

The nature, portrayal of eternity and economic use of non-birdsong subjects in La rousserolle effarvate, from Catalogue D'oiseaux by Oliver Messiaen

A natureza, a representação da eternidade e o uso econômico de temas não relacionados ao canto dos pássaros em La rousserolle effarvate, do Catalogue D'oiseaux de Oliver Messiaen



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Abstract: This paper examines the longest work from Catalogue d'oiseaux, La rousserolle effarvate, focusing on the non-birdsong subjects that depict the nature and habitat of the solo birdsong, the reed warbler. The analysis reveals that Messiaen used the time of day and non-birdsong subjects to structure the work, incorporating elements such as pond music, sunrise and sunset, and flower themes. It also shows that many of the non-birdsong subjects employ Messiaen's harmonic language, including *résonance contractée*, *thème d'accords*, and others, to represent these subjects. Many of the harmonic progressions used in this work appear in previous compositions such as *Le Merle Noir* (1952), *Turungalîla-Symphonie* (1946-48), and *Cantéyodjayâ* (1949),

indicating Messiaen's economical use of material, which may also explain the significance of his compositions.

Keywords: Oliver Messiaen, Catalogue d'oiseaux, La rousserolle effarvatte, nature, non-birdsong subjects

Resumo: Este artigo examina o trabalho mais longo do Catalogue d'oiseaux, La rousserolle effarvatte, concentrando-se nos temas não relacionados ao canto dos pássaros que retratam a natureza e o habitat do canto dos pássaros solitário, a toutinegra-dos-juncos. A análise revela que Messiaen utilizou a hora do dia e assuntos não relacionados ao canto dos pássaros para estruturar a obra, incorporando elementos como música de lago, nascer e pôr do sol e temas florais. Também mostra que muitos dos temas que não cantam os pássaros empregam a linguagem harmônica de Messiaen, incluindo *résonance contractée*, *thème d'accords* e outros, para representar esses temas. Muitas das progressões harmônicas usadas neste trabalho aparecem em composições anteriores, como *Le Merle Noir* (1952), *Turangalila-Symphonie* (1946-48) e *Cantéyodjayâ* (1949), indicando o uso econômico do material por Messiaen, o que também pode explicar a importância de suas composições.

Palavras-chave: Oliver Messiaen, Catalogue d'oiseaux, La rousserolle effarvatte, natureza, assuntos que não sejam o canto dos pássaros.

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1. Introduction

'La rousserolle effarvate' (LRE) from *Catalogue d'oiseaux* is the fourth book in the series and is arranged at the central position as the longest of the thirteen movements, lasting approximately thirty to thirty-five minutes. In contrast, 'L'alouette Calandrelle' (the short-toed lark) is much shorter, running for only five and a half minutes. Set in the Sologne region—encompassing Saint Viâtre, Nouan le Fuzelier, Salbris, and Marcilly in Gault—'La rousserolle effarvate' is not only the lengthiest movement but also a programmatic piece that spans a detailed observation of over 24 hours, a total of 27 hours from midnight until 3 a.m. The use of time of the day to examine the structure of the work is similarly stated in Kang (2020) and Kraft's (2000) analysis. The music transcribed at the beginning reappears at the end, symbolizing the cyclical nature of daily events and the perpetual essence of nature. This work serves as a thorough auditory documentation of nature, creatively transformed into music by Messiaen, despite lacking a visual component.

Like other movements in *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, the non-birdsong elements in this piece typically depict the environment, weather, and other aspects related to the solo birdsong. In 'La rousserolle effarvate,' notable non-birdsong themes include the sounds of the pond, representations of the marsh, sunrise and sunset, and three floral motifs. These elements not only shape the habitat for the solo birdsongs but also reflect natural aspects such as time, the daily cycle, and indirectly, the concept of eternity. This paper will analyze the non-birdsong themes in 'La rousserolle effarvate'. First, we will examine the structure of the work.

2. Structure

Given the extensive range of subjects (both birdsong and non-birdsong), the structure of this movement may seem intricate. For example, it incorporates sixteen distinct birdsongs or calls beyond those of the warblers. The non-birdsong elements in the work include the landscape (such as the pond), sunrise and sunset

to depict the time of day, the music of the 'solemn night,' sounds from the marshes, and three types of flowers: the yellow iris, purple foxglove, and water lily. The essential framework for the birdsongs is comprised of the pond, flowers, and marshes. Beyond the habitat, it is the concept of 'time' that integrates all the other elements, aligning with Messiaen's concept of the musical flow.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall structure of the movement as organized according to the time indicated by Messiaen. The specified times create a logical framework for the movement, which can be summarized in an ABCB'A' format, giving the music a quasi-palindromic structure. The central part of the piece features four main strophe groups that alternate with the 'flower' themes, serving as a development section leading to the climax. The reed warbler theme reappears before the conclusion of the 'music of the pond,' providing symmetry with its initial appearance (Figure 1: RW1 and RW8). The recurrence of the reed warbler symbolizes eternity and the daily cycle, reflecting similar themes.

The following analysis reveals how each subject plays a role in the music while relating to nature. The table highlights how these subjects are grouped and how they expand into larger sections. For instance, the sunrise motif paired with the blackbird and red-back shrike's duet, including the red-start in the middle, forms a distinct section of five phrases (Figure 1, S). Similarly, the flowers in the development section occur between warbler strophes (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The structure of 'La rousserolle effarvate'

Section	Time	Content	Indication	Other
A	Midnight 12:00am	Introduction (habitat)	M.P + fg + b+	
B	3:00am	Main Strophe 1 Night +Habitat Sunrise(1) and birds Sunrise(2)and birds	RW1 + pause n+ m(a)+ n+ m(b)+ f+ n S1+ (bb and r.b.s) S1+ (bb and r.b.s) S1+ r.s S2+bb S2+(bb and r.b.s) S2+(bb and r.b.s)	Sunrise's form (S) a a b c a' a'
	8:00am Midday 12:00pm	Flower Strophe Instrument effect Flower Instrument effect Bird	y.i Others birds tt y.i tt GHW + pause	To represent the silent of midday
C	5:00pm	Main Strophe 2 Flower Main Strophe 3 Flower Main Strophe 4 Flower Main Strophe 5	RW2 +SW1 p.f RW3 +SW2 p.f GRW+SW3 + RW4 +b.h.g+ c w.l RW5 +SW4+ RW6 +SW5+ RW7	a b a b a' b a' (Climax) ↓

B'	6:00pm	Instrument effect Flower Instrument effect Bird	tt yi tt GHW Ct	Skylark's solo
	9:00pm	Strophe Sunset (1) and Sunset (2) Birds and Habitat	Sl+f+sl+f wr + pause S1'+S2'+b+S2'+S1'+B+S1'+B+S1' N+S2'+n+N+n+N+b+N M(b)+M(a)+S2'+f + n +pause	
	3:00am	Main Strophe 6	RW8 + pause	
A'		Habitat (ending)	Fg +MP+ b + pause	In retrograde order

Initial for birdsongs and non-birdsong subjects

Non-birdsong

Music of Pond -M.P

Music of Pond	-	M.P
Noise in the marsh A	-	m(a)
Noise in the marsh B	-	m(b)
Solemn Night	-	n
	-	
Sunrise	-	S1
Sunrise	-	S2
Sunset	-	S1'
Sunset	-	S2'
	-	
Yellow Irish	-	y.i
Purple Foxglove	-	p.f
Water lily	-	w.l
Instrument (tam-tam)	-	tt

Birdsongs

Reed Warbler-RW

Sedge Warbler	-	SW
Great Reed Warbler	-	GRW
Grasshopper warbler	-	GHW
Blackbird	-	bb
Red-backed Shrike	-	r.b.s
Redstart	-	r.s
Pheasant, Reed bunting, Green Woodpecker, Starling, Great Tit, White Tail	-	Others
Black-headed Gull	-	b.h.g
Coot	-	ct
Skylark	-	sl
Water Rail	-	wr
Nightingale	-	N
Bittern	-	b
Frog	-	f
Frog Group	-	fg

3. The pond music

The opening of the piece is crafted with two central ideas: the enigmatic atmosphere of the night and the habitat of the reed warbler, set at the pond. Described as a 'clear process' (Dingle, 2016), both the right and left hand parts are structured using Messiaen's characteristic rhythmic patterns. The stillness of the water is evoked through the repeated use of two major 9th intervals in the right hand, accented occasionally (Example 1). This tintinnabulation, produced by the high-pitched in major 9th intervals, mimics the timbre of a xylophone and creates a meditative ambiance through its consistent and still effect.

Example 1. Pond Music p.1

Musique des étangs (minuit)
(les notes accentuées de main droite: comme un xylophone)
Bien modéré (♩ = 100)
16^a

PIANO

A hallmark of Messiaen's rhythmic approach is evident in the way he has creatively designed the accented rhythm. After the first two semiquavers, the accents are augmented by an additional semiquaver in each measure (Example 2). The inserted A flat between the pairs of accents indirectly causes a contraction of the B flat semiquavers; the number of A flat semiquavers increases while the B flat semiquavers decrease in the subsequent measures. As the repeated semiquavers approach the end of the pond music, the B flat accent, having undergone a cycle of contraction, becomes the first note of the accent in the next passage. This transition—where B flat follows A flat rather than the initial A flat followed by B flat—symbolizes the cyclical nature of the music.

Example 2. Rhythmic structure of the pond music

1st System

Augmentation X

Contraction Y

Last System

Y

X

The repeated high-pitched intervals of 9th semiquavers are layered over a progression of chords in the left hand that span nearly two-thirds of the piano's range. This arrangement poses a challenge for pianists, as even in this quiet introduction, precise control of the chordal movement is required. Although there are nine distinct chords in the progression, each measure contains only seven chords, with the remaining chords carried over into the next measure (Example 3). This means the nine chords are superimposed onto a seven-value rhythmic framework.

Example 3. Chord progression superimposed on the seven-value rhythm

The image displays musical notation for Example 3. At the top, a staff in bass clef with a 12/8 time signature shows a sequence of nine chords. The chords are: 1. C major (C4, E4, G4), 2. D major (D4, F4, A4), 3. E major (E4, G4, B4), 4. F major (F4, A4, C5), 5. G major (G4, B4, D5), 6. A major (A4, C5, E5), 7. B major (B4, D5, F5), 8. C major (C5, E5, G5), 9. D major (D5, F5, A5). Below the staff, the numbers 1 through 9 are aligned with the measures. Underneath, the word 'RHYTHM' is written. Below that, two systems of rhythmic notation are shown, each on a five-line staff. The first system is labeled '1ST SYSTEM' and the second '2ND SYSTEM'. Both systems show a sequence of seven rhythmic values: 1. quarter note, 2. quarter note, 3. quarter note, 4. eighth note, 5. eighth note, 6. quarter note, 7. quarter note. The numbers 1 through 7 are placed below each note.

Despite the consistent rhythmic pattern in the left hand across all measures, the transformation of the introduction is driven by the added value on the sixth chord in each measure. Over the course of ten measures, the 14 semiquavers from the first measure expand to 23 semiquavers by the final measure. This lengthening of each measure creates the effect of the music gradually delving deeper into the night. This technique mirrors Messiaen's approach in earlier works, such as the piano passages in 'Liturgie de cristal' from 'Quatuor pour la fin du temps' (1941), where twenty-nine chords are layered over seventeen rhythmic values.

From a performance perspective, an intriguing aspect is the use of the sustaining pedal, which remains fixed on the third chord in the progression. This F C G chord becomes a pivotal harmony, serving to amplify resonance and marking a key point in each cycle of the chord progression. Despite the high-pitched, bell-like effect, this chord does not muddy or interfere with the 9th semiquavers. The combination of the high-pitched semiquaver figures and the softly moving chords creates an atmospheric passage.

Metaphorically, the bell-like figures could be interpreted as reflections of light on water, with the accents suggesting occasional glimmers under moonlight. The steady semiquaver pulse might represent the calmness of the night, while the accents can be seen as occasional disturbances caused by the wind or slight ripples in the water. As noted earlier, the consistent semiquaver pulse, combined with the timbre, evokes a sense of timeless stillness and contributes to a meditative mood.

The final section revisits similar material, though it progresses in retrograde order. Unlike the intense and consistent beginning, the ending is less intense and marked by occasional interruptions in the semiquaver figures due to silence. These rests, indicated between phrases, are explained by the composer as “the mist creeping across the water” (Hill, 1994:339), highlighting his attention to even the smallest visual details in his music.

The rests increase in duration, contrasting with the shorter phrases in the ‘music of the pond.’ As the rests become more extended, the pond music recedes. The bittern’s call reappears after a prolonged silence, and instead of concluding with the lake music, Messiaen uses this brief, abrupt call. This choice may be intended to reflect the cyclical nature of the movement, suggesting that this depiction is a daily occurrence, with the bittern’s call signalling the start of a new cycle.

Example 4. Frog's call p.3

(choeur des grenouilles)
Un peu vif (♩ = 126)

The musical score consists of three systems, each representing a system of a grand staff (piano and bass clefs).
System 1: Starts with *pp tr* and *8va bassa*. The piano part has a triplet of notes. The bass part has a long trill. Dynamics include *cresc.*
System 2: Starts with *ff tr* and *8va bassa*. The piano part has a triplet of notes. The bass part has a long trill. Dynamics include *dim.*
System 3: Starts with *mf tr* and *8va bassa*. The piano part has a triplet of notes. The bass part has a long trill. Dynamics include *dim.* and *pp*.
All systems include *(Ped. sempre)* and a final asterisk.

To enhance the naturalness of the habitat sounds, short calls of frogs and bitterns are introduced (from bars 11-18) to create interruptions and noises. The frogs' calls use the timbre from the lower range of the piano to produce a deep, coarse timbre. These calls, which rise and fall like a wave, are achieved through a long trill in a tonic-dominant-tonic pattern in the left hand, accompanied by a left-hand triplet built on a major 2nd interval (Example 4). The bittern's calls appear three times throughout the piece, generating a distinctive noise by cascading black notes against white notes rooted on G (Example 5). These calls serve as brief transitions between sections, appearing at the beginning, within the sunset theme, and at the end.

Example 5. Bittern's call p.3



The next non-birdsong element is the scene of the night, referred to by the composer as 'Solemn night' (n) (Example 6). Unlike the extended night music found in pieces like 'La chouette hulotte', which uses the *mode de valeurs*, the portrayal of night in 'La rousserolle effarvatte' is more akin to the approach in 'Le courlis cendré' (Example 7). This night refrain features a series of 7th intervals played simultaneously by both hands and accented chords that move in varied directions, described by Messiaen as "la nuit et le brouillard se répandent peu à peu" (the night and fog gradually spread).

This night refrain interacts with the 'noise of the marsh' motifs, depicted as m(a) and m(b), along with the frog's call (Examples 8 and 9). Despite being marked 'solemn', the night music begins with a fortissimo motif of cluster chords rolling from the middle to the low register. This motif, likened by Messiaen to a "shock from the cymbal" with the bass pitches sounding "like a tam-tam," creates a resonant effect enhanced by the sustaining pedal. The resulting ambience is further deepened by the cluster chords' resonance and the tam-tam imitation for the lowest note. The loud and abrupt entry of these motifs is perhaps intended to capture the listener's attention and signal a scene change.

Example 6. 'Solemn' Night motif p.9

Solemnité de la nuit (3^h. du matin)
Lent (♩ = 44)

Très lent (♩ = 54)

pp (comme des vibrations métalliques)

pp pp pp

(comme des trombones)

ff

(comme un choc de cymbales)

(comme un tam-tam)

p

ff

ff

ff

p

p

Red.

Red.

Red.

Red.

Example 7. Night music of 'Le courlis cendré'

(la nuit et le brouillard se répandent peu à peu)
Lent (♩ = 60)

ff (épais, jouer de haut, attaques profondes)

Red.

Red.

Red.

Following this, a progression of 7th intervals played by both hands creates a ringing effect, with each voice specified for different dynamics: the high-register intervals in the right hand are played in a soft dynamic (pianissimo), evoking the vibration of metal; the tenor intervals in the left hand are marked fortissimo, representing the sound of a trombone; and the bass intervals provide a soft timbre, enhancing the overall piano sound. The soft, vibrating pitches in the right hand and the bass might reflect the composer's interest in producing harmonic textures from the chords. The term 'solemn night' likely refers more to the series of 7th intervals and the persistent loud tenor notes that characterize this night scene.

Next are the two representations of 'noise in the marsh'. The first motif consists of two brief segments: a fast ascending and descending arpeggio followed by a repeated slurred dyad in tritone intervals that gradually diminishes (Example 8).

Example 8. Noise of the Marsh p.9 [m (a)]

The image shows two musical excerpts. The first is a piano solo in G major, marked 'vif' with a tempo of quarter note = 160. It features a fast ascending and descending arpeggio in the right hand, followed by a slurred dyad in tritone intervals. The dynamics are marked *mf*, *f*, and *mf*. The second excerpt is a piano accompaniment marked 'Presque lent' with a tempo of quarter note = 60. It consists of a continuous arpeggiated pattern in both hands, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and ending with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic. The text '(bruits dans le marais)' is written below the first excerpt.

The second depiction of 'noise' forms a much extended section, characterized by the composer as 'confused and mysterious' (Example 9). This section begins with two measures of semiquaver chords and then evolves into a quasi-pentatonic, weave-like arpeggio in both hands, moving in contrary motion. This pattern builds up until it resolves into a 'chord on the dominant' (D) with the omission of G (Example 10 X). Following this, the frog calls continue in the lower register. Another brief motif representing the marsh is introduced, with higher register trills, creating a contrast with the lower-register frog calls.

Example 9. Noise of the marsh motif, p.10 (m(b))

(bruits dans le marais)
Viv (♩ = 160) *(mystérieux et confus)*

ppp
8^a b.
ppp 16^a b.
Ped.

pp

(Péd. sempre)

pp

Chords on the dominant

p *sfz* p

(Péd. sempre)

The musical score is written in bass clef and consists of four systems. The first system begins with a piano introduction marked 'ppp' and includes a first ending bracket. The second system features a 'Péd. sempre' instruction. The third system continues the texture with 'pp' dynamics. The fourth system is a grand staff with a treble clef on top and bass clef on bottom, containing a series of chords marked 'p', 'sfz', and 'p', with a 'Péd. sempre' instruction below.

Example 10. Chords on the dominant

Vif (♩ = 144)
16
pp
mf 3
Led.
(bruits dans le marais)
X

The traits of the frog and marsh motifs offer a distinct perspective. The lower-register arpeggios representing the marsh, contrasting with the higher trills, suggest that the frog is concealed within the marsh. While Messiaen might not have directly visualized the marshes in darkness, he could have been influenced by the sounds of the marshes stirred by the wind.

These motifs reappear near the ending, though in different sequences and interspersed with the song of the nightingale. Harmonically, the 'solemn night' and 'noise in the marsh' motifs create a dominant-tonic relationship (A-D) from their bass notes. The first note of the cluster chord, D, bounces to a lower A in the bass. In contrast, the 'confused and mysterious' marsh motif begins with an A minor in the bass and resolves to a dominant D chord.

4. Sunrise and Sunset

Similarly with the 'flower' motifs, sunrise and sunset theme is one of the lyrical and melodic passages. It is structured in an arch-like shape, reflecting the transition of daylight from sunrise

to sunset, creating a contrast between the brightening and fading light. Accompanied by the duet of the blackbirds and red-backed shrike, the theme for sunrise unfolds in five distinct phrases, as detailed below (Figure 2):

Figure 2. The structure of the sunrise.

Sunrise (s)	a	a	b	c	a'	a'	(refer to table1).
Bar no.	134	139	144	160	171	184	

The structure and phrasing of the sunrise theme, featuring songs of both the blackbird and the red-backed shrike, are clearly defined. Following this sunrise theme, the *r sonance contract e*, created by a two-chord motif (Example 11, x), supports the birdsongs. This figure effectively serves to portray the 'sunshine' as a backdrop for the birds.

Example 11. Sunrise motif, p.11

Lever de soleil rose et mauve
 (sur l' tang des n nuphars) (6^h du matin)

Merle noir

Pie-gri che

Yi Yii x

Example 12a. 'Le traquet stapazin', sunrise theme, p.8

Lent (♩ = 72)
mf
(le disque rouge et or du soleil sort de la mer et monte dans le ciel)
mf
(majestueux, sonore, coloré. laissez résonner toutes les notes)
mf
Ped. 8.

Example 12b. 'Le Traquet Stapazin', sunset theme p.22

Lent (♩ = 72)
(entouré de sang et d'or, le soleil descend derrière la montagne)
ff
(majestueux, sonore, coloré. laissez résonner toutes les notes)
ff
Ped. (Péd. sempre)

In the *Catalogue*, the portrayal of sunrise and sunset is a prominent element, appearing not only in *La rousserolle effarvate* but also in *Le loriot* and *Le traquet stapazin*.

In *Le loriot*, the sunrise theme is conveyed through a rising progression of chords arranged in an curvature shape, though without the layering of voices. In contrast, *Le traquet stapazin* employs a similar approach to *La rousserolle effarvate* with layered voices, but the textures differ, in which it is denser (Examples 12a and 12b), reflecting the grandeur of the mountain, as described in

the sunset theme: “Entouré de sang et d’or, soleil descend derrière la montagne” (Surrounded by blood and gold, the sun descends behind the mountain).

In *La rousserolle effarvate*, the sunrise motif is crafted with two layers of voices in parallel motion for both hands. The first layer establishes a chordal theme that serves as a ‘foundation’ for the entire section (Example 11, yi). This theme consists of a short, floating, ascending chordal fragment in *pianissimo*, creating a gradual rising effect that evokes the emergence of the sun.

Messiaen emphasizes colours in this sunrise depiction using his characteristic colour chords derived from the mode of limitation. Specifically, the first layer of the theme (yi) is based on mode 2, representing the colours rose and mauve, while the ascending motif (yii) is built from mode 3(1), which symbolizes the orange, associated with sunshine. These colour associations are explicitly noted in the score. Following these colour chords, both hands move to the middle register, where the previously mentioned two-chord motif is introduced.

Further analysis reveals that the chords introduced before the birdsongs are derived from Messiaen’s harmonic sequence. The first two chords at bar 135, which support the blackbird’s song, are the *résonance contractée*. Notably, the E and B notes in the blackbird’s song originate from the inner notes of the second chord in the *résonance contractée* (Example 11, X).

The blackbird’s song is composed using mode 3(2), while the red-backed shrike’s song is in mode 3(4). Despite this, a few notes in both songs fall outside these modes. The blackbird’s song places a strong emphasis on E major intervals, which not only highlights the brightness of the sunrise but also reflects Messiaen’s indication of a cheerful emotion (*gai*). Additionally, the E major chord functions as a dominant leading to the A major chord (the second chord from the *résonance contractée*).

The *résonance contractée*, which is repeated twice for the two phrases of the blackbird’s song, is extended to a four-bar progression. This followed by a sequence of varied chord progressions. At bar

147, a pair of harmonies derived from mode 5 is employed, similar to those at the introduction of *Le traquet stapazin* (Example 12a) and in *Turangalîla*. By bar 149, the harmonic progression shifts to the first half of the ‘anacrouse, accent, désinence’ sequence (Example 13 X). Here, the final chord of this progression is lowered, introducing the redstart’s song.

Example 13. Sunrise motif and the redstart’s song p. 12

The image displays a musical score for Example 13, consisting of two systems of music. The first system is titled '(Lever de soleil)' and is marked 'Lent (♩ = 50)'. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef, and a vocal line. The piano part includes dynamics such as *pp* and *p*, and includes markings for 'Red.' and 'X'. The tempo changes to 'Très modéré (♩ = 72)' in the latter part of the system. The second system is titled 'Rouge-queue' and is marked 'Un peu vif (♩ = 120)'. It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part includes dynamics such as *mf* and *p*, and includes markings for 'Red.' and '*'. The tempo is marked '(gentiment monotone)'. The system concludes with the instruction '(Péd. III sempre)'. The score is written in a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

There is a harmonic cohesion between this chord and the song of the redstart: the outer note E# / F of the chord acts as the dominant of the Bb in the redstart’s song, and this Bb serves as the dominant to the Eb bass. In the fourth phrase, the second half of the ‘anacrouse, accent, désinence’ progression follows the redstart’s song and is accompanied by two bars depicting the sunrise colours (Example 14, Z). The first half of this harmonic progression is repeated at bar 163 before concluding with the thème d’accords from *Vingt Regards* at bar 164.

Example 14. Second sunrise motif p.13

The musical score for Example 14, 'Second sunrise motif p.13', is presented in two systems. The first system, titled '(Lever de soleil)', begins with a tempo of 'Lent (♩ = 50)'. It features a piano accompaniment with dynamics 'mf' and 'pp', and a vocal line with dynamics 'pp' and 'mf'. The tempo then changes to 'Très modéré (♩ = 72)'. The second system, titled 'Merle noir', is marked 'Modéré (♩ = 118)'. It features a piano accompaniment with dynamics 'f' and 'mf', and a vocal line with dynamics 'f' and 'mf'. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

In a similar fashion, the E major chord is provided by the bass of the thème d'accords that aligns with the solo blackbird's part. The longest phrase in this section is the fifth one, where the progression from the vineyard terrace in *Le traquet stapazin* reappears. It concludes with a two-chord sequence in a much lower interval. The *résonance contractée* then completes the final phrase of this section, sustaining through the duet, and is transposed exactly as in the first phase, featuring the decorated A major chord.

After the redstart's song in the fourth phrase of section C, the initial motif from the sunrise theme evolves into new material, though its texture remains fairly similar to its earlier appearance. This new iteration features the first layer written in three successive chords, with the final chord supporting an ascending, echo-like motif (Example 14, yi and yii).

The first three chords (yi) depict the colour mauve, using mode 4(5), while the echo-like motif (yii) represents the colour gold, derived from mode 6(1). All chords ascend, with the top notes of the first three chords—F, F#, and A—being echoed by the later three chords, which feature bell-like top notes of F#, G#, and A# in the right hand.

The chords extend into the final phrase, moving slowly and ascending continuously from the initial three chords to a fortissimo climax, symbolizing the sun reaching its zenith.

The sunset theme begins at bar 569, following the songs of the skylark and water rail, and marks the conclusion of the brilliance section featuring the warblers' duet. Different from the sunrise theme, the sunset theme is not linked to any particular birdsong until the interruption of the bittern's call. The chordal motifs in this section descend slowly, indicating the fading light of day. Initially, the theme stands on its own but eventually begins to interweave with other elements, including the bittern's call, the solemn night motif, and the song of the nightingale.

As the light wanes, the theme shortens in duration. The final three sustaining chords—E flat, C minor, and A minor—serve as a cadence for the last three phrases of the sunset theme, while alternating with the bittern's call before the music fades into darkness (Example 15a). The A minor chord in the concluding phrase extends through nine descending chords, described by the composer as *le disque rouge du soleil rejoint son reflet et s'enfonce dans l'eau* (the red disc from the sun merges with its reflection in the water). The dynamics, marked *pp dim* to *ppp*, and the gradual *diminuendo* suggest that the chords dissolve into the water.

Interestingly, the A minor chord establishes a tonic-dominant relationship between the sunrise and sunset harmonies, echoing the song of the blackbird in E major at sunrise. Parallel to the sunrise, the sunset theme evolves into a new motif after the first strophe of the nightingale, described by Messiaen as *triste et sombre comme des hautbois et cor anglais* (sad and dark like the oboe and cor anglais). This new motif is a retrograde of the earlier sunrise motif (Example 15b), with the top notes of the first three chords (F#, F, D#) echoed by the floating chords (A#, G#, F#). As the nightingale's strophes unfold, the sunset music gradually fades, giving way to the solemn night motif, reflecting the sky's transition into darkness.

While the sunset theme's inner structure differs slightly from the sunrise theme, where sunrise phrases are typically paired with

the blackbird and red-backed shrike's songs, the positioning of these elements contributes to a symmetrical form, complemented by ascending and descending motifs. The nightingale, which takes over the morning birds, represents the night in the sunset section. Its strophes are self-sufficient, standing independently without relying on the sunset or solemn night harmonies. The nightingale's song holds greater significance due to its more pronounced and stereotypical characteristics.

Example 15a. Sunset theme p.40-41

The musical score is divided into two pages, 40 and 41.
 Page 40 (top):
 - **System 1:** *Héron Butor* *Vif* (♩ = 168). Tempo *Lent* (♩ = 80). Dynamics: *pp*, *p*, *pp*. Includes notes: *(aspiration d'air) (n.d. dessous)* and *(mugissement)*.
 - **System 2:** *Coucher de soleil* *Lent* (♩ = 50). Dynamics: *p*, *pp*. Key signature: **E♭ Major**.
 Page 41 (bottom):
 - **System 3:** *Coucher de soleil* *Lent* (♩ = 80). Dynamics: *mf*, *f*.
 - **System 4:** *Coucher de soleil* *Lent* (♩ = 42). Dynamics: *p*, *pp*. Key signature: **C minor**. Includes notes: *(le disque rouge du soleil rejoint son reflet et s'enfonce dans l'eau)* and *(Péd. sempre)*.
 - **System 5:** Dynamics: *dim.*, *pppp*. Key signature: **A minor**.
 The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *pppp*), articulation (*dim.*), and performance instructions like *(Péd. sempre)*.

Example 15b. Sunset theme p.42

Lent (♩=42)
(violet sombre)

(souvenir du coucher de soleil)

f *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

f *f* *f*

Red. Red. Red. *Red. Red. Red.*

5. Transition of Bridge

The flowers

The subjects discussed, including the music of the pond, sunrise, and sunset, each appear independently and are often separated by long pauses. In the *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, every musical phrase or fragment is meticulously explained by the composer. Among these, the flower themes not only present a natural element but also offer contrast when compared to the other subjects. Notably, all flower motifs in *La rousserolle effarvate*, although being marked with the same tempo (*Lent*, semiquaver = 80), are derived from themes in the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*.

Following the duet of the blackbird and red-backed shrike, the first yellow iris motif (Example 16a(i)) emerges at bar 192. This motif not only signals the conclusion of the sunrise theme but also introduces a sequence of morning bird calls. Spanning three bars, the yellow iris motif concludes with a transposed reversion by Messiaen, though not in its full progression. Examples 16a(ii), 16a(iii), and 16a(iv) demonstrate how motifs from *Le Merle Noir* (1952), *Turangalîla-Symphonie* (1946-48), and *Cantéyodjayâ* (1949) relate with the flower themes in *La rousserolle effarvate*, although with variations in rhythm and range. Additionally, a notable feature of

the flower motif is its melodic contour, which reflects Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau*, a technique Messiaen frequently employed in his compositions (Messiaen, 1956).

The second theme of the yellow iris theme appears between pairs of two-chord motifs in crotchets, described by Messiaen as "like the tam-tam from a distance." This motif consists of two single melodic lines in both hands, moving in either parallel or contrary motion. Structurally, both yellow iris motifs frame the group of morning birds' calls.

The main theme of the second yellow iris theme in the left hand is derived from *Cantéyodjayâ* (Examples 16b i and ii). This melodic contour also mirrors a flute fragment from *Turangalîla-Symphonie* (Example 16b iii, X). The chromatic movement of the motif is marked as X, while the changes in accidentals within an octave are marked as Y. The motif ends with a D# (Eb) in the bass on B flat, subtly recalling the concealed E flat tonality from the reed warbler theme (Example 16b ii).

Example 16a(i). 'La rousserolle effarvatte' Yellow Iris Motif, p.15

Lent (♩ = 80)
8
p
mf
(iris jaunes) (8^A. du matin)
pp
m. g. dessus
8^a b
♯

Example 16a (ii). Le merle noir p.1

Musical score for 'Le merle noir' (Example 16a (ii)). The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Presque lent, tendre'. The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic. The vocal line is marked *mf* and features a long, expressive melodic line with various ornaments and grace notes.

Example 16a (iii). Turangalîla, p.54-55

Musical score for 'Turangalîla' (Example 16a (iii)). The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a single melodic line with various ornaments and grace notes, characteristic of Debussy's style. The tempo is marked *f*.

Example 16a (iv). Cantéyodjayâ, p.5

Musical score for 'Cantéyodjayâ' (Example 16a (iv)). The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Cantéyodjayâ'. The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic, followed by a *f* dynamic. The vocal line is marked *f* and features a long, expressive melodic line with various ornaments and grace notes. The score includes a *ff* dynamic marking and a *p* dynamic marking with a *8* marking. There is also a *8* marking and a *p* marking with a *8* marking. A *** marking is present at the end of the score.

Example 16b (i). Cantéyodjayâ, p.10-11

(1^{er} refrain) (doubleáfloréalîla)
Un peu lent, et tendre

Musical score for Example 16b (i) showing piano accompaniment for the first refrain of 'Cantéyodjayâ'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of three staves each (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The first system includes dynamics *più f*, *p*, and *pp*, with a first ending bracket labeled '16'. The second system includes dynamics *più f*, *f*, and *più f*, with a second ending bracket labeled '8'. The score contains various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

Example 16b (ii) La rousserolle effarvatte, yellow irish second motif, p.18

Musical score for Example 16b (ii) showing piano accompaniment for the second motif of 'La rousserolle effarvatte'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of three staves each (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The first system includes dynamics *p* and *mf*, with a first ending bracket labeled 'X'. The second system includes dynamics *mf* and *p*, with a second ending bracket labeled '8'. The score contains various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

Example 16b (iii). Turangalîla

Musical score for Example 16b (iii) showing piano accompaniment for 'Turangalîla'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of three staves each (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The first system includes a first ending bracket labeled '5'. The second system includes a first ending bracket labeled 'X'. The score contains various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

The purple foxglove motif, which first occurs after the sedge warbler's strophe, is a notable and harmonically rich element in *La Rousserolle effarvate*. Like the yellow iris motif, it appears only twice in the piece. This motif is derived from a transformation of a flower theme in *Turangalîla* (Example 16c, i) and holds significance due to its use of an acciaccatura that anchors the bass, a technique reminiscent of the first movement of *Regard du Père* from *Vingt Regards*.

The ending of this motif also draws parallels with a figure from *Le Merle Noir* (Example 16c, iii X) and reflects melodic contours found in Debussy (Messiaen, 1956), highlighting its intricate harmonic structure (Example 17, Z, 16c, ii). The theme is characterized by two primary chords (Example 16c, iv): the first is a second inversion of E flat with an added fifth (with Bb in the bass), and the second is a second inversion of B major with an added G (with F# in the bass).

Example 16c (i). Melodic contour of the purple foxglove first motif

1.

2.

FROM TURANGALILA 'FLOWER' THEME

3.

Example 16c (ii). La rousserolle Effarvate, purple foxglove motif, p.19

(digitale pourrée)
 Lent (♩=80)
 (chantant, très lié)

The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system features a melody in the right hand with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *mf* section. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and a bass line. The second system continues the piece, with a dynamic marking of *pp* and a *p* section. A bracket labeled 'X' spans across both systems, indicating the purple foxglove motif.

Example 16c (iii). Le Merle Noir p.2

The score shows a single melodic line in the right hand. A bracket labeled 'X' spans across the entire line, indicating the purple foxglove motif. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

Example 16c (iv). Harmonic progression of the purple foxglove second motif

The score shows a harmonic progression in the right hand. The chords are labeled as follows:

- 259: X
- 261: Y
- 262: ADDED 6th (C)
- ADDED 6th (C)
- ADDED 6th G# (Ab)
- Y

A bracket labeled 'X' spans across the chords from 261 to 262.

Following its initial appearance, the motif is revisited with a slight variation. The second inversion of E flat chord begins a new phrase, incorporating an added sixth note. This extension introduces two additional chords between the previously established ones,

creating a descending bass (Bb, Ab, G, and F#). This alteration results in a more extended three-bar phrase, compared to the earlier two one-bar phrases.

In the second occurrence of the purple foxglove motif in *La Rousserolle effarvate*, the theme evolves while retaining a strong connection to its previous iteration (Example 16d, iv). This version employs a chromatic chord progression similar to the earlier one, but with a notable harmonic variation. Specifically, the fourth chord now features a B major with an added sixth (Ab, or G#) (Example 16d, iv), giving it a distinct flavour compared to the initial motif.

The phrasing of this second appearance is also more complex. Unlike the earlier instance, where the motif was presented in two one-bar phrases, this version includes a longer phrase that is repeated three times before transitioning to a shorter phrase. Again, the chromatic progression remind us one of the motif from *Turangalilâ* via *Cantéyodjayâ* and *Le merle noir* which was mentioned earlier (Example 16d, i, ii, iii). This extension adds depth and variation to the motif, making it stand out more prominently in this section of the piece.

Example 16d (i). *Turangalilâ* p.244



Example 16d (ii). Cantéyodjayâ p.18

(2^e refrain) (mousikâ)
Modéré

f 10

pp 8 Red. *

Example 16d (iii). Le Merle Noir p.2

Example 16d (iv) La rousserolle effarvatte, second purple foxglove motif, p.21

(digitale pourprée)
Lent (♩ = 80)

P (chantant, très lié) *mf*

mf *P* *P* *PP*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. *

Furthermore, the penultimate phrase of this motif reflects Debussy's melodic contour, reminiscent of *Reflets dans l'eau* (Example 16d, iv). The motif concludes by inverting this contour, which ties back to the Debussian influences and adds a layer of thematic coherence. Overall, Messiaen's development of the purple foxglove motif demonstrates a sophisticated elaboration, integrating harmonic changes and melodic references to enrich the thematic material.

The water lily motif, the third floral theme in *La Rousserolle effarvatte*, appears before the reed warbler's duet. This motif is characterized by its ethereal quality and is performed with soft dynamics, exploring the outer extremes of the keyboard in both hands moving in unison. This use of the piano's extreme register is a hallmark of Messiaen's compositional style, reminiscent of the second movement of *Vingt Regards*, "Regard de l'étoile."

The motif prominently features Messiaen's favourite harmonic technique, the *accords tournants*—a type of resonance harmony where chords rotate through a series of notes, with certain notes recurring while others shift. In *La Rousserolle effarvatte*, this technique is utilized in the outer layer of the water lily theme, creating a sense of movement within the harmony (Example 16e, i). A similar approach is seen in *Cantéyodjayâ*, though there it is presented more forcefully with strong *fortissimo* accents (Example 16e, ii).

Example 16e (i). La rousserolle effarvatte, water lily's motif p.25

The musical score is for a piece in G# (Ab) major, marked 'Lent' with a tempo of 80. It features a piano accompaniment with a 'nénuphars' (water lily) motif. The score is divided into four systems. The first system includes a first ending marked '8^a. b.' and a second ending marked '16.'. The second system includes a first ending marked '5' and a second ending marked '2'. The third system includes a first ending marked '5' and a second ending marked 'X 5'. The fourth system includes a first ending marked '2' and a second ending marked '3'. The score is marked with dynamics *p* and *pp*, and includes performance instructions such as 'Red.' and '*'. The piece is identified as A.L. 22.943.

Example 16e (ii). Cantéyodjayâ p.12

In La Rousserolle effarvate, the water lily theme establishes a tonic-dominant relationship, beginning on G# and moving to Eb before resolving back to G#. This progression mirrors a perfect cadence but does not align with the tonality of Ab or Eb major (Example 16e, i). The theme's ending reflects another characteristic of Messiaen's work: the chromatic patterns found in Technique de mon langage musical (Messiaen, 1956) (Example 16e, i and iii).

Example 16e(iii). Messiaen's Technique de mon langage musical

Example 17. Messiaen's *Technique de mon langage musical*

85
Debussy
Images, reflets dans l'eau

86
L'Épouse

87
les Offrandes oubliées

88
Paysage

(Ruban-timbre d'espace, onde, métallisé palme • M P A 1)

f expressif (le plus lié possible)

89
Combat de la Mort et de la Vie

The image displays five musical staves from Messiaen's 'Technique de mon langage musical'. Each staff is numbered and includes a title. Staff 85 is for Debussy's 'Images, reflets dans l'eau' and features a '2' above the staff with a bracket. Staff 86 is for 'L'Épouse'. Staff 87 is for 'les Offrandes oubliées'. Staff 88 is for 'Paysage' and includes performance instructions: '(Ruban-timbre d'espace, onde, métallisé palme • M P A 1)' and '*f expressif (le plus lié possible)*'. Staff 89 is for 'Combat de la Mort et de la Vie'.

6. Conclusion

This paper examines the non-birdsong elements in Messiaen's *La Rousserolle effarvatte*, specifically the pond music, sunrise and sunset themes, and flower motifs. The work's structure reflects the cyclical nature of the day, weaving through the various elements to convey both the passage of time and a sense of eternity. For instance, the return of subjects like the pond music, frog calls, and night music towards the end of the work illustrates the cycle of

day and night, echoing Messiaen's broader thematic concerns with cyclical and eternal elements as seen in earlier works like *Quatuor de la fin du temps* (1940-41).

The non-birdsong motifs in *La Rousserolle effarvatte* also serve to depict the birds' natural environments and habitats, much like in other movements from the *Catalogue*. These motifs are derived from Messiaen's distinctive musical language, which appears consistently across his oeuvre. Messiaen's harmonic language such as *résonance contractée*, *anacrouse*, *accent*, *desinence*, *accords tournants* and others to represent non-birdsong subjects are also well established in this work, similarly stated in Kang's research (2020). This study finds parallels with other pieces such as *La Bouscarle* (Loo & Loo, 2021), *Le Traquet Stapazin*, and *La Chouette Hulotte* (Loo & Loo, 2019). Significant connections are noted with *Cantéyodjayâ* and *Turangalîla*, where similar musical materials are employed to explore diverse non-birdsong subjects. This use of recurring motifs in varying rhythmic and musical patterns underscores Messiaen's unique compositional style, economical use of material and his ability to infuse different elements with his distinct musical language.

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