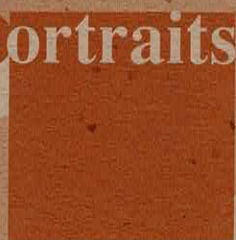




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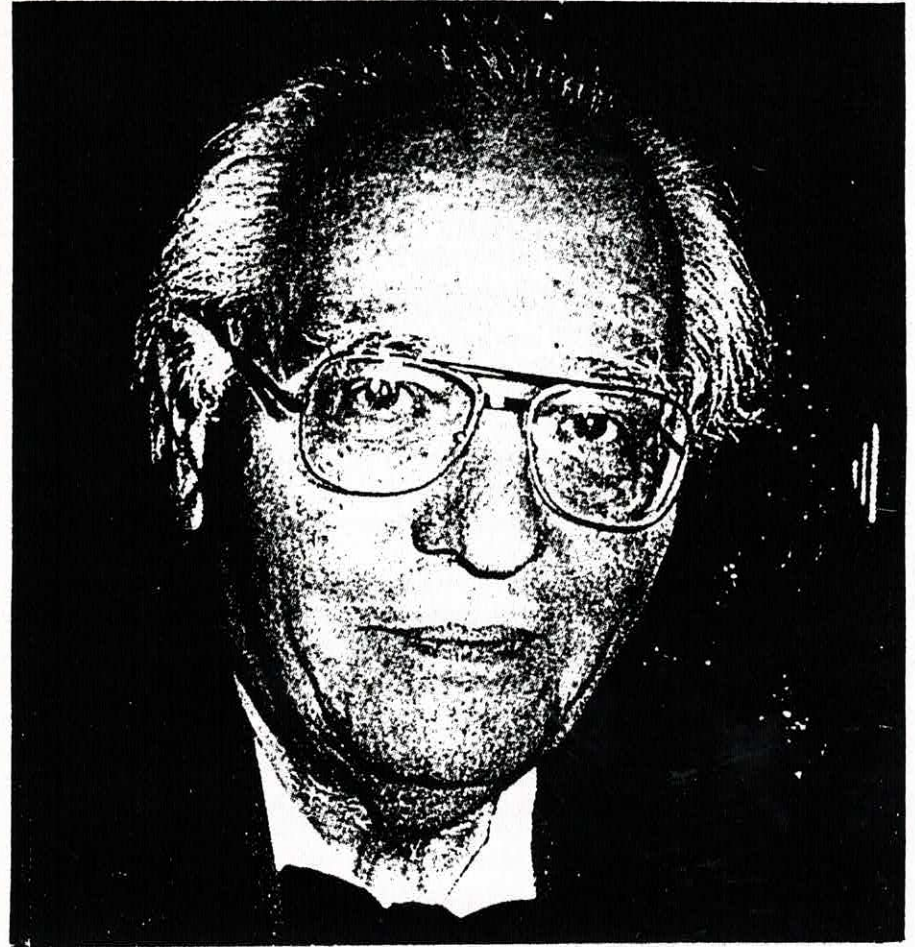
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# OLIVIER MESSIAEN - A TRIBUTE



*Two concerts celebrating his piano and orchestral works  
in definitive performances by Yvonne Loriod and Roger Muraro*

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
Concert 3:00 pm  
The Great Hall at Hart House  
University of Toronto

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# Roger Muraro

playing the music of Messiaen

## Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus (1944)

1. Regard du Père
  2. Regard de l'étoile
  3. L'échange
  4. Regard de la Vierge
  5. Regard du Fils sur le Fils
  6. Par Lui tout a été fait
  7. Regard de la Croix
  8. Regard des hauteurs
  9. Regard du temps
  10. Regard de l'Esprit de joie
  11. Première communion de la Vierge
  12. La parole toute puissante
  13. Noël
  14. Regard des Anges
  15. Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus
  16. Regard des prophètes, des bergers et des Mages
  17. Regard du silence
  18. Regard de l'Onction terrible
  19. Je dors, mais mon coeur veille
  20. Regard de l'Eglise d'amour
- Roger Muraro, piano**

Presented in co-operation with  
**Hart House Music Committee**  
Steinway Grand Piano courtesy of  
**Toronto College Park**

Programme One

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
Introductory film 7:00 pm, Concert 8:15 pm  
Premiere Dance Theatre

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# Yvonne Loriod

playing the music of Messiaen

## Petites esquisses d'oiseaux (1985) dur. 15'

1. Le Rouge-gorge (The Robin), 2. Le Merle noir (The Blackbird), 3. Le Rouge-gorge (The Robin), 4. La Grive musicienne (The Song Thrush), 5. Le Rouge-gorge (The Robin), 6. L'Alouette des champs (The Sky Lark)

**Yvonne Loriod, piano**

## La Ville d'En-haut (1987)❖ dur. 8' 30

Yvonne Loriod, piano, Robert Aitken, conductor  
The New Music Concerts Ensemble

## Un vitrail et des oiseaux (1986)❖ dur. 10'

Yvonne Loriod, piano, Robert Aitken, conductor  
The New Music Concerts Ensemble

## Intermission

### Excerpts from

## Catalogue d'oiseaux (1956-58) dur. 20'

No. 6: L'Alouette Lulu (The Wood Lark)

No. 3: Le Merle bleu (The Blue Rock Thrush)

**Yvonne Loriod, piano**

## Un vitrail et des oiseaux (1986) dur. 10'

Yvonne Loriod, piano, Robert Aitken, conductor  
The New Music Concerts Ensemble

## La Ville d'En-haut (1987) dur. 8' 30

Yvonne Loriod, piano, Robert Aitken, conductor  
The New Music Concerts Ensemble

❖ Canadian Première

Programme Two

## New Music Concerts Ensemble

**Conductor:** Robert Aitken

**Flute:** Doug Stewart, Dianne Aitken, Les Allt

**Piccolo Flute:** Camille Watts

**Alto Flute:** Anne Thompson

**Oboe:** Cynthia Steljes, Hazel Newton,  
Keith Atkinson

**English Horn:** Barbara Bolte

**Clarinet:** Stanley McCartney, Colleen Cook,  
Tom Marcaccinni

**E flat clarinet:** James Ormston

**Bass Clarinet:** Margaret Gillie

**Bassoon:** Fraser Jackson, Kathleen McLean,  
Peter Lutek

**Piccolo Trumpet:** James Gardiner

**Trumpet:** Jim Spragg, Michael White,  
Stuart Laughton

**French Horn:** Joan Watson, Dianne Doig,  
Michelle Gagnon, Brenda Cook, Darcy McFadyen,  
Janet Anderson

**Trombones:** Gord Sweeney, Jerry Johnson,  
Robert Ferguson

**Tuba:** Scott Irvine

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# Olivier Messiaen

a tribute

Notes

**Olivier Messiaen** was born in Avignon on December 10, 1908. His mother was the poet Cecile Sauvage. His father, Pierre, was a professor of English, noted for his translation of the complete works of Shakespeare. Messiaen's childhood was spent in the region of the Dauphiné mountains, instilling in him a life-long love of nature and a passionate interest in birdsong. At the age of ten he entered the Conservatoire de Paris, graduating in 1930 with first prizes in piano accompaniment, organ improvisation, composition and theory.

From 1931 until his death on April 27, 1992, Messiaen was the organist for the Église de la Trinité in Paris, and it was in this capacity that his music gradually came to wider attention. The visionary compositions he created for his own instrument continue to represent a contribution to the organ repertoire that has yet to be equalled. In 1936 Messiaen founded, with André Jolivet, Yves Baudrier and Daniel Lesur, an association of composers known as *Jeune France*. Their mission was to restore the elements of magic and ritual to what they regarded as the comparatively sterile and formalist aesthetic of the neo-classicism prevalent at that time. Jolivet in particular called for a music that would constitute "a sonic manifestation bearing a direct relationship to the universal cosmic system". Messiaen alone succeeded in achieving this goal from a global perspective.

While serving as a hospital attendant during the Second World War Messiaen was captured by Nazi forces and imprisoned for two years in Stalag VIII at Görlitz in Silesia. From this shattering experience arose one of his most charismatic works, the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (1941). Shortly after his repatriation in 1942 he was appointed professor of harmony at the Conservatoire de Paris. His first great public acclaim came in 1945 with the storm of controversy surrounding the première of his *Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence divine*. The unbridled sensuality of this heartfelt choral cantata was both attacked and defended with unusual ferocity. Considered a dangerous radical by his more orthodox colleagues, it was not until 1966 that he was named a full professor of composition at the Conservatoire, a position he held until his retirement in 1985.

Though Messiaen had few direct imitators, his way of thinking about music has been profoundly influential. His role as a teacher extended far beyond the inner circle of his students in Paris or Darmstadt. His *Technique of My Musical Language*, first published in 1944, is required reading for all students of composition. His early interest in the music of non-European cultures was to have far-reaching consequences. Messiaen's characteristic use of ancient Greek and Hindu rhythms, researches into Asian and African music and exploration of alternative approaches to tonality helped to define contemporary sensibilities and concerns. The structural complexities of the *Quatre Études de rythme* for piano (1950) marked a new direction in his music and became the impetus for the serialization of rhythmic elements that played a large role in the subsequent compositions of Boulez and Stockhausen.

Olivier Messiaen, whose very name proclaims the Messiah and his message of infinite love, may well be considered in the course of history to have been the greatest musical evangelist since J.S. Bach. His role as a musician was to celebrate his Christianity and to proclaim a love of nature which extends from the canyons to the stars. For those who share his Catholic faith, his passing was more commemorated than mourned, for throughout his life he strove to make explicit in his music his desire to be united with his Lord.

### Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus (1944)

Messiaen's works for the piano exhibit a sensitivity to sonorities, dynamics and registral extremes far more advanced than in any previous keyboard music. The Wagnerian time-span and hyper-virtuosity of the **Vingt Regards** imposes super-human demands on both the stamina and memory of the performer. While the duration of the work may seem on the surface to be extreme, the music itself is constructed in a manner which is intended to destroy the notion of linear time and to render in the listener a response of attentive contemplation. Paul Collaer has noted how this effect is often heightened by Messiaen's practice of creating "*long melodies of inhuman slowness (that is, slower than the slowest vital movements of our bodies) that induce ecstasy*".

In his Preface to these "**Twenty Views of the Infant Jesus**" (lamentably too lengthy to be included here) Messiaen explains in detail the theological ramifications of each movement of this monumental cycle of pieces. The inter-relationships of the movements (each page of which

may contain additional programmatic annotations of their own) and their sources of inspiration are of such complexity that during the last complete presentation of this composition in Toronto by Yvonne Loriod, during the Bach 300 Festival in 1985, the composer himself was observed to be following the performance while reading from the score of the work. Though it is unlikely that the casual listener would be able to perceive the finer structural points of the composition without such a visual aid, one may still appreciate the unity of the work aurally by virtue of the symmetrical arrangement of its movements and the cyclic recurrences of the themes and harmonic progressions unveiled in the first two pieces, namely the "Theme of God" and the "Theme of the Star and the Cross".

#### **Petites esquisses d'oiseaux (1985)**

*These are six very short pieces. They are both very similar and very different from one another. They are similar in their harmonic style, which is evolved through sound-complexes of changing colours. In these "chords of transposed inversions" the dominant colours are shades of blue, red, orange and violet. The "chords of contracted resonance" and the "chords of the total chromatic" add more vibrant or subtle characteristics to these harmonies. On the other hand, each bird has its own aesthetic nature and melodic and rhythmic characteristics. The three pieces concerning the Robin exhibit pearly-toned descending arpeggios, almost like a glissando, followed by slower notes and a more refined melodic design. The Blackbird sings with an air of victory, in phrases full of sunshine. The Song Thrush is recognized by the incantatory manner of his repeated call. Finally, the Sky Lark,*

*which ends the work, is possessed of a valuable chirping, turning around a high dominant, which is punctuated from time to time by two loud, long notes, the whole corresponding with the aspects of a bird in flight. The writing for the piano is very demanding. The work, written in 1985, is dedicated to Yvonne Loriod.*

**Olivier Messiaen**

#### **La Ville d'En-haut (1987)**

"The City Above" was commissioned by the Festival d'Automne de Paris and was premiered on November 17, 1989 at the Salle Pleyel by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Pierre Boulez, with Yvonne Loriod as piano soloist. The work is a musical commentary on two Biblical verses: Colossians 3:1, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above..."; and Revelation 21:2, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven...".

The composition is lucidly organized into four musical paragraphs:

-**Chorale** for woodwinds; -**Trumpet melody** in counterpoint with the harmonies of the piano and glockenspiel; -**The Summons**, in conjunction with the song of the Melodious Warbler.

-**Chorale** for woodwinds; -**Trumpet melody**, extended; -**The Summons**, with new material for three xylophones, again based on the song of the Melodious Warbler.

-**Song of the Blackcap** (woodwinds) and **Song of the Garden Warbler** (piano solo), alternating between the two in increasingly longer phrases.

-**Recapitulation** of the **Chorale** and the **Trumpet melody**, both greatly extended.

Messiaen elucidated the symbolism inherent in this composition with the following remarks: "*The Chorale of the woodwinds represents the Glory of the Celestial City. The birdsongs in the xylophones, the winds and solo piano symbolize the joy of the resurrected, united forever in Christ. The constantly shifting harmonies reflect the colours of the Divine Light of the Beyond.*"

Merle bleu  
Très modéré (♩ = 80)

*mf* (m. g. dessus)  
(lumineux, irisé, auréolé de bleu)

### Un vitrail et des oiseaux (1986)

"**A Stained-Glass Window and Birds**" was composed in 1986 on a commission from Pierre Boulez for the Orchestre de l'Ensemble Intercontemporain. It was premiered by them at a concert in honour of the composer's 80th birthday at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on November 26, 1988; Yvonne Loriod was the piano soloist. The plan of the work, like that of **La Ville d'En-haut**, consists of four structural paragraphs, preceded by an introduction:

-**Introduction** for three mallet instruments: xylophone, xylorimba and marimba.

-**Principal Theme**: for trumpet and bells, first portion; -**Songs of the Chaffinch and Blackcap**: for the woodwinds; -**Cadenza 1**: piano, flute and clarinet in free tempo.

-**Principal Theme**: trumpet and bells, second portion; -**Chaffinch and Blackcap**: woodwinds; -**Cadenza 2**: piano with two flutes and two clarinets, extended and in free tempo.

-**Principal Theme**: as before, third portion; -**Chaffinch and Blackcap**: woodwinds; -**Cadenza 3**: piano based on the call of the Garden Warbler; three flutes play calls of the Blackbird; three clarinets imitate the calls of the Garden Warbler, Subalpine Warbler and Robin.

-**Coda**: for the mallet instruments; **Principal Theme**: the three previous portions and a final, concluding portion.

### excerpts from Catalogue d'oiseaux (1956-58)

Messiaen's seven-volume, thirteen-movement "**Catalogue of Birds**" artfully combines the language he developed in the 1940's with the new approaches he initiated in the following decade. It constitutes the apotheosis of his ornithological obsessions and represents a secular counterpart to the **Vingt Regards**. The work is elaborately programmatic in its concept. Each movement is preceded by a poetic description of its contents.

## **I'Alouette Lulu (The Wood Lark)**

*On the mountain pass of the great woods at Saint-Saveur. On the right, pine-trees; prairie pasture to the left. Out of the darkness the Wood Lark glides earthwards, with a descent both chromatic and liquid. Hidden in the bush, in a clearing in the woods, a Nightingale responds. Contrast between the tremulant mordents of the Nightingale and the mysterious voice in the sky. The Lark, invisible, approaches and withdraws. The trees and the countryside are black and calm. It is midnight.*

## **Le Merle bleu (The Blue Rock Thrush)**

*It is the month of June at Rousillon, on the coast of Vermeille, near Banyuls: Cape l'Abeille, Cape Rederis. Above the ocean of Prussian and sapphire blue, mountain bluffs loom. The cry of the Swift; the splashing of the water. The cliffs stretch themselves into the sea like crocodiles. From a cleft in the rocks echoes the song of the Blue Rock Thrush. Yet there is another blue than that of the sea: a violent blue, slate-like, satiny, a black-blue. The crashing of the waves evokes the exotic music of Bali. We hear as well the Theckla Lark, fluttering in the sky over vineyards and fields of rosemary. In the distance, Herring Gulls dive towards the sea. The cliffs hold a terrible fate for the ocean, which has come to die at their feet with the song of the Blue Rock Thrush as its ultimate memory.*

*Olivier Messiaen*

**Notes and translations © 1995 by Daniel Foley.**

## **Biographies**

The young French-Italian pianist **Roger Muraro** (b.1959) was a student of both Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris. He is regarded as one of the most gifted performers of his generation and is particularly celebrated for his interpretations of Messiaen's music. He has recently completed a recording of the *Turangalila-Symphonie* to add to his discography of works by Rachmaninoff, Liszt and Albeniz. His performance of the *Vingt Regards* is available on the Art Electronics label.

**Yvonne Loriod** (b.1924) has been both the inspiration for and the foremost interpreter of Messiaen's piano works since she first studied with him in the early 1940's. Their musical collaborations eventually resulted in their marriage in 1962. She has premièred and recorded all of her husband's piano works as well as compositions by Pierre Boulez and Jean Barraqué. As a recording artist she has received the "Grand Prix du Disque" a dozen times. In addition to her expertise in contemporary music her repertoire includes the entire Well-Tempered Clavier of Bach, the 32 Sonatas of Beethoven, the complete works of Chopin and the 22 piano concertos of Mozart. As professor of piano at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique her pupils have included many of the French pianists who came to prominence in the 1960's and 1970's.



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