

Birdsongs, Structure and Harmonic colour of non-birdsong Subjects in Olivier Messiaen's 'La Bouscarle' from Catalogue d'oiseaux



Fung Chiat Loo

Department of Music, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
lfc@upm.edu.my



Fung Ying Loo

Cultural Centre, University of Malaya, Malaysia
loofy@um.edu.my

Resumo: Este artigo analisa 'La Bouscarle', um movimento do Catalogue d'oiseaux, que é uma das mais extensas obras para piano escritas por Oliver Messiaen. Uma característica distintiva desse movimento comparativamente curto é a cor harmônica construída a partir do modo do compositor 3 na representação do tema do rio, servindo como um assunto importante que fornece o fluxo e a estrutura para todo o trabalho. O Modo 3, que forma uma tonalidade A principal para o tema do rio e a representação da cor do martim-pescador, também fornece uma harmonia menos dissonante que é diferente das harmonias usadas para habitats apresentados em outros movimentos do Catálogo. O solista, a toutinegra dos Cetti, com sua chamada breve e brusca, produz um clima contrastante com o tema lírico do rio cordal. A maioria dos cantos de pássaros deste trabalho compartilha características semelhantes às do solista, exceto o melro, o pintarroxo e o blackcap mais melodicamente delicados, com a chamada correspondente ao tema do rio. Conclui-se que a singularidade dos temas não-pássaros destaca os significados de 'La Bouscarle', e as características do canto dos pássaros neste movimento aparecem de forma semelhante em outras obras de Messiaen.

Palavras-chave: Catálogo d'oiseaux, 'La Bouscarle', canções de pássaros, cor harmonica, Oliver Messiaen, obras de piano

Abstract: This paper analyses 'La Bouscarle', a movement from *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, which is one of the most extensive piano works written by Oliver Messiaen. A distinctive characteristic of this comparatively short movement is the harmonic colour constructed from the composer's mode 3 in the representation of the river theme, serving as an important subject that provides the flow and structure for the entire work. Mode 3, which forms an A major tonality for the river theme and the portrayal of the kingfisher's colour, and also provides a less dissonant harmony different from the harmonies used for habitats presented in other movements of the *Catalogue*. The soloist, the Cetti's warbler, with its brief and brusque call, produces a contrasting mood with the lyrical chordal river theme. The majority of birdsongs in this work share similar characteristics with the soloist, except the more melodically delicate blackbird, robin, and blackcap, with their calls matching the river theme. It is concluded that the uniqueness of the non-birdsong subjects highlights the significances of 'La Bouscarle', and the characteristics of birdsongs in this movement feature similarly in other Messiaen's works.

Keywords: *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, 'La Bouscarle', birdsongs, Harmonic Colour, Oliver Messiaen, piano works

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Introduction

Birdsong is an important element of Messiaen's compositions and for the composer songbirds are the greatest musicians (SAMUEL, 1994, p. 85). Another important characteristic in Messiaen's works is the correspondence between colour and sound (BERNARD, 1986). From the fifth book of the *Catalogue* cycle, 'La Bouscarle' (the Cetti's warbler) is the ninth movement in *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1956–1958), together with 'L'Alouette Calandrelle' (The short-toed lark). What contributes to the significance of Messiaen's birdsong works is that the composer, also an ornithologist, transcribed these birdsongs in particular locations, with dates and times clearly indicated in his notebook. According to the description in the preface, 'La Bouscarle' was composed in Charente on 30 April (indicated by the composer as the 'last day of April'). It could be assumed that this was written in daytime or early morning, looking at Messiaen's narrative on the kingfisher's flight at the end of the work (*Vol nuptial du Martin-pêcheur, qui tourne, exposant au soleil ses belles couleurs de myosotis*). However, as noted in Messiaen's *cahiers de notation des chants d'oiseau* (MESSIAEN, MS23009, p. 19), the transcription of the Cetti's warbler was made at 20.15 hours.

In addition to the birdsongs, colours in relation to the tonality serve a significant purpose in 'La Bouscarle'. Similarly to 'Le Merle Bleu' and 'Le Traquet Rieur', A major is used to represent the colour of water in these birds' habitat. Another representation is the kingfisher's flight and plumage, described by the composer as blue and green. It is noticeable that the harmony of the river theme is shared with the kingfisher's in that it not only portrays the colour of blue (river), but it also provides the bird's reflection.

Constructed in a symmetrical position in this movement, another more important material that highlights Messiaen's harmonic language is the *Mode de valeurs* that represents the reflections of willow and poplars in 'La Bouscarle'. However, unlike other works, the *Mode de valeurs* is established in another

configuration that presents a rhythmic order which will be examined in later sections. Similar to 'La Chouette Hulotte', the serially constructed section is organized close to the beginning and ending and acts as a pillar to encapsulate all sections. However, 'La Chouette Hulotte' uses *Mode de valeurs* in a more complete format with attacks, duration and dynamics, to indicate fear and darkness. The two sections are longer and more complicated, in contrast with the one in 'La Bouscarle' that portrays serenity with a much softer dynamic, possibly to represent the obscureness of the reflection. As Hill (1994, p.341) describes, the composer requires the pianist to employ very delicate and sensitive pedalling to achieve the impressionistic character.

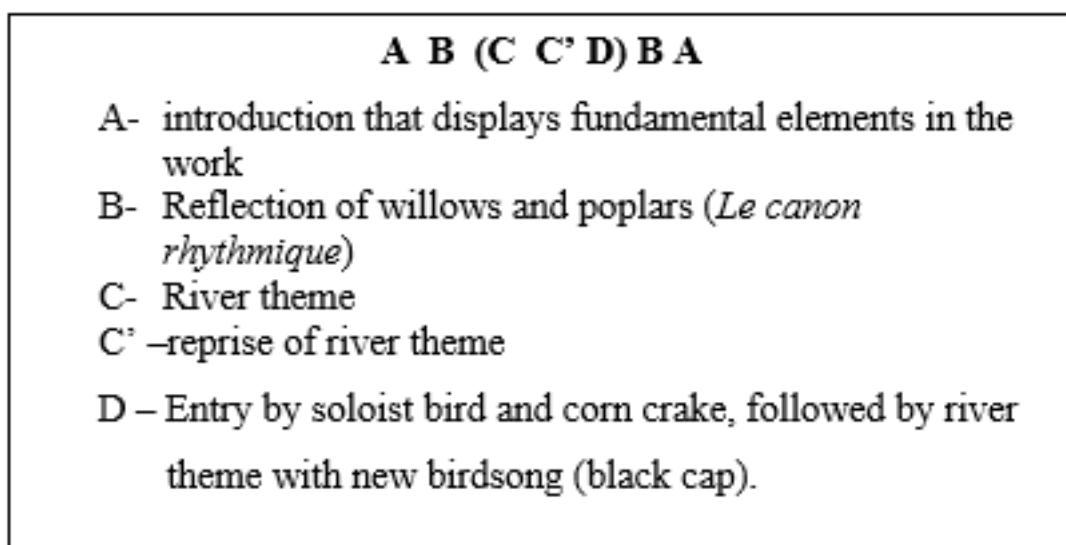
Flow and Structure

The structure of 'La Bouscarle' prompts interesting discussion and analysis due to the inconsistency of how the subjects are organized in comparison with other movements, yet they are at the same time significant due to the harmony and lyricism of the river theme that provides a sense of flow and time. The composer Reverdy (1978, p. 84), who studied with Messiaen, categorized the work according to the non-birdsong subject of the river theme and the reflections, with less focus on the birdsong subjects (Figure 1). Halbreich (2008, p. 249), another pupil of Messiaen, offers another description very similar to Reverdy although in a much simpler format, indicating a long middle section and ending with a coda (A B C B' A' – coda).

Both formats provide a macro viewpoint of the entire structure by focussing on the river and reflection theme. However, this paper suggests another structure by looking not only at the two non-birdsong themes but also the soloist, in that the structure of this movement can be explained by the soloist that serves as the primary theme to lead to other subjects, forming nine groups in total (Figure 2). In contrast with the analyses of Reverdy and Halbreich, the sequence of the river theme based on the A major

tonality suggests another viewpoint in constructing the form of the movement. While serving to indicate the passing of time, we propose that this river theme portrays a question and answer using the open-resolved cadences at the end of each section.

Figure 1 - Summary of the form described by Reverdy (1978)



Working from the point of view that the soloist of this work serves to lead other subjects, nine groups are established: the even numbered groups 2 and 4 function to carry the open cadence of the river theme and the odd numbered groups 3 and 5 use the river theme to close the section. Similar materials are found in the beginning (group 1) and ending (group 9), particularly using the *résonance contractée* that signifies the kingfisher's colour together with the call of the moorhen that only appears in these two groups. Situated in group 2 and in the penultimate group, the significant reflections of willows and poplars contribute a symmetrical landmark for the entire structure, i.e. after the introduction and before the ending. These two reflections pair with the kingfisher in the key of A major, a tonality Messiaen uses in signifying the colour of the bird.

Some similarities can be identified between group 2 to 8 even though the order of the birdsongs and non-birdsong subjects

are not organized strictly in the same order. The odd and even numbers of the group share a certain degree of similarity. Apart from the added harmony litany, group 3 has the same features as group 5. Group 4 resembles group 6, but the wren's call is replaced by the chaffinch's call (marked *). However, looking from a more harmonic context with the tonality and cadence provided by the river theme, this proposes another structure where group 2 pairs with group 3, and group 4 with group 5, in which the ending of the river theme in group 3 (the *comme un tam-tam lointain*) suggests a closed cadence resolution from the ending of the river theme in group 2 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - 'La Bouscarle' (Structure)

<p>Group 1 (Introduction)</p> <p>Cetti's warbler Moorhen Kingfisher Kingfisher (blue and green) <i>Résonance contractée</i> Moorhen <i>Résonance contractée</i> Moorhen</p>	<p>Group 3</p> <p>Cetti's warbler</p> <p>Kingfisher's flight</p> <p>River (c) + Robin R2</p>	<p>Group 5</p> <p>Cetti's warbler</p> <p>Kingfisher's flight + HL</p> <p>River (c) + Robin R2</p>	<p>Group 7</p> <p>Cetti's warbler Corn crake River (CLIMAX) R3 + Black cap</p>	<p>Group 8</p> <p>Cetti's warbler Hoopoe Wren Nightingale Kingfisher's flight + HL</p> <p><i>REFLECTION</i></p> <p>Sand martin Moorhen</p>
<p>Group 2</p> <p>Cetti's warbler <i>REFLECTION</i></p> <p>River (o) + blackbird R1</p>	<p>Group 4</p> <p>Cetti's warbler Corn crake Song thrush</p> <p>Wren *</p> <p>River (o) + Blackbird R1</p>	<p>Group 6</p> <p>Cetti's warbler Corn crake Song thrush Chaffinch*</p>		<p>Group 9 (Ending)</p> <p>Cetti's warbler River (c) + Robin (R2) Corn crake Yellow wagtail Kingfisher Kingfisher (blue and green) <i>Résonance contractée</i> Cetti's warbler</p>

Note: Acronyms: HL, harmony litanies; River (o), open cadence; River (c), close cadence; R1, river theme 1, R2, River theme 2, R3, River theme 3

The following paragraph outlines the construction of the river theme harmony that provides a sense of open-closed cadence with the use of A major tonality from Messiaen mode 3 (1). These harmonies share those with the colour of the kingfisher, described by the composer as blue-green. The open cadence appears at the first occurrence of the river theme in group 2 (R1: example 1) and the theme ends with a closed cadence in group 3 (R2: example 2). What contributes to the significance of the open-closed cadence is the phrase structure of the two sections of R1 and R2, together with the contour of the melody of birdsongs and non-birdsong subjects. While R1 is constructed by a theme in three phrases, it is R2 with a single phrase that serves as an extension of the river phrase that completes the theme. The circling of the similar chords in R2 also signals an ending as the fourth phrase of the river theme. Messiaen's indication of the 'tam-tam' at the lower register that provides a sustaining resonance for the robin's call also gives the effect of a conclusion. The same structure replicates in group 4 and 5.

Example 1 – R1 River theme 'open' cadence p.4-5, bar 46-51.

Merle noir

Très lent (♩=60) Un peu vif (♩=138) *mf* *f* *p*

(la rivière)

mf (calme, chantant, bien timbré) (joyeux et clair)

Très lent (♩=60) Un peu vif (♩=138)

mf *f* *mf* *f*

Très lent (♩=60) Un peu vif (♩=138)

mf

Un peu vif (♩=138)

mf *f* *mf* *pp*

The image displays a musical score for 'Merle noir' by Olivier Messiaen. It is divided into four systems of music. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a 'Très lent' tempo (♩=60) and then changes to 'Un peu vif' (♩=138). The piano part has dynamics of *mf* (calme, chantant, bien timbré) and *f* (joyeux et clair). The second system continues the 'Un peu vif' tempo, with dynamics of *mf* and *f*. The third system returns to 'Très lent' (♩=60) with *mf* dynamics. The fourth system returns to 'Un peu vif' (♩=138) with dynamics of *mf*, *f*, *mf*, and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and fingerings.

Example 2 – R2 River Theme ‘Closed cadence’ p.5-6, bar 57-61.

(la rivière)
 Très lent (♩ = 60)
 mf
 pp
 bassa
 16^a bassa
 (comme un tam-tam lointain)

Example 3 – R3 River Theme, climax section p.12-13, bar 129-140

(la rivière)
 Très lent (♩ = 60)
 mf (calme, chantant, bien timbré)
 Fauvette à tête noire
 Un peu vite (♩ = 132)
 mf (clair et doux)
 Modéré (♩ = 108)
 (refrain joyeux, autoritaire, éclatant)
 (Péd. sempre)
 (Péd. sempre)
 Très lent (♩ = 60)
 Un peu vite (♩ = 132)
 mf (clair et doux)
 Modéré (♩ = 108)
 (refrain joyeux, autoritaire, éclatant)
 (Péd. sempre)
 (Péd. sempre)

(la rivière)
Très lent (♩ = 80)

15

Un peu vif (♩ = 132) Fauvette à tête noire
(clair et doux)

(Péd. sempre)

The importance of the river theme also includes its role in presenting the climax (R3) for 'La Bouscarle' (example 3 in group 7). Being the longest section and introducing a new birdsong (the blackcap), its modulation to the dominant key of E major also marks a main cadence point. The effect of the climax also comes from the reiteration of the dominant chord emphasized in the short descending motif, before landing permanently for the entry of the

long black cap phrase. Features of R1 and R2 are included in R3, for example, the melodic contour in an inverted version (examples 1 'x' and 3 'x') and a melodic line with different harmonies (examples 2 'y' and 3 'y'). The river theme ends with R2 which again provides a closed cadence leading to the conclusion of the movement. The overall architecture of the river theme can be described as below:

$$(R1 + R2) \rightarrow (R1 + R2) \rightarrow R3 \rightarrow R2$$

(Climax)

Using a different entity in nature, the flow of the river theme serves the same function as the sunrise–sunset theme in 'Le Traquet Stapazin', in simulating the passage of time, while introducing other birdsongs and non-birdsong subjects. Both themes in these two pieces are superimposed on the birdsong sections.

Harmonic Colour of Non-birdsong subjects

Colour representation in 'La Bouscarle' comes from the plumage of the kingfisher, which is blue-green (described by the composer as *flèche bleue-verte du Martin-pêcheur*), and not from its song. The colours are presented harmonically using two motifs based on mode 3 and in the key of A major. Messiaen's portrayal of water, sea, and river using A major can also be reaffirmed with other movements of the *Catalogue*, which are 'Le Merle Bleu' and 'Le Traquet Rieur', as mentioned earlier. Elsewhere, whether or not it is a coincidence, the A major also recalls Debussy's *L'isle joyeuse* (1904), portraying an island, which is again related to the sea and water. The first motif of the kingfisher moves in one ascending chromatic chordal phrase with lightning speed (*flèche bleue-verte du Martin-pêcheur*), while the second uses alternating chords and single notes to represent the flight, as if the flapping of the wings (*vol nuptial du Martin-pêcheur*). This flight closely resembles the *Thème et Variations* in *Poèmes Pour Mi* (CHADWICK & HILL, 2018, p. 158).

The ascending-chromatic-chord motif that portrays the colour of the kingfisher establishes the A major tonality in this movement (example 4a) which is constructed from Messiaen's mode 3 (3rd transposition). Messiaen's economic use of material across his works is visible here, as this motif derives from the descending piano chordal passage in *Turangalîla*, although with another tonality in Eb major chord (example 4b). The exploration of a similar motif in portraying different subjects is one of Messiaen's characteristics in many movements of the *Catalogue* as well. Appearing in two occurrences, the extremely fast tempo in this motif may portray a flash of flight and at the same time provide a frame for the entire work – at the beginning and ending.

Example 4a – Kingfisher's Flight p.1, bar 9-10

(fêche bleue-verte du Martin-pêcheur)
Très vite (♩ = 200)
f (brillant)
(Péd. sempre)
5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1 *

Example 4b – *Turangalîla* 1. Introduction p.33

pp mf ff
Ped *

The second colour representation of the kingfisher's flight occurs between groups 3 and 8 which the composer describes as *très rapide, scintillement dun bijou bleu et vert*. The portrayal of this flight is represented by two different patterns of chordal passages. The first is a single note against a chordal right hand figure (using transpositions from mode 3) with a pure single-note arpeggio in A major ending with E major in the left; the second is a consistent

right hand chordal passage moving in parallel with the left hand single-note using A and E though omitting the third (examples 5a and 6a). Harmonically, the blue-green colour is represented by a fundamental A major tonality in the left hand, tinted with the chordal passages using mode 3 in right hand. Although in a complex and abstract harmony, the fundamental use of 1 to V cadence is obviously heard in this figure. The extremely fast tempo with the ascending and descending movement could depict the bird's movement such as the flapping of wings. While its occurrences are always short, lasting two or three bars, the third appearance of the flight at group 8 provides a long passage which parallels how the work and subject develops alongside the climax of the river theme. Interestingly, the first pattern is associated closely with an earlier work, 'Regard du silence', from *Vingt Regards* (p. 130) (example 5b).

Example 5a – Kingfisher's Flight p.5, bar 54-56

(vol nuptial du Martin-pêcheur)
Extrêmement vif (♩ = 184)

p (*très rapide, scintillement d'un bijou bleu et vert*)

(Péd. sempre)

Péd.

** Péd.*

Example 5b – *Vingt Regards* 'Regard du silence', p.130

Modéré, presque vif (♩=120)

The musical score for 'Regard du silence' is presented in two staves. The tempo is 'Modéré, presque vif' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats. The music is in G major and 3/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays a bass line with dyads. The piece is marked 'p' (piano) and consists of 8 measures.

The second flight sounds closely like the first, although in a slower tempo. Somewhat similarly constructed, the overall idea is technically more demanding, generated by chords in first inversion moving in parallel between both hands (example 6a). Again, this idea occurred in the theme of Golaud in *Pelléas* in 'Amen des Anges, des Saints, du chant des oiseaux' from *Visions de l'Amen*, (see examples 6b and 6c) (MESSIAEN, 1999, p. 260). Unlike the first pattern, the omission of 3rds leaving a bare perfect fifth on this account may pose a much more blatant and lighter flight. The harmonic litany that features the repetition of a harmony series follows this flight idea, one of Messiaen's idiosyncrasies (MESSIAEN, 1944, p. 42) that occurs in many of his works (examples 7a and 7b). Although without any description by the composer, the characteristic of the dyads that move in semitones by inner notes, while at the same time surrounded by similar outer notes, creates an image of a horizontal flight.

Example 6a – Kingfisher's flight p.8, bar 89-90.

Très vif (♩ = 144)
mf (vol nuptial du Martin-pêcheur)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers bars 89 and 90. The second system covers bars 91 and 92. The music is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 144 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and pedaling markings (Ped.). The second system also includes pedaling markings (Ped.).

Example 6b – *Visions de l'Amen*, from the fifth movement 'Amen des Anges, des Saints, du chant des oiseaux' p. 53

joyeux (♩ = 144)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers bars 19 and 20. The second system covers bars 21 and 22. The music is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 144 beats per minute. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The first system includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and pedaling markings (Ped.). The second system includes pedaling markings (Ped.).

Example 6c – Messiaen's *Traité* Vol. 3 p. 260

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers bars 1 and 2. The second system covers bars 3 and 4. The music is in 3/4 time. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The first system includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and pedaling markings (Ped.). The second system includes pedaling markings (Ped.).

Example 7a – 'La Bouscarle', *Harmony Litany*, p. 9, bar 91-95.



Example 7b – Messiaen's *Technique de mon langage* (example 246)

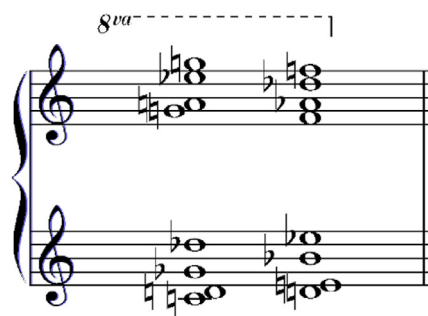


Followed by the crescendo at the end of the harmonic litany (example 8a), the peak of this figure uses a descending series of dyads in both hands, portraying a sudden dive and then rising with great force (*ff*); the slower tempo in ascent thus naturally depicting the weight and intensity required in flying to a higher position. The *résonance contractée* is used for each quaver chord at *rall. molto* to terminate the flight description. Appearing as early as in *Quatour pour la fin du temps* 'Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du temps' though written in *Presque lent*, this harmonic pattern is Messiaen's *résonance inférieure contractée* (example 8b and 8c) (MESSIAEN, 1944, p. 39). Messiaen's economical use of the same harmony can also be detected in 'Amen des étoiles' from *Visions* (example 8d) and in *Harawi* 'Syllabes' (example 8e).

Example 8a – Kingfisher's flight after *Harmony Litany*, p.9, bar 96-97.



Example 8b – Messiaen's *résonance inférieure contractée* from *Traité Vol. 2*



Example 8c – *Quatour pour la fin du temps*, 2. 'Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du temps' at *Presque lent*, p.9

Musical score for Example 8c, *Quatour pour la fin du temps*, 2. 'Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du temps' at *Presque lent*, p.9. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a tempo marking of *Presque lent, impalpable, lointain* (♩ = 50 env.). The music is characterized by a series of chords, with a tempo marking of *PPP (quintes d'ou en arc-en-ciel)*. The score includes markings for *Sordine* (mute) for the violin and viola.

Example 8d – *Visions du l'Amen 'Amen des étoiles'*, p.19

Musical score for Example 8d, 'Visions du l'Amen' (Amen des étoiles), page 19. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano (p) dynamic. It consists of three staves: a vocal line (1^{re}) and two piano accompaniment staves (2^e and 3^e). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A '6th' is indicated above the first staff, and '8^{va} bassa' is indicated below the third staff. There are also asterisks (*) and 'Ped.' markings.

Example 8e – *Harawi 'Syllabes'* p.59

Musical score for Example 8e, 'Harawi' (Syllabes), page 59. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano (p) dynamic. It consists of three staves: a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The vocal line has the syllables 'pia pia pia pia' written below it. The piano accompaniment includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also 'Ped.' markings and an asterisk (*) at the end of the piece.

Colour of the River Theme

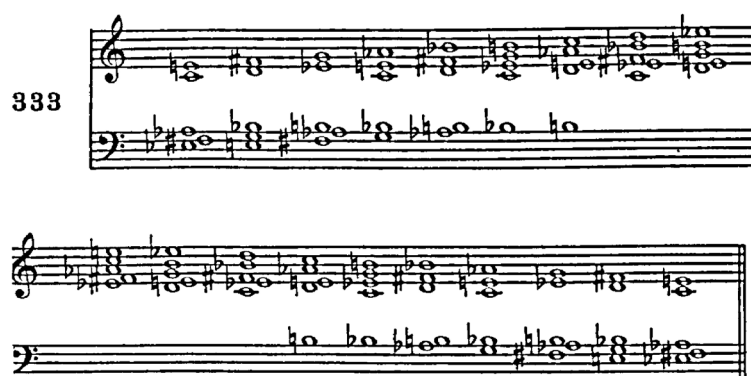
This section explains how the harmony increases the importance of colour in this movement. Although colour for this motif is not indicated by the composer, it is clear that the river theme shares the same harmonies with the kingfisher's flight (example 4a), although presenting a clear resolve of A major 6th at the end of a phrase. Another interesting point is that the top voice of every concluding phrase uses one of the A major triad (example 1), the first A, second E and third C#.

The harmonic language of the river theme is not new where the composer uses the chord progression of mode 3, as shown

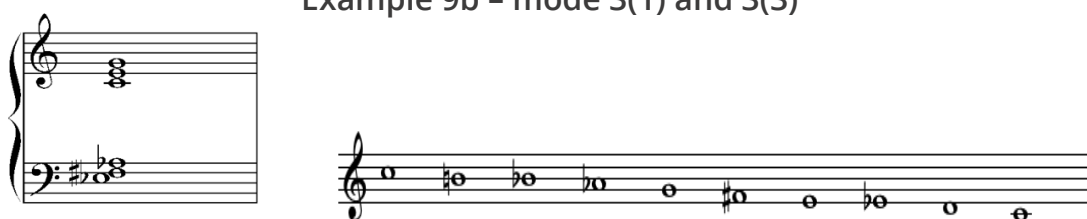
in his *Technique de mon langage musical* (TLM) Vol. 2 (1944) p. 52, example 333 (see example 9a). The first phrase uses the tonic triad from the third transposition of mode 3(3) (that provide a direct D major triad RH) (example 9b). The second phrase thus uses mode 3(1) as we can see that the first and second chords of the theme are directly taken from the given progression in Messiaen's TLM (see example 1 and 9a). Appearing in a few other earlier works, again, this must have been one of Messiaen's favourite harmonies. For example, in the form of a grand arpeggio pattern in 'Regard du silence' p. 131 (example 9c). The composer further stated this harmony has close similarity to Ravel's 'Ondine' (MESSIAEN, 1999). Recalling an example in *Turangalila* on p. 17 (example 4b), the same chord progression appears similar to the first motif of the kingfisher's flight though in a descending form (see 'La Bouscarle', p. 1).

Example 9a – Messiaen's *Technique de mon langage musical* Vol.2 p.52, example 333

333



Example 9b – mode 3(1) and 3(3)



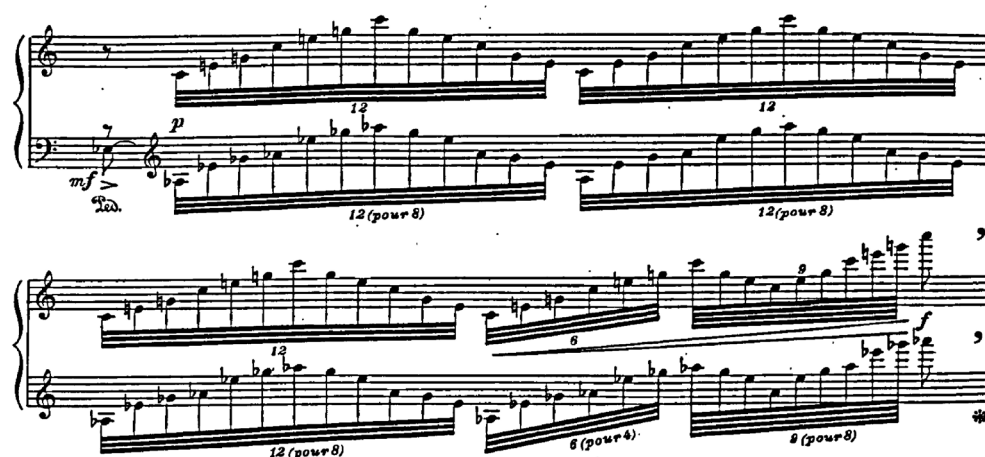
Mode 3 (1)



Mode 3 (3)

The image shows two musical examples. The first, labeled 'Mode 3 (1)', consists of a piano introduction with a treble and bass clef, followed by a single melodic line on a five-line staff. The second, labeled 'Mode 3 (3)', is a single melodic line on a five-line staff.

Example 9c - 'Regard du silence' p.131



The image displays a musical score for 'Regard du silence' p.131. It features two systems of music. The first system includes a piano part (left hand and right hand) and a vocal line. The piano part has markings for 'mf' and 'p'. The vocal line has markings for 'p' and 'mf'. The second system continues the piano and vocal parts. Performance markings include '12 (pour 8)', '6 (pour 4)', and '8 (pour 8)'. The score ends with a double bar line and a sharp sign.

Overall, the tonal harmony generated from the river theme thus provides the same character as in 'Theme of God' from *Vingt Regards*, and in 'Amour oiseaux des étoiles' from *Harawi*. Although with a different tonality in F# major, the melodic contours for both examples and the way they resolve resemble the river theme in 'La Bouscarle'. *Harawi* mirrors even more closely the structure of the river theme where the entry of the birdsong is superimposed on the last sustaining chord at the end of the phrase. While bearing a similarity to a certain extent, the two examples in F# major depict entirely different subjects (the 'Theme of God' and the painting by Penrose), in contrast to the natural phenomenon of the river.

Non-harmonic colour using Serial language

While 'La Bouscarle' is significant in its representation of colour, both sections of the calm serene reflection of willows and poplars make a huge contrast to the more tonal and lyrical river theme and the brusque soloist call. Its function in creating an emotion could be associated with the night music 'La Chouette Hulotte' (The Tawny Owl), and one wonders whether this is coincidental or planned in advance by the composer, as this owl movement is in a symmetrical position in *Catalogue d'oiseaux* with 'La Bouscarle'. However, the complicated and complete serialism of *mode de valuer* in the portrayal of dark and fear in 'La Chouette Hulotte' contrasts with the serenity of the reflections in 'La Bouscarle' that omit the mode of dynamics and articulations. Another feature of this reflection similar to the *mode de valuer* in other works is the 2/4 time, a time signature rather favoured by the composer in presenting the serial section (LOO & LOO, 2019). While in a simpler organization, the rhythmic sequences in 'La Bouscarle' offer some interesting points (example 10a).

Example 10a – Reflection Music p.2, bar 20-24

(l'eau reflète les saules et les peupliers)

Viv (♩ = 152)

pp (liquide et fluide)

(sourdine) $\frac{2}{4}$

Example 10b – Reflection Music p.3, bar 27-28 and bar 36-37

The image displays two excerpts of a musical score for piano. The first excerpt, labeled '27', shows two staves. The right hand (RH) has a melodic line with a bracketed 'x' above it, and the left hand (LH) has a corresponding line with a '1' below it. The second excerpt, labeled '36', also shows two staves. The RH has a melodic line with a bracketed 'x' above it, and the LH has a line with '2' and '3' below it. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and '8va basso'.

Many references have revealed the significance of these two passages of reflection, which flow with a rhythmic canon in augmentation, with the left hand moving an added semiquaver against the right (REVERDY, 1978; HALBREIGH, 2008; CHEONG, 2014). The construction from the twelve-note writing of Messiaen's symmetrical permutation was analysed in detail where the first passage uses the inversion of 1-22 and the second uses 23-35 (CHEONG, 2007; CHEONG, 2014). However, on a simpler figuration in the first passage, we can also see from the tabulation of the value and augmentation that an identifiable number of patterns emerge (4224 424 and 5335 535 as in Figure 3). The combination of the first groups is recapitulated, forming an ABA form within the right-hand passage. Seemingly serving as the climax, the much longer duration of 12 (RH) and 13(LH) marks the end of the phrase. However, nor the formation of this figuration disappear in the second reflection passage (pp. 17–18), the 2/4 time was also abandoned by the composer. Another main difference is the additional silences in between the twelve-note permutation, similar to the lake passage

at the ending of 'La Rousserolle Effarvate'; the rest may function to further simulate the distance and tranquillity of the reflection.

Figure 3 – Rhythmic Value in the Reflection of Willows and Poplars

First Passage

RH	[4224 424] [333] [4224 424] [232] [12] [222 3] [222 3] [23] [4]
	[44] [24] [4224 424] [333] [4224 424] [232] [12]
LH	[5335 535] [444] [5335 535] [343] [13] [333 4] [333 4] [34] [5]
	[9] [35]

Note: In the right hand, the first five groups are repeated again giving an ABA form.

Second passage

RH	[2244] [rest] [24 333 422 431] [rest] [232] [12*] [23 445] [2223] [2223] [2223] [23]
LH	[445] [rest] [595 51] [rest] [5535] [343] [13*] [23331]

Note:

- a) The only definite set of the formation is [343] [13] from the LH contrary to [232] [12].
- b) [2223] is repeated three times on the LH, which is derived from the first passage.

Interpreting from a pianist's perspective, configuring a sense of phrasing from this type of serial writing provides a meaningful imitation to the subject (example 10b 'x'). In this instance, the arch of contour from Debussy's 'Reflets dans l'eau' as stated in Messiaen's *Technique de mon langage* could serve as a good example in providing a resolve on the second beat. Elsewhere, the two crotchet beats in the right hand at bars 21 and 33 can also function to signal an ending of a phrase.

Birdsongs

Being a relatively short movement, few of the birdsongs in 'La Bouscarle' are written in long strophes. Despite the short solo of the Cetti's warbler and the slightly longer nightingale and robin songs, other secondary birdcalls are organized together to form smaller sections, similar to many movements in the *Catalogue*. The structure and character of 'La Bouscarle' is highlighted with a contrasting attribute of the birdsong and habitat – the brusque and violent proclamation of the Cetti's warbler as opposed to the serenity of the river theme and the tranquil reflection of willows and poplars. The contrasting quality also occurs similarly to the birdsongs; led by the soloist, the calls of the moorhen, kingfisher, and the corncrake are short and brief, opposing the more melodious birdsongs such as those of the blackbird, robin, and blackcap that serves as a companion to the river theme. The transcriptions of these calls and birdsongs can be traced precisely from Messiaen's notebooks No. MS23009 and MS23056 (1) & (2) (HILL, 2013, p.168; HILL, 2016, p. 71; BENITEZ, 2017)

The Brusque Call of the Soloist: The Cetti's Warbler

Characterized as *brusque et violent*, the Cetti's warbler's call has the same description as the soloist of 'Le Traquet Stapazin' in book 2 (example 11a). The transcription of the soloist is close to Messiaen's notebook MS23009 p. 19 in a single line notation; along with the close similar pattern, the top pitch of the first and last note are identical with the score. This call similarly appears in *Réveil* (example 11b) although it was not harmonized but transcribed with a single line melody by the clarinet. According to the composer in *Traité Vo. V* (MESSIAEN, 1999, p. 625), this bird is not always visible but can be heard near rivers and damp areas. Its timbre is described as the sound of a small trumpet together with a tambourine, and it is extremely powerful and authoritative.

Example 11a – Cetti Warbler’s call p.1, bar 1-3.

The image shows a piano score for 'Bouscarle'. It consists of two staves. The first staff is marked 'Modéré (♩ = 108)' and the second staff is marked 'Un peu vif (♩ = 138)'. The tempo changes from 'Modéré' to 'Un peu vif' at the beginning of the second bar. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (brusque et violent) and *ff*. There are also performance instructions like 'Red.' and asterisks. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Example 11b – *Réveil des oiseaux*, Cetti Warbler’s call, p.3

The image shows a musical score for 'Réveil des oiseaux' featuring multiple instruments: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Cello (Cél.). The score is divided into sections for 'Bouscarle' and 'Alouette lulu'. The 'Bouscarle' section is marked 'Modéré (♩ = 92) (batterie des doubles croches)'. The 'Alouette lulu' section is marked 'Alouette lulu (batterie à la croche)'. There are various performance instructions, including 'cresc.', 'effets: une 2^e plus haut', and 'Mouvement noir'. The score includes dynamic markings like *pp* and *ff*.

Although the call of the Cetti’s warbler varies, it is constructed based on two patterns: it usually starts with three accented chords and is followed by a rotating group or repeated notes (as in *Réveil* although in single-note melody), which occasionally ends with an *acciaccatura* (such as in the second variation in ‘La Bouscarle’). It seems that the version in *Catalogue* was even more meticulously transcribed, as both motifs are written in different metronome markings, with the rotating pattern faster in speed. A much lighter texture of this soloist is transcribed in group 7, perhaps signalling the climax section for the river theme.

The Melodious Blackbird, Robin, and Blackcap

The sudden change of contrast is a prominent characteristic of Messiaen’s musical style in this documentation of birdsongs in the

Catalogue. This abrupt change of character and mood constructed from the portrayal of the birdsong habitat also contributes to the difficulty of piano playing. The three contrasting birdsongs are significant due to their much quieter, smoother and melodious character, and their presence is allied with the river theme to which these songs serve as an afterthought. The entries of all the blackbird's songs are positioned strictly at the 'open cadence' of the river theme (groups 2 and 4), while the robin consistently serves to conclude the 'closed cadence' (groups 3, 5, and 9). Its more gentle and delicate melodic style is probably the main reason why the robin's song is used to conclude the river theme, while at the same time serving as a resolution. An exact transcription of the robin's excerpt (bar 213, example 12a) was found on the same page of Messiaen's notebook MS23008 p.19, right beside the transcription of the Cetti's warbler. The blackcap, however, serves as the climax section (group 7) with several phrases, and this birdsong only appears once throughout the movement. All three birdsongs share a similar timbre where they sing above the sustaining chord from the river theme in a high register; perhaps the only difference can be detected from their melodic contour.

Although it appears only once, it is worth paying more attention to the blackcap's song since it is a familiar birdsong often used by Messiaen, in *Réveil*, *Chronochromie*, *La Transfiguration*, *La Fauvette des Jardins*, *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinite*, *Saint François d'Assise*, and *Un vitrail et des oiseaux*. The birdsong is described extensively in *Traité*, Vol. 5, including many transcriptions taken by the composer from Petichet in 1980 (example 12b). Accordingly, phrases of this birdsong are full of rests and audible only when the bird is near due to its soft dynamic (MESSIAEN Vol. V, 1999, p. 314). Perhaps it is the capricious and delicate motif (*clair et doux*) that is the reason why Messiaen chooses the blackcap's song for the climax section of the river theme, additionally it provides a triumphant motif at the end of each phrase as the composer indicates it as *refrain joyeux, autoritaire, éclatant*. The blackcap's song displays its virtuosity in one of the piano cadenzas (example 12c) in

Réveil, written in octave playing by both hands, one of Messiaen's idiosyncrasies in the piano depiction of birdsong. Interestingly, the two examples share a similar metronome marking (Quaver = 132), although each refrain of the blackcap at the climax section of the river theme in 'La Bouscarle' ends with a slower tempo in projecting the joyous and authoritative character. Elsewhere, the blackcap's song in 'La Bouscarle' overall is also gentler in comparison to the more articulate rendition in *Réveil*. Looking at the composer's indication of '*clair et doux*', this much gentler interpretation may be required to be compatible with the tranquillity of the river.

The significance of the blackcap's song can be seen in 'The Sermon to the Birds' from the opera *Saint François d'Assise*, presenting what the composer has described as the extremely complicated rhythmic organization such as the 'Hors Tempo' written for the orchestra (MESSIAEN Vol. V, 1999, p. 237). With a slower tempo than the two works mentioned above, it appears after the turtle dove when Brother Masseo introduces the birdsongs at the Carceri. As explained by the composer, the blackcap is the *capinera*: 'which is to say the blackcap of Assisi, whose song is always entrusted to the entire woodwind section with a suspended-cymbal trill' (SAMUEL, 1994, p. 237).

Example 12a – Robin's song, bar 213

Rouge-gorge
Un peu vif (♩)=126

pp (*liquide, confiant*)
(*Péd. sempre*)

Example 12b – Messiaen's *Traité*, Vol. 5, p.314

Fauvette à tête noire (Petichet - 29 juin 1980 - 16 h.)

Modéré

Example 12c – *Réveil des oiseaux*, blackcap's song, p.42

28 Presque vif (♩ = 132)
Fauvette à tête noire

Piano Solo

[poco rall.] [poco rall.]

à la fois appuyé, autoritaire *f* *pp* *f*

(en a parte)

The Crowd: Other Birdsongs or Birdcalls

Except for the more melodious songs of the nightingale and robin, all secondary birdcalls are articulated, short and fast from a musical perspective. Many of these short calls can be found in Messiaen's notebook MS23009 at p. 21 with the transcription of hoopoe right at the top of the page, followed by the corn crake and the moorhen. In terms of structural arrangement, groups 4 and 6 are practically identical in terms of the order of the material, although the wren is interchanged with the chaffinch.

The wren and chaffinch are two common birds whose distinct and easily identified characters are used in many works of Messiaen. The transcription of the wren at example 13 can be found in the composer's notebook MS23009 on pages 23 and 33, although not exactly identical, the leaps, top pitch B natural and the rotation with C-B are mirrored. The wren's song can be recognized starting with intervals and leaps, followed by some repeated pitch and rotating pattern before it concludes its phrase (example 13). The chaffinch is even easier to recognize from the beginning of the motif (the first note is always slightly longer) with some repeated pitch, later moving down a tone or semitone, and followed by a rotating pattern with a strong leap to terminate its phrase (example 14). As transcribed at page 14 in the same notebook, again, the tonality is fairly closed; the repeated notes are F natural instead although the leap of the last two notes (Bb and Ab) are identical. The piano transcription in 'La Bouscarle' is even detailed with the dynamic marking from *p* -*mf* -*f* at the beginning of the phrase. The three chaffinches that respond to each other make a much more interesting appearance in *La Fauvette des Jardins*; they all present the same characteristics, although each corresponds to a lower pitch than the previous song. In contrast, they have a closer interval and denser harmonization than the wren. The triumphant and strongly articulated song thrush in 'La Bouscarle' is identical to the same species that appears in other movements (example 15a). This could be recognized by its significant *glissando*-like ascent figure in

which also appears in 'Le Loriot' (example 15b). Presenting in two occurrences, it always appears after the corncrake's call

Example 13 – 'La Bouscarle', Wren's song, p. 14, bar 147-150.

Troglodyte
Vir (♩=160)
f
Ped.
+ Ped. III
Ped.
16
8
(Ped. sempre)
* Ped. * Ped. * □
A. L. 22.945

Example 14 – 'La Bouscarle', Chaffinch's song, p.11, bar 122-124.

Pinson
Vir (♩=144) pressez (♩=160)
p mf f ff
Ped.
(Ped. sempre)
*

Example 15a – 'La Bouscarle', Song Thrush's song, p.10, bar 110-115.

Grive musicienne
vif (♩=144)
mf (perlé, liquide)
ff (arraché)
mf

Example 15b – 'Le Lorient', Song thrush's song, p.10

Grive musicienne
vif (♩=144)
ff (actif, incantatoire, bien prononcé)
ff

Having the role of framing the movement, the calls of the kingfisher and the moorhen are positioned in the introduction and at the end. The call of the kingfisher, transcribed as two consistent short bursts with consistent rests in between (example 16), resembles the moorhen's. However, the moorhen's appears with much variation and animation, marching upwards in semitones and exploding with a loud chord at the end of its phrase (example 17). In contrast, calls in the lower register come from the corncrake and

the hoopoe, which are similarly presented throughout with cluster chords in contributing a coarse timbre (example 18). Like the sand martin, the hoopoe (example 19a) has only one appearance in the entire movement, and its quiet and constant call sounds almost like the quail's in 'L'Alouette Calandrelle'. The composer indicated in the preface that the hoopoe's call is like an anapaestic rhythm in poetry that defines two short unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable. The full timbre of the call is similar to that on page 21 of the notebook at MS23009 mentioned above except for the lower pitch in the right hand. The same applies to the moorhen in which bar 4-6 and the corncrake (as in example 18) are identical to the transcription of the same page in the notebook, including all pitches, dynamics and articulation.

Example 16 – Kingfisher's call, p.1, bar 7

Martin-pêcheur
Un peu vif (♩ = 126)

mf (sec)

Example 17 – Moorhen's call, p.1, bar 4-6

Poule d'eau
Un peu vif (♩ = 126)

f (piqué, pointu, très sec)
p
ff (explosif)
f
mf

(sans péd.)

ped. 1 2 3 *

Example 18 – Corncrake’s call, p.6, 65-66

Rôle de genêts
 Presque lent (♩ = 104)

8^{va} b.
 (râclé, bruit de scie et de récu-réco)

8^{va} b.
 sans péd.

Example 19 – a) Hoopoe’s call in ‘La Bouscarle’, p.14, 144-145

b) Hoopoe’s call in *Réveil des oiseaux* p.11

A
 Huppe
 Lent (♩ = 92)

mf (étouffé, monotone)

8^{va} b.
 * * * * *

B
 Très vif (♩ = 100)

p (effet: une 2^e plus bas)

p cri de la Huppe

p (timbre désagréable)

With a longer section than any other birdsong, the sand martin’s song (example 20) appears after the reflection section, providing a bridge between the recap of the quiet ‘reflection’ and the animated moorhen’s call. Another call that has only one appearance is the yellow wagtail (example 21), like the herring gull characterized by the *acciaccatura*, it occurs near the ending after the corncrake.

Example 20 – Sand martin's song, p.18, 195-199

Hirondelle
de rivage

vir (♩ = 144)

pp *p* *pp* *p* *mf*

sourdine

Example 21 – Yellow wagtail's call, p.20, bar 216-217.

Bergeronnette printanière

Moderé (♩ = 108)

mf *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

The timbre of these short birdsongs calls was much detailed in Messiaen's orchestral works. For the wren's song, the composer highlighted its timbre using the woodwind section in the orchestra in *Saint François d'Assise*, 6 tableau, 'le Prêche aux oiseaux' (pp. 48 and 49), although the rotating pattern does not occur. The song thrush's song also appears in *Réveil* with a detailed transcription written for the orchestra *tutti*. According to Messiaen (SAMUEL, 1994, p. 89),

The song thrush is one of the most brilliant birds, and although each individual thrush has its own invention, the song is still quite

recognizable. It's an incantatory sort of song with strophes generally repeated three times. But! These strophes are never identical, which is to say, the bird invents a strophe, repeats it three times, then invents another, also repeated three times, and the next day it'll invent another dozen of them, all repeated thrice, but after the three repetitions, it's over; the thrush invents a new strophe, repeated in its turn. Moreover, within these strophes, the rhythms are excessively pronounced and varied, and they accompany melodies of timbres.

Similarly found in *Réveil*, the hoopoe's call is transcribed using a mixture of wind instruments (example 19b). However, both are marked with a contrasting tempo where *Réveil* with *Très vif*, and *Lent* in 'La Bouscarle'. A possible reason for the contrasting tempo may be that a different species of hoopoe was transcribed in 1953 than in 1957, or the tempo was aimed to suit the characteristics of the particular repertoire.

Conclusion

This paper analyses how the birdsong and non-birdsong subjects contribute to the construction 'La Bouscarle', one of the *Catalogue* movements. As in 'La Chouette Hulotte', the significance of this movement derives much from the habitat which in fact functions to contribute to the overall construction of the work. In this movement, the river theme provides the backbone and creates the architecture of the work, while displaying its calm and serene character that supports the contrasts of the robust call of the Cetti's warbler, the soloist. The highlights of the river theme can be found in how Messiaen explored mode 3 to present a more tonal harmony for the river theme and the kingfisher that signifies the colour of blue. It also provides a distinguished tonality to the movement in comparison with others in the *Catalogue*. In contrast, the serially constructed *mode de valeur* that represents the reflection of the willow and poplars suggests a non-colour

(reflection) description, similarly used to describe the darkness in 'La Chouette Hulotte'. This article also highlighted the composer's economical use of musical ideas in which the birdsong and non-birdsong subjects in 'La Bouscarle' are commonly shared in his other works. This is why his musical language can be discerned easily from his repertory which also marks the significance of the composer's overall compositions.

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