



The Analysis of *Je Dors, Mais Mon Cœur Veille* Composed by Olivier Messiaen

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to illustrate the musical style of Olivier Messiaen as manifested in his piano compositions. Additionally, it delves into the integration of his distinctive compositional approach with his deeply held Catholic beliefs, as expressed through his music. Research materials have been gathered from published secondary sources and firsthand performances of his works. Biographical accounts of Messiaen's life have been examined to highlight pivotal moments that directly influence his compositions. Furthermore, the background of his masterpiece *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (Twenty Gazes upon the Infant Jesus) has been explored to elucidate how the analyzed work, *No: XIX Je dors, mais mon cœur veille* (I sleep, but my heart waketh), is related to the entire cycle. A systematic analysis of the piece, including the modes of limited transposition, themes of the *Vingt Regards*, rhythmic and harmonic structures, has been undertaken to comprehend how Messiaen's musical language and rhythmic structure contribute to tonal progression and formal coherence. This article also investigates the thematic relevance of the title and its alignment with the religious and mystical themes prevalent throughout the cycle and Messiaen's broader oeuvre.

Keywords

Vingt Regards, modes of limited transposition, rhythmic structure, harmonic structure

1. Introduction

Olivier Messiaen, a prominent composer of the twentieth century, hailed from France and is renowned for his extensively researched and frequently performed compositions. His musical style is characterized by intricate concepts drawn from a diverse array of sources, including Greek and Hindu rhythms, as well as bird calls (Karacsony & Ruscanda, 2023). Despite these influences, it is his devout Catholic faith that exerted the most profound impact on his musical creations. This study endeavors to illustrate how Messiaen skillfully fused his unique compositional techniques with his unwavering religious convictions, presenting them cohesively in his compositions. An in-depth examination of *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille* (I sleep, but my heart waketh), a spiritually inspired piece from the larger work *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, serves as the focal point to explore how Messiaen seamlessly integrates Christian theology into his musical language.

Je dors, mais mon cœur veille (I sleep, but my heart waketh), a dialogue that represents Messiaen's mystic love of God, showcases a diverse array of pitch collections, musical textures, and rhythmic structures. Each pitch collection holds symbolic significance for Messiaen, reflecting the thematic essence of the composition. The exploration of how these pitch collections and rhythmic structures evolve throughout the piece provides valuable insight into how Messiaen articulates the subject matter and generates a formal structure that resonates with its biblical source.

As one of the most influential teachers of the twentieth century, Messiaen left behind a plethora of resources—

including books, program notes, and interviews—that serve as invaluable aids in comprehending his compositional technique. These materials not only shed light on his religious convictions and musical idiom but also offer guidance for interpreting and performing his music.

2. Messiaen's Life

Born on December 10th, 1908, in Avignon, Olivier Messiaen was a distinguished French composer, organist, ornithologist, and educator. Displaying prodigious musical talent from a young age, he commenced composing at a mere eight years old. His early musical education involved piano studies with Gontran Arcouët and Robert Lortart, as well as harmony lessons with Jehan de Gibon. Enrolling at the Paris Conservatory in 1919, he received tutelage in organ from Marcel Dupré, a renowned figure in the field (Alsop, 2019). Although he departed the conservatory in 1931, Messiaen continued to serve as an organist at the *Church of La Sainte Trinité* until his passing in 1992. Additionally, he imparted his knowledge at the *École Normale de Musique* and the *Schola Cantorum*.

During World War II, Messiaen was enlisted in the military and subsequently became a prisoner of war in Görlitz, Silesia, from 1940 to 1941. It was during this period of internment that he composed his seminal work, the *Quatuor Pour la fin du Temps* (Quartet for the End of Time), intended for performance by himself and fellow prisoners—an event that took place in the winter of 1941. Following his release from captivity, he resumed teaching harmony at the Paris Conservatory, nurturing prominent composers such as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and George Benjamin. Elevated to the position of harmony professor in 1966, he remained at the conservatory until retiring in 1978, passing away peacefully in his sleep on April 27, 1992, in Paris, age 83 (Dingle, 2007).

Messiaen's Catholic faith profoundly influenced his musical output, with frequent use of Biblical symbolism to express his devotion to Jesus Christ. Additionally, his passion for ornithology fueled his compositions, with transcriptions of bird calls serving as inspiration for masterpieces such as *Oiseaux Exotique* (1955-56), *Catalogue d'Oiseaux* (1956-57), and *Chronochromie* (1959-60), showcasing his adeptness in capturing both rhythm and melody from avian sources. Throughout his life, Messiaen's multifaceted interests and devotion to his craft left an indelible mark on the world of music.

3. Background of the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*

Composed in 1944, the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (Twenty Gazes upon the Infant Jesus) stands as a masterpiece, embodying Messiaen's profound commitment to the Catholic faith through its rich theological elements. Revered as one of the most exceptional solo piano works of the twentieth-century, this cycle is divided into four groups, each comprising five pieces. Notably, every fifth piece is devoted to addressing the Divinity, with the initial movement focusing on God, the Father, the fifth on God, the Son, and the tenth on God, the Holy Spirit. Both the fifteenth and twentieth movements also center on God, the Son.

Messiaen provides title descriptions for each of the *Vingt Regards*. The comments shown below are taken from the score and translated by Dennis Vannier (Fear No Music & Voglar, 2008). They are in the following order:

- 1) ***Regard du Père (Gaze of the Father)***
Complete phrase on the theme of God.
And God said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- 2) ***Regard de l'étoile (Gaze of the star)***
Theme of the star and the Cross.
Jolt of grace... The star shines naïvely, surmounted by a cross.
- 3) ***L'échange (The exchange)***
Descent in a trail of light, ascent in a spiral; awesome human-divine communion; God becomes man so that we may become gods...
God is the motif of alternating thirds: that which does not change, that which is small. Man is the remaining fragments, which grow and grow and become huge, following a process of development I call "asymmetrical swelling."
- 4) ***Regard de la Vierge (Gaze of the Blessed Virgin)***
Innocence and tenderness... The woman of Purity, the woman of the Magnificat, the Blessed Virgin contemplates her Child...
I have tried to express purity in music: this requires a certain degree of strength — coupled with much naïveté

and childlike gentleness...

5) ***Regard du Fils sur le Fils (Gaze of the Son upon the Son)***

Mystery, rays of light through the night — refraction of joy, the birds of silence — the person of the Word in a human nature — marriage of the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ.

This represents, of course, the Son-Word contemplating the Son-Child-Jesus. Three sonorities, three modes, three rhythms, three superimposed tunes. “Theme of God” and rhythmic canon through the addition of a dotted note. Joy is represented by birdsongs.

6) ***Par Lui tout a été fait (Through Him everything was made)***

Multiplicity of spaces and times; galaxies, photons, reverse spirals, inverted thunderbolts; through “Him” (the Word) everything was made... in an instant, creation reveals the luminous shadow of its Word.

This is a figure in which the subject is never repeated: as early as the second entrance, it changes rhythm and register. Notice the divertimento during which the upper voice expresses the subject as a non-retrograde rhythm, and where the fortissimo bass repeats a fragment of that subject in asymmetrical swellings. The middle incorporates very short and very long values (representing the infinitely small and infinitely large). Then, retrograde reprise of the fugue, like a crayfish. Mysterious stretta. Fortissimo theme of God: victorious presence, the face of God behind the flames and turmoil. Creation reprises and sings the theme of God as a chordal canon.

7) ***Regard de la Croix (Gaze of the Cross)***

Theme of the star and the Cross.

The Cross said to him: you shall be priest in my arms.

8) ***Regard des hauteurs (Gaze of the heights)***

Glory in the heights... the heights descend upon the manger like the song of a lark... Birdsongs: nightingales, thrushes, warblers, chaffinches, goldfinches, warblers, serins, and mostly larks.

9) ***Regard du Temps (Gaze of time)***

Mystery of the plenitude of time; Time sees within itself the birth of He who is eternal.

This theme is short, cold, strange, like de Chirico’s egglike heads; rhythmic canon.

10) ***Regard de l’Esprit de joie (Gaze of the Spirit of joy)***

Vehement dance, drunken horn-like tonalities, transport of the Holy Spirit... the joy of God’s love in the soul of Jesus Christ.

I have always been struck by the fact that God is happy — and that His continual and ineffable joy inhabited the soul of Christ. Joy is, for me, a transport, an intoxication in the maddest sense.

Form:

Oriental dance in the extreme-low range, in unequal neumes, like plainchant. First development on the “theme of joy.” Asymmetrical swelling. Three hunting-tune-like variations. Second development on the “theme of joy” and “theme of God.” Then, reprise of the Oriental dance, with the extreme-low and extreme-high ranges together. Coda on the “theme of joy.”

11) ***Première communion de la Vierge (First communion of the Blessed Virgin)***

A tableau in which the Blessed Virgin is shown kneeling, bent forward in the night — a luminous halo surrounds her form. Her eyes shut, she worships the fruit hidden within herself. This scene takes place between the Annunciation and the Nativity: it is the first and greatest of communions.

Theme of God, soft volutes, stalactites, and interior embrace. Recall of the theme of the “Virgin and Child” in my “Nativity.” Ever more enthusiastic Magnificat. Special chords with pulsations in the low register, representing the heart of the beating Child within his mothers’ breast. The theme of God vanishes.

After the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary worships Jesus within herself... my God, my Son, my Magnificat! — my love without voice.

12) ***La parole toute puissante (The all-powerful Word)***

Monody with pulsations in the low register.

This child is the Word, which sustains all things through the power of its voice.

13) ***Noël (Christmas)***

Carillon — the bells of Christmas sing with us the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

14) ***Regard des Anges (Gaze of the Angels)***

Shimmering, percussion; powerful breaths sounding immense trombones; thy servants are flames of fire...

and then, the songs of birds drinking azure — and the angels are amazed: for God has joined, not with them, but with the human race...

In the first three stanzas: flames, rhythmic canon, and breaking up of the chordal theme.

Fourth stanza: birdsongs. Fifth stanza: the angels are amazed.

15) *Le baiser de l'Enfant Jésus (The kiss of the Child Jesus)*

At every communion, the Child Jesus sleeps beside us near the door; He then opens it upon a garden and throws Himself in the light to embrace us.

Theme of God in the style of a lullaby. Sleep — the garden — arms extended toward love — the kiss — the shadow of the kiss. An etching furnished my inspiration for this movement: it showed the Child Jesus leaving the arms of His mother to kiss little sister Thérèse. All this is symbolic of communion, of divine love. One must love in order to love that picture and this music, which aims to be as soft as the heart of heaven; there is nothing else.

16) *Regard des prophètes, des bergers et des Mages (Gaze of the prophets, the shepherds, and the magi)*

Exotic music — tom-toms and hautboys, huge and reedy consort.

17) *Regard du silence (Gaze of silence)*

Silence in the palm of the hand, inverted rainbow... Every silence in the manger reveals music and color that are the mysteries of Jesus Christ.

Polymodality, rhythmic canon through the addition of a dotted note, special chords, “theme of chords.” The entire piece is intricately chiseled, for a piano work. Ending: alternating chords, multicolored and impalpable music, like confetti, light gemstones, and colliding reflections.

18) *Regard de l'Onction terrible (Gaze of the awesome anointing)*

The Word assumes its human nature; awesome Majesty adopts Jesus's flesh.

An ancient tapestry depicts the Word of God as combat, with Christ astride a charger: one sees only His two hands clasping the hilt of a sword, which He brandishes through a cloud of lightning bolts. That image influenced me.

In the introduction and the coda, gradually slowing notes are superimposed on gradually accelerating notes, and vice versa.

19) *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille (I sleep, but my heart waketh)*

Love poem, dialogue of mystical love. Rests play an important part.

It is not the angel's bow that smiles down on us—it is sleeping Jesus, who loves us on His Sunday and grants us oblivion.

20) *Regard de l'Eglise d'amour (Gaze of the Church of love)*

Grace makes us love God as He loves Himself; after the rays of night and the spirals of distress, here are the bells, the glory, and the loving kiss... The full passion of our arms embracing the Invisible...

Form (the development precedes the exposition):

Development:

The first theme in a nonretrograde rhythm, amplified to the right and left; that theme is interrupted by inverted fireworks. Then, three recalls of the “theme of God” separated by asymmetrical swellings. The third theme is melodic. It is followed by the first theme with fireworks and more asymmetrical swelling. Finally, the ringing of bells, forming a dominant pedal and recalling the chords of the preceding movements.

Exposition:

Complete phrase on the “theme of God,” as a glorious fanfare. Long coda on the “theme of God” — triumph of love and joy, tears of joy.

Throughout the composition, Messiaen employs three cyclical themes: the *Thème de Dieu* (Theme of God), the *Thème de l'étoile et de la Croix* (Theme of the Star and the Cross), and the *Thème d'accords* (Theme of Chords). The most significant theme, the “God Theme,” initially heard in the opening movement, *Regard du Père* (Gaze of the Father), serves as the focal point of the entire piece, recurring in incomplete forms in subsequent movements. The second theme, the “Theme of the Star and the Cross,” emerges in the second and the seventh movements, symbolizing pivotal events in Christ's life—guidance for the Magi and the crucifixion, respectively. The third theme, “Theme of Chords,” makes its debut in the sixth movement, devoid of religious connotations, yet recurring throughout.

Biblical references permeate the music, movement titles, and pre-movement descriptions. For instance, *Regard du Père* (The gaze of the Father), draws from Matthew 3:17... “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased”

(Burger, 2009). This declaration follows immediately after the occurrences outlined in the preceding stanza, echoing the divine proclamation at Jesus' baptism - "... After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him." Similarly, movement six, *Par Lui tout a été fait* (Through Him everything was made), resonates with John 1:1–3, underscoring Christ's role in creation. The main source is found in the third stanza: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." (Burger, 2009). The title of the movement twelve, *La parole toute puissante* (The all-powerful word), refers to Hebrews 1:3- "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Biblical numerology appears to hold symbolic significance in the *Vingt Regards*, with numerous instances of this correlation evident throughout the piece. One such example can be seen in the first movement, *Regard du Père*, which is associated with the number 1, symbolizing unity, and representing God, the Father.

Before me there was no God formed
Neither shall be or after Me
I, even, am the Lord
And besides Me, there is no Saviour. (Isa. 43: 10-11) (Bullinger, 1988)
Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. (Deut 6:4)

Additionally, the pairing of movements six and twelve mirrors the completion of creation in six days. Movement seven is dedicated to the Cross because the number seven represents the spiritual perfection (Bullinger, 1988). It embodies spiritual perfection, reflecting Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

4. The Analysis of *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille*

Below is the title description of the movement:

Love poem, dialogue of mystical love. Rests play an important part.

It is not the angel's bow that smiles down on us—it is sleeping Jesus, who loves us on His Sunday and grants us oblivion.

Je dors, mais mon cœur veille (I sleep, but my heart waketh) comes from the Song of Solomon: "I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking: Open to me, my sister, my darling, My dove, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of the night" (Song 5:2).

Immediately after the main title, the additional title of *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille* starts with a phrase representing Saint Francis of Assisi ("It is not an angel's bow that smiles"). Saint Francis asks God to give him the pleasure of eternal life and then sees an angel holding a violin and a bow in his hands. When the angel starts to play, Francis becomes amazed by the beauty of the melody and loses his sense of physical sensation. He later tells everyone that he got scared of his soul being separated from his body from the intolerable pleasure. At the beginning of the piece, Messiaen promises that the unbearable joy is not coming from the angel's bow: "It is sleeping Jesus who loves us on his Sunday and gives us oblivion" (Bruhn, 1997).

The slow *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille* is a dialog that represents Messiaen's mystic love of God and might be divided into three parts related to the musical language, the form, and the title of the piece. The first twenty-three measures form Section A, (mm. 24-68) Section B, and (mm. 69-87) Section A'. The movement is indeed in ternary form in which all of the sections are made of smaller portions.

Section A:

The opening section (mm. 1-24) consists of two distinct parts. The first part (mm. 1-8) is diatonic and made up exclusively of an F# major triad. The second part (mm. 9- 24) is exclusively octatonic. As an eight-note scale, the three standard models of the octatonic scale are based on the tone-semitone pattern and are therefore the following: Octatonic-O (C-D-Eb-F-F#-G#-A-B-C), Octatonic-1 (C#-D#-E-F#-G-A-Bb-C-C#), and Octatonic -2 (D-E-F-G-Ab-Bb-B-C#-D). The reason why we can classify the first part as being diatonic is that the F# major chord cannot be derived from the octatonic scale used in the subsequent section. The F# major key signature is confirmed by the unchanging F# major 6/3 chord (mm. 1-7). Since there is no harmonic or melodic activity to generate a musical direction or phrase, rests (m. 8) act as a cadence to mark the end of the section.



Figure 1. (mm. 1-8) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

Messiaen appreciated both vertical and horizontal symmetry in music. Having a perfect fourth between two-thirds, the F# major triad in the first inversion with the third doubled is such an example. The F# triad is used as a symbol to create God's image in this movement (Bruhn, 2007). Therefore, the key signature F# most probably represents God, the Son. As there is no conclusive cadence at the end of the opening section (mm. 8-9), the key signature of the piece is definitely meant to be used as a symbol. F# major scale has six accidentals: F#-C#-G#-D#-A#-E# Messiaen stated that the number six is a symbol of the creation of humankind, which was completed in six days—as mentioned in the book of Genesis (Bruhn, 2008). This six-sharp key signature and its six-part harmony are related to the creation mentioned in the Bible and are not a true statement of tonality.

The relationship between time and eternity is also one of the fundamental conceptions of Messiaen's musical output. The lack of a time signature suggests that time is uninterrupted. It also emphasizes God's eternity, as God does not have a beginning or an end (Bruhn, 2012).

This section is associated with the title of the movement as well as the first stanza of the Song of Solomon 5:2 "I was asleep but my heart was awake." It undoubtedly represents the sleeping Jesus (mm. 1-7). The dynamic level of *pp* (very soft) at the beginning of the piece plays an important part in creating quietness. The rhythmic variations of the first measure (mm. 3-6) describe how Jesus keeps watching us, even when he is sleeping.

Every added value that occurs in the opening section (mm. 1-8) is on the chord of F# 6/3. As the added value is a new duration of the given rhythm, the use of this added value creates asymmetry in the texture. In the initial eight-note rhythm, the added value (m. 3) is represented by a sixteenth-note. The first three eighth-notes are represented in six sixteenth-notes and are immediately followed by an eight-note. It is precisely the sixteenth-note that creates an asymmetrical growth in the text.



Figure 2. (m. 3) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

Messiaen truly appreciated the rhythmic freedom. He admired those small entities of music that destroyed the systematic subdivision of metric units. He added a sixteenth-note to one of the values in almost every measure of the opening section in order to ruin the human notions of time.

The cornerstone of Messiaen's compositional approach lies in a set of modal structures named the modes of limited transposition. These modes comprise a collection of seven symmetrical patterns that exhibit a finite number of

transpositions before recurring. Put simply, each mode possesses a restricted range of transpositions before returning to its initial configuration. There is a sudden change of musical texture at a *mf* dynamic level (m. 9). Mode 2 or the octatonic 1 scale emerges as the primary pitch collection not only of this formal section but also of the entire piece.

Figure 3. (mm. 9-17) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

In terms of scales, there is no logical musical connection between the opening section and m. 9. The new part of the large A is suddenly separated from the opening. It is very unusual, however, to go from one part to another without a development. As Messiaen did not compose either in the traditional tonal system or in the atonal system, these hints are given by the formal structure would be the only way to understand how the musical development is directly connected to the title. For instance, the new dynamic mark is *mf* (moderately loud) followed by *f* (loud) (m. 11). This dynamic change right on the octatonic scale might suggest that the new section no longer represents the sleeping Jesus. The second part is related to the composer's description: "the dialog of mystical love." Mode 2 is distributed in right-hand/left-hand alternations (m. 9, 11, 15, and 17) to literally represent the dialogue.

It is interesting to note that the main beats of the left hand of the octatonic section (m. 9) are the perfect fourths [C#-F#-A#-D# and G-B#(C)]. In the next measure (m. 10), the main beats of the left hand are also made up of the perfect fourth [E-A] and its inversion, the perfect fifth [A-E]. The F# minor seventh chord (m. 10) is, according to Messiaen, related to the octatonic scale because F# minor seventh chord can be derived from octatonic 1. As the F# minor seventh chord does not include an A#, the new part of the large A is still not related to the opening which is entirely made of an F# major chord. The chords of the right hand (m. 12) are also made up of perfect fifths (F#-C#-G#-D#). All of these perfect fourths and fifths are abstracted from the diatonic aspect of the octatonic scale. The chords of m. 10 and m. 14 create an identical pattern with the appearance of D# minor seventh chord (m. 14). Therefore, the diatonic aspect of the first part of the opening section is used again. This relation also suggests that the composer wants to give an impression of returning the God theme at a *pp* dynamic level although this would not be a real return. There is indeed a clash between the diatonic scale and the octatonic scale (mm. 9-14). The clash between

the diatonic and octatonic scale comes to an end (m. 16) in much the same way as a cadence that marks the end of a tonal phrase. In addition, the texture is immediately changed in the subsequent measure (m. 17).

The complete pitch content of (mm. 17-22) is octatonic. The reappearance of the D# minor seventh chord (m. 22) proves that whenever the octatonic content is used, it is resolved by a diatonic content. Even though these two parts of the A section use a very different pitch context, strong links that are common to both are used to link them.

There are approximately three-hundred verses that talk about birds in the Bible. They sometimes appear as the symbol of purity, or are given a particular spiritual meaning. Proverbs says, “As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place” (Proverbs 27:8). Messiaen was deeply interested in bird songs and frequently used them in his compositions to explain his love of nature being closely related to God. He admired the idea of ‘exemplarism,’ developed by Bonaventure, one of the Franciscan theologians of the thirteenth century. Exemplarism means that one can recognize God through the creatures around him as these creatures in nature reflect their Creator (Bruhn, 2007). He uses a small bird motive on the second beat of (m. 12) in an incomplete chromatic scale as an introduction to its frequent appearance in the large B section. The birds always appear in a chromatic scale in the upper range of the piano.

The special treatment of rhythm is an essential part of Messiaen’s music and sometimes suggests the birth of time mentioned in the Bible. As Messiaen writes:

Let us not forget that the first, essential element in music is Rhythm, and that Rhythm is first and foremost, the change of number and duration. Suppose that there were a single beat in all the universe. One beat; with eternity before it and eternity after it. A before and an after. That is the birth of time. Imagine then, almost immediately, a second beat. Since any beat is prolonged by the silence which follows it, the second beat will be longer than the first. Another number, another duration. That is the birth of Rhythm (Bruhn, 2012).

A sixteenth note is placed on the downbeat of the measure (m. 18) so that the shorter note at the beginning of the measure causes an ametrical rhythmic flow and most probably suggests the birth of time as a singularity, as happens in the book of Genesis.



Figure 4. (m. 18) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

The rests at the end of the second section (m. 23) again act as a cadence to mark its end.



Figure 5. (mm. 21-23) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

The *Thème d’amour*—a subsidiary theme to the *Thème de Dieu*—is introduced at the beginning of section B (m. 24) at a *f* dynamic level. This sudden dynamic change represents the imploring nature of the words in the Song of Solomon, “A voice! My beloved was knocking: Open to me, my sister, my darling, My dove, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of the night” (Song 5:2). *Thème d’amour* is presented with

an incomplete E \flat minor chord in the right hand the first time it appears. This unexpected representation of the theme is accompanied by whole tone chords of the left hand.

Section B:

The image shows a musical score for two pieces. The first piece, 'Un peu plus vif (Thème d'amour)', is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 108. It features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. The second piece, 'Un peu lent', is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 80. It features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, *pp*, and *p*. The word 'berceur' is written in the lower part of the second piece.

Figure 6. (mm. 24-30) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

The third chord of the left hand (m. 24) is an incomplete whole-tone 0 collection [A \flat -B \flat -C-D]. The second chord is an incomplete whole-tone 1 [A-B-C \sharp -D \sharp]. The chord of the first triplet [C-E-G-A] is made up of both whole tone scale fragments where [C-E] belongs to whole-tone 0 and [G-A] belongs to whole-tone 1. As a result, the first triplet represents both whole-tone scales which are separated out in the next two chords. It is interesting to note that whole-tone scales are used to represent the “Theme of Love” which appears right at the beginning of Section B (m. 24). Because the whole-tone scale does not contain any semi-tones—which can be heard as leading tones—and therefore creates harmonic tension, it is perhaps one of the best pitch collections to represent the “Theme of Love” and is especially apt to represent the human love of God.

The left hand of (m. 25) consists of alternations of octatonic chords. The notes of the left-hand chords are the octatonic 1 collection [C \sharp -E-G-A] and the octatonic 0 collection [C-E \flat -G \flat -A \flat]. Opposed to these is the perfect fourth interval of the right hand [E \flat -B \flat], which, once again, represents the clash between diatonic and octatonic realms. The chords that immediately follow (m. 26) are also alternations of the octatonic collections. The first [G-D-B-F-B \flat] is octatonic 2, the second [E \flat -B \flat -G-D \flat -G \flat] is octatonic 1, while the third [F-C-A-E \flat -F] is octatonic 0. Simultaneously, six notes of the perfect fifth cycle [E \flat -B \flat -F-C-G-D] are present in the lower part, manifesting the ongoing clash between the two different collections. To cement the octatonic aspect, the chords of the left hand (m. 27) are all octatonic fragments, [C-F \sharp -A-D] being octatonic 0, [G-C] being octatonic 1, and [G \sharp -B] being octatonic 2. With the exception of A, the last chord [B-D-E-G \sharp -A] represents octatonic 2.

While mode 6 suddenly appears for the first time at the tempo change, (m. 28) represented by block chords in both hands, mode 2, the primary pitch collection of the entire piece, emerges in the subsequent measure.

Immediately after this (m. 30), octatonic combinations recommence. The first chord and the second chord are octatonic 1 [C-D \sharp -F \sharp -(G \sharp)-A \sharp and C-E-F \sharp -A-E], while the third and fourth chords are octatonic 0 [A-D \sharp -F \sharp -B-F and F \sharp -C-F-(A \sharp)-B]. The fifth chord consists of a diatonic collection [F-B-E-A-D] which is in cyclic order. The final chord is exclusively octatonic [D \sharp -F \sharp -B-E-A \sharp]. The left hand of the entire measure consists of tritons where half of the octatonic 1 scale can be derived from the first four sixteenth notes. The octatonic 0 collection [G \sharp -F \sharp -E \sharp -B-D] is unfolded horizontally by the top notes. The octatonism is brought to a sudden end by the chords of the following measure (m. 31).

The first chord [G \sharp -A \sharp -C \times -E \sharp] is an incomplete whole-tone collection, while the second chord [E-B-A-D-F \sharp -G \sharp -A \sharp (B \flat)-F] is an incomplete perfect fifth cycle, completed by the notes of the next two chords [B-F \sharp -C \sharp -G \sharp -E \flat -B \flat -C-G]. The “Theme of Love” appears immediately after. The third repetition of the “Theme of Love” ends (m. 39)

with the confirmation of the cyclic aspect, which occurs in the perfect fifths [B-F#-C#-G#].

There is a return to the octatonic aspect shortly after (m. 42) where the first chord is octatonic 2 [Bb-F-D-Ab-C#], the second chord is octatonic 1 [F#-C#-A#-E-A], and the third chord is octatonic 0 [D#-F#-G#-B#]. Immediately after that, the whole-tone 1 collection reappears (m. 44) [C#-D#-E#-B] with the exception of A#. Octatonic 2 follows (m. 45) [C#-D-E#-B], with the reappearance of the chords found in the previous measures.

Asymmetrical expansion plays an important role in Messiaen's music. The immediate growth of rhythms also can explain Jesus Christ's abundant love. Siglind Bruhn explains that one of the most important themes that can be seen in Messiaen's music is God's Love, and this love is extended to the world through Jesus Christ. For instance, in movement *L'échange*, Messiaen described God as "that which does not move" with humanity, "represented by fragments that grow and grow and become enormous, in a process that I call 'asymmetric growth'" (Bruhn, 2007).

Figure 7. (mm. 43-53) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

Once again, there is a new clash between whole-tone 1 (m. 46) [C#-D#-E#-(A#)-B] and octatonic 0 collections (m. 49) [F#-G#-B-D]. There is a repetition of the section with minor changes. After a repetition of all the presented materials (mm. 50-61), the sudden entrance of the *Thème d'accords* confirms the cyclic aspect (m. 62) by yielding a stream of perfect fourths in the top part [E#-F#-G#-F#-A#-B-C#] that combine with the lower part [B-F#-C#-G#-Eb-Bb-C] to unfold the complete perfect fourth cycle.

A new repetition of the *Thème d'accords* introduces Section B.



Figure 8. (m. 62) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

In Je Dors, Mais Mon Cœur Veille, the connection of the themes with specific pitch collections remains unchanged, so that their meaning also does not change as well. The *Thème d'accords* is in a chromatic scale represented by four successive vertical structures. New bird motifs appear in a chromatic scale on the third beat of (mm. 54-59) and, as before, they are presented at the upper range of the piano. As Messiaen explains: “Melodies of the ‘bird’ genre will be transcription, transformation, and interpretation of the volleys and trills of our little servants of immaterial joy” (Messiaen & Satterfield, 2007).

Figure 9. (mm. 54-59) 1947 by Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, Paris.

Being directly related to the text of the Song of Solomon, “My dove, my perfect one” (Song 6:9), these bird calls definitely stand as reflections of their Creator.

Section A':

Being in ternary form, the return of a modified A section (m. 69) occurs. The F \sharp major chord used as the primary chord of the opening returns to open the third section and is followed by a short coda (m.79) ending piece at a *ppp* level.

The changes in musical language through the use of the different pitch collections generate the formal structure of the piece. Section A (mm. 1-24) consists of diatonic and octatonic pitch collections. Section B (mm. 24-68) contains whole-tone scales, diatonic and octatonic pitch collections. Section A'(mm. 69-87) is made up of the same diatonic collection as section A (Soylar, 2018).

5. Conclusion

Je Dors, Mais Mon Cœur Veille explore divergent themes, discernible through variations in pitch collections and rhythmic patterns. The movement begins with a segment employing the symmetrical inversion of F \sharp major, symbolizing divine perfection. The Theme of Love (m. 24) employs the whole-tone scale, devoid of semitones, reflecting a harmonic tension absent in human love for God. Throughout the piece, the perfect fourth and fifth cycles, due to their equal intervals, consistently denote divine and universal concepts. Each theme possesses distinct pitch collections, and their arrangement contributes to the piece's overall structure. Messiaen strategically places these themes to shape the progression of musical events, aligning with the overarching theme suggested by the title. In *Je Dors, Mais Mon Cœur Veille*, Messiaen introduced a sixteenth-note into nearly every measure of the opening section to disrupt the systematic division, symbolizing the distortion of human perception of time. Such rhythmic alterations play a crucial role in delineating the musical structure.

Although employing an extra-musical source as a program for musical composition is a familiar practice, Messiaen's approach stands out for its sophisticated use of various pitch collections and specialized rhythms to convey distinct concepts. The intricate pitch relationships resulting from the concurrent utilization of different pitch collections and their derivatives serve multiple purposes. They not only depict the literal meaning of the title but also articulate a progression and blending of literal and abstract concepts, simultaneously shaping both a literal narrative and the musical evolution and formal structure of the composition.

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