition from the improvisation (A major, rather than E-flat major) but follows the same spatial-harmonic generating principle.

Example 37. Messiaen, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, movement 13 (“Les deux murailles d’eau”) p. 104, ss. 1–2

GPR : fonds 16, 8, 4, mixtures, pleins-jeux, anches 16, 8, 4 | tous accouplements |

Modéré, un peu vif (Les vagues dressées)

legato, arraché

Recalling

Example 29 and Example 30 from section 2.3.1 (p. 31), this is the second theme from this same movement of the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* that can be traced back in part to the improvisations

⁵⁹ Yves Balmer, Thomas Lacôte and Christopher Brent Murray, “Messiaen the Borrower: Recomposing Debussy through the Deforming Prism,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 69, Number 3 (2016), 744–746. (See also: *Traité*, 6:105.)

on *L'Âme en bourgeon*. It is not surprising, then, to learn that one of the earliest references in Messiaen's agendas to what would eventually become the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* was related to a piece "sur la 'traversée de la mer Rouge'" at the end of 1979⁶⁰ (only two years after the improvisations were recorded). Indeed, there are several mentions in these agendas, between 1979 and 1984, of improvisations on the parting of the Red Sea—including one with which Messiaen was particularly pleased on Holy Saturday, 1982.⁶¹ At the end of this same year there is a note in which Messiaen reminds himself to *add* "la traversée de la Mer rouge (les deux murailles d'eau à droite et à gauche)" to his *Livre d'orgue*.⁶²

2.4 *Thème de l'ombre*

2.4.1 Origins

Example 38. Olivier Messiaen (tr. Foster), *Thème de l'ombre*, improvisation 3: "Enfant, pâle embryon"

Un peu lent (Thème de l'ombre)

Pos : corne 5 rangs, cor de nuit < |

MAN. Pos

f legato

The most frequently recurring melodic theme in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations, labeled the *Thème de l'ombre* in Messiaen's sketches, is shown above in Example 38. This seven-note melodic formula appears in its unaltered form nine times throughout the improvisations, in addition to a number of derivative and expanded instances. It has its origins in the late-1940s, where it is first encountered in the 2nd movement (Example 39: "Chant d'amour 1") of Messiaen's *Turangalîla-Symphonie*—in a passage described by the composer as a "melodic ornamentation of A-sharp."⁶³ It then reappears, with the terminating pitches slightly altered, in the 5th movement (Example 40: "Joie du sang des étoiles") of the symphony. Messiaen later recycles the formula in both the 3rd (Example 41) and 5th (Example 42) of his *Cinq rechants* (composed in 1948, shortly after the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*). Finally, it makes its first (and only) appearance in an organ composition in the 2nd movement (Example 43: "Offertoire: les choses visibles et invisibles") of Messiaen's *Messe de la Pentecôte* (composed from 1949–1950). In his analysis of the *Messe de la Pentecôte* (found in volume 4 of the *Traité*), Messiaen discusses a variant of the theme which appears throughout this work (Example 44), relating it to the

⁶⁰ Agendas, 531. "...on the 'parting of the Red Sea.'"

⁶¹ Ibid., 580.

⁶² Ibid., 589. *Livre d'orgue*, at this point, appears to be a working title for the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*.

⁶³ *Traité*, 2:179.

melodic contour that opens Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (Example 45).⁶⁴ In fact, this same variant shows up frequently as well in both the *Turangalila-Symphonie* (Example 46) and *Cinq Rechants* (Example 47), further attesting to its common origin with the *Thème de l'ombre*.

Example 39. Messiaen, *Turangalila-Symphonie*, Movement 2 ("Chant d'amour"), p. 48, m. 3 (woodwinds)



Example 40. Messiaen, *Turangalila-Symphonie*, Movement 5 ("Joie du sang des étoiles"), p. 171, mm 1–3 (strings). Theme with terminating pitches altered.



Example 41. Messiaen, *Cinq Rechants*, Movement 3, p. 22, s. 1, mm. 1–2 (theme with terminating pitches altered, similar to Example 40)



Example 42. Messiaen, *Cinq Rechants*, Movement 5, p. 38, s. 2, mm. 1–2



⁶⁴ Ibid., 4:93.

Example 43. Messiaen, *Messe de la Pentecôte*, Movement 2 ("Offertoire: les choses visibles et invisibles"), p. 4, ss. 4–6

Modéré
Pos.
MAN. *mf legato*

Example 44. Messiaen, *Messe de la Pentecôte*, Movement 2, p. 11, s. 2, m. 1 (variant of *Thème de l'ombre*)

Un peu lent (*staccato goutte d'eau*)
Pos.
R. *f*
pp legato
legato *mf*

Example 45. Ravel, *Tombeau de Couperin*, I. Prélude, mm. 1–2 (source for *Thème de l'ombre* variant)

Vif $\text{♩} = 92$
pp

Example 46. Messiaen, *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, Movement 3 ("Turangalîla 1"), p. 99, s. 1, rehearsal 6 (variant of *Thème de l'ombre* in celesta and piano)

Celesta *pp*
Vibr. *pp*
Piano *pp*

Example 47. Messiaen, *Cinq Rechants*, Movement 5, p. 37, s. 1, mm. 1–2 (variant of *Thème de l'ombre*)

Couplet
Bien modéré

3 Sopr.
1^{er} Contr. Solo
3 Tén.
3 Basses

(berceur et tendre)
lo - san - gé ma fleur tou - jours
fla - ko fla - ko
fla - ko fla - ko

2.4.2 *Thème de l'ombre* in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations

This theme is presented alone, on the Positif cornet (with cor de nuit), in several of the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations (as in Example 38 on p. 39). When it is first introduced in the 2nd improvisation (Example 48: “Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre”), Messiaen expands and develops it as a monodic solo on the voix humaine (with trémolo) of the Récit. It is treated in a similar fashion in the 7th improvisation on “Te voilà, hors de l’alvéole” (Example 49). Finally, in two passages from the 10th improvisation on “L’Abeille” (Example 50) and the 12th improvisation on “Viens, je veux t’expliquer,” the theme is harmonized on the Récit gambe and voix céleste and played as a dialogue between the 16' bourdon and quinte of the Grand Orgue and the 16' quintaton and nazard of the Positif. This latter registration was a favorite of Messiaen and is employed frequently throughout his final two organ cycles (as in Example 51, from the 8th movement of the composer’s *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*).

Example 48. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Improvisation 2: “Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre” (opening measures)

(« Tu devras tout apprendre... »)
↓
(Thème de l'ombre)
R Un peu lent

MAN.
MAN.

2.4.3 Derivative themes

The *Thème de l'ombre* is also the source from which several additional themes are generated in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations. Among them are the mode-4⁴ and mode-6⁴ themes (themes X and Y) that appear in the 5th and 12th improvisations (Example 52 and Example 53). In fact, these could be viewed as a single *melodic* theme that is separately colored by the two modes. Upon examining the motive contained in the first three notes of the upper voice and pedal voice (which is simply a tonal transposition within mode 6⁴), a possible relationship is revealed between this gesture and the boxed fragment of the *Thème de l'ombre* shown in Example 54. This relationship is confirmed through further contextualization.

The motivic fragment appears in many forms throughout the 5th and 12th improvisations. First, it is treated as an ostinato in a pseudo-canonic passage from the 5th improvisation (shown in Example 55). It then forms the Grand-Orgue motive that is featured in the *scherzando* passage (as in Example 56, from the 12th improvisation).⁶⁵ Finally, it is the basis from which Messiaen constructs the principal development sections of each improvisation (shown in Example 57 and Example 58). The excerpt in Example 58 reaches its culmination in Example 59, where this motive is transformed, with a climactic arrival in octaves, into the *Thème de l'ombre*. Thus the relationship between the motivic fragment and the original theme is made clear.

Messiaen's usage of this theme demonstrates the extent to which he borrowed and recycled from his own composed *œuvre*. This is evident in the appearance of the *Thème de l'ombre* within three distinct works during the late 1940s, as well as its later employment throughout Messiaen's improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon*. Here it is used not only as a recurring refrain but also as a source for further invention and development. Bearing in mind that none of these developmental passages are contained in the composer's written sketches, they in turn reveal Messiaen's extensive manner of independently elaborating on this theme through improvisation.

⁶⁵ See also section 2.3.1, p. 32

Example 52. Messiaen, "Theme X" (Mode 4⁺), *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches

stacc. Modéré
louré

Pos { *mf*

stacc. louré

Example 53. Messiaen, "Theme Y" (Mode 6⁺), *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches

stacc.

R { *mf*

stacc.

legato f

Example 54. Messiaen (tr. Foster), *Thème de l'ombre*, improvisation 3: "Enfant, pâle embryon" (motivic fragment indicated in box)

(Thème de l'ombre)

Pos **Un peu lent**

Pos : cornet 5 rangs, cor de nuit < |

MAN. *f legato*

Example 55. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: "Tu tettes le lait pur" (motivic fragment indicated in box)

(sur "crescendo") (cresc. n° 4)

Un peu vif

legato

(cresc. n° 5)

GPR { *mf*

legato

Example 56. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 12: “Viens, je veux t’expliquer” (*Scherzando* theme). The motivic fragment is played on the Grand Orgue. Note the intervallic relationship (major second, followed by major sixth) in the third measure, which is identical to the original *Thème de l’ombre* fragment in Example 38.

Example 56 shows a musical score for Improvisation 12. The score is for Grand Orgue (Pos) and features a staccato melody in the right hand and a staccato bass line in the left hand. A boxed section in the right hand, starting on a G, shows a motivic fragment with a major second followed by a major sixth interval. The tempo is Scherzando.

Example 57. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur” (motivic fragment indicated in box)

Example 57 shows a musical score for Improvisation 5. The score is for Grand Orgue (GPR) and features a non legato melody in the right hand and a non legato bass line in the left hand. A boxed section in the right hand indicates a motivic fragment. The tempo is Très vif.

Example 58. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 12: “Viens, je veux t’expliquer” (motivic fragment indicated in box)

Example 58 shows a musical score for Improvisation 12. The score is for Grand Orgue (GPR) and features a non legato melody in the right hand and a non legato bass line in the left hand. A boxed section in the right hand indicates a motivic fragment. The tempo is Vif.

Example 59. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur” (continuation of *Example 57*: full statement of *Thème de l’ombre* in dashed box)

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano accompaniment. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble staff features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with similar rhythmic patterns. The second system also consists of two staves. Above the first measure of the second system is the label "(cresc. n° 7)" with a downward arrow. Above the eighth measure is the label "(cresc. n° 8)" with a downward arrow, and above the ninth measure is the label "(cresc. n° 9)" with a downward arrow. A dashed rectangular box encloses the musical notation from the eighth measure to the end of the system, indicating a full statement of the "Thème de l'ombre".

2.5 Borrowing and transformation

The *Thème de l'ombre* demonstrates a clear instance of Messiaen borrowing from his own *compositions*, and the examples presented in sections 1.5 (p. 15) and 2.3 (p. 31) showed themes that Messiaen later borrowed from his *improvisations*. Furthermore, as Messiaen noted in his *Traité*, the melodic contour for the *Thème de l'ombre* was borrowed from (or at least inspired by) a work by Maurice Ravel. Along with each of these cases, the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations contain notable borrowings from Claude Debussy which can be traced to this source through Messiaen's preliminary sketches.

Balmer, Lacôte, and Murray (2016) have conducted extensive research on systematic borrowing as one of Messiaen's primary compositional tools. As a point of departure for their research, they refer to a passage in the composer's *Technique de mon langage musical* where he mentions the concept of the *prisme déformant*:

Tous ces emprunts...seront passés au prisme déformant de notre langage, recevront de notre style un sang différent, une couleur rythmique et mélodique imprévue où fantaisie et recherche s'uniront pour détruire la moindre ressemblance avec le modèle.⁶⁶

The rigorous method that the authors have used to uncover instances of conscious borrowing involves a threefold triangulation process, which serves to rule out merely coincidental similarities:

In each of the cases described above we have compared sources to their transformations in Messiaen's scores and, importantly, have cross-referenced these comparisons with information found in the composer's statements about his own music and the music of others. This triangulation cleared the way for a step-by-step reconstruction of Messiaen's compositional process and his habits of selection and transformation.⁶⁷

A similar methodological approach can be used to investigate the borrowings that take place in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations. In what appears to be a clear reference to Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Messiaen writes the word *Pelléas* directly above two themes which appear on the first page of the *L'Âme en bourgeon* thematic sketches (as shown in Example 60). In fact, neither theme is present in the recorded improvisations. Instead, Messiaen uses two original themes (labeled *PMA* and *PMB*) which bear striking resemblances to the initial *Pelléas* themes. Given the context and clear similarities,

⁶⁶ *Technique*, 46. "All these borrowings...will be passed through the deforming prism of our language, will receive from our style a different blood, an unexpected melodic and rhythmic color in which fantasy and research will unite to destroy the least resemblance to the model."

⁶⁷ Balmer, Lacôte, Murray, 774.

it can be reasonably deduced that *PMA* and *PMB* signify *Pelléas et Mélisande A* and *Pelléas et Mélisande B*. Upon further investigation, I have managed to find the origins of both of the unused *Pelléas* themes within Debussy's opera. The first (from which *PMB* is derived) is a reduction of an excerpt from Act 1, Scene 3 (third measure after rehearsal 42); and the second (from which *PMA* is derived) is taken from Act 2, Scene 2 (beginning at rehearsal 35).⁶⁸

Example 60. Messiaen/Debussy, “Pelléas” themes, *L’Âme en bourgeon* sketches

(Pelléas)

R : fl, bourd, gbe
Pos : clarinette, quintaton 16, nazard
G : montre 8, fl, bourdon -
Ped : sb 16, bourd 8, tir R

(Pelléas)

Pos : fl 4 seule
R : bourdon 8 seul
G : bourdons 8, 16
Ped : sb 16, 32 -

Pos : **lent**
R : htb et bourd 16
G : m.dr. *louré*
Ped

As Balmer, Lacôte, and Murray note, “Although created from his teaching notes, Messiaen’s published Debussy analyses are inseparable from his activity as a composer in that they focus on the passages he reused in his own works.”⁶⁹ Heeding their advice, an examination of volume 6 of Messiaen’s *Traité* reveals that he analyzes both of these *Pelléas et Mélisande* passages in great detail.⁷⁰ In the case of the first excerpt (Example 75, Appendix A), Messiaen’s analysis focuses on the *rythme d’intensité* that Debussy achieves by superimposing a variety of rhythms, static dynamic markings, crescendos, and diminuendos. It is rather unexpected, then, that none of these nuances are brought out in Messiaen’s organ reduction (Example 60, mm. 1–2), nor or they reflected in theme *PMB*

⁶⁸ Refer to Appendix A (p. 68) for both themes in the full score.

⁶⁹ Balmer, Lacôte, Murray, 707.

⁷⁰ *Traité*, 6:66–69; 6:88 (Act 1, scene 3); 6:73–74 (Act 2, Scene 2).

(Example 61). For this new theme, Messiaen maintains the gestural skeleton of the Debussy excerpt while transforming the harmonic content and rhythmic structure. The harmonic transformation is achieved through Modes of Limited Transposition (mode 3^2), while the rhythmic transformation is achieved through *deçi-tâlas*.

Example 61. Messiaen (tr. Foster), *Thème PMB*, improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”

R : flûte 8, bourdon 8, gambe < |
 Pos : clarinette, quintaton 16, nazard $2\frac{2}{3}$ < |
 G : montre 8, flûte 8, bourdon 8 |
 Ped : sb 16, bourdon 8 | tirasse R |

The musical score for Example 61, "Thème PMB", improvisation 6, is presented in three systems. The first system is marked "Lent" and "(vijaya)". It features three staves: MAN. (Mandolin), R. (Right Hand), and PED. (Pedal). The MAN. staff has a melody in "Pos" (Positif) with a dynamic of *mf*. The R. staff has a melody in "R" (Régional) with a dynamic of *mf legato*. The PED. staff has a bass line with a dynamic of *mf legato*. The second system shows the MAN. staff with a melody in "R" and the PED. staff with a bass line. The third system shows the MAN. staff with a melody in "G" (Gambe) and the PED. staff with a bass line. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *f*, and articulation like *legato*.

Some light can be shed on these transformations by referring once again to volume 7 of Messiaen’s *Traité* and comparing the chords in the composer’s mode- 3^2 table to *Thème PMB* (as it appears in the sixth improvisation on “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”) and the reduction of the initial *Pelléas* theme found in Messiaen’s sketches. All three of these are shown together in Example 62. The choice of mode 3^2 (which begins with a D-flat major triad in the right hand in Messiaen’s table) is fitting, given that the passage from *Pelléas et Mélisande* begins with a D-flat dominant-9th chord. Messiaen constructs *Thème PMB* by first replacing this dominant-9th chord with the initial mode- 3^2

chord from the table. Just as Debussy's dominant-9th chords ascend in parallel motion, Messiaen's mode-3² chords do the same. Turning now to the right hand, the first dyad in Example 60 contains the pitches C-flat and E-flat. In Messiaen's mode-3² table, there is no third that corresponds to these exact pitches. Nevertheless, there is a third containing the pitches C-natural and E-flat, which becomes Messiaen's new point of departure for the right hand of *Thème PMB*. Rather than play the third as written, however, he further transforms it by inverting the interval so that it now becomes a sixth. Using once again Messiaen's mode-3² chord table, the F-natural/A-flat dyad that follows now becomes A-flat/B-natural, and the newly transformed right-hand pattern ascends in parallel motion as in the Debussy model. The final rhythmic transformation is achieved by replacing Debussy's syncopated 8th-and-16th-note pattern with the *vijaya* rhythm (3+2+3). Afterward, Messiaen substitutes the *candrakalâ* rhythm (2+2+2+3+3+3+1) for *Golaud's rhythm* (with its characteristic dotted sixteenth-note and thirty-second-note motive), as shown in Example 63.

Example 62. [top left] Debussy/Messiaen, beginning of first "Pelléas" theme, from sketches; [top right] Messiaen, Mode-3² table, *Traité*, 7:122; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), beginning of *Thème PMB*, improvisation 6: "Mon cœur revient à son printemps"

The image displays three panels of musical notation illustrating the transformation of a theme from Debussy/Messiaen sketches to Messiaen's *Thème PMB*.

- Top Left Panel:** Labeled "(Pelléas)", it shows a piano sketch with a treble and bass staff. A box highlights a chord in the bass staff, with a dashed arrow pointing to the Mode 3² table. The tempo is marked "Lent" and the dynamics include "mf" and "Ped".
- Top Right Panel:** Labeled "3²", it shows the Mode 3² table with two staves. A dashed arrow points from the sketch to this table, and another dashed arrow points from the table to the bottom panel. The text "Mode 3² en accords parallèles" is written across the staves.
- Bottom Panel:** Labeled "Lent", it shows the beginning of *Thème PMB* improvisation 6. It features a treble staff with a melody and a bass staff with chords. A box highlights a chord in the bass staff, with a dashed arrow pointing from the Mode 3² table. The tempo is marked "Lent" and the dynamics include "mf" and "legato". The text "(vijaya)" is written above the treble staff.

Example 63. [left] Messiaen/Debussy, second half of “Pelléas” theme; [right] Messiaen (tr. Foster), second half of *Thème PMB*, from improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps.” *Golaud’s rhythm* is transformed into *candrakalā* (2+2+2+3+3+3+1)

2.6 Birdsong

No analysis of these improvisations would be complete without a thorough examination of birdsong. In total, the songs of five different birds are featured on the recording, including a nightingale (*rossignol*), skylark (*alouette des champs*), willow warbler (*pouillot fitis*), Eurasian blackcap (*fauvette à tête noire*), and common chiffchaff (*pouillot véloce*). Considering the fact that each of these birds appears labeled in Messiaen’s thematic sketches, the question arises, did he improvise the birdsongs at all, or were they completely pre-composed and performed from score? While the chiffchaff and willow-warbler solos are indeed written in their entirety (with the exception of some repetitions and minor alterations), Messiaen only provides opening incipits for the other birds in these sketches. One might suspect, then, that these incipits served as a point of departure from which Messiaen improvised the full solos. Volume 5 of Messiaen’s *Traité* (with its extensive analyses of characteristic gestures, patterns, and rhythms for dozens of birds), for example, could act as a kind of instruction manual offering a catalog of formulas and generating principles that can be used to improvise the songs of specific birds.

This is undoubtedly a fascinating avenue for exploration, but indications within Messiaen’s thematic sketches for the *L’Âme en bourgeon* improvisations cast doubt on the premise. Alongside the nightingale and skylark incipits, Messiaen provides a date and location for their origin. Taking this information into account, I examined Messiaen’s birdsong sketchbooks (*cahiers de notations de chants d’oiseaux*) dating from June of 1974 to April of 1975 (henceforth referred to as *MS 23125*).⁷¹ Within the nearly 50 pages of birdsong transcriptions contained in this document, three of the five birds referenced in the improvisation sketches are fully notated and correspond directly to what Messiaen

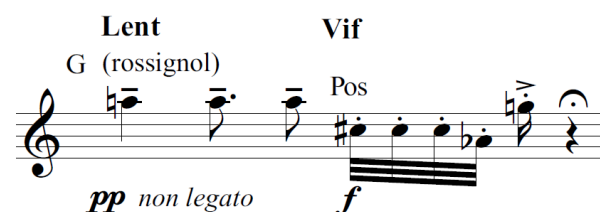
⁷¹ Olivier Messiaen, *MS-23125, Aube, Juin 1974, Cahiers de notation de chants d’oiseaux : Cahier utilisé entre le 1er juin 1974 et le 3 avril 1975* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

plays on the recording. Based on these findings, it is safe to assume that Messiaen was most likely reading directly from this manuscript when he performed his improvisations on *L'Âme en bourgeon*. However, rather than taking a literal *top-to-bottom* reading of the printed page, Messiaen freely repeats individual notes and phrases, alters rhythms, and in some cases plays gestures and phrases out of their printed order. This suggests a kind of *flexible* score reading in which he scanned the printed page as he played, selected individual phrases that perhaps caught his eye, and *recomposed* the materials in real time in the course of improvising.

2.6.1 Nightingale (*rossignol*)

To illustrate this manner of working, I will examine the nightingale solo from the first improvisation. In Appendix B (p. 70) the complete nightingale incipit is shown (Example 77) as it appears in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* sketches, alongside Messiaen's full transcription of this same solo from June 1, 1974, at 6:45 p.m., taken from *MS 23125* (Example 78). The examples that follow below provide a phrase-by phrase picture of Messiaen's navigation process through the original *MS-23125* transcription. The phrase numbers (1–7) are also indicated within the corresponding portions of Example 78. From this formal outline it can first of all be inferred that Messiaen omits much of the material contained in the original transcription—playing less than half of it, in fact, and beginning in the middle of the page. What is most telling, however, is the manner in which Messiaen *navigates* through the solo with little consideration for its original chronology, linking phrases together by skipping ahead and backtracking.

Example 64. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 1 (improvisation on “Nature, laisse-moi”)



Example 65. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 2



Example 66. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 3 (after bracket)

Example 66 shows two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 3/4. It features a series of eighth notes with a slur over them, marked *mf* and *R*. The second staff continues the melody, marked *Lent* and *pp* for the first part, then *Vif* and *f* for the second part, and finally *R* and *mf* for the third part. The key signature changes to one sharp in the second part.

Example 67. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 4

Example 67 consists of two staves. The first staff is marked *Un peu vif*, *Pos*, *f*, *R*, and *mf*. It features a series of eighth notes with a slur over them. The second staff is marked *Modéré* and continues the melody with eighth notes and a slur.

Example 68. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 5

Example 68 shows a single staff of music marked *Un peu vif*, *Pos*, and *f*. It features a series of eighth notes with a slur over them.

Example 69. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 6

Example 69 shows a single staff of music marked *Un peu lent*, *pp*, *G*, *Pos*, *f*, *Vif*, *Un peu vif*, *R*, and *mf*. It features a series of eighth notes with a slur over them.

Example 70. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 7

Example 70 shows a single staff of music marked *pp*. It features a series of eighth notes with a slur over them.

2.6.2 Skylark (*alouette des champs*)

Among the other birdsongs featured in the recording are two skylark solos, both of which stem from a common original source, found in *MS 23125* (transcribed on Pentecost Sunday, June 2, 1974, at 12:45 p.m.). Unlike the preceding nightingale example, Messiaen follows the chronology of his original transcription in this case, but he freely modifies and repeats individual gestures and motives when improvising. This can be seen by comparing individual phrases from *MS 23125* to my own transcription of the skylark solo in Messiaen's 6th improvisation ("Mon cœur revient à son printemps"). The opening material in *MS 23125* (Example 71) is virtually identical to that of the improvised solo except for the fact that Messiaen plays the third-measure gesture three times in the improvisation. In the measures that follow (Example 72), Messiaen maintains the contour of the initial phrase while making slight alterations of various individual pitches. The concluding gesture (indicated by the dashed box) is substantially altered, although certain elements can still be traced between the two excerpts (such as the pitches B-flat and C-sharp leaping up to B-natural). The phrase shown in Example 73 demonstrates an even greater discrepancy between the original manuscript and Messiaen's improvised realization. In the improvisation, he completely omits the first two bars (indicated by the dashed box) and significantly alters the rhythm in bars 5 and 6 of the original. In the concluding measures (Example 74), Messiaen replaces the repeated A-naturals of *MS 23125* with B-naturals. This was perhaps an intentional decision, due to the recurring high B-naturals throughout the rest of the solo. Finally, Messiaen alters the closing gesture, adding a descent by thirds to the improvisation before landing on the final A-flat.

These two solos reveal how Messiaen's treatment of birdsong in the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations illustrates many different facets of the relationship between prepared composition and the improvisational ideal of composition-in-performance. Very little about the underlying components of the improvised birdsong is spontaneous, yet at the same time Messiaen's intimate understanding of the songs and characteristics of each individual bird (as explicated in the enormous fifth volume of his *Traité*) allows him the flexibility to construct, in the moment of performance, a version of the original transcription that is adapted to the needs of his improvisations—lingering on certain gestures, transforming them when he sees fit, and omitting some altogether.

Example 71. [top] Messiaen, Skylark (June 2, 1974, 12:45 p.m.), *MS 23125*; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps.” The boxed gesture in *MS 23125* is played three times in the improvisation.

Top staff: *f* *f* *mf* < *ff* *f*

Tempo: *Un peu vif*

MAN. *f*

Pos.

Example 72. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, *MS 23125*; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6. Note the altered pitches and accidentals (indicated in the boxes).

Top staff: *f* *mf* < *ff*

Bottom staff: *f* *mf* < *ff*

Example 73. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, *MS 23125*; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6. The first two bars of *MS 23125* are omitted in the improvisation. Note the rhythmic differences between mm. 5–6 of *MS 23125* and mm. 3–4 of the improvisation, as well as the modifications in m. 5 of the improvisation.

The musical score is presented in four systems, comparing the original manuscript (top) with an improvisation (bottom). The key signature is one flat (B-flat).

System 1 (Original Manuscript): The first two bars are enclosed in a dashed box. Dynamics include *p*, *ff*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff* (plein ciel). The first two bars are omitted in the improvisation.

System 2 (Improvisation): Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *f*, and *ff* (plein ciel). The first two bars of the original manuscript are omitted.

System 3 (Improvisation): Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The first two bars of the original manuscript are omitted.

System 4 (Improvisation): Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The first two bars of the original manuscript are omitted.

Arrows indicate the flow of the improvisation from the original manuscript, showing the omission of the first two bars and the modification of the subsequent bars.

Example 74. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, *MS 23125*; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6. Note the altered pitches in the solid squares, as well as the altered descent (dashed square) that concludes the improvisation.

The image displays a musical score comparison for the piece 'Skylark' by Olivier Messiaen. The top staff represents the original manuscript (*MS 23125*), and the bottom staff represents a transcription by Foster, including improvisation 6. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, and *pp*. The phrase '(elle tombe)' is written below the staff. A solid square highlights a specific melodic phrase in the original manuscript, which is transcribed in the bottom staff. A dashed square highlights a different melodic phrase in the original manuscript, which is also transcribed in the bottom staff. Arrows indicate the correspondence between the original manuscript and the transcription.

3. Intertextuality and meaning in the *L'Âme en bourgeois* themes

*Messiaen is known for the programmatic texts he wrote to accompany his music. As we become more aware of his technique of composing with existing musical formulas, the potential for hermeneutic interpretation of his music increases. Ostensibly, Messiaen would have been capable of imitating music stylistically without directly borrowing from it. The choice to borrow, therefore, seems weighted with significance, a sign of the composer's desire to inscribe his work with intertextually charged meaning.*⁷²

Taken in isolation, these words from Balmer, Lacôte, and Murray (2016) appear to offer a compelling argument for intentionality when Messiaen inserts recycled themes, previously charged with meaning in other compositions, into his improvisations. At the same time, these authors caution against the temptation to automatically default to this assumption. They note, “Messiaen’s reuse of existing music is far too fundamental to the basic and local operations of his creative process for it to be a systematic conveyor of plausible meaning.”⁷³ Indeed, there are examples in the *L'Âme en bourgeois* improvisations that seem to clearly defy this mode of intertextual interpretation, such as the borrowings from *Pelléas et Mélisande*, where the somber tone of the opera’s text bears no apparent thematic or symbolic relationship to the poem “Mon coeur revient à son printemps”—an exuberant hymn in which Sauvage rejoices in the new life that she is carrying. Therefore, in the present analysis of the *L'Âme en bourgeois* improvisations I will focus only on one example: Messiaen’s *Thème de l'ombre*. Due its previous context in the *Messe de la Pentecôte*, this recycled theme offers a plausible intertextual link to symbolism found in Sauvage’s text,

3.1 Things visible and invisible

Les choses visibles et invisibles ! Mais il y a tout dans ces mots ! Les dimensions connues et inconnues : du diamètre possible de l'Univers à celui du proton—les durées connues et inconnues : de l'âge des galaxies à celui de l'onde associée au proton—le monde spirituel et le monde matériel, la grâce et le péché, les anges et les hommes—les puissances de lumière et les puissances de ténèbres—les vibrations de l'atmosphère, le chant liturgique, le chant des oiseaux, la mélodie des gouttes d'eau, et les grognements noirs de la monstrueuse bête de l'Apocalypse—enfin, tout ce qui est clair et palpable, et tout ce qui est obscur, mystérieux,

⁷² Balmer, Lacôte, Murray, 731–32.

⁷³ Ibid., 732

*surnaturel, tout ce qui dépasse la science et le raisonnement, tout ce que nous ne pouvons découvrir, tout ce que nous ne comprendrons jamais...*⁷⁴

The word *ombre* in French can refer to *shadow* or *darkness*. In literary or poetic usage, it can equally refer to a *ghost* or *spirit* of a deceased person (much like the English word *shade*). The word occurs ten times among the twelve poems featured on the recording, and in almost every instance it is accompanied, preceded, or followed by the *Thème de l'ombre*.⁷⁵ In section 2.4.1 (p. 39) the provenance of this theme was discussed in exhaustive detail, including two examples taken from the 2nd movement (“Les Choses visibles et invisibles” [“Things visible and invisible”]) of Messiaen’s *Messe de la Pentecôte*, where it is extensively featured. The title of this movement (a reference to the first line of the Nicene Creed: “I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible”) provides a clue as to a possible interpretation of the theme.

On the *L’Âme en bourgeon* recording, the *Thème de l'ombre* is first heard in the second improvisation on the poem “Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre...,” where it is presented as an extended monodic solo on the voix-humaine stop of the Récit (see Example 48 on p. 43). The poem opens with the line, “Could I have called you forth from the shadows [or *darkness*] into light” (“Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre vers le jour”).⁷⁶ The word *ombre* here symbolizes the mystery of being springing forth from obscurity. This mirrors Messiaen’s description of the spiritual realm of *things invisible* (“all that is unknown, mysterious, supernatural...all that we will never understand”). This is among the most somber poems in the cycle, in which the mother broods over the death and suffering that pervade this world and questions how she could have brought her newborn son into the midst of it. Despite being innocently “enthralled by the first sweetness,” she confesses that he will one day awaken to this illusory façade (“The poor construction, the varnishes, the plaster...”). She tells him, “You will discover that

⁷⁴ *Traité*, 4:89. “Things visible and invisible! But everything is contained in these words! Dimensions known and unknown: from the possible diameter of the universe to that of the proton—durations known and unknown: from the age of galaxies to that of the wave associated with the proton—the spiritual world and the material world, grace and sin, angels and men—the powers of light and the powers of darkness—the vibrations of the atmosphere, liturgical song, birdsongs, the melody of drops of water, and the dark groans of the monstrous beast of the Apocalypse—finally, all that is evident and tangible, and all that is unknown, mysterious, supernatural, all that escapes science and reason, all that we are incapable of discovering, all that we will never understand.”

⁷⁵ The most notable exception is the 9th improvisation on “La Tasse,” in which the *Thème de l'ombre* does not appear at all despite a recurring textual theme of *darkness*, or *ombre*: “La nuit fait les gros yeux, avec la lune ronde | Et tous les astres blonds qui pressent leur lueur | Sur le front noir de l’ombre où l’angoisse est profonde.” “Dieu ! c’est l’ombre déjà ! Déjà le ver luisant | Répand sa goutte d’or sur la verdure moite...” (“Night shows its bright eyes with the round moon | And all the blonde stars that cast their glow | On the shadow’s dark face of deep anguish.” “God! It is already dark! Already the glow-worm | Spreads its golden bead on the damp greenery...”

⁷⁶ See Appendix C (p. 71) for complete texts and translations of all poems featured on the recording

being is swept away by the storm like a seed in the wind,” and in the final stanza she laments this loss of innocence:

Alors to me diras : — Qu'avez-vous fait, ma mère ?
 J'inclinai au repos, l'obscurité légère
 Recueillait sans savoir mon germe inconscient
 Et pour moi vous avez éclairé le néant ...
 — Qu'ai-je fait, mon enfant ?⁷⁷

The *Thème de l'ombre* is likewise a key thematic element in the fourth improvisation on the poem “La Tête.” The similarities between Messiaen’s treatment of the thematic materials in this improvisation and those in the 5th movement of the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* have already been discussed in section 2.2.1 (p. 25). It comes as no surprise, then, that Messiaen’s own description of the 5th *Méditation* once again addresses this notion of the “profound mystery” of the supernatural domain:

« Dieu est immense », présent partout : cette absence de lieu déterminé, cette ubiquité totale, restent un profond mystère—je me suis adressé au grave de l’orgue, avec le basson 16 fortissimo, qui fait entendre le « thème de Dieu » varié rythmiquement...⁷⁸

The text of “La Tête” begins with the mother marveling at the new life (a “rejuvenated universe”) that she has created from her own being:

Ô mon fils, je tiendrai ta tête dans ma main,
 Je dirai : j’ai pétri ce petit monde humain ;
 Sous ce front dont la courbe est une aurore étroite
 J’ai logé l’univers rajeuni qui miroite
 Et qui lave d’azur les chagrins pluvieux.⁷⁹

The mystery of existence is at the heart of the tone of these opening lines, but the poem soon takes a morbid turn. Using the metaphor of a menacing skull hiding beneath her son’s tender, innocent visage,

⁷⁷ So you will tell me—“What have you done, mother? | I was lying back to rest, the fragile darkness | Was unknowingly harvesting my unconscious seedling, | And now you have illuminated nothingness for me...” | —“What have I done, my child?”

⁷⁸ Olivier Messiaen, *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1973.), p. 37. “‘God is immense,’ omnipresent: this absence of fixed place, this complete ubiquity, remains a profound mystery—I directed myself to the low end of the organ, with the 16’ bassoon fortissimo, which plays the ‘theme of God’ rhythmically varied.”

⁷⁹ Oh my son, I will hold your head in my hand, | I will say, “I have molded this human world; | Beneath this face whose arc is an intimate dawn, | I accommodated this shimmering, rejuvenated universe | That washes away rainy sorrows with blue skies.

Sauvage portrays existence as a thinly veiled illusion that will soon crumble and lay bare the inescapable realities of death and decay, just as in “Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre...”:

Je verrai sous tes chairs soyeuses et vermeilles
 Couvertes d'un pétale à tromper les abeilles,
 Je verrai s'enfoncer les orbites en creux,
 L'ossature du nez offrir ses trous ombreux,
 Les dents rire sur la mâchoire dévastée ...

Et ta tête de mort, c'est moi qui l'ai sculptée.⁸⁰

Much like the *Thème de Dieu* in the 5th *Méditation* (see Example 22 on p. 28), Messiaen plays the *Thème de l'ombre* in the lowest octave of the organ for this improvisation, using the 16' basson of the Positif (a stop that he aptly described as “merveilleux pour évoquer les grognements de la bête de l’Apocalypse ou le dragon Fafner, ou toute autre chose épouvantable, grave et caverneuse”⁸¹). This treatment further supports an interpretation of the theme as a commentary on, or depiction of, the *unknown* invisible world. The foreboding and dreadful atmosphere conveyed by Sauvage in “La Tête” serves as a stark reminder of death and the mysteries that surround it. While Antoine Goléa, in his 1958 interview with the composer, would protest, “Il n’y a rien de très catholique dans ce poème,”⁸² Messiaen’s response indicates a markedly different perspective on death:

Pour un enfant, la mort n’est pas terrible. Pour un enfant, il est tout naturel de voler comme un oiseau ou de passer à travers les murs. Les fées, les fantômes et les sorcières de Shakespeare ne me surprenaient pas davantage... Si tout était « normal » dans le monde invisible, où serait la différence entre l’infini et le fini, entre Dieu et les hommes, et que nous resterait-il à apprendre dans l’éternité ?⁸³

⁸⁰ I will see beneath your silky, scarlet flesh, | Covered by a petal to fool the bees— | I will see the hollowed orbits sinking in, | The nose’s skeleton offering its shadowy holes, | The teeth laughing on the decaying jaw... | And your skull—it is I who sculpted it.

⁸¹ Glandaz, 20. “Marvelous for evoking the groans of the beast of the Apocalypse or the dragon Fafner, or all other things dreadful, serious, and cavernous.”

⁸² Antoine Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris-Genève: Slatkine, 1984), 36.

⁸³ Ibid., 36–37. “For a child, death is not terrible. For a child, it is completely natural to fly like a bird or to pass through walls. The fairies, ghosts, and sorcerers of Shakespeare no more surprised me... If everything were normal, in the visible world, where would the difference be between the infinite and the finite, between God and man, and what would be left for us to learn in eternity?”

4. Conclusion: Improvisation, Transcription, and Reinterpretation

*Cécile Sauvage était ma mère. Le plus beau de ses recueils, qui terminait « Tandis que la terre tourne », nous est resté. Ce recueil, qui comprend vingt poèmes, s'intitule : l'Âme en bourgeon. Je suis très fier de ce livre. Plus que tous les concerts qui ont jalonné ma carrière de compositeur de musique, l'Âme en bourgeon est mon plus beau titre de gloire, car il a été fait pour moi, au cours de l'année 1908, alors que ma mère m'attendait...*⁸⁴

This analysis of Olivier Messiaen's 1977 recording of improvised musical commentary on *L'Âme en bourgeon* has uncovered numerous important links between Messiaen-the-composer and Messiaen-the-improvisor. I have revealed through agenda entries and musical examples the direct influence of these improvisations on the *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, which is most evident in the recycled themes found in the movements "Puer natus est," "L'Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine," and "Les deux murailles d'eau." In addition, I have shown how the compositional techniques outlined in volume 7 of Messiaen's *Traité de rythme, de couleur et d'ornithologie*, with its tables of Modes of Limited Transposition and Special Chords, directly shaped many of the themes used in these improvisations. I have examined themes that Messiaen borrowed and transformed within the improvisations, including the numerous forms and appearances of the *Thème de l'ombre* and the two Debussy themes taken from *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Finally, I have demonstrated that the birdsongs featured in this recording were lifted directly from Messiaen's *carnets de notation de chants d'oiseaux*, and I have discussed a few of the many ways in which Messiaen transformed his original birdsong transcriptions while he was improvising.

During my research and preparation for this project, many questions and ethical concerns have arisen relating to improvisations and transcriptions. What is the rightful place of an improvisation among the larger catalog of *written* works by a composer such as Messiaen? If an improvisation exists only in a recorded or sketched format, what right (if any) do we have to appropriate it and create a derivative reconstruction for public consumption, analysis, or performance? If it is the permission of the composer or improviser that we seek, how does this differ from compositions that are published posthumously without the consent of their creator (such as Messiaen's *Prélude*, *Monodie*, or *Offrande au*

⁸⁴ Olivier Messiaen, preface to Sauvage (1987, 8). "Cécile Sauvage was my mother. The most beautiful of her collections, which concludes *Tandis que la terre tourne*, remains for us. This collection, which includes twenty poems, is titled *L'Âme en bourgeon*. I am very proud of this book. More than all of the concerts that have marked my career as a composer of music, *L'Âme en bourgeon* is my most beautiful title of glory, because it was made for me, during the year 1908, while my mother was expecting me."

Saint Sacrement, for organ)? These questions pertain not only to the integrity of the materials themselves but also the integrity and identity of the composer. Since a transcription of this kind can never reflect the original recorded source with absolute accuracy, to whom do we attribute authorship of such works?

The composer and improviser Thomas Lacôte thoughtfully expresses some of these concerns in a 2014 interview with David Cassan:

Le problème de la retranscription est que, évidemment, beaucoup d'improvisations sont vraiment trop moyennes pour être retranscrites et révèlent certaines faiblesses, tout simplement. Ce constat nous aide à prendre du recul sur leur statut en tant qu'œuvres. Je ne me sens pas très concerné par cette question mais peut-être que la manière de m'amener sur ce terrain est d'imaginer si quelqu'un retranscrivait et rejouait une improvisation que j'ai faite et affirmait après un certain temps : « c'est une œuvre de Thomas Lacôte ! » Oui, cela me poserait un problème qu'on veuille y voir une œuvre de même statut que mon œuvre écrite.⁸⁵

This question of *status*, as it relates to improvised and composed works is certainly an important consideration, and it would no doubt be imprudent to present works such as the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations as *compositions* by Olivier Messiaen. At the same time, the above examples have revealed how deeply Messiaen's composed and improvised vocabularies were intertwined. Even when certain passages diverge considerably from their recomposed counterparts (such as the *Thème de la terre* in relation to "L'Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine"), there are instances elsewhere in Messiaen's *œuvre* in which other themes are treated with similar or identical techniques.

It is equally important to note the distinction between these improvisations and those that may have been captured in a mass or concert without the composer's permission. This project was *initiated* by Messiaen, and the timeline that is presented in the composer's agendas reveals that the recording was prepared over a period of no fewer than seven months. Additionally, it must be stressed that this is not a *live* recording but was conducted in a *studio* context, where multiple takes were possible in order to perfect the musical content and ensure that the final product was satisfactory. Beyond the

⁸⁵ "L'Improvisation et la création," Entretien avec Thomas Lacôte (mars 2014), thomaslacote.wordpress.com/2016/01/13/l-improvisation-et-la-creation/ (Accessed April 3, 2017). "The problem of transcription is that, of course, many improvisations are really too mediocre to be transcribed and reveal certain weaknesses, quite simply. This assessment helps us to put into perspective their status as works. I am not very concerned with this question, but perhaps the way to put myself in this situation is to imagine if someone transcribed and re-played an improvisation that I did and asserted after a certain time, 'It is a work by Thomas Lacôte!' Yes, it would pose a problem for me that someone wishes to see there a work with the same status as a written work."

recording session itself, Messiaen painstakingly labored to ensure that the presentation and release of the LP were to his satisfaction. One year later, he stated this was the best improvisation of his entire life.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the fact that his materials were prepared and composed in advance with such care and precision did not deter Messiaen from labeling this work an *improvisation*. All of this suggests an understanding of improvisation for the composer that is more akin to William Porter's description of 17th-century keyboard practice and the similarities in that era between written and improvised music:

There is no evidence to suggest that the improvised music produced was in any substantive way different from the surviving repertoire; there is some evidence, however, that there was a close correspondence between music composed in performance and music written down.⁸⁷

Surely such correspondences can be acknowledged without actually *equating* these improvisations with Messiaen's compositional body. There is, after all, much that can be learned through this recording, and it would be terribly unjust to deny it the kind of insight that can be gained through attentive research, transcription, and analysis.

In addition to analysis, performance (or reinterpretation) offers considerable possibilities for further insight into these improvisations. However, the performer must be very careful to respect the wishes of the composer or improviser in the way that the improvisations are presented. As is the case in performing any written work, the ultimate goal of artistic interpretation must never be mere duplication. This, after all, is precisely the function of the recording itself—forever sealing and preserving the memory of the original improvisation. Reinterpretation, on the other hand, serves the purposes of *reflection*, *commentary*, and *revitalization*. In the case of the *L'Âme en bourgeon* improvisations, performance is a collaborative endeavor in which both organist and narrator interact to forge new connections within the music and poetry. Though the transcription itself remains a fixed document, a kind of living fluidity is maintained in such interactions, so that the spirit of the text influences the performance of the improvisations, while the music shapes the tone and cadence of the narration. This was precisely my experience in performing these reconstructed improvisations together with Dominique Labelle, who recited the poems, at my doctoral lecture-recital in February, 2017. In such a context, performance is no longer simply reinterpretation. On the contrary, the interaction encourages a form of improvisation (or composition-in-performance) that breathes new life into

⁸⁶ See footnote 9 on p. 2.

⁸⁷ Porter, 69.

Messiaen's music and Sauvage's poetry. If Messiaen's original intent in creating this disc (as his agendas and public remarks attest) was to use *musical commentary* as a means to highlight his mother's poems above all else, then I remain quite confident that to engage in such an undertaking is to fulfill this desire.

In Yvonne Loriod's transcription of Messiaen's agendas, she writes, "Ce disque est un chef d'œuvre et on ne sait qui admirer le plus, la géniale poétesse où le génial musicien ! Quel dommage de ne plus exploiter un tel document unique au monde !"⁸⁸ Two decades have now passed since those words were written and nearly four decades since the recording was released. Yet the music that it contains—and its testimony to Messiaen's deep and lifelong admiration for his mother—remains to many a sadly neglected mystery. If the present project has accomplished any one thing, I hope that it has done some justice to Loriod's wishes by preserving the legacy of this extraordinary document in much the same way that Messiaen himself fought to restore the legacy of his mother Cécile Sauvage in the final decades of his life.

⁸⁸ Agendas, 467. "This disc is a masterpiece and one knows not whom to admire the most, the brilliant poet or the brilliant musician! What a shame to no longer profit from such a one-of-a-kind document!"

Appendix A: Excerpts from *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Claude Debussy)

Example 75. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 1, Scene 3, Rehearsal 42 (p. 57)

42 même mou!

1^{re} 2^{de}

F.

B. ^{es}

Cors

Trp.

Timb.

Ge.

P.

C.

T.

B.

42 même mou!

V. ^{ons}

Alt.

V. ^{lle}

C. B.

Jene sais si nous pourrons le voir; Il y a en - cor une brume sur la mer

_té On di - rait que la brume s'è - lè - ve

Ho - é!

Ho - é!

div. unis

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

Example 76. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 2, Scene 2, Rehearsal 35 (p. 131)

35

Fl. 1^o 2^o poco rit.

Hrb. 1^o pp

C. a. pp

Cl. pp

H^{ous} 3^o pp

Cors 4^o p dim. pp

Trp.

Trb.

Tuba

Cymb. * tr. pp dim. poco rit.

1^{re} ven. à 8 pp

2^d ven. à 8 pp

Alt. div. pp

Vclle. pizz pp

C.B. pp

* Les roulements indiqués aux cymbales doivent être exécutés sur l'un des plateaux suspendu par sa courroie.

Appendix C: Poems featured on the recording (with translations)

All poems by Cécile Sauvage (public domain)

Translations by Adrian Foster (© 2017); special thanks to Duncan McDonald

I. Nature, laisse-moi...

Nature, laisse-moi me mêler à ta fange,
M'enfoncer dans la terre où la racine mange,
Où la sève montante est pareille à mon sang.
Je suis comme ton monde où fauche le croissant,
Et sous le baiser dru du soleil qui ruisselle,
J'ai le frisson luisant de ton herbe nouvelle.
Tes oiseaux sont éclos dans le nid de mon cœur,
J'ai dans la chair le goût précis de ta saveur,
Je marche à ton pas rond qui tourne dans la sphère,
Je suis lourde de glèbe, et la branche légère
Me prête sur l'azur son geste aérien.
Mon flanc s'appesantit de germes sur le tien.
Oh ! laisse que tes fleurs s'élevant des ravines
Attachent à mon sein leurs lèvres enfantines
Pour prendre part au lait de mes fils nourrissons ;
Laisse qu'en regardant la prune des buissons
Je sente qu'elle est bleue entre les feuilles blondes
D'avoir sucé la vie à ma veine profonde.
Personne ne saura comme un fils né de moi
M'aura donné le sens de la terre et des bois,
Comment ce fruit de chair qui s'enfle de ma sève
Met en moi la lueur d'une aube qui se lève
Avec tous ses émois de rosée et d'oiseaux,
Avec l'étonnement des bourgeons, les réseaux
Qui percent sur la feuille ainsi qu'un doux squelette,
La corolle qui lisse au jour sa collerette,
Et la gousse laineuse où le grain ramassé
Ressemble à l'embryon dans la nuit caressé.
Enfant, abeille humaine au creux de l'alvéole,
Papillon au maillot de chrysalide molle,
Astre neuf incrusté sur un mortel azur !
Je suis comme le Dieu au geste bref et dur
Qui pour le premier jour façonna les étoiles
Et leur donna l'éclair et l'ardeur de ses moelles.
Je porte dans mon sein un monde en mouvement
Dont ma force a couvé les jeunes pépiements,
Qui sentira la mer battre dans ses artères,
Qui lèvera son front dans les ombres sévères
Et qui, fait du limon du jour et de la nuit,
Valsera dans l'éther comme un astre réduit.

Je suis grande, je suis la plaine fourragère,
La grappe et le froment pendent à mon côté,
Je marche et me répands ainsi que la lumière,
Ma main verse aux labours les rayons de l'été.
Je suis l'arbre fécond dont le bras fructifie
Et je regarde avec un œil gros d'infini
Grouiller dans mon giron les graines de la vie
Et des chapelets d'œufs ceindre mon flanc béni.
Soleil, j'ai comme toi des tresses de semence,
Mes pas font jaillir l'herbe et s'écarter le sol,
J'ai le croissant d'argent pour corne d'abondance

I. Nature, let me...

Nature, let me merge with your mire,
Entrench myself in the soil where roots feed,
Where the rising sap and my blood are one.
I am like your world where the crescent moon reaps,
And under the heavy kiss of the dripping sun
I have the glistening shimmer of your freshly sprung grass.
Your birds are hatched in the nest of my heart,
I hold in my flesh your precise flavor,
I walk in your round steps that turn in the sphere,
I am heavy with fields, and the delicate branch
Lends me its aerial gesture on the blue heavens.
My side weighs itself down upon your own with sprouts.
Oh! Let your flowers that rise from the ravines
Attach their infantile lips to my breast
To take part in the milk of my nursing children;
Let me feel, in gazing upon the plum in the bushes,
That it is blue amid the blonde leaves
That has sucked life from my deep veins.
Nobody knows how a child born of me
Could have given me the sense of the earth and the woods,
How this fruit of flesh that swells from my sap
Puts in me the glow of a rising dawn,
With all its emotions of dew and birds,
With the wonder of buds, the veins
That penetrate a leaf like a soft skeleton,
The corolla that straightens out its ruff toward the daylight,
And the wooly pod where collected seed
Resembles an embryo in the caressed night.
Child, human bee in the hollow of the cell,
Butterfly in the vest of the soft chrysalis,
New star encrusted in a mortal sky!
I am like God, who in a brief and firm gesture
Molded the stars on the first day
And gave them the flash and fervor of their substance.
I wear in my breast a world in movement,
Whose young chirpings my strength has incubated,
That will feel the sea beat in its arteries,
That will raise its forehead in the grave shadows,
And that, made from the silt of day and night,
Will waltz in the ether like a faded star.

I am large, I am the foraging plain,
Clusters of fruit and wheat dangle at my side.
I walk and scatter myself like light,
My hand deposits in the plowed fields the summer's rays.
I am the fertile tree whose branch bears fruit,
And I watch, with a large and boundless eye,
The seeds of life swarm in my bosom
And chains of eggs encircle my blessed side.
Sun, I have wreaths of seed like you,
My feet make the grass spring up and burst through the soil,
I have the silver crescent moon for a cornucopia

Quand je jette la nuit les étoiles au vol.
La fleur et le grillon dorment dans mes mamelles,
Le faon des biches tremble et me lèche les pieds
Tandis que mon fils nu qui se joue avec elles
Rit comme Jupiter sous les pis nourriciers.

II. Ai-je pu t'appeler de l'ombre...

Ai-je pu t'appeler de l'ombre vers le jour,
Sachant qu'il est si peu d'allégresse et d'amour,
Que le soleil qui luit sur l'azur n'a pas d'âme
Et que sous son regard dévoré par la flamme
Dort l'éternelle nuit ?

Ai-je pu désirer pétrir une chair frêle
Et lui communiquer la fureur de mon aile
Quand je me tords les bras dans l'horizon réduit
Et quand la mort est là cachant derrière l'huis
Ses nudités amères ?

Tu devras tout apprendre et tes yeux étonnés,
Pleins d'ivresse d'abord de voir et d'être nés
Comme des fleurs de mars aux doigts de la lumière,
Tes yeux, s'émerveillant de la douceur première,
Riront à l'infini.

Tu croiras que l'oiseau qui pille les cerises
Poursuit pour ton bonheur le pas glissant des brises
Dans le ciel glacé d'or où l'astre pend son nid,
Tu croiras que la lune est un galet poli
Pour servir d'amulette.

Mais de l'ordre apparent bientôt tu comprendras
Le triste agencement, les vernis, les plâtras.
En son lustre la fleur te paraîtra moins nette,
Tu connaîtras que l'être est pris par la tempête
Comme un grain dans le vent.

Alors to me diras : — Qu'avez-vous fait, ma mère ?
J'inclinai au repos, l'obscurité légère
Recueillait sans savoir mon germe inconscient
Et pour moi vous avez éclairé le néant ...
— Qu'ai-je fait, mon enfant ?

III. Enfant, pâle embryon...

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

Tu vis comme la plante, et ton inconscience
Est un lis entr'ouvert qui n'a que sa candeur
Et qui ne sait pas même à quelle profondeur
Dans le sein de la terre il puise sa substance.

Douce fleur sans abeille et sans rosée au front,
Ma sève te parcourt et te prête son âme ;
Cependant l'étendue avare te réclame
Et te fait tressaillir dans mon petit giron.

When I fling the stars in flight into the night sky.
The flower and cricket sleep in my breasts,
The doe's fawn trembles and licks my feet,
While my naked child who amuses himself with them
Laughs like Jupiter under the nourishing teats.

II. Could I have called you forth from the shadows...

Could I have called you forth from the shadows into light,
Knowing that there is so little joyfulness and love,
That the sun that shines on the blue sky has no soul,
And that under its gaze, devoured by the flame,
Sleeps eternal night?

Could I have wished to mold your frail flesh
And imbue it with the fervor of my wing
When I twist my arms in the shrinking horizon
And when death is there hiding, behind the door,
Its bitter nakedness?

You will have to learn everything, and your stunned eyes,
Intoxicated from the start with seeing and being born
Like March violets in the fingers of light,
Your eyes, enthralled by the first sweetness,
Will laugh endlessly.

You will think that the bird who pillages the cherries
Chases after the breeze's slippery steps for your delight.
In the sky glazed with gold, where the star hangs its nest,
You will think that the moon is a shiny pebble
There for amusement.

But you will soon understand from the seeming orderliness
The poor construction, the varnishes, the plaster.
In its radiance the flower will seem less pure;
You will discover that being is swept away by the storm
Like a seed in the wind.

So you will tell me, — "What have you done, mother?
I was lying back to rest, the fragile darkness
Was unknowingly harvesting my unconscious seedling,
And now you have illuminated nothingness for me..."
— "What have I done, my child?"

III. Child, feeble embryo...

Child, feeble embryo, who sleeps in the waters
Like a little dead god in a glass coffin,
You now taste the delicate existence
Of the fish that slumbers beneath the reeds.

You live like a plant, and your ignorance
Is a partially opened lily, in its innocent purity,
That knows not from what depths
In the heart of the earth it draws its nourishment.

Sweet flower without a bee and without dew on its brow,
My sap flows through you and lends you its soul;
However, the greedy expanse calls for you
And makes you tremble in my little bosom.

Tu ne sais pas combien ta chair a mis de fibres
 Dans le sol maternel et jeune de ma chair
 Et jamais ton regard que je pressens si clair
 N'apprendra ce mystère innocent dans les livres.

Qui peut dire comment je te serre de près ?
 Tu m'appartiens ainsi que l'aurore à la plaine,
 Autour de toi ma vie est une chaude laine
 Où tes membres frileux poussent dans le secret.

Je suis autour de toi comme l'amande verte
 Qui ferme son écrin sur l'amandon laiteux,
 Comme la cosse molle aux replis cotonneux
 Dont la graine enfantine et soyeuse est couverte.

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

Je vois tes bras monter jusqu'à ma nuit obscure
 Comme pour caresser ce que j'ai d'ignoré,
 Ce point si douloureux où l'être resserré
 Sent qu'il est étranger à toute la nature.

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

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

Car nous jouons parfois. Je te donne mon cœur
 Comme un joyau vibrant qui contient des chimères,
 Je te donne mes yeux où des images claires
 Rament languissamment sur un lac de fraîcheur.

Ce sont des cygnes d'or qui semblent des navires,
 Des nymphes de la nuit qui se posent sur l'eau.
 La lune sur leur front incline son chapeau
 Et ce n'est que pour toi qu'elles ont des sourires.

Aussi, quand tu feras plus tard tes premiers pas,
 La rose, le soleil, l'arbre, la tourterelle,
 Auront pour le regard de ta grâce nouvelle
 Des gestes familiers que tu reconnaîtras.

Mais tu ne sauras plus sur quelles blondes rives
 De gros poissons d'argent t'apportaient des anneaux,
 Ni sur quelle prairie intime des agneaux
 Faisaient bondir l'ardeur de leurs pattes naïves.

Car jamais plus mon cœur qui parle avec le tien
 Cette langue muette et chaude des pensées
 Ne pourra renouer l'étreinte délacée :
 L'aurore ne sait pas de quelle ombre elle vient.

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

You know not how much your flesh has planted fibers
 In the young and maternal soil of my flesh,
 And your gaze that I sense so clearly
 Will never learn this innocent mystery in books.

Who can say how I hold you near?
 You belong to me like the sunrise to the plain.
 Enveloping you, my life is a warm wool blanket
 Where your sensitive limbs grow in secret.

I encompass you like the green hull
 That closes its jewel case on the milky almond seed,
 Like the soft pod with quilted folds
 Covering the silky, infantile seed

You know the tear that forms in my eyes,
 Your lips sense in it the rich flavor of my blood,
 You know which passions, which burning fevers
 Unleash a bitter torrent in my vein.

I see your arms climb up to my dark night
 As if to caress this unacknowledged part of me,
 This sorrowful point where strengthened being
 Feels that it is foreign to all of nature.

Listen, now, while you can hear me still,
 Impress on my breast your childish mouth,
 Respond to my love with your docile flesh:
 What other embrace would seem stronger to me?

The days that I will live isolated and passionless,
 When you will be a grown man and more distant to me,
 I will relive the times when I was with you,
 When we were two at play in my soul.

Because we play at times. I give you my heart
 Like a vibrant jewel full of fantasies,
 I give you my eyes where clear images
 Feebly row on a cool lake.

They are golden swans that look like ships,
 Nymphs of the night who settle down on the water,
 The moon on their foreheads tipping its hat;
 And their smiles are for you alone.

Also, when you will later take your first steps,
 The rose, the sun, the tree, the turtledove
 Will have for the gaze of your new grace
 Familiar gestures that you will recognize.

But you will no longer know on which blonde rivers
 Large silver fish brought you rings,
 Nor on which intimate prairie lambs
 Leapt with the fervor of their innocent hooves.

Because no more will my heart that speaks with yours
 This warm and silent language of thoughts
 Be able to renew the loosened embrace:
 The sunrise knows not from which shadow it came.

No, you will not know which pure Venus
 Laced your blood with the passion of the kiss,
 The anguish of the mystery where art will shatter,
 And this appetite to nourish a timid despair.

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

IV. La Tête

Ô mon fils, je tiendrai ta tête dans ma main,
 Je dirai : j'ai pétri ce petit monde humain ;
 Sous ce front dont la courbe est une aurore étroite
 J'ai logé l'univers rajeuni qui miroite
 Et qui lave d'azur les chagrins pluvieux.
 Je dirai : j'ai donné cette flamme à ces yeux,
 J'ai tiré du sourire ambigu de la lune,
 Des reflets de la mer, du velours de la prune
 Ces deux astres naïfs ouverts sur l'infini.
 Je dirai : j'ai formé cette joue et ce nid
 De la bouche où l'oiseau de la voix se démène ;
 C'est mon œuvre, ce monde avec sa face humaine.

Ô mon fils, je tiendrai ta tête dans ma main
 Et, songeant que le jour monte, brille et s'éteint,
 Je verrai sous tes chairs soyeuses et vermeilles
 Couvertes d'un pétale à tromper les abeilles,
 Je verrai s'enfoncer les orbites en creux,
 L'ossature du nez offrir ses trous ombreux,
 Les dents rire sur la mâchoire dévastée ...

Et ta tête de mort, c'est moi qui l'ai sculptée.

V. Tu tettes le lait pur...

Tu tettes le lait pur de mon âme sereine,
 Mon petit nourrisson qui n'as pas vu le jour,
 Et sur ses genoux blancs elle berce la tienne
 En lui parlant tout bas de la vie au front lourd.

Voici le lait d'esprit et le lait de tendresse,
 Voici le regard d'or qu'on jette sur les cieux ;
 Goûte près de mon cœur l'aube de la sagesse,
 Car sur terre jamais tu ne comprendras mieux.

Vois, mon âme sur toi s'inclinant plus encore,
 Dans le temps que tu dors au berceau de mon flanc,
 Brode des oiseaux blonds avec des fils d'aurore
 Pour draper sur ton être un voile étincelant ;

Elle forme en rêvant ton âme nébuleuse
 Dont le jeune noyau est encore amolli
 Et t'annonce le jour, prudente et soucieuse,
 En le laissant filtrer entre ses doigts polis.

Ouvre d'abord tes yeux à mon doux crépuscule,
 Prépare-les longtemps à l'éclat du soleil ;
 Vole dans mes jardins, léger comme une bulle,
 Afin de ne pas trop t'étonner au réveil.

You will no longer know anything of me, the fatal day
 When you embark upon harsh existence,
 Oh, my little mirror that sees my solitude
 Anxiously lean on the edge of your glass.

IV. The Head

Oh my son, I will hold your head in my hand,
 I will say, "I have molded this human world;
 Beneath this face whose arc is an intimate dawn,
 I accommodated this shimmering, rejuvenated universe
 That washes away rainy sorrows with blue skies.
 I will say, "I gave this sparkle to these eyes,
 I pulled from the moon's ambiguous smile,
 From sea's reflections, from the plum's velvet
 These two innocent stars opened on infinity."
 I will say, "I formed this cheek and this mouth,
 A nest from which the bird-like voice exerts itself;
 It is my work, this world with its human face."

Oh my son, I will hold your head in my hand
 And, considering that the day rises, shines, and dies out,
 I will see beneath your silky, scarlet flesh,
 Covered by a petal to fool the bees—
 I will see the hollowed orbits sinking in,
 The nose's skeleton offering its shadowy holes,
 The teeth laughing on the decaying jaw...

And your skull—it is I who sculpted it.

V. You suckle the pure milk...

You suckle the pure milk of my peaceful soul,
 My little nursling who has not seen daylight;
 And on its white knees my soul cradles your own,
 Speaking to it softly, from its heavy brow, about life.

Here is the milk of intellect and the milk of tenderness,
 Here is the gaze of gold that is tossed into the heavens;
 Taste next to my heart the dawn of wisdom,
 Because on earth you will never understand better.

Look, my soul, leaning even more on you
 While you sleep in the crib of my side,
 Embroiders blonde birds with threads of dawn
 To drape your being in a glistening veil;

It forms, in dreaming, your nebulous soul
 Whose young kernel is still soft,
 And announces to you the day, prudent and concerned,
 By letting it pass through your glowing fingers.

Open your eyes first of all to my soft twilight,
 Prepare them a while for the radiance of the sun,
 Fly in my gardens, light as a bubble,
 So as not to startle yourself upon waking.

Cours après les frelons, joue avec les abeilles
Que pour toi ma pensée amène du dehors,
Soupèse entre tes mains la mamelle des treilles,
Souffle sur cette eau mauve où la campagne dort.

Entre dans ma maison intérieure et nette
Où de beaux lévriers s'allongent près du mur,
Vois des huiles brûler dans une cassolette
Et le cristal limpide ainsi qu'un désir pur.

Ce carré de clarté là-bas, c'est la fenêtre
Où le soleil assied son globe de rayons.
Voici tout l'Orient qui chante dans mon être
Avec ses oiseaux bleus, avec ses papillons ;

Sur la vitre d'azur une rose s'appuie,
En dégageant son front du feuillage élané ;
Ma colombe privée y sommeille, meurtrie
De parfum, oubliant le grain que j'ai versé.

Entr'ouvre l'huis muet, petit mage candide,
Toi seul peux pénétrer avec tes légers pas
Dans la salle secrète où, lasse et le cœur vide,
Sur des maux indécis j'ai sangloté tout bas.

Ou bien, si tu le veux, descends par la croisée
Sur le chemin poudreux du rayon de midi,
Ainsi qu'un dieu poucet à la chair irisée
Qui serait de la rose et du soleil sorti.

Je suis là, je souris, donne-moi ta main frêle,
Plus douce à caresser que le duvet des fleurs ;
Je veux te raconter la légende éternelle
Du monde qui comprend le rire et les douleurs.

Écoute et souviens-toi d'avoir touché mon âme ;
Quelque jour je pourrai peut-être dans tes yeux
La retrouver avec son silence et sa flamme
Et peut-être qu'alors je la comprendrai mieux.

Ô toi que je cajole avec crainte dans l'ouate,
Petite âme en bourgeon attachée à ma fleur,
D'un morceau de mon cœur je façonne ton cœur,
Ô mon fruit cotonneux, petite bouche moite.

VI. Mon cœur revient à son printemps

Mon cœur revient à son printemps,
L'herbe jeune sort de la terre,
Le muguet aux grelots battants
Carillonne l'heure légère.

Sur le ciel d'aurore amolli,
Le gros soleil dans sa bavette
Gigote comme sur un lit
Un nourrisson à chair replète ;

Dans les prés de gauches rayons
Titubent en cherchant des sources,
La mouche flâne, les boutons
Crèvent l'œuf tendre de leurs bourses.

Run after the hornets, play with the bees,
Brought here for you from the outside by my mind;
Evaluate between your hands the vine's breast,
Breathe on this mauve water where the countryside sleeps.

Enter my clean, domestic house
Where handsome greyhounds stretch themselves out along the wall,
See the oil sizzling in a pot
And the glass as transparent as pure desire.

That clear square over there, that is the window
On which the sun lays its globe of beams;
Here is all the Orient that sings in my being,
With its blue birds, with its butterflies;

The rose presses against the sky-blue windowpane
As its forehead emerges from the slender foliage,
My own personal dove dozes off over there, stunned
By the fragrance, forgetting the seed that I poured.

Crack open the quiet front door, innocent little wizard;
You alone can penetrate with your light steps
The secret room where, tired and downtrodden,
I wept quietly for vague miseries.

Or, if you want, descend through the window sash
On the dusty trail of the sun's noon rays,
Like an infant god of iridescent flesh
That would have emerged from the rose and the sun.

I am here, I am smiling, give me your frail hand,
Softer to caress than the down of flowers.
I want to tell you the eternal legend
Of the world that understands laughter and sorrows.

Listen and remember how you have touched my soul;
Someday, in your eyes I might be able
To find it, with its silence and its fervor,
And perhaps then I will better understand it.

Oh, you whom I cradle with trepidation in a cotton quilt,
Little budding soul attached to my flower,
From a piece of my heart I fashioned your heart,
Oh, my downy fruit, little moist mouth.

VI. My Heart Returns to its Springtime

My heart returns to its springtime,
Fresh grass shoots up from the earth,
The lily of the valley with beating bells
Tolls the delicate hour.

On the soft dawn sky,
The large sun in its bib
Wriggles about like
A plump infant on a bed.

To the left, rays of light
Stumble around looking for streams,
The fly roams, buds
Burst their purses' tender eggs.

On entend les bergers roués
Flûter en sonores rosées
Les perles des roseaux troués
Où leurs lèvres se sont posées ;

On entend la feuille lapper
L'air rose de sa langue fine
Tandis qu'aux vitres vient frapper
Une guêpe encore enfantine.

Un poussin se lisse le bec
Sur la jatte de vernis jaune
Et pas une herbe n'est à sec
Sous les vapeurs que le jour donne.

Ainsi, mon cœur, ton renouveau
Jette dans l'ombre son cri grêle
Et te voilà comme un oiseau
Qui tape sur sa coque frêle

Parce que je tiens dans mon flanc,
Sur un coussin de primevères,
Le bourgeon d'homme somnolent
Qu'ont nourri mes forces premières

Et que son petit poing frondeur
Mène les candides vendages
Des fleurs de lait, du jour baveur
Et des insectes dans leurs langes.

Il est là. L'abeille lui dit :
J'ai du nouveau miel pour tes lèvres.
Pour tes jeux sur l'herbe bondit
Un chevreau blanc entre les chèvres.

L'ardente alouette a pondu,
Les fourmis promènent leur graine
Et nos petits se sont vêtus
Du duvet dont ta tête est pleine.

VII. Te voilà hors de l'alvéole

Te voilà hors de l'alvéole,
Petite abeille de ma chair,
Je suis la ruche sans parole
Dont l'essaim est parti dans l'air.

Je n'apporte plus la becquée
De mon sang à ton frêle corps ;
Mon être est la maison fermée
Dont on vient d'enlever un mort.

J'eus beau te donner sur ma bouche,
Butineuse dès le matin,
Le pollen où pétrit la mouche
Et l'odeur piquante du thym ;

J'eus beau cueillir pour ta retraite
Des rameaux avec leur azur,
Des nids où la ponte était faite,
Des lézards sur leur pan de mur.

The cunning shepherds can be heard
Fluting, in pink sonorities,
The pearls of pierced reeds
On which their lips are posed;

The leaf can be heard lapping up
The pink air with its fine tongue,
While in the windowpanes
An infant wasp comes knocking.

A chick straightens its beak
On the yellow-varnished basin,
And not a blade of grass is dry
Under the mist given off by the day.

So, my heart, your renewal
Casts in the shadow its shrill cry,
And there you are, like a bird
That taps on its fragile shell,

Because I hold in my side,
On a primrose cushion,
The bud of drowsy man
That has fed my primal forces,

And may its rebellious little fist
Lead the pure harvests
Of milk flowers, of the drooling day,
And of insects in their swaddling clothes.

He is here. The bee tells him,
"I have some fresh honey for your lips;
For your amusement, a white kid
Frolics on the grass amongst the goats.

The fervent skylark has laid her eggs,
The ants march their grain.
And our little ones are clothed in
The down of which your head is full."

VII. There you are out of the cell

There you are out of the cell,
Little bee of my flesh;
I am the speechless hive
Whose swarm has departed into the air.

I no longer bring the food
Of my blood to your frail body;
My being is the closed house
From which a corpse has just been removed.

I may well have given you on my mouth,
Forager since morning,
The pollen molded by the fly
And the biting odor of thyme;

I may well have cut for your hideaway
Branches with their blue tint,
Nests where eggs were laid,
With lizards on their walls.

Du monde où passe la lumière
Je ne t'offrais que les reflets ;
Et ton œil ouvrit sa paupière
Et ta main poussa les volets.

Te voilà hors de l'alvéole,
Petite abeille de ma chair ;
Je suis la ruche sans parole
Dont l'essaim est parti dans l'air.

Vois-tu, je suis vide et suis soûle
Comme une jonque sans rameur ;
J'ai l'âme de la mère-poule
Dont fuit le caneton nageur.

Fallait-il que je sois la plante
Qui voit le vent ravir son grain
Et qui reste sèche et craquante,
Les pieds enchaînés au terrain ?

Tu n'es plus tout à moi. Ta tête
Réfléchit déjà d'autres cieux
Et c'est l'ombre de la tempête
Qui déjà monte dans tes yeux.

VIII. Je savais que ce serait toi...

Je savais que ce serait toi,
Avec cette petite bouche,
Avec ce front et cette voix,
Ce regard indécis qui louche.

Je savais que ta jeune chair
Aurait ces nacres veloutées,
Que tes mains tapoteraient l'air
Pour saisir la robe des fées.

Je savais la suave odeur
De lait pur qu'aurait ton haleine
Et quel choc effrayant ton cœur
Battrait sous la guimpe de laine.

Je sentais si bien tes pieds nus
Marcher dans mon douillet mystère
Que mon sang les a reconnus
Quand tu les posas sur la terre.

Comment ne t'aurais-je pas vu
Avec les yeux de ma pensée ?
Rien de toi ne m'est imprévu,
Petite âme que j'ai tissée.

Quand tu poussas ton premier cri,
Ce cri me sortait des entrailles ;
Mon souffle s'étire attiédi
Sur tes lèvres lorsque tu bâilles.

Jusqu'au bout de tes menus doigts,
Je me prolonge et me sens vivre ;
Comme au vent la feuille des bois,
Mon penchant incline à te suivre.

Of the world through which light passes,
I offered you but reflections;
And your eyelids opened
And your hand pushed back the blinds.

There you are out of the cell,
Little bee of my flesh;
I am the speechless hive
Whose swarm has departed into the air.

See, I am empty and drunk
Like a junk without a rower;
I have the soul of a mother hen
From whom the swimming duckling flees.

Must I be the plant
That sees the wind sweep away its seed
And is left crisp and dried out,
Its feet chained to the ground?

You no longer belong completely to me. Your head
Already ponders other skies,
And it is the shadow of the storm
That already rises in your eyes.

VIII. I knew that it would be you...

I knew that it would be you,
With this little mouth,
With this face and this voice,
This hesitant, squinting gaze.

I knew that your young flesh
Would have these velvety pearls,
That your hands would tap the air
To seize the dresses of fairies.

I knew the pleasing smell
Of pure milk that your breath would have,
And the dreadful shock of your beating heart
Under the wool gimp.

I felt so vividly your naked feet
Walking in my fragile mystery,
That my blood recognized them
When you placed them on the earth.

How would I not have seen you
With my mind's eye?
Nothing of you was unforeseen to me,
Little soul that I weaved.

When you expelled your first cry,
This cry ejected my entrails;
My cool breath stretches out
On your lips when you yawn.

To the end of your slender fingers
I persist and feel alive.
Just as the leaf in the woods to the wind,
My fondness leans to follow you.

De l'ombre où je la retenais
 Dans l'effroi de la clarté nue,
 N'es-tu pas, enfant nouveau-né,
 Une de mes formes venue

Afin que d'un rêve jaloux
 Je goûte l'intime caresse
 Et que je berce la tristesse
 De mon âme sur mes genoux.

IX. La Tasse

Dans cette tasse claire où luit un cercle d'or
 J'ai versé du lait blanc pour ta lèvre vermeille.
 Comme un enfant dolent le long du corridor
 Un rayon de soleil s'étant couché sommeille.

Vois, la mouche gourmande est plus sage que toi.
 Perchée au bord du vase où son aile se mouille,
 Avec sa trompe fine et subtile elle boit
 Tandis que le jour bleu dévide sa quenouille.

Ah ! si la nuit venait, comme nous aurions peur ;
 La nuit fait les gros yeux, avec la lune ronde
 Et tous les astres blonds qui pressent leur lueur
 Sur le front noir de l'ombre où l'angoisse est profonde.

Vite ! bois cette tasse avant que soit le soir ;
 Le moineau de la cage aime l'eau que je verse,
 La fleur du pot d'argile accueille l'arrosoir,
 Comme les champs nouveaux se plaisent à l'averse.

Et surtout ne va pas avec tes doigts fripons
 Déranger le niveau de la crème dormante ;
 On apporte la lampe et son nimbe au plafond
 Bouge comme au matin une source mouvante.

Dieu ! c'est l'ombre déjà ! Déjà le ver luisant
 Répand sa goutte d'or sur la verdure moite...
 Vite ! l'étoile fait les cornes en passant
 Et la lune a caché le soleil dans sa boîte.

X. Te voilà, mon petit amant

Te voilà, mon petit amant,
 Sur le grand lit de ta maman.
 Tu gambades, tu te trémousses,
 Tu jettes des ruades douces ;
 Tu pétris mon cou dans ta main,
 Tu baves ton lait du matin,
 Jeune allégresse de la terre.
 Tu me trouves belle et légère,
 Tu m'aimes, nous nous caressons,
 Nous avons les mêmes façons
 De rire aux poudres de lumière
 Qui dansent dans la chambre claire.
 Je peux t'embrasser, je te tenir,
 Soupeser ton bel avenir.
 Bonjour, ma petite statue
 De sang, de joie et de chair nue.
 Mon petit double, mon émoi,
 Je me touche en pressant tes doigts.
 Laisse que j'effleure ta joue,

From the shadow where I caught it
 In the terror of naked clarity,
 Are you not, new-born child,
 A form of mine, come

So that from a jealous dream
 I may taste the intimate caress
 And cradle the sorrow
 Of my soul on my knees.

IX. The Cup

In this shimmering cup where a golden ring glows
 I poured some white milk for your scarlet lips.
 Like a doleful child along the corridor,
 A ray of sun lies down and drifts off to sleep.

See, the eager fly is wiser than you.
 Perched on the side of the vase where it moistens its wing,
 It drinks with its thin and nimble trunk
 While the blue day uncoils its whip.

Ah! If night fell, as we feared;
 Night shows its bright eyes with the round moon
 And all the blonde stars that cast their glow
 On the shadow's dark face of deep anguish.

Quick! Drink this cup before evening comes;
 The caged sparrow likes the water that I pour,
 The flower in the clay pot welcomes watering,
 Just as the new plains are pleased by the rain showers.

And above all, don't disturb with your mischievous fingers
 The level of the stagnant cream;
 The lamp is brought, and the halo it casts on the ceiling
 Shifts like a flowing spring in the morning.

God! It is already dark! Already the glow-worm
 Spreads its golden bead on the damp greenery...
 Quick! The stars mock us in their passing,
 And the moon has hidden the sun in its box.

X. There you are, my little lover

There you are, my little lover,
 On your mom's large bed.
 You frolic, you wiggle,
 You hurl soft kicks;
 You mold my neck in your hand,
 You dribble your morning milk,
 Young joy of the earth.
 You find me beautiful and delicate,
 You love me, we caress each other,
 We have the same manner
 Of laughing in powders of light
 That dance in the bright room.
 I can kiss you, hold you,
 Ponder your beautiful future.
 Hello, my little statue
 Of blood, joy, and naked flesh.
 My mirror image, my emotion,
 I touch myself when I squeeze your fingers.
 Let me caress your cheek,

Je bois les bulles de ta moue,
 Je te palpe avec mes baisers.
 Ne bouge plus. Viens reposer
 Sur moi ta fatigue endormie ;
 Sois comme ma main engourdie
 Qui me paraît, restant à moi,
 La main d'un autre. Je suis toi.

XI. L'Abeille

Vois, j'ai trouvé dans l'herbe une abeille engourdie,
 Son aile ne luit plus à travers les rayons,
 Son ventre duveteux où ne bat plus la vie
 Laisse sortir le jet dolent de l'aiguillon.

Pose-la sur ta main ; elle n'est plus méchante,
 Elle est molle à toucher comme un coton de fleur ;
 Ni le chant de l'oiseau ni l'odeur de la menthe
 Ne la réveilleront de sa longue torpeur.

Elle est morte. Le jour ne se souvient pas d'elle ;
 D'autres s'égayeront du miel qu'elle a pillé ;
 La rose qui la tint sur sa jeune mamelle
 Offre aux frelons goulus son corset déplié.

De tout son beau désir qui lui faisait une âme
 Elle est dépossédée et paraît maintenant
 Comme le ver luisant qui n'aurait plus sa flamme :
 La nuit s'est faite en elle et rôde sur son flanc.

Elle est comme les gens qu'on cache dans des caisses
 Et qui semblent n'avoir rien aimé ni rien su.
 Parce qu'elle n'a plus d'essor ni d'allégresse
 La campagne l'ignore et nous marchons dessus.

Elle-même sans voix s'abandonne au silence,
 Il faut courber le front quand les temps sont venus.
 Regarde, l'aiguillon dans sa molle indécence
 Est pareil à l'instinct qui ne résiste plus.

On voit ainsi les morts tirer leurs langues vertes
 Comme pour faire encor plus de vide en leur sein,
 Et descendre au néant, les paupières ouvertes,
 Frôlant d'un œil aveugle une ombre sans matin.

Cette abeille n'est plus, cette étincelle est morte ;
 Comprends-tu bien la nuit et l'immobilité ? ...
 La chatte saute après les mouches de la porte ;
 Viens jouer, c'est la joie au jardin, c'est l'été !

XII. Viens, je veux t'expliquer...

Viens, je veux t'expliquer le scarabée aurore
 Qui se chauffe au soleil dans le berceau des fleurs ;
 Le matin ruisselant d'humidité se dore
 Et tombe goutte à goutte en fondant ses vapeurs.
 Les nids qui sont pleins d'œufs tachetés et fragiles
 Suspendent aux rameaux leurs petits paniers ronds
 Et l'abeille en chantant laboure les argiles
 Du pollen qui s'attache à ses cuissots larrons.
 Je suis une Ménade ayant encor des tresses
 Sur le dos ; toi, petit chèvre-pied nouveau-né,
 Le sein est l'outre où vont encore tes tendresses,

Drink the bubbles of your pout,
 Palpate you with my kisses.
 Settle down. Come and rest
 Your weariness on me;
 Be like my numb hand
 That appears, though still mine,
 The hand of another. I am you.

XI. The Bee

Look, I found in the grass a lifeless bee.
 Its wing no longer glistens through the sun's rays,
 Its fuzzy stomach where life beats no more
 Leaves behind the sting's doleful jet.

Place it on your hand; it is no longer dangerous,
 It is soft to touch like a flower's fleece.
 Neither the bird's song nor the smell of mint
 Will wake it from its deep slumber.

It is dead. The day remembers it not;
 Others will delight in the honey that it pillaged.
 The rose that held it on her young breast
 Offers to gluttonous hornets her unfolded corset.

Of all the beautiful desire that made it a living soul
 It is robbed and appears now
 Like the glow-worm that has lost its sparkle.
 Night falls on it and prowls on its side.

It is like people that we hide away in crates
 And who seem to have neither loved nor learned anything.
 Because it has no more flight nor joy,
 The countryside ignores it and we trample over it.

Voiceless, it surrenders to silence—
 One must bow the head when the time comes.
 Look, the sting in its soft indecency
 Is just like instinct that has given up.

One sees likewise the dead stick out their green tongues,
 As to make an even greater void in their breasts,
 And descend into the nothingness, their eyelids open,
 Grazing, with a blind eye, a shadow without morning.

This bee is no more, this spark is dead;
 Do you understand night and impassivity?...
 The cat leaps after the flies on the door,
 Come and play, it is joyful in the garden, it is summer!

XII. Come! I want to explain to you...

Come! I want to explain to you the dawn beetle
 That basks in the sun in a cradle of flowers;
 The morning, soaked in moisture, shines golden
 And falls, drop by drop, as it releases its mist.
 Nests full of fragile, spotted eggs
 Hang their little round baskets from the branches,
 And the bee, while singing, turns over the clay soil
 For pollen, which latches onto its pillaging hind legs.
 I am a maenad, still with braided hair
 Down my back; You, little new-born satyr—
 My breast is the wineskin to which your affections are still directed.

Tu laisses au frelon notre miel tartiné ;
 Mais bientôt plus vaillant sur tes jambes tremblantes
 Tu sauteras dans l'herbe avec les criquets verts
 Et tu voudras saisir dans les griffes des plantes
 La mûre granuleuse et les bourgeons amers.
 Comme je me ferai petite pour te plaire ;
 Nous jouerons, nous verrons avec des yeux naïfs
 La libellule boire au courant de l'eau claire
 Et la guêpe effarer les agneaux attentifs.
 La courtilière en ses couloirs de terre fraîche
 Ronflera de plaisir ; tu passeras tes bras
 Au cou de la brebis, nous mordrons dans la pêche,
 Comme le limaçon cornu tu baveras.
 La mante paraîtra monstreuse et surnoise
 Dans l'agenouillement de ses bras anguleux.
 Nous ferons des gâteaux charmants où la framboise
 Mettra son mufler pourpre au cœur des graviers bleus.
 Nous construirons avec des boulettes de terre
 Des châteaux olympiens pour loger un grillon,
 Au sommet flottera la brindille légère
 D'un rameau de fenouil servant de pavillon.
 La lune au soir ainsi qu'une servante honnête
 Nous dira : Couchez-vous, c'est l'heure, il faut dormir —
 Mais parfois comme une grand-mère rondelette
 Elle se laissera dans un rire attendre.
 Nous la verrons rôder autour de la fenêtre
 Agitant le hochet de l'astre au feu changeant
 Et peut-être qu'alors le brouillard viendra mettre
 Un bonnet vapoureux sur ses cheveux d'argent.
 Ton âme sera si candide que mon âme
 Près d'elle redeviendra blanche et quand nos fronts
 Se toucheront sur l'herbe où la chaleur se pâme,
 Je croirai que nous devenons deux liserons
 Fleur contre fleur mêlant leurs bouches de rosée.
 Car nous serons très près de la terre. Le jour,
 Indulgent de nous voir plus jeunes que la haie
 D'aubépine dira : — Qu'ils aient beaucoup d'amour,
 Que la simplicité rustique les enchante,
 Qu'un lait coule pour eux de l'avoine et du foin
 Et que tous mes rayons tiennent dans chaque plante
 Pour que mon cœur trop grand ne semble pas si loin. —
 J'aurais l'insouciance agreste de la chèvre.
 Parfois je t'offrirai des fraises sur ma lèvre,
 Parfois comme la prêle et les fins peupliers
 Dans l'eau pleine d'azur nous tremperons nos pieds.
 Tu prendras le bouc mâle et roux par la barbiche,
 Nous trouverons le tertre où la taupe se niche ;
 Nous verrons la belette au corsage élancé
 Disparaître élégante aux ronces d'un fossé.
 L'automne ayant jeté des feuilles sur la porte,
 Nous y découvrirons la sauterelle morte ;
 Nous jouerons au ressort de ses pattes longtemps.
 Mais nous serons surtout les frères du printemps.
 J'aurai des parentés avec la mère-poule,
 Avec la mère-biche, avec la guêpe soûle
 Qui fait glisser son vol sur un fil de soleil
 Et qui baise sur l'œil l'alicante vermeil.
 Les bourgeons paraîtront des tétines de chatte
 Que bleuit le chaton sous sa morsure ingrate.
 Je verrai fluer du lait dans les eaux
 Où nage l'aurore ;
 Nos mains chercheront entre les roseaux
 La conque sonore.
 Ton pied frappera le monde indulgent

You leave our creamed honey for the hornet;
 But, soon more valiant on your trembling legs,
 You will leap in the grass with green crickets,
 And you will want to seize from the plants' claws
 The grainy blackberry and bitter buds.
 As I will make myself childlike to please you,
 We will play, we will see with innocent eyes
 The dragonfly drink from the stream of clear water
 And the wasp frighten the attentive sheep.
 The mole cricket in its corridors of cool earth
 Will grunt with pleasure; you will slide your arms
 On the ewe's neck, we will bite into the peach,
 You will dribble like the horned snail.
 The mantis will seam sly and monstrous
 In the way that its angular arms kneel.
 We will make charming cakes where the raspberry
 Places its purple nose in the heart of the blue gravel.
 We will build with clumps of soil
 Olympian castles meant to house a cricket.
 At the top will fly a thin twig
 From a fennel branch, serving as a flag.
 The evening moon, like a loyal maid
 Will tell us, "Lie down, it's time for bed, you must go to sleep"—
 But sometimes, like a plump grandmother,
 She will let herself be moved to laughter.
 We will see her prowling around the window,
 Shaking the rattle of the twinkling star,
 And perhaps then the fog will come out to place
 A misty bonnet on her silver hair.
 Your soul will be so pure that my soul,
 Close to it, will be made spotless once again; and when our faces
 Meet on the grass where passion is uncontrollable
 I will believe that we are becoming two bindweeds,
 Flower against flower, joining their pink mouths together.
 Because we will be very near to the earth. Daylight,
 Complaisant to see us younger than the hawthorn hedge,
 Will say, "May they have much love,
 May rustic simplicity enchant them,
 May milk flow for them from the oats and hay,
 And may my rays take hold within each plant,
 So that my overabundant heart does not seem so distant."
 I will have the rustic nonchalance of the nanny goat.
 At times, I will offer you strawberries from my lip,
 At times, like horsetail and slender poplars,
 We will soak our feet in the sky-blue water.
 You will grab the red-headed billy goat by its beard,
 We will find the mound where the mole burrows;
 We will see the slim-breasted weasel
 Disappear elegantly into the brambles in a trench.
 Autumn having strewn the leaves on the door,
 We will uncover the dead grasshopper,
 We will play a while with the elasticity of its legs.
 But above all, we will be brothers of spring.
 I will be kindred with the mother hen,
 With the mother doe, with the drunken wasp
 That skids on a sunbeam in its flight
 And sinks its mouth into the eye of the ruby-red Alicante.
 The buds will look like a mother cat's teats,
 Made blue by the kitten under its ungrateful bite.
 I will see milk flow in the waters
 Where dawn floats,
 Our hands will search between the reeds
 For the sonorous conch.
 Your foot will strike the indulgent world

Comme un bœuf paisible,
 Le lac plissera des cerceaux d'argent
 Dans son jeu flexible.
 J'oublierai que j'eus parfois dans le cœur
 Un goût d'amertume,
 Tu verras flotter mon nouveau bonheur
 Ainsi que la plume.
 Je te dirai : Viens, amour-nourrisson,
 Ta grâce est si belle
 Que c'est le soleil avec sa toison
 Contre ma mamelle.
 Ne découvre pas ton ventre doré,
 Car l'abeille folle
 Pourrait s'y blottir comme au flanc sucré
 De quelque corolle.
 Ne taquine pas avec ton pied nu
 L'herbe à peine haute,
 Car le noir frelon jetterait dessus
 Un coup de sa botte ;
 Ne regarde pas autour de la fleur
 Errer cette mouche,
 Car mon jeune sein verrait sa liqueur
 Couler de ta bouche.
 Ainsi je m'amuse, ainsi tu t'endors,
 La terre gazouille,
 Pour nous écouter l'heure en robe d'or
 Suspend sa quenouille.

Like a calm steer,
 The lake will wrinkle with silver rings
 In its supple flow.
 I will forget that I had in my heart at times
 An appetite for bitterness,
 You will see my new-found happiness floating
 Like a feather.
 I will tell you, "Come, beloved nursling,
 Your grace is as lovely
 As the sun with its woolen fleece
 Against my breast.
 Don't uncover your golden belly,
 Because the foolish bee
 Could nestle itself in there like the sweet side
 Of some corolla.
 Don't irritate, with your naked foot,
 The freshly grown grass,
 Because the black hornet will launch up
 A blow from its boot;
 Don't look around the flower
 At this roaming fly,
 Because my young breast will see its liqueur
 Flowing from your mouth.
 Thus I amuse myself, thus you fall asleep,
 The earth gurgles;
 In order to listen to us, time, in its golden gown,
 Hangs up its whip.

Index of Musical Examples

Example 1. Messiaen, Improvisations Trinité [1985] faites le 21 octobre en soirée.....	6
Example 2. Messiaen, Improvisations Trinité [1985] faites le 21 octobre en soirée.....	6
Example 3. Messiaen, “Theme C,” L’Âme en bourgeon sketches.	8
Example 4. [top] Messiaen, “Theme C,” L’Âme en bourgeon sketches; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Adrian Foster), “Theme C” in improvisation 5, “Tu tettes le lait pur.”.....	9
Example 5. Messiaen (tr. Foster), “Theme C,” improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.”.....	9
Example 6. Messiaen, “Theme Z,” L’Âme en bourgeon sketches.....	10
Example 7. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: “La Tasse.”.....	11
Example 8. Messiaen, “Puer natus est,” Livre du Saint Sacrement (p. 27, s. 2).	14
Example 9. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: “La Tasse”	14
Example 10. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.” Bourdon 8 seul (Récit), box closed.....	16
Example 11. Messiaen, Scherzando theme (improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur”), L’Âme en bourgeon sketches. 16' quintaton and 2' doublette (Positif).....	16
Example 12. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps” (Thème PMA). Clarinette, 16' quintaton, and nazard.	16
Example 13. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon.” 4' flûte, nazard, octavin, and tierce.	17
Example 14. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 10: “Te voilà, mon petit amant”	18
Example 15. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 9: “La Tasse” (pedal registration)	19
Example 16. Messiaen, “Theme X” (Mode 4 ¹), L’Âme en bourgeon sketches.....	23
Example 17. Messiaen, Mode 4 ¹ parallel chords, Traité, 7:129.....	23
Example 18. [top] Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”; [bottom] Messiaen, Mode 4 ¹ parallel chords, Traité, 7:128.....	24
Example 19. Messiaen, Turning Chords (10 th transposition), Traité, 7:171	25
Example 20. Messiaen’s Turning Chords (10 th transposition) presented linearly with identical enharmonic spellings.....	26
Example 21. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Improvisation 4: “La Tête”	27
Example 22. Messiaen, Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité, Movement 5, p. 68, ss. 1–2.....	28
Example 23. Messiaen, Accord du total chromatique (9 th transposition), Traité, 7:182	28
Example 24. [top] Mozart, Symphony in G Minor, K. 550, IV. Allegro assai, mm. 125–34 (oboe); [bottom] Complete-Chromatic Chord (in the dashed box), broken into three components.....	29
Example 25. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 10: “Te voilà, mon petit amant” (opening)	30
Example 26. Messiaen, Livre du Saint Sacrement, mouvement 6 (“La manne et le Pain de Vie”), p. 38, s. 4....	30

Example 27. Ravel, “Scarbo,” from <i>Gaspard de la nuit</i> , mm. 370–387 (p. 38, ss. 1–4).....	32
Example 28. Messiaen, <i>Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus</i> , Movement 10 (“Regard de l’Esprit de joie”), p. 63, s. 3.....	33
Example 29. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur” (<i>Scherzando</i> excerpt)	33
Example 30. Messiaen, <i>Livre du Saint Sacrement</i> , Movement 13 (“Les Deux murailles d’eau”), p. 93, ss. 3–4	34
Example 31. Messiaen, “Thème de la Terre,” <i>L’Âme en bourgeon</i> sketches	35
Example 32. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 1: “Nature, laisse-moi”	35
Example 33. Messiaen, <i>Livre du Saint Sacrement</i> , Movement 11 (“L’Apparition du Christ ressuscité à Marie-Madeleine”), p. 65, s. 1	36
Example 34. Messiaen, <i>Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus</i> , Movement 14 (“Regard des Anges”), p. 101, s. 1, m. 2.....	37
Example 35. Messiaen, <i>Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus</i> , Movement 18 (“Regard de l’Onction terrible”), p. 139, s. 2	37
Example 36. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon”	37
Example 37. Messiaen, <i>Livre du Saint Sacrement</i> , mouvement 13 (“Les deux murailles d’eau”) p. 104, ss. 1–2	38
Example 38. Olivier Messiaen (tr. Foster), Thème de l’ombre, improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon”	39
Example 39. Messiaen, <i>Turangalîla-Symphonie</i> , Movement 2 (“Chant d’amour”), p. 48, m. 3 (woodwinds)	40
Example 40. Messiaen, <i>Turangalîla-Symphonie</i> , Movement 5 (“Joie du sang des étoiles”), p. 171, mm 1–3 (strings)..	40
Example 41. Messiaen, <i>Cinq Rechants</i> , Movement 3, p. 22, s. 1, mm. 1–2	40
Example 42. Messiaen, <i>Cinq Rechants</i> , Movement 5, p. 38, s. 2, mm. 1–2	40
Example 43. Messiaen, <i>Messe de la Pentecôte</i> , Movement 2 (“Offertoire: les choses visibles et invisibles”), p. 4, ss. 4–6	42
Example 44. Messiaen, <i>Messe de la Pentecôte</i> , Movement 2, p. 11, s. 2, m. 1	42
Example 45. Ravel, <i>Tombeau de Couperin</i> , I. Prélude, mm. 1–2.....	42
Example 46. Messiaen, <i>Turangalîla-Symphonie</i> , Movement 3 (“Turangalîla 1”), p. 99, s. 1, rehearsal 6	42
Example 47. Messiaen, <i>Cinq Rechants</i> , Movement 5, p. 37, s. 1, mm. 1–2	43
Example 48. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Improvisation 2: “Ai-je pu t’appeler de l’ombre” (opening measures)	43
Example 49. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 7: “Te voilà, hors de l’alvéole” (opening measures).....	44
Example 50. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 11: “L’Abeille” (opening measures).....	44
Example 51. Messiaen, <i>Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité</i> , Movement 8, p. 73, ss. 3–4.....	44
Example 52. Messiaen, “Theme X” (Mode 4 th), <i>L’Âme en bourgeon</i> sketches	46
Example 53. Messiaen, “Theme Y” (Mode 6 th), <i>L’Âme en bourgeon</i> sketches.....	46
Example 54. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Thème de l’ombre, improvisation 3: “Enfant, pâle embryon”	46

Example 55. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur”	46
Example 56. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 12: “Viens, je veux t’expliquer” (Scherzando theme).....	47
Example 57. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur”	47
Example 58. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 12: “Viens, je veux t’expliquer”	47
Example 59. Messiaen (tr. Foster), improvisation 5: “Tu tettes le lait pur”	48
Example 60. Messiaen/Debussy, “Pelléas” themes, L’Âme en bourgeon sketches	50
Example 61. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Thème PMB, improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”	51
Example 62. [top left] Debussy/Messiaen, beginning of first “Pelléas” theme, from sketches; [top right] Messiaen, Mode-3 ² table, Traité, 7:122; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), beginning of Thème PMB, improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps”	52
Example 63. [left] Messiaen/Debussy, second half of “Pelléas” theme; [right] Messiaen (tr. Foster), second half of Thème PMB, from improvisation 6: “Mon cœur revient à son printemps.”	53
Example 64. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 1 (improvisation on “Nature, laisse-moi”)	54
Example 65. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 2.....	54
Example 66. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 3.....	55
Example 67. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 4.....	55
Example 68. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 5.....	55
Example 69. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 6.....	55
Example 70. Messiaen (tr. Foster), Nightingale, Phrase 7.....	55
Example 71. [top] Messiaen, Skylark (June 2, 1974, 12:45 p.m.), MS 23125; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6 : “Mon cœur revient à son printemps.”.....	57
Example 72. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, MS 23125; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6.....	57
Example 73. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, MS 23125; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6.....	58
Example 74. [top] Messiaen, Skylark, MS 23125; [bottom] Messiaen (tr. Foster), Skylark, improvisation 6.....	59
Example 75. Debussy, Pelléas et Mélisande, Act 1, Scene 3, Rehearsal 42 (p. 57).....	68
Example 76. Debussy, Pelléas et Mélisande, Act 2, Scene 2, Rehearsal 35 (p. 131)	69
Example 77. Messiaen, Nightingale (L’Âme en bourgeon sketches)	70
Example 78. Messiaen, Nightingale (June 1, 1974, 6:45 p.m.), MS 23125.....	70

Bibliography

- Balmer, Yves, Thomas Lacôte, and Christopher Brent Murray. "Messiaen the Borrower: Recomposing Debussy through the Deforming Prism." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (Vol. 69, no. 3, 2016): 699–791.
- Benitez, Vincent. "Messiaen as Improviser." *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* Vol. 13, no. 2 (2008): 129–44.
- Berryman, Luke. "Messiaen as Explorer in *Livre du Saint Sacrement*." In *Messiaen the Theologian*, edited by Andrew Shenton (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 223–240.
- Boivin, Jean & Malou Heine. "Trois entretiens inédits d'Olivier Messiaen avec Stéphane Audel." *Revue Musicale de Suisse Romande* (Vol. 62, issue 3, September 2009): 18–51.
- Broad, Stephen. *Olivier Messiaen: Journalism 1935–1939* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012)
- Cheong, Wai-Ling. "Rediscovering Messiaen's Invented Chords." *Acta Musicologica* Vol. 75, no. 1 (2003): 85–105.
- Debussy, Claude. *Pelléas et Mélisande: Lyric drama in five acts by Maurice Maeterlinck*. Paris: E. Fromont, 1904. Score.
- Delbos, Claire. *L'Âme en bourgeon : Huit mélodies avec accompagnement de piano*. Poems by Cécile Sauvage. Paris: Éditions Fortin, 1937. Score.
- . *Primevère : Cinq mélodies avec accompagnement de piano*. Poems by Cécile Sauvage. Paris: Leduc, 1935. Score.
- Dingle, Christopher. *The Life of Messiaen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Messiaen's Final Works*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013.
- Forte, Allen. "Messiaen's Chords." In *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, edited by Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 91–114.
- Fournier, Carolyn Shuster. *Un siècle de vie musicale à l'église de la Trinité à Paris : à l'église de la Trinité à Paris*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014.
- Glandaz, Olivier, Olivier Messiaen, and Jean Tain. *Messiaen à l'orgue*. Péronnas: Archimbaud / Klincksieck, 2014.
- Golée, Antoine. *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen*. Paris-Genève: Slatkine, 1984.
- Halbreich, Harry. *Olivier Messiaen*. Paris: Fayard/Fondation SACEM, 1980.
- Hill, Peter, and Nigel Simeone. *Messiaen*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Lacôte, Thomas and David Cassan. "L'improvisation et la création: Entretien avec Thomas Lacôte." March, 2014. <https://thomaslacote.wordpress.com/2016/01/13/l-improvisation-et-la-creation> (accessed April 3, 2017).

- Landale, Susan. "Olivier Messiaen : Livre du Saint Sacrement." *L'orgue : Bulletin des Amis de l'orgue* 224 (1992): 24–42.
- Loriod-Messiaen, Yvonne. "Étude sur l'œuvre pianistique d'Olivier Messiaen." In *Portrait(s) d'Olivier Messiaen*, edited by Catherine Massip (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France: 1996), 75–159.
- Lyon, Raymond. "Entretien avec Olivier Messiaen." *Le Courrier musical de France* (1978): 126–32.
- Marti, Jean-Christophe and Olivier Messiaen. "C'est un secret d'amour : Un entretien avec Olivier Messiaen." In *Olivier Messiaen: Saint François d'Assise*, CD liner notes (Deutsche Grammophon: 20/21 Series, 1999), 69–81.
- Massin, Brigitte. *Olivier Messiaen : Une poétique du merveilleux*. Aixen-Provence: Éditions Alinéa, 1989.
- Messiaen, Olivier. *Cinq Rechants* : pour 12 voix mixtes. Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1949. Score.
- . "Évocation de Cécile Sauvage." *Annales de Haute-Provence* 50/291 (1^{er} semestre, 1981): 114–18.
- . *Improvisations Trinité [1985] faites le 21 octobre en soirée*——. 3 pages. Uncatalogued. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France. Photocopy of original manuscript.
- . *Improvisations inédites*. La Praye (DLP 0209), 1987. CD.
- . *L'Âme en bourgeon : Poèmes de Cécile Sauvage dits par Gisèle Casadesus avec des commentaires musicaux improvisés à l'orgue par Olivier Messiaen*. Érato STU 71104, 1978. LP
- . *Livre du Saint Sacrement*. Paris: A. Leduc, 1989. Score
- . *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité*. Paris: A. Leduc, 1973. Score.
- . *Messe de la Pentecôte*. Paris: A. Leduc, 1951. Score.
- . *MS-23125. Aube. Juin 1974. Carnets de notation de chants d'oiseaux : Cahier utilisé entre le 1^{er} juin 1974 et le 3 avril 1975*. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France (Fonds Olivier Messiaen). Format oblong, 17,5 x 22,5 cm. Cahier à spirale, couverture verte.
- . "Notes de travail pour l'accompagnement musical de « Matins du monde » à l'église de la Trinité." In *Matins du monde*, by Roger Michael (Paris: Bordas, 1949), 109–12.
- . "Olivier Messiaen analyse ses Œuvres." In *Olivier Messiaen, homme de foi : Regard sur son Œuvre d'orgue* (Paris: Trinité Media Communications, 1995), 31–67.
- . *Quartet for the End of Time; Improvisations*. Image Entertainment (5085GC), 1999. DVD.
- . *Technique de mon langage musical*. Texte avec exemples musicaux. Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 2000.
- . *Thèmes pour improvisations "L'Âme en bourgeon."* 6 pages (1977). Uncatalogued. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France (Fonds Olivier Messiaen). Photocopy of original manuscript.
- . *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie: (1949–1992) en Sept Tomes*. Paris: A. Leduc, 1994–2002.
- . *Turangalila-Symphonie*. Paris: Durand, 1992. Score.

- . *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. Paris: Durand, 1947.
- Messiaen, Olivier, and Yvonne Loriod. *Transcription des agendas d'Olivier Messiaen, 1939-1992, par Yvonne Loriod*. ResVmb ms-122 (3). Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France (Fonds Olivier Messiaen).
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Symphonie g-Moll: 1. und 2. Fassung, KV 550*. Edited by Henrik Wiese. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 2014. Score.
- Murray, Michael. "An Interview with Olivier Messiaen." *The Diapason* 70 (December 1978): 3–5.
- Nichols, Roger. "Messiaen at 70: Roger Nichols Talks to the Composer, Who is 70 on December 10." *Music and Musicians* 27/4 (December 1978): 20–23.
- Porter, William. "Hamburg Organists in Lutheran Worship." In *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time. North European Reflections, 1610–2000*, edited by Kerala J. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press: 2002), 60–77.
- Ravel, Maurice. *Gaspard de la nuit: 3 poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand*. Paris: Durand, 1909. Score.
- . *Le Tombeau de Couperin : Six pièces pour piano deux mains*. Paris: Durand, 1918. Score.
- Samuel, Claude, and Olivier Messiaen. *Musique et couleur: nouveaux entretiens avec Claude Samuel*. Paris: P. Belfond, 1986.
- Sauvage, Cécile. *L'Âme en bourgeon*. Preface by Olivier Messiaen, postface by Marie Dormoy. Boulogne-sur-Seine: Librairie Séguier Archimbaud, 1987.
- Simeone, Nigel. "Chez Messiaen, tout est prière: Messiaen's Appointment at the Trinité." *Musical Times* 145, 1889 (Winter 2004): 36–53.
- Weller, Philip. "L'Âme en bourgeon: Cécile Sauvage." » In *Olivier Messiaen : Music, Art and Literature*, Edited by Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 191–278.