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# The ecstatic musical time of Olivier Messiaen's Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum

## O tempo musical extático de Olivier Messiaen em Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum

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**Resumo**

Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum foi composta em 1964 por Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) para orquestra de sopros e percussão metálica. São cinco movimentos de caráter hierático e monumental, estático e extático, mas de grande simplicidade formal. O objeto deste estudo é analisar o modo pelo qual esta simplicidade se cria através de um princípio composicional comum aos cinco movimentos, cujo intuito consiste em produzir uma obra musical que constrói o sagrado através do som. Este, o som, se apresenta de forma praticamente absoluta, tanto como silêncio quanto como potência sonora esplêndida e gloriosa.

**Palavras-chave:** Messiaen, Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, tempo musical, tempo cíclico, circularidade

**Abstract**

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) composed Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum for winds orchestra and metallic percussion in 1964. The piece has five movements of hieratic and monumental, static and ecstatic character, and yet, of great formal simplicity. This study is an analysis concerned with how this simplicity is created by means of a compositional principle that is common to the five movements, the intention of each being to produce a musical work that constructs the sacred through sound. The sound is presented in a practically absolute way both as silence and as a glorious and splendid sound potency.

**Keywords:** Messiaen, Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, musical time, cyclical time, circularity

Listening to Olivier Messiaen's *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* on my "walk-man" CD player, in the summer of 1994, on the edge of a rocky cliff with the blazing sun reflection over the vast surface of the Mediterranean Sea in Isola d'Elba, was one of the most memorable listening experiences I have had in my life. Years later, with the score in my hands, I had the confirmation that my listening choice at that time and place was correct, as Messiaen wrote that the piece is "destined to the wide spaces: churches, cathedrals, and even in open air and the high mountain" (Messiaen, 1966, p.1).

This experience was memorable because the music took me away from my usual awareness of being listening to music. It seized me by a stillness, snatched me into a unique world of sounds that raised exalted feelings of fright and awe. It was ecstatic. Maybe this word – ecstatic – is vague, not because I doubt the quality of the experience, but because it can easily misrepresent it to the reader, depending on their own prejudice against out-of-ordinary or mystical experiences. I believe that there are many triggers and *qualitative* levels of intensity and duration to what could be called an "aesthetic ecstasy", or a "mystical ecstasy", and I would not know where to place my experience in these respects. So, it should be enough to say that, honestly, my experience of listening to *Et exspecto…*[2]*,* back then, was indeed exceptional.

The memory of this experience has persisted, and, eventually, led me to consider that the fact that I am not religious and do not believe in the Christian Rapture[3] (expressed in the piece's title), although raised as a Catholic, was supposed to indicate a lack of propensity from my part, as a listener, that should somehow have prevented me from identifying with the specific religious content of the piece in a degree that could result in some kind of extreme emotional elevation. Thus, I came to the intuition that there should be something *in the music*, and not only in the listener, that maybe connected to, or enhanced by, environmental contexts, that has the power to produce in the listener some degree of a spiritual or aesthetic state of mind that could be called ecstatic. "Beauty is *not only* in the eye of the beholder…" Naturally, from this does not follow that everyone will see the same beauty or even any beauty at all.

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[2] I respectfully abbreviate the piece's title to *Et exspecto…*, for a quicker reference.

[3] The Christian Rapture is "the eschatological (concerned with the last things and Endtime) belief that both living and dead believers will ascend into heaven to meet Jesus Christ at the Second Coming (Parousia)" (Stefon, 2025).

The most general meaning of the Greek word *ekstasis*, is "to be placed outside" (Sharma, 2005, pg. 2677), and "to transcend oneself" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). Thus, it would be possible to say, in general, that the attentive listener is *placed outside ordinary time* by music. In this case, the music would acquire the quality of being ecstatic due to this event. However, any type of music is potentially capable of facilitating the listener's awareness to be entirely taken away from ordinary time and into itself, structured musical time. Good music swallows the listener, if they are paying attention to it… but, although it would be correct to say that there may be an ecstatic moment of transcendence and of self-forgetfulness in such a listening experience, this does not mean that the music itself is ecstatic.

Therefore, I leave be my personal account and the listener's predicaments, and raise my hypothesis: *Et exspecto…* is ecstatic because it conveys a strong sense of the Sacred, the Infinite, Immovable, Imperishable *mysterium tremendum* or, in one word (or four…), the Absolute, Eternal Presence, Being. I refer to the conveyance of this sense of the Eternal Presence by music as the *musical expression of the Absolute* (or of its synonyms). The carriers of this potential expression is the immanent organization found in the neutral level[4] of the musical work (Nattiez, 1987:4), or, in one word, its cosmology[5], and the resulting coexistence of musical components, as they constitute the music's "physical body", its *physis (Φύσις)*. Thence the question: what are *Et exspecto…*'s musical characteristics that make it ecstatic? The following analysis aims to expose some of the compositional principles, the *logos (λόγος)* behind the physis, used by Messiaen to structure musical time in order to express Eternity.

My analysis is not an exhaustive or definitive explanation of this topic in Messiaen's work, simply because, due to the complex nature of music, no analysis can *fully* explain any point. Likewise, a complex and underexplored field of studies such as music and mysticism, or even the perhaps related field of music and meaning, could not possibly admit a single and final "explanation" about anything. However, the effort for a rational explanation of music's ways is the role and desire of any musical analysis, even if its outcome proves insufficient. I hope it will be helpful to promote some understanding about the mystical aspect of this composition.

[4] I am referring to the threefold semiological "theoretical directions" of a musical work: the poietic, neutral and aesthetic, established by Jean Molino (b.1931) and adopted by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (b.1945).

[5] Please see Irlandini (2012 and 2018) for the idea of composition as cosmology.

The general question which requires an explanation about the subject and, therefore, constitutes a legitimate rational research endeavor, was triggered in my mind by the paradox between music and the Absolute. The traditional conception of the Eternal as timeless (or outside time) Being, and Becoming – *devenir* – as the irreversible, relative and transitory flow of events of time, leads to the question: since music is, by definition, movement, how would it be an adequate means to express the Immovable? As a virtual[6] temporal flow, itself impermanent, it needs the passing of time to become manifest[7]. How could music be fit to express the Eternal Presence?

The architecture of time in an ecstatic musical work is of a special kind, as it delivers to the listener the *opportunity* to experience time that is *similar* to timelessness. The fact that some pieces have an ecstatic quality does not mean that the experience of listening to them will always or necessarily reach the ecstatic level. However, the musical work in its neutral level will remain ecstatic. The point here is simply to recognize that ecstatic music can induce the listener to such an experience because it *mimics* an ecstasy, and that, because it thus expresses the Absolute, which is out of time, this state is also similar in nature to a mystical ecstasy.

How can ecstatic music offer a musical time that appears timeless? This is what this analysis wants to show in this work by Messiaen. The macroform[8] of a piece is, in terms of time, a duration within ordinary time, a flow or succession of changing sound events, with a beginning, a continuation, and an end. It is built into, and therefore, is inescapable from, the diachronic linearity of ordinary time[9]. No piece of music escapes linearity[10]. However, time can be shaped in a way that it is no longer experienced as a Becoming, but rather as Being; this is when the musical time itself is *ecstatic*. In this case, it causes the listener, in their rapture, to lose the sense of time's irreversibility, and perceive the inescapable diachrony of the musical devenir as synchrony and timelessness. It is in this sense that "music as expression of the Absolute" should be understood: a sense of *atemporality* obtainable during an immersed, concentrated listening of this special type of

[6] The word *virtual* comes from Suzanne Langer: "Music unfolds in a virtual time created by sound" (Langer, 1957, p. 41)

[7] In this paper, music as time is a premise. Please see, in that regards, Irlandini (2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2022).

[8] Macroform is the entire duration of a musical work. The term may also apply to the entire duration of one movement in a musical work such as a Symphony.

[9] Whether time in this sense is real or not is not a subject in this paper.

[10] As discussed before in Irlandini, 2013b.

musical time. The image of the circle, which is a Gestalt, immediately and synchronically perceived as a self-contained totality and simultaneity, is a traditional symbol of eternity (Cooper, 1978, p.36). Therefore, the idea of *circularity*[11] in musical time includes several of the main structural principles of composition that act together with other determinants, such as psychology, emotion and musical cognition, to create the kind of musical experience that comes as near as possible to the experience of eternity... This works in paradoxical ways: musical time is said to express the Absolute because, as a first condition, it *seems* immovable and unchanging. It imitates *stasis*, the lack of movement. By *mimesis (μίμησις),* it is the impression of permanence, or, as ethnomusicologist Lewis Rowell (1933-2025) called it, "the illusion of stasis" (Rowell, 1987:184). Once immobility is established, the musical time becomes dilated, hieratic and ecstatic, depending on the *ethos (ἦθος)*[12] of the musical events. All these qualities happen by means of movement and change of the musical components, combined with certain strategies in repetition.

Music as an expression of eternity has little to do with the length of its duration. Some composers have idealized that a very long work would convey a sense of eternity, as the very long duration would feel "infinite". But all such a long duration itself may convey is the idea of sempiternity, which is existence within time infinitely into the future, while eternity does not last forever because it is outside time, as affirmed by St. Augustine or the Vedas[13]. John Cage's *Organ²/ASLASP (AS Slow AS Possible)*, composed with the intention that it would be the slowest musical work in existence*,* has a version currently in progress in Halberstadt, Germany, which is scheduled to last 639 years (Schmitz, 2024), as long as mechanical support and financial donations can be maintained. Cage's interest in the slowest speed is connected to the idea of the longest duration. However, for obvious reasons, it is impossible for a listener to actually experience the "infinite duration" of *Organ²/ASLASP.*

[11] One of the central goals of my research is establishing a musicological understanding of circular musical time, and this paper is directly concerned with this goal.

[12] In the sense of character and atmosphere.

[13] St. Augustine's *Confessions*, book XI, chapter XIII: "But Thou precedest all things past, by the sublimity of an ever-present eternity; (…) Thy years neither come nor go (…) for they pass not away; (…) Thy years are one day; and Thy day is not daily, but To-day, (…) Thy To-day, is Eternity" (Pusey, transl., p. 275). And, concerning the Vedas; "There are, indeed, two forms of Brahma: time, and the Timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the Timeless *(akāla)* and partless *(akala)*: but that which begins with the sun is the time that has parts *(sakala)*, and its form is that of the Year… Prajāpati…Self." (Coomaraswamy, 1947, p.15).

The attempt to *literally* make a macroform of infinite duration becomes acceptable as *conceptual music*: the posing of a problem, through music (not through words), for people to think about, and that will hopefully lead them to a wider concept of music or something else. However, conceptual music provocatively creates a liminal and paradoxical situation in which the music presented does not stand as what one culturally expects music to be. For this reason, it often causes strong reactions in the public: *connoisseurs* even feel that music itself or themselves have been disrespected. Because of these *desired* reactions, conceptual music does not create an actual opportunity for the experience of musical time. It throws the listener away from aesthetical fruition into a shocking or absurd intellectual dilemma. This is why pieces such as Cage's *4'33"* or Eric Satie's *Vexations* are not regular repertoire pieces to be listened to: their *conception* is all that matters and they are not possible objects of fruition, as the fruition they offer is somewhat perverted because of the conceptual agenda. On the other hand, they really make you think.

Nevertheless, music cannot be infinite, as it must end according to the cultural listening endurances responsible for one's acceptance of that musical time as "music". My study is limited to musical works that a listener would actually be able to stop to listen from beginning to end, even if the effort involved is great because of its unusually extended duration (for example, Morton Feldman's six-hour long String Quartet II). This is not a choice for more "conventional" music, but, in reality, a choice for music that is not only thought provoking, but mainly, a combination of structured and experiential time capable of taking the listener into a realm of suspended, dilated time, in which one loses the linear sense of diachrony. For the reasons mentioned above, extremely long durations may be helpful but are not necessary to create a sense of eternity throughout a piece's duration. Musical time can be extremely dilated in a short duration of ordinary time, as *Et exspecto…* clearly shows.

To me, there is more than a simple analogy between music and time. Music *is* a time that can be experienced and lived just as any other event in ordinary time. This realization leads to the desire of a vocabulary about music that reflects and follows the identity between music and time as much as possible, but this does not mean that one should replace the usual musical terminology for one coming from another area of knowledge such as the philosophy of time. Words that reflect a time approach (such as event, phenomenon, time segment) may feel strange to music and, sometimes, do not seem to be the best words in certain cases, but this does not mean the time approach is

inadequate or unintelligible. Music as time is a particularly appropriate approach to the question of music as expression of eternity, in which temporality is circular. Music has its own vocabulary, such as motive, series, chord, rhythm, interval, duration, etc., including terms that reflect other approaches, namely, that of music as form (such as structure, segment, part, section, macroform, microform), or that of music as language and discourse (such as phrase, semi-phrase, sentence). None of these terms are mutually exclusive or stand in contradiction with each other, they only come from different points of view. Therefore, it makes sense to use, enjoy, and relate them all interchangeably, in order to convey ideas as clearly and responsibly as possible, even though the main conception – music as time – is preferred.

Commissioned by André Malraux and composed in 1964, *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* was first performed by conductor Serge Baudo and an orchestra of "instrumentalists chosen among the best ones in France" (Messiaen, 1966, pg. 3) on May 7th, 1965, at La Sainte Chapelle, in Paris. The orchestra is formed by eighteen woodwind players, sixteen brass players, and six percussionists playing 3 sets of cencerros, 1 set of tubular bells, 6 gongs and 3 tam-tams.

Messiaen attributes a sacred text inscription to each of the five untitled movements. He requires the conductor to respect the long rests and *fermate (point d'orgue)* within each movement, and to observe a silence of approximately one minute between movements. Thus, the inner movement silences (or prolonged resonances) suggest that they are full of meaning, while the in-between movement silences may do the same but mainly serve to separate each movement to extent that they become like separate pieces. *Et exspecto…*'s macroform is like a suite, or a discontinued sequence of events (movements), or, visually speaking, scenes or panels, but the movements may share some recurring material and their succession forms a whole.

In the following, each movement is considered a macroform in itself and is analyzed separately. Please double-check the detailed information given with the work's score. I have prepared a few figures with musical reductions from the score whenever I believed it was absolutely necessary. Please listen to the performance by the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France conducted by Myung-Whun Chung available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f4qdJHatNM&t=1510s.

## I - *"Des profondeurs de l'âbime, je crie vers toi, Seigneur: Seigneur, écoute ma voix!"* (Psalm 130, verses 1 and 2).

Messiaen indicates that the general form of the piece has three parts: 1. "Theme of profoundness at the low brass; 2. Harmonization in sound complexes by the six horns; and 3. Wail of the Abyss" (Messiaen, 1966, p.1). However, there is more to it than just this understated three-part arrangement as such, as will be seen.

The fourteen measures of the "Theme of Profoundness" (or Abyss) are articulated in three events: $A_1$, $A_2$ and $A_3$. The first, $A_1$ (mm. 1-5), is a seven-note monody played in unison by three bassoons, counter-bassoon, bass trombone, tuba and saxhorn. Figure 1 uses the saxhorn part as its best representation and also shows the resonant tam-tam sounds imitating the contour of the brasses' line. The slow rhythm uses time values in a 2:1 ratio forming one choriamb foot followed by one bacchius.

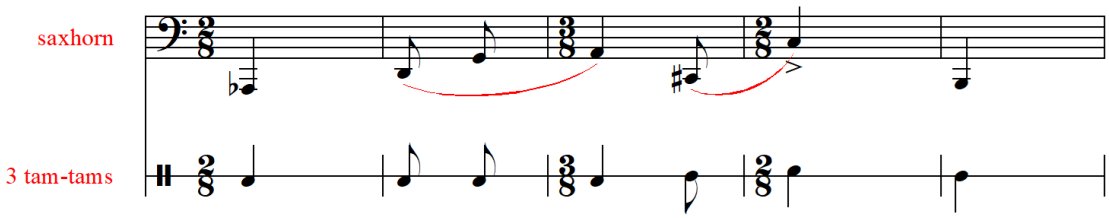


Figure 1. Theme of the Abyss: $A_1$ (mm. 1-5).

The second event, $A_2$ (mm. 6-10), repeats the $A_1$ melody, with exactly the same notes, rhythm, and eleven-beat length, now in parallel octaves played by three tenor trombones, six horns, three clarinets and a bass clarinet. While $A_1$ provided the sense of depth, $A_2$ stands out by the higher octave sounds, the absence of tam-tam resonances and the different instrumental color. It seems to bring the human element; maybe someone is facing the Abyss…

With $A_3$ (mm. 11-14), the Abyss surrounds the person, as the same instrumentation including tam-tams, sonority and atmosphere of $A_1$ returns, as a modified repetition (Figure 2), and not as a contrasting section, even though the melody is a different one. In reality, the first four notes are an inversion of $A_1$ and the last three are the same as in $A_1$, but permutated. The rhythm forms a regular pulse:

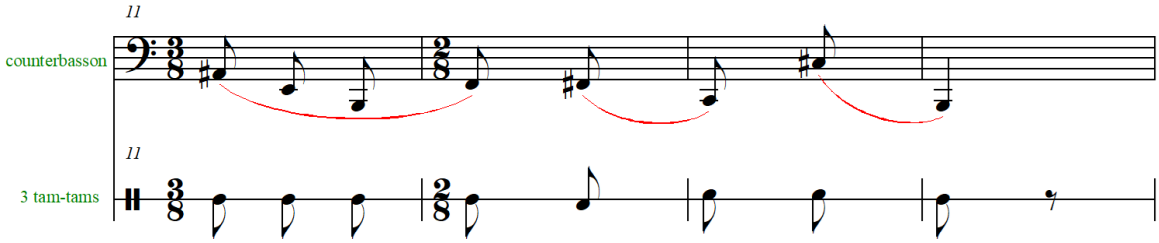


Figure 2. Theme of the Abyss $A_3$ (mm.11-14)

Messiaen modestly calls his second part, mm. 15-38, a Harmonization. It is also in three parts: $A_4$, (mm.15-19) $A_5$ (mm. 20-25), and $A_6$ (mm. 26-38). He describes the harmonization technique as the stain glass window principle *(le principle du vitrail)* which consists in "coloring the subject in a symbolic way, causing everything to turn like a glare in the eye, so as to arouse, by means of a thousand colors, one single color" (Messiaen, 1965)[14]. In $A_4$, which is simply a varied repetition of $A_1$, each tone in the Theme appears harmonized by six-note sound complexes, *harmonies-timbres*, which occur in two different vertical dispositions: one in the woodwinds (English horn, clarinets and bassons), and the other in the six horns. The stain glass window effect results from the use of sound complexes made of consistent combinations of specific intervals. These harmonic halos have the same function as the tam-tams added inharmonic frequencies, now adding harmonic frequencies to the deep tones of the Abyss. The Theme, thus accompanied by this homophony of auras, remains unchanged and is heard loud and clear, played on saxhorn, tuba, trombones, bassons and bass clarinet. Each instrumental part realizes the same note succession with different melodic contours. For this reason, the doublings result partly in unisons, partly in octaves, like an irregular unison/octave transposition.

$A_5$ is a modified repetition of the melody first heard in $A_3$, now doubled in unisons and octaves as has just been described for $A_4$. There are two differences between $A_3$ and $A_5$: the $A_5$ rhythm repeat the choriamb and iamb feet succession of $A_1$ (Figure 3); and the $A_5$ melody excludes two tones present in $A_3$: B and F. In spite of their omission, the time values in $A_5$ are such that the nine-beat length of $A_3$ remains unchanged. This is followed by the addition of the four last notes of $A_1$, not as the permuted version seen in $A_3$, but as an insertion of $A_1$'s ending as it is, with the same original instrumentation of low brasses and bassons colored by tam-tams. With this addition, the whole $A_5$ becomes a longer version of $A_3$, as follows:

[14] The documentary, produced by Pierre Schaeffer, Luc Ferrari and S. G. Patris, was made during the rehearsals for the performance of *Et exspecto ressurectionem mortuorum* at the Chartres Cathedral in 19 June 1965 and is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWCPyx2MAK4&t=5s .

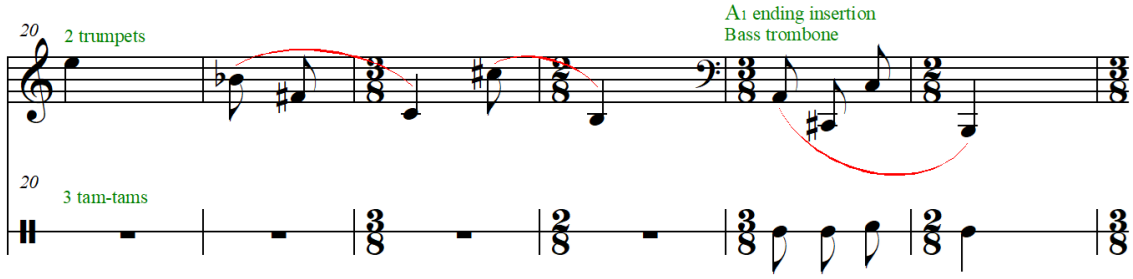


Figure 3. $A_5$ (mm.20-25)

$A_6$, mm. 26-35, is the third part of the Harmonization. Because it presents an entirely much longer and new succession of tones, it becomes much more like a development. One feels tempted to call this section by a contrasting letter, B. However, the cohesion factors with the previous As justify calling it yet another modified A. The main melody's instrumentation irregular doubling in octaves and unisons is still the same as in $A_3$. The sound complexes are superimposed by the same two different vertical dispositions as before. However, the 25 beats of $A_6$ are articulated in two parts: in the first ten beats, there is an uninterrupted flow of eight notes and, in the following fifteen beats, the rhythm is the consistent succession of three cretic feet ( □□□□□□□□□ ), each one of them beginning on the low B natural. What happens horizontally in the first part of $A_6$'s main melody is a zigzag of ascending and descending intervals, making use of a much greater variety of interval qualities than those in the $A_1$ theme. The notes forming descending intervals are grouped together by slurs, and this makes this part of $A_6$ a sequence of descending intervals. The second part of $A_6$ is much more regular, in that the cretic grouping organizes the intervals in the pattern shown in Figure 4. Even though this threefold cretic line has the function of a cadence, a "*tihai* cadence", as I will explain later, the entire harmonization and succession of descending intervals are suddenly interrupted by the return of the

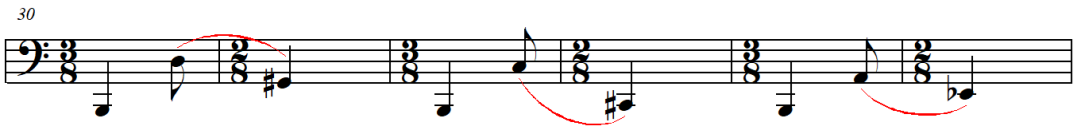


Figure 4. Cretic cadence pattern of $A_6$ (mm.30-35)

beginning of the theme repeated exactly as in its first appearance (mm. 36-38). However, only the first five notes are heard, for it is also abruptly interrupted by the final event: the Wail of the Abyss.

Thus, the entire Harmonization section (mm. 15-38) is the fourfold recurrence of A, all things considered, and can be represented by $A_4$-$A_5$-$A_6$-($A_7$), with $A_7$ within parenthesis to show that it is incomplete.

The Wail of the Abyss, mm. 39 until the end, is the only clean break with A, and deserves, for this reason, to be labeled B. This consists of eight sound complexes, all in ***ff***, each with two attacks, the first on brasses, tam-tams and gongs, the second, a sixteenth note later (which amounts to almost one second of delay), on the woodwinds and tubular bells. The image is simply and clearly that of the outcry of a crowd.

In the following description, the vertical bars recognize that Messiaen's threefold partition still holds true:

$$A_1 \quad A_2 \quad A_3 \quad | \; A_4 \quad A_5 \quad A_6 \; (A_7) \; | \; B.$$

The first three As are grouped together by the more structural than superficial identification of $A_1$ and $A_2$ with $A_3$, which, as explained before, is carried to the surface by means of atmosphere and instrumentation (therefore, timbre). The last four As are grouped together by the textural harmony complexes coloring the Abyss melody, and this is valid even in $A_6$, in spite of its rhythm-melodic elaborations. The last and incomplete $A_7$, "should have been" an effective way of concluding the harmonization section in its complete and original version of seven notes, but the scenario is that of a terrifying Abyss, and not of a peaceful contemplation. B, the cry, explodes involuntarily, thus interrupting the A melody just after its fifth tone. B "groups with itself", as it stands in sharp contrast with everything that occurred before.

Even though Messiaen's threefold partition is experienced as such, it is weakened by the steady repetition of As. Time is structured and experienced as the cyclic repetition of the Theme even in $A_6$, which offers, in the surface, the greatest contrast when the previous As but is still constructed according to the same formative principles.

This condition of $A_6$ raises a question: when is a repetition no longer a repetition and should be consequently considered as something *different*? If a section is different, shouldn't it not be considered a repetition? Composers are always concerned with balancing unity and multiplicity: unity in multiplicity, multiplicity in unity. This old principle is what holds a musical work together, in the sense that it will not be experienced as a state of utter confusion. For a composer, whenever

an element is changed by some technique, this changed version still is a repetition of that element. The repetition becomes a *different repetition*, and may seem to have nothing to do with its original version. Arnold Schönberg treats the retrograde, the inversion and the retrograde inversion of a motive as *exact repetitions* "if they preserve the features and note relations" (as in the given example in his book) and distinguishes them from *modified repetitions* when they are "created through variation and produce new material (motive-forms)" (Schönberg, 1967, pg. 9). The changes incurred by means of those techniques, combined or not with free variations upon the melody, may be severe, as they can scramble the tones and transfigure the original melody into a completely different one resembling nothing of it in the surface level. However, pitches and rhythm can be altered to produce modified repetitions that still manage to retain, in a deeper, middle- or background structural level, something from the original, enough to convey, in hidden ways, to the listener, its true nature. "Nature loves to hide", explains the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, fragment 28 (Diano, 1993, pg. 19). "The invisible harmony is better than the visible", again, Heraclitus, fragment 27 (*id.* pg. 17). *Because it is hidden*, this hidden or invisible (inaudible, in our case) "nature" or "harmony", is what strengthens the multiplicity of the surface level and makes it integral to the whole, notwithstanding how surprisingly different it may be, as a secret bond or connection. It also triggers the fascinated listener's curiosity and participant attention, vitalizing the act of listening.

Messiaen's techniques for creating the $A_3$ and $A_5$ melodies rely on the maintenance of some of the same intervals heard in the original A, by using the inverted form of parts of A, or by changing the order of the same notes (permutation). He also slightly changes the rhythm. However, all other contrast is avoided, and the *atmosphere* resulting from tone color and orchestration is where the listener feels that the "same" is still going on, although it sounds with different tones. Section $A_6$, the most complex part of the First movement, uses the same rhythmic-melodic material of A, but subjects its continuity to a sort of chopping principle that results in more unpredictable durations and intervals that, however, still relate to the vocabulary of durations and intervals already established in the previous As. It is in the rhythmic-melodic domain that $A_6$ shows the greatest deviation from $A_1$, as well as in its extended duration of nineteen notes ($A_1$ has only seven), while the atmosphere, textural treatment and orchestration of $A_6$ remain the same as that of $A_3$ and $A_5$.

In music, there are several levels of repetition: at one end of the spectrum is reiteration, which is the immediate and continuous (often insistent) identical repetition of a statement or phenomenon, while, at the opposite end, is a different repetition, which may be not entirely recognizable – or entirely unrecognizable – as a repetition, but, is newly or additionally structured

upon the same original materials or principles. This is not equivalent to say that, in music, things can be same and not-same simultaneously and in the same respect (going against the principle of non-contradiction). But it means that, in music, there are different repetitions of the same thing, just as a summer (or winter) is a different repetition of another summer (or winter).

In a deeper than superficial level, the entire First movement consists of the six-fold reiteration of *one* event, the A melody, plus a B. With the exception of $A_6$, all occurrences are immediately recognizable as repetitions of A. The final effect is that of a static, cyclical temporality, very much like that created by the repetitions in a rosary prayer or by the meditation on a divinity's name (Allah, Allah…, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna…., or Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu…).

## II - *Le Christ ressuscité des morts, ne meurt plus; la mort n'a plus sur lui d'empire* (Saint Paul, Epistle to the Romans, chapter 6, verse 9).

The simple macroform of the Second movement repeats the alternation of three contrasting events: A, a single gesture beginning with fast notes and ending with a slowly decaying tone; B, an unaccompanied melody played by the woodwinds; and C, a *bien modéré* homophony formed by a trumpets line colored by resonances with the *principe du vitrail*, and superimposed by a rhythmic layer of percussion sounds. The result is

$$A_1\ B_1\ C_1\ B_2\ C_2\ A_2\ B_3.$$

The sheer contrast between textures A, B and C is enough to produce this unambiguous segmentation, which is further guaranteed by the long *fermata*[15] between As and Bs, the tempo changes between Cs and Bs, and the short *fermata* plus tempo change between Bs and Cs.

The As are of lesser formal substance than the Bs and Cs, because of the simplicity of its construction. Due to the feeling of expectation that it creates about what will happen next, $A_1$ functions as an Introduction to what forms the greatest part of the macroform: the alternation of Bs and Cs. Like the alternation of antiphonal singing of cantor and congregation, it clearly establishes the cyclical time characteristic of the Second movement. What I refer to as cyclical time is created by the repetition of the same (or similar) events *in the same order*[16]. Here, the events

[15] Messiaen requires this whole note rest fermata to follow the MM = 72 for the sixteenth note. Thus, it should last at least 16 seconds.

[16] A good example of cyclical time is the cycle of seasons because they always occur in the same order: Autumn never comes after Winter, Spring always precedes Summer. See cyclical musical time as described for the first time in Irlandini, 2014.

have slight differences and are in the same order (Cs always follow Bs). After comparing $B_1$ with $B_2$ and $C_1$ with $C_2$, the conclusion is that the changes are subtle enough to produce a feeling of identical repetition, even though they are not really identical. This feeling enhances the listener's perception of a time structured cyclically. There are only two complete occurrences of the cycle BC, the minimum repetition that effectively establishes cyclical time.

After the sequence $B_1C_1B_2C_2$, $B_3$ would be the next expected section, but it is $A_2$ which comes as a surprise, recreating the initial feeling of expectation, which is both satisfied and frustrated at the same time. Satisfied because $B_3$ does follow $A_2$, but frustrated, because $B_3$ is a really short version of B, with no $C_3$ in the continuation, since the flow is craftily interrupted, resulting not even in a "condensed version" of a third occurrence of B. I suppose this interruption is a way that Messiaen found to suggest the alternation would go on forever, and, at the same time, stay with the greatest number of repetitions that he could tolerate as producing an interesting musical form for him.

It is even possible to imagine that $A_2$ followed by $B_3$ could suggest the "intended", larger, cycle ABCBC, and not BC nor ABC. This would explain why $A_2$ appears after $B_2$. However, the macroform would result in just one statement of $A_1B_1C_1B_2C_2$ followed by a "hint" of a second occurrence ($A_2[B_3]$), and this would not establish the macroform as cyclical time.

Now, anything that interrupts the repetition in the same order of the cycle's identical or similar events has the potential to interfere with the concentration meant to result from the "redundant" repetition and the consequent confirmation of expectations characteristic of cyclical time. Then, would the occurrence of $A_2$ after $B_2$ put at risk the establishment of the BC cycle as cyclical time? This would make it an undesired "fluctuation of the mind", to use a yogic vocabulary… Here, Messiaen's poetic choices and cultural context must be considered. When he composed *Et exspecto…* in 1964, minimalism was still non-existent, and the post-serial *Zeitgeist* was still imbued with the values of aperiodicity and complexity, not to speak of centuries of compositional practices that consciously valued monotony or too much repetition as lack of creativity. Thus, "redundant repetition" was not a desirable aspect in composition at that time. Messiaen has used cyclical structures aiming to build complex textures. For example, in his 1944 *Technique de mon language musicale*, he writes that the rhythm pedal "repeats itself indefatigably, in ostinato", it does so "without busying itself about the rhythms which surround them" (Messiaen, 1956, p. 26). Thus, his use of rhythm pedals was together with the creation of complex polyrhythmic textures that would hide this sort of repetition. This shows that not only Messiaen kept repetition camouflaged by the

superimposition of many equally repetitive layers of music, but also that the reiteration of events would necessarily be negotiated beteeen his personal sense of form and that inherited from 19th and early 20th century French composition.

Now I will examine the Second movement events in more depth, comparing their first and second occurrences in order to understand more about the feeling of identical repetition produced by non-identical events. This feeling greatly contributes to the establishment of cyclical time and still allows the composer to be creative and inventive. Because of limited space, I cannot provide an exhaustive discussion about all textural components: I will discuss all events, but, for the Cs, the percussion layer will be considered in greater depth than the winds layer.

$A_1$ (mm. 1-8) opens with a ***ff*** descending gesture of fast six notes (Eb-D-C-Ab-G-E), played by woodwinds, each one with a different contour resulting from the irregular unison/octave doubling, but all landing on a long sustained and decaying E (Figure 5). Next is another statement of the same succession of notes, however, in the form of *a mélodie par manques*, a "melody by absences" (Messiaen, 1966, pg. 2), meaning that all the notes are first stated simultaneously as a chord and, because the notes are taken away from it one by one by first undergoing a sudden crescendo shortly before being silent, they are individually heard as they go absent from the chord, thanks to the emphasized intensity, in the same order Eb-D-C-Ab-G-E. At the end of the chord (m.7), the remaining tone E, is one octave lower and sustained for much longer than at the end of the melodic descent in m.2. A long fermata follows the slow decay of the E, separating it from the next event, the B melody. In $A_2$ (mm. 76-83), all happens in the same exact way, with the same instruments, but different notes, namely, Ab-G-A-Db-Eb-D, which result from an irregular transposition and permutation of the $A_1$ melody[17]. D is the last tone in $A_2$, one tone below the $A_1$ E. Such changes in detail correspond more to the composer's refusal to operate twice exactly in the same way than to establish a contrasting event: $A_2$ is a slightly different repetition of $A_1$.

$B_1$, *Presque lent* (mm. 9-32), is a seventy-six beat long melodic line segmented in six parts and without accompaniment. The oboe plays the nine beats of Segment 1, $S_1$ (mm. 9-11). This is the same $A_1$melody ten times slower[18], approximately. $S_1$ is answered by $S_2$ in the clarinet, also with nine beats of duration, and with the same sequence of notes in the $A_2$ gesture (Figure 5).

[17] The straight transposition a perfect fourth above results in Ab-G-F-Db-C-A, made irregular by changing F into Eb, Db into D, and C into Db This results in Ab-G-Eb-D-Db-A, and this is permutated into Ab-G-A-Db-Eb-D.

[18] Since in A1 it appears at the speed of thirty-second notes in a MM 88 for the dotted eighth-note (88x6=528), while now, in $S_1$, the speed is MM 52 for the eighth-notes.

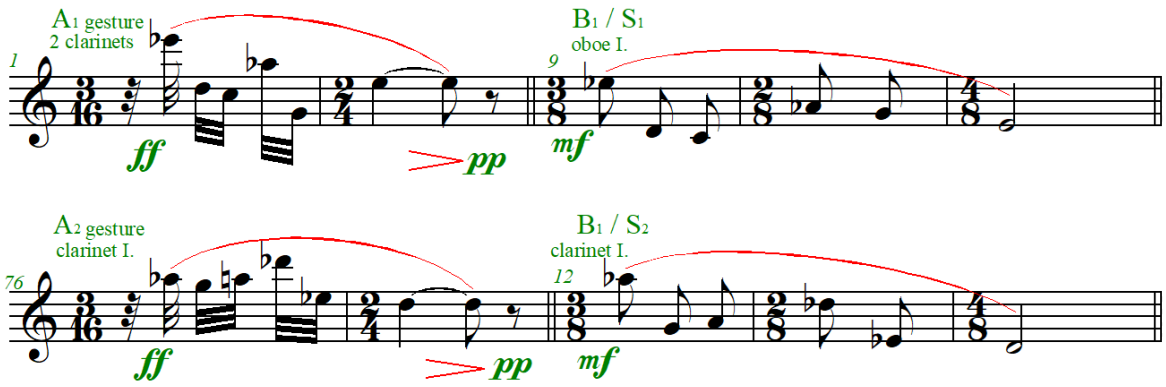


Figure 5: $A_1$ gesture and Segment $S_1$ compared to $A_2$ gesture and $S_2$

$S_1$ and $S_2$ form a unit, not only because of their similar contour and intervallic content made of step movements, minor sixths, major sevenths and minor 9ths, but also because the following part, $S_3$ (mm.15-19), although with roughly the same duration (ten beats), contrasts with them by means of a consistent use of perfect fifths, fourths and tritones, the overlapping of the double reed instruments with the clarinets, and its arched and symmetrical contour followed by a two-note flute echo. The next three segments form a unit by way of the insistent use of the descending melodic fragment (G#)-D-C-G-Db or D-C-G-Db, and the ascending Db-G-(A)-C-(G#). The notes between parenthesis may be omitted in one or another movement. The 13-beat $S_4$ (mm. 20-23) is articulated by the oboe in the first half and the flute echo in the second. $S_5$ (mm. 24-27) is entirely played by the oboe (12 beats), while $S_6$ (mm. 28-32) has a more complex segmentation. $S_6$ starts with the clarinet for six beats, is echoed by the flute (three beats), and ends with the English horn last four notes, the final one being an extended F#. Thus, $S_1$ and $S_2$ form a unit and $S_4$, $S_5$ and $S_6$ form another, both units standing around $S_3$. However, another grouping of inner and outer segments runs in parallel: the relationship oboe/clarinet present in $S_1$ and $S_2$ is somewhat preserved in $S_5$ and $S_6$, while the inner segments, $S_3$ and $S_4$ are those in which the relationship oboe/flute echo are preserved.

These two parallel groupings occurring between outer segments around different inner segments have the effect of strengthening the construction of all segments into one continuous flow. Of special importance in the cohesion of these segments is that, from $S_4$ on, each segment starts with the same note or notes with which the previous segment finished. The notes of the flute echo of $S_3$ are the beginning notes of the oboe in $S_4$, and the four last notes of the $S_4$ flute echo are the same beginning notes of $S_5$ in the oboe. There is a bouncing back and forth between the high

G# and the low Db that, although never repeats in the exact same way, remains static in the irregular arpeggiation of the symmetrical set G#-D-G-Db: two tritones around a perfect fifth, which is sometimes hidden by the interference of grace notes C and D before the C-G fourth. It is because of these construction principles that the $B_1$ line is less a line than a circle: its building blocks are not only intertwined but also connected in such a way along its diachronic continuity that the sense of repetition makes itself present even though one cannot tell exactly what is being repeated. This is circularity[19] in the melody.

$B_2$ is a practically identical repetition of $B_1$. There are only two differences: first, the inclusion of the "mysterious but audible counterpoint of gongs" (Messiaen, 1966, pg.2) that occurs over the last note of each melodic segment, like a punctuation. Second, is the interruption of $B_2$ by the gongs and cencerros of $C_2$, resulting in the omission of the entire $S_6$. The interruption of the melodic line at that point is so subtle that it is hardly felt as an interruption, and effects a continuation into $C_2$, already prepared by the four descending tones in the punctuating gongs added in the last measures of $B_2$, anticipating in ***pp*** the same ***mf*** gongs descent that starts $C_2$. The omission of $S_6$ in $B_2$ indicates that $S_6$ is, in essence, an almost redundant cadence, desired in $B_1$ to provide closure and discontinuity, but omitted in $B_2$ with the purpose of strengthening the connection with, and the entrance of, $C_2$.

The *Bien modéré* section, $C_1$ (mm. 33-45), first introduces the percussion instruments and, soon after, the winds. The atmosphere is that of a celebration of Christ's victory upon death mentioned in the inscription of this movement. I will discuss the percussion layer in greater detail than the winds layer, and, for the latter, will concentrate only on the repetition procedures applied to the trumpets line, because of lack of space.

The eighth *deśi-tāla* (Johnson, 1989, p.206) of Śārṅgadeva's treatise, the Saṅgīta Ratnākara, was chosen by Messiaen, for symbolic reasons[20], as the backbone of the percussion layer. This rhythm is the *siṃhavikrama*, "the strength (*vikrama*) of the lion (*siṃha*)." Siṃhavikrama has five long and two short syllables with a total of 15 time units.

θ θ θ ε | θ . θ θ. = θ θ θ ε + vijaya θκ θ θκ

[19] Not cyclicity, as the events are repeated with *no recognizable order*. This does not mean there is no order: depending on the piece and situation, the order may be so complex that the pattern is not identifiable.

[20] As in Messiaen, 1966, p.1, replicated in Johnson 1989, p. 170.

The first half has four syllables and corresponds to the 4th epitrite foot in a 2:1 ratio, while the second half (itself a separate deśi-tāla, *vijaya*, which means victory, included in the siṃhavikrama) has three syllables and corresponds to the cretic foot in a 3:2 ratio. Messiaen uses the sixteenth note as time unit:

ε ε ε ξ | ε. ε ε.

Siṃhavikrama is a seven-note melodic line in cyclical repetition along $C_1$. Each repetition is marked in the score in ***f*** on the part of the second set of cencerros, as well as by a bracket missing its lower line, starting on m. 33. The first four syllables make a melodic arch, while the vijaya part corresponds to the high Gb, the only note assigned to the third cencerro[21], and the two final strokes on E and Eb (Figure 6).

The special feature of this cyclical repetition is that, each time the pattern is repeated, the vijaya portion undergoes a little treatment. There are four complete occurrences of siṃhavikrama but, due to the progressive reduction of the three last notes of the cycle at each repetition, the first occurrence has a duration of 21 sixteenth notes, the second, 18, the third, 15, and the fourth, 12, followed by two repetitions of its vijaya. While the first half of siṃhavikrama retains the 2:1 syllabic ratio, the vijaia first appears in ratio 5:4, then, 4:3, 3:2 and, finally, 2:1 (Figure 6). For this reason, siṃhavikrama's original form of 15 time units appears only once, when it is played for the third time.

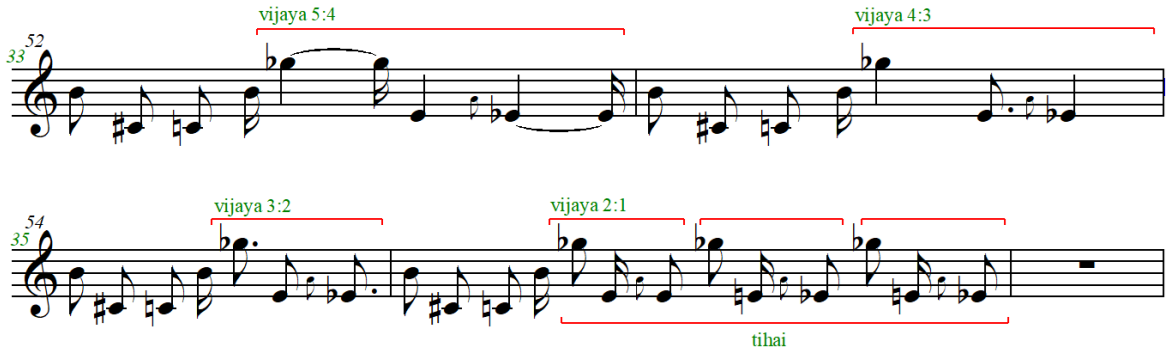


Figure 6: Siṃhavikrama process of spiral contraction in $C_1$

This simple process of progressive reduction of the vijaya part provides the siṃhavikrama line with a characteristic *spiral* quality. This means that the line is more dynamic than a regular cyclical

[21] As the first note of the vijaya section, this Gb is always supported by the 4th gong and 1st tamtam.

line, which would only repeat identically or with insignificant differences, thus reiterating the circle by just passing over its line again and again. On its turn, the spiral is processual and unfolds gradually, teleologically committed to the completion of a certain process, namely a contraction or an expansion. Every time it goes over a corresponding or "same" previous step, it does so changed in the direction of the completion of the process.

Signaling that the process has reached its end (the smallest syllabic ratio), the vijaya portion is repeated twice. The vijaya is equivalent to the cretic foot, the same rhythm that has already served as the threefold cadence shown in Figure 4 and related discussion above. This procedure of ending a section with three statements of a rhythmic/melodic pattern (always the cretic in *Et exspecto…*) reminds the *tihai* of classical North Indian rāga performances, with which Messiaen would probably have been acquainted.

The aural perception of this cadence, or of the siṃhavikrama line all the same, is problematic because of the massive superimposition of textures covering it in $C_1$. The perception is further complicated by the first cencerro line, which is a counterpoint of descending lines that go progressively higher each time the simhavikrama is about to re-start. Because of the same instrumental timbre, and of its crossing with the siṃhavikrama, it gets really difficult to distinguish by ear which sounds belongs to which pattern. In reality, the aural recognition of siṃhavikrama in this context is only possible if the part is played alone, or by listeners who have studied the score. This apparent lack of interest in whether or not the part is audible relates directly to the statistical listening mode that became common in Avant-Garde music in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

I will consider now the percussion layer of $C_2$, which works like a re-composition of the percussion layer in $C_1$. The counterpoint between the lines formed by siṃhavikrama and the first cencerro line is a different one, since the two components are aligned differently in $C_2$. The first cencerro line also shows new segments not present in $C_1$, while de siṃhavikrama lines are repeated identically, with the same rhythmic contraction of the vijaya portion, for the same number of repetitions (four) as in $C_1$. This is all regarding texture. It should be noticed, though, that the very first mark, on m. 63, indicating the beginning of siṃhavikrama, points to the two last syllables of siṃhavikrama, and not to the first syllable of the pattern. Perhaps, the reason is that any point of the circle line can be its beginning or its end. Thus, the pattern starts with its two final notes, E and Eb in ***ff***, "announcing" the "real beginning" in the following measure, which Messiaen has the courtesy to indicate again with the semi-bracket on m. 64.

Back to C1: the trumpets are the only brass instruments in the winds layer of this event. The main line alternates the first and second trumpets, with occasional doubling of the second trumpet by the third, (Figure 7; trumpets I, II and III). The trumpets line should "spring spontaneously from the harmonies in the woodwinds", even though the woodwinds should play ***f*** in order to allow "the rainbow of all colors of chords" (Messiaen, 1966, p. 19, 24) to be heard.

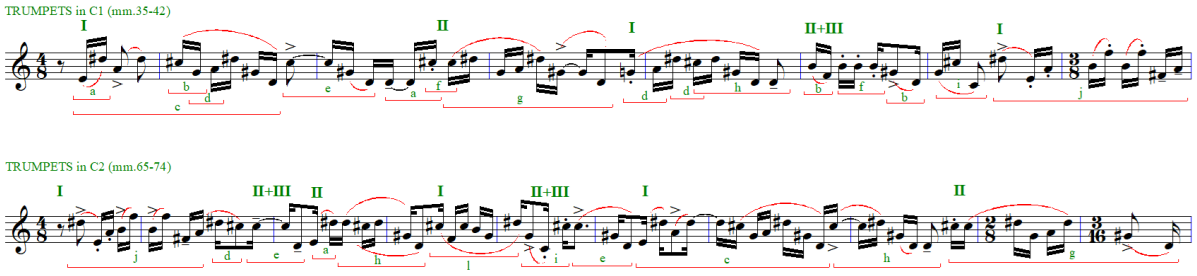


Figure 7. Trumpets lines in C1 and C2

The top line in Figure 7 corresponds to the trumpets part in $C_1$ (mm. 35-42). It contains all twelve tones with an emphasis on D#, D, C# and G#, while others, like C and F, appear only once. All notes are polarized, i.e., they do not appear in different octaves. Some contours are striking to the ear, such as the alternations between C# and D# and between G an A, as well as the descent D#-G#-D. Figure 7 also shows the results of an analysis of the pitches independent from rhythm, indicating brackets containing different pitch successions, each identified by letters "a" through "j". I do not claim that these are the pitch motives Messiaen used to build his trumpet line. These are pitch successions of many different lengths, obtained from comparing the trumpet line of $C_1$ with itself and then with that of $C_2$. I will call them *pitch fragments*. Other different pitch successions may be found to form different pitch fragments, since there are many ways of reading the line. For example, the descent D#-G#-D already mentioned is found in many places (C1 mm.36, 38, 39 and C2 mm.67, 71, 72 and 74) and was not even marked as a pitch fragment in Figure 7. The point is to show that the line repeats certain pitch fragments in a seemingly random order and combined with different time values, like in a *talea/color* setting.

Looking at the trumpet part in $C_2$, (bottom line in Figure 7), it is possible to use the melodic construction to discuss, at the same time, how the trumpet lines of $C_1$ and $C_2$ appear identical and

different, or, in less irrational terms, how both lines are constructed from the same principle and result in two different lines that are, for the statistical ear, identical. Pitch fragments are most often repeated literally, such as "a" (compare $C_1$ m.35 with $C_2$ m.67) or "c" (compare $C_1$ mm.35-36 with $C_2$ mm.70-71). They may be transposed, as "a" in $C_1$ m.37, and "b" (compare $C_1$ mm.36 and 40). They may be shown incomplete, as "e" (compare $C_1$ m.37 with $C_2$ m.66, where the G# is missing). They may permute the order of pitches, as "i" (compare $C_1$ m.41 with $C_2$ m.66). Again, this is not to say that Messiaen proceeded in this way. This is my analysis interpreting the chosen fragments and showing how they can be seen to derive from others. It may be argued that this kind of motivic analysis makes it possible to find structural relationships anywhere and everywhere. The smallest the motive, the easier it is to see it pervading everywhere, especially when it can be transposed, inverted, retrograded, and taken inside out, but this can be said also about Rudolf Réti's book on the thematic process in music. However, Messiaen's lines share very long pitch fragments, such as "c", "g" and "j", which could be taken as larger pitch successions generating the smaller ones.

There is definitely some patch work in the way the pitch fragments are disposed in succession. The independence between pitches and time values points the rhythmic analysis in the same direction of that made for the pitches but, again, I will not pursue this argument here for lack of space. Likewise, the discussion about pitch organization of the harmonizations will be left out, but it will suffice to say that the mostly perfect homophonic rhythm of all parts supports that the harmonic complexes follow the same kind of formative rationale seen earlier. Therefore, here I rest the case about how the equivalent sections in the Second movement are *dissimilarly identical*.

**III - *L'heure vient où les morts entendront la voix du fils de Dieu…"***
**(Gospel according to St. John chapter 5, v. 25)**

The Third movement is a simple succession of events connected to each other by their symbology as a story line providing some continuity to the otherwise disconnected events. Messiaen talks about these symbolic meanings in the Chartres documentary (see footnote no.6). There are five events: A, *Modéré*, mm. 1-24, the chant of the Amazonian bird uirapuru *(Leucolepsis modulator)* ; B, *Trés lent*, mm. 25-32, the tubular bells line announcing "the call of the son of God" (Messiaen, 1965, at 15:15 in the video); C, *Trés vif*, mm. 33-35, a sound burst of the entire ensemble, internally articulated by fast repeated notes in the trumpets, horn and cencerros, quickly growing

from ***pp*** to ***ff*** : "the people of the dead wake up and there is a big commotion in the orchestra not only in the brasses but also in the cencerros" (idem, at 15:20 in the video); D, *Trés lent*, mm. 36 -41, the Theme of the Abyss, with only four low notes disposed in two tritones, one ascending and another descending, and using the same notes in retrograde from the tubular bells' call: "it is the voice of profoundness, the voice of the conscience of the dead" (id., at 16:35); and, finally E, mm. 41- 44, the tremolo of tam-tams and gongs from ***pp*** to ***fffff*** and the ensuing "mysterious and unsettling" (id. at 17:02) resonance of the tam-tams. The sheer textural contrast already separates them into five different *Gestalten*. Most important is that there are two occurrences of this fivefold event succession, again establishing cyclical time:

$$A_1B_1C_1D_1E_1 \mid A_2B_2C_2D_2E_2.$$

The second occurrence of the events is, again, dissimilarly identical to the first, except for $D_2$ and $E_2$, Theme of the Abyss and tam-tams, which remain identical to $D_1$ and $E_1$ respectively. The uirapuru As are two different versions of Messiaen's stylized transcription[22] of the birdsong. Each section contains three different statements of the uirapuru line, of different lengths, timbres and pitch sequences. Each of the tubular bells Bs present two different permutations of the same notes, which are the same ones of the Theme of the Abyss. The Cs' two sound bursts, compared, show different orchestrations of the same texture and chord.

Each section-event is characteristically circular in structure, meaning that each seems isolated from the next. It is easier to describe their circularity going from the simplest to the more complex. The tam-tam event, made of a crescendo and a very long decay, displays the elemental way a single sound can be a complete and self-contained structure: it grows and decays, like a breath, in the complementary symmetry of inspiration and expiration. The four-note version of Theme of the Abyss is also reciprocally symmetrical with its ascending (Db-G) and descending (C-F#) tritones, thus affirming its whole expression without the need of any continuation whatsoever. The sound burst shows a vertical symmetry in the piling of perfect fifths in the upper register and of fourths in the lower, both separated by the central tritone Eb-A in the brass instruments[23]; it is more a sound explosion than a harmony expecting continuation. Its sudden cut and its internal "commotion"

[22] See Irlandini, 2010.

[23] The woodwinds double the chord with a different disposition of the same notes.

produce the effect of a sudden realization, or a shiver, like a frightened awakening from a nightmare, this being, therefore, the least static and detached of the five events. Each one of the tubular bells events consists of two slow pulsating of four pitches each: in $B_1$, mm. 25-32, the first line is C-F#-Db-G, followed by C-F#-G-Db, forming a general descending movement. In $B_2$ (mm. 72-79), the contours are generally arched because the notes are permutated into F#-C-G-Db followed by C-Db-F#-G. Because of the quality of the tritone interval, and of the closure effect produced by the quadrature and symmetry of the two phrases with four notes each, the bells lines are firmly self-contained and complete in themselves. Finally, both uirapuru sections are cyclical in themselves as each has three modified statements of the uirapuru song. The first statement in a section is the most literal transcription of the birdsong, while the third is the most elaborated and changed by interpolations, shortenings and stretchings of their gestures. Internally, each single statement is circular, constructed by a flexible patch work of gestural units that allows for several rearrangements to be made into new versions of itself. The surface outcome of both uirapuru sections is dissimilar, however, the contrast is not enough, and the general perception is that they are identical.

**IV -*"Ils ressusciteront, glorieux, avec un nom nouveau, dans le concert joyeux des étoiles et les acclamations des fils du ciel"***
**(St. Paul, First Epistle to Corinthians, chap. 14, v. 43, Apocalypse of St. John, chap. 2, v. 17, and book of Job, chap. 38, v.7)**

The Fourth movement joins practically all musical components presented in the previous movements in a climactic moment of integration and laudation. These components are the Theme of the Abyss, the tam-tam strokes, and the stylized transcriptions of birdsong and Christian plainsong.

Three musical events appear in regular alternation, forming the movement's time cycle: A: three tam-tam strokes in ***pp*** or ***ff*** that carry a threefold symbolism: "the call of the Trinity, the solemn moment of resurrection and the distant melody of the stars" (Messiaen, 1966, p.2); B: the harmonized counterpoint of two Christian plainsongs: the Introit of Easter and the Easter Hallelujah, with added instrumental layers in $B_2$ and $B_3$; and C, the calandra lark (*Melanocorypha*

*calandra*) joyous birdsong. The cycle is ABAC, and occurs three times. The final repetition, however, is ABAD, where D is a "new" section.

The A sections constantly interrupt the previous music, which is either B or C, resulting in

$$A_1\text{-}B_1\text{-}A'_1\text{-}C1 \mid A_2\text{-}B_2\text{-}A'_2\text{-}C2 \mid A_3\text{-}B_3\text{-}A'_3\text{-}D.$$

In the first occurrence of the cycle, $A_1$ (mm.1-3) and $A'_1$ (mm. 26-28), the three tam-tam strokes are played ***pp*** and ***p***, respectively. In $A_2$ (mm. 66-68) and $A'_2$ (mm. 96-98) they come in ***f*** and ***ff***, respectively. Finally, in $A_3$ (mm.144-146) they are played in ***fff*** and, in $A'_3$ (mm. 192-195), there are six tam-tam strokes, segmented in two units (phrases) of three strokes each, the first in ***p***, the second in ***f***, all with added resonances from the gongs, intended by Messiaen to sound in perfect balance, without the predominance of any gong or tam-tam, like true "resonance chords" (Messiaen, 1966, p. 76). All tam-tam interventions are sudden interruptions of the preceding music with the exception of $A'_3$, which has its own features, as will be seen further ahead.

The B sections constitute the main events in the Fourth movement, because they are the place where the greatest accumulation and integration of musical components takes place: "the angels and the stars gather together to acclaim the resurrected in their glory, by the superimposition of four musics, four color shimmerings, four sound complexes" (Messiaen, 1966, p.2). Messiaen means the Introit, the Hallelujah, the Siṃhavikrama deśi-tāla, and the Theme of the Abyss.

The basic structure of the Bs is a two-part counterpoint of stylized transcriptions of the Introit of Easter at the tubular bells and of the Easter Hallelujah at the trumpets. All Messiaen retains from the original plainsong is their melodic contour. Each line is expanded in homophony by the usual technique of resonant harmonic halos: the cencerros double the tubular bells, and the woodwinds the trumpets. There is a general principle of expansion, growth or swelling at each B section which stands for the ever increasing rejoicing and lauding that this movement is intended to convey. This progressive intensification produces, in the Fourth movement, an expanding spiral time, notwithstanding the discontinuity caused by the abrupt way in which events follow each other.

The first element of spiral expansion is the time duration of each B section. $B_1$ is shorter than and $B_2$ by only four beats (less than three seconds), so this difference remains unnoticeable through listening. However, $B_3$ (mm. 147-190) becomes almost 2,5 times longer than $B_1$. The second element of expansion relates to orchestration and the accumulation of superimposed layers. $B_1$, mm. 4-25, is for tubular bells, cencerros, trumpets and woodwinds only. $B_2$, mm. 69-95, adds a counterpoint to the tubular bells on the gongs, containing the Siṃhavikrama. In $B_3$, mm.147-190, in addition to everything just mentioned, the Theme of the Abyss is brought in counterpoint with the trumpets line, performed by all low brass instruments. There is also a third intensification procedure that could be called a *stretto*, regarding the time difference between the entrances of Introit and Hallelujah lines. The Easter Introit always starts first, followed by the Hallelujah somewhat later, but the distance between their entrances is progressively shorter with each repetition of B. In $B_1$, the distance is of 16,5 beats; in $B_2$, it is equal to 8; and in $B_3$, it is of only 2. The result is the Hallelujah sounding for longer at each B.

There is a great affinity between the circular flow of the rhythmic-melodic units of a plainsong and of Messiaen's melodies in *Et exspecto…* . Both share the principle of patch work seen in Figure 7, that would allow for an analysis of plainsong in similar terms, pointing to possible fragments and motivic building blocks that appear repeated with or without transformations. However, there is something about the plainsong stylized transcriptions that indicates these melodies are "eternal", as if they were constantly sounding..., and this is not quite spiral time. This has less to do with the melodic structure of the individual lines of Introit and Hallelujah than with the way by which Messiaen sets the Latin *text* to the wordless tubular bells and trumpets, making them recur in a special way. This concerns the way the melodies recommence in $B_2$ and $B_3$; my discussion will be limited to the Introit only, for lack of space. In its first appearance, the Introit starts at the beginning point of the plainsong original, but, from the second time on, at the beginning of $B_2$ and $B_3$, it simply restarts from a seemingly arbitrary point, as if the Introit had been sounding before and the music "caught up" with it.

$B_1$ (mm. 4-25) transcribes the portion of the Introit[24] melody equivalent to the words *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum, allelúia: posuísti super me manum tuam* but interrupts it before

[24] Easter Introit: *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum, allelúia: posuísti super me manum tuam alleluia: mirábilis facta est sciéntia tua*. Listen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS8USaGrwpk.

singing the following word, *allelúia*. In $B_2$, mm.69-95, the tubular bells part does not go back to the beginning of the hymn *(resurrexi…)*, but resumes from the already heard *posuísti (super me manum tuam),* resulting in the repetition of the bells part heard from m.16.2 to m.25. After that, it includes the continuation, *allelúia: mirábilis facta est sciéntia tua* but, again stops short of the next word, the *allelúia*. $B_3$ (mm.147-190) repeats the part from m.84 to m.95, and continues to the end of the text. Then, it skips the Domine and Gloria sections that are traditionally associated with the Introit and immediately restarts from the beginning *(resurrexi…)*, continuing until its interruption at *mirábilis facta est*.

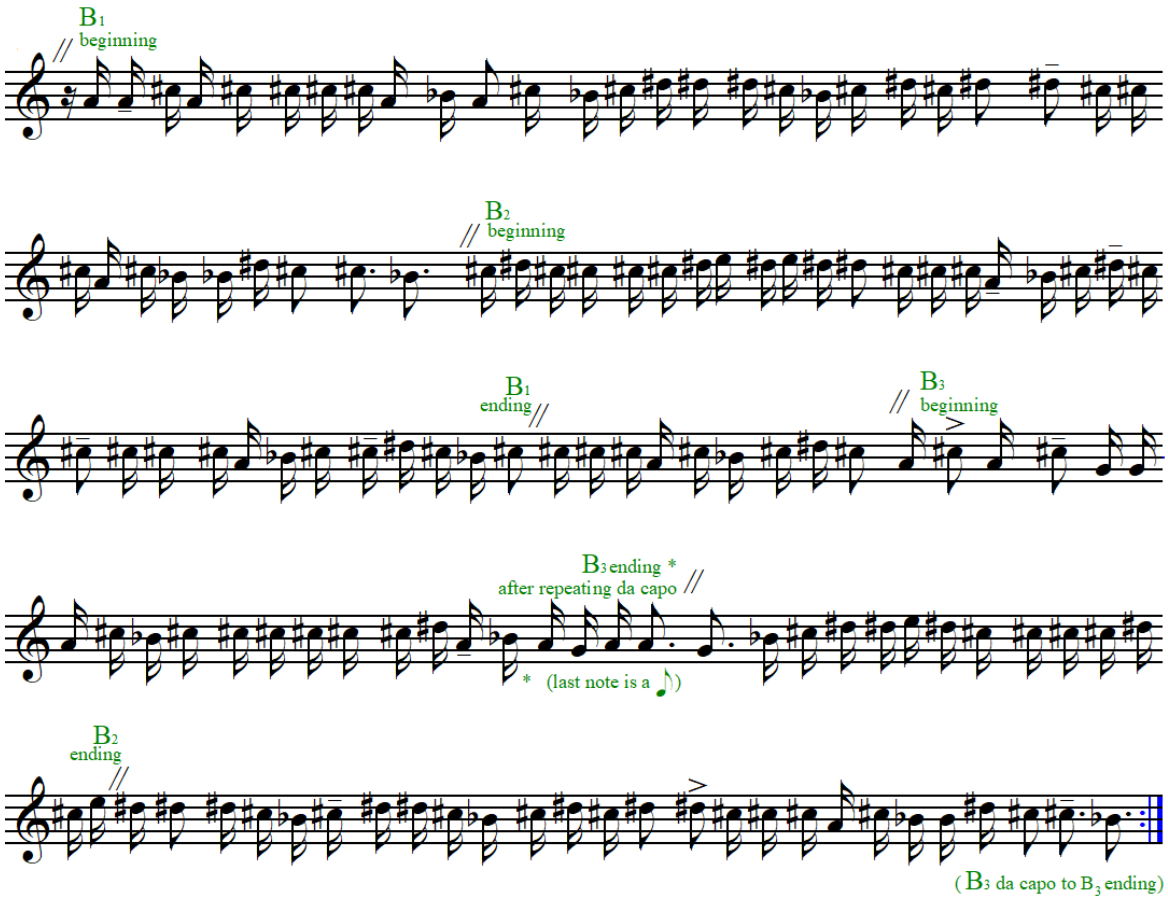


Figure 8 Melodic cycle of the stylized transcription of the Easter Introit

Therefore, the Introit is a complete melodic cycle with its beginning, middle and end. The cycle is repeated at every occurrence of B, as it is also interrupted. When the time arrives in the music to repeat a B section, the melody starts on an already previously heard point in the cycle further ahead of its beginning. The melody then continues for some more. When the new B section's duration is long enough to allow revealing the Introit's complete duration ($B_3$) it continues *da capo*, from the *resurrexit*. The effect of this structural conception, to me, is that the melodic cycle is constantly sounding, like the harmony of the spheres…, but the Fourth movement only shows bits of it that can begin or end at any point of the flow. Figure 8 shows the Easter Introit's melodic cycle and the points in which it is interrupted and restarted at each B.

I will quickly mention some details of the Siṃhavikrama and Theme of the Abyss lines of the Bs, as they reveal important features concerning circularity of the dynamic (the spiral) and static (the circle, properly speaking) types, respectively. The Siṃhavikrama is assigned to the six gongs and starts in $B_2$ on m.78. The spiral process seen in the Second movement is repeated. To unfold completely as it did in the both $C_1$ and $C_2$ of the Second movement, this process requires four repetitions of the Siṃhavikrama. Here, in the Fourth movement $B_2$, there are only three complete occurrences of the Siṃhavikrama; the syllabic ratio of the vijaya portion contracts from 5:4 to 4:3 and 3:2, and only the first three syllables of the fourth occurrence appear, before the interruption. In $B_3$, the Siṃhavikrama restarts in m.160. The nine complete occurrences of Siṃhavikrama allow the spiral process to occur two complete times in $B_3$, with the vijaya syllables being fully reduced from 5:4 to 2:1 and the tihai cadence taking place as well. The tenth occurrence of Siṃhavikrama starts at the very end of $B_3$ but is interrupted before the completion of the first syllable of the pattern.

Starting at m.157, the Theme of the Abyss takes place in the Fourth movement retaining all pitches and durations of its originally fragmented exposition in the First movement. However, here, the As flow without interruption and without the differentiated and segmenting harmonic treatments. Furthermore, $A_2$ and $A_4$ are excluded. Another distinction of the Theme in the Fourth movement is that it has its own harmonic auras, entirely assigned to the six horns. After the conclusion of the tihai cadence of the three cretic feet (see Figure 4) in mm. 181-186, the Theme starts over again, on measure 187, but misses to reach the last note of $A_1$ because of the section interruption. Therefore, the Theme does not succeed in establishing itself as cyclical time.

Nevertheless, it remains as a static, circular melodic line, because its inner components are simultaneously somewhat undifferentiated and dissimilar, transforming its linearity into circularity.

In the context of $B_3$, both Siṃhavikrama and the Theme of the Abyss suggest the idea of sempiternity, an infinite duration in time, as their inexorable repetition is suggested by their "attempted restart" just before the section interruption, as shown above. In a subtle way, Messiaen conveys the idea that the laudation itself is eternal.

The *allouette calandre* (calandra lark) was chosen for the C sections because it is a symbol of '*joy*' and the '*gift of agility*'". Contrary to the previous birdsong, the ominous uirapuru, "its song is characterized by a large rhythmic variety, a fast tempo, a rich timbre, and a constant cheerfulness" (Messiaen, 1966, p.2), which entirely fits the celebration mood. Compared with $C_1$ (mm. 29-65), $C_2$ (mm. 99-143) shows a growth in duration – $C_2$ is 80% longer than $C_1$. Compared with $C_1$, the way the lark's gestures or fragments are edited, added and patched together along $C_2$ show a more intense and complex elaboration of the texture. Unfortunately, there is no space for the description of these compositional procedures. It will suffice to say that the time flow of the Cs results from permutations of the birdsong's smaller rhythmic-melodic units. The "constant cheerfulness" and fast tempo are responsible for the impression of movement, but this is only an impression, as the section leads nowhere: it is a false movement. The use of permutations in this way, that is, to compose a varied and unpredictable succession of a limited number of fragments that remain recognizable and, at the same time, not perfectly distinguishable from each other in their modified repetitions, produces a self-circumscribed state of things that is static, even though all is intensified, like a spiral, from $C_1$ to $C_2$.

Messiaen does not provide a $C_3$ version of the calandra lark song. Instead, he uses $A'_3$ to stop $B_3$ in a new way. This is the pivot point, in which time escapes from its cyclical repetition, as if going off on a tangent, creating a surprising situation and causing expectation; what is coming next? The surprise consists in that, instead of a tam-tam sound, first there is a prolonged silent fermata, followed by the tam-tams in a new intensity, ***p***, doubled with gongs and, furthermore, extended by a second set of three tam-tam strokes, now in ***f***. What comes next is section D, the Wail of the Abyss, mm. 198-205. Now, the slow succession of the eight chords in *tutti*, from ***pp*** to ***fff***, lasts for almost a full minute, but has no sense of movement, except for its intensity crescendo; it is like a state of shock, with a bright glow growing brighter, then dazzling and blinding, as much as an orchestra can make it.

**V -** ***"Et j'entendis la voix d'une foule immense…".***

**(St. Johns Apocalypse, chapter 19, v. 6)**

The Fifth movement is marked, from beginning to end, by the inexorable slow strokes on the gongs (sixteenth note at MM = 66). Their pitches change at every four strokes (equivalent to one quarter note), forming a pulsating and undulating melody that goes from the lowest to the highest and back to the lowest gong. Such an exposed pulsation is a completely new feature in *Et exspecto…* . A second line is assigned mainly to the brass instruments in unison or in the usual homophony of harmonic complexes in the winds, and consists almost entirely of quarter notes. The note-against-note counterpoint of gongs and brasses together creates an image of the procession of an immense crowd. A third line is the drone formed by a trill on the three cencerros sets, present for the entire movement. The entire movement consists of six occurrences of this 28-beat counterpoint, A, the first five with the same duration of 28 eighth-notes, while the last, $A_6$, is much larger and developmental. This is clearly a cyclical time that reminds the First movement:

$$A_1\text{-}A_2\text{-}A_3\text{-}A_4\text{-}A_5\text{-}A_6,$$

but Messiaen's work is never predictable, and does not lack formal ambiguity.

$A_1$, mm.1-8, is the first exposition of the basic cycle, the counterpoint between brass and gongs. The brass melody starts with a descending tritone G-Db played by all brass instruments except the two first trombones, which will be the main instruments to play the core of the brass melody (mm.3-6), doubled in unison by the six horns and the tubular bells. The line ends with the arching movement G-C-Db in mm. 5 and 6, with the Db as a half note. This cadence is extended by the reiteration of the G-Db tritone in quarter notes, again in unison of all brass instruments without the two trombones. The cadence of the melody is very similar to its opening, since both insist on the descent to Db, the lowest note of the line, and both with the Db half note. With the cyclic repetition of the melody, it soon becomes unclear whether or not the new opening is yet another extension of the previous cadence. This doubt is casted away when one realizes (through analysis, not through listening) that the opening receives the same instrumental treatment as the following

melody core. As seen in $A_1$, both the opening and the core of the melody are played by the two trombones doubled by the horns and tubular bells. In $A_2$, both opening and the core of the melody are played by the two first trombones now doubled in unison by the bassoon and, in octaves, by flutes and trumpets, while the rest of the winds produce the resonant harmonic halos. Since the same orchestration is applied to the two first notes of the opening, G-Db, this confirms, by means of timbre segmentation, that these two notes really do belong to the $A_2$ section, and not to $A_1$.

Messiaen builds contrast between the cycles through the alternation of these two orchestral versions of the melody. The melody appears only in unison of trombones, horns and tubular bells in the odd number sections ($A_1$, $A_3$ and $A_5$), while, in the even number sections ($A_2$, $A_4$ and $A_6$), the melody is in unison of trombones, bassoon, flutes and trumpet, and superimposed by the homophony of harmonic complexes. There are, however, several details that deviate from this scheme once the phenomena become "too established". For example, the reiteration of the cadence in $A_3$ is not G-Db, but A-Eb (mm 23-24). The core of the melody in $A_4$ (mm. 27-30) is a new succession of notes, although it does cadence on Db. Naturally, this novelty is not enough to constitute an altogether different melody. The same happens with the core of the melody in $A_5$ (mm.35-39). Also, there is no opening tritone in the beginning of $A_6$. This is why $A_5$ flows into $A_6$ quite uneventfully, if not for the reintroduction of the harmonic halos on m. 40 and the louder intensity. Concerning the gongs part, in $A_4$, it changes to a different melody made of the same notes, and $A_5$ displays yet another melody. At the point of $A_5$ meeting $A_6$, the gongs line gains some momentum, as there is no cadential articulation. Further ahead, its wave-like motion increases in activity until m.48, from where it slowly ascends to the highest gong sound, staying there for 24 ***ff*** strokes and ending abruptly.

The last repetition of the cycle, $A_6$, mm. 40-54, may be segmented in three parts, as both lines in the counterpoint articulate at the same points. The first articulation is on the downbeat of m.43, where the lowest Db is reached in the brass instruments, at the same time as the lowest gong note is prolonged for eight strokes. Needless to say that the articulation is subtle, and does not interfere with the continuous circularity of the apparently random succession of its large intervals or possible melodic fragments. The second articulation, m. 48, segments the line not only by the fact that, again, both the brasses and gongs lines reach their lowest points, but also because from then on,

the rhythm slows down to half notes on the winds, and starts a melodic ascent of four notes that ends triumphantly on the long sustain of the highest note.

The Fifth movement remains "charged with this choral effect: fortissimo, enormous, unanimous and simple" (Messiaen, 1966, p.2).

* * * * * *

Each movement in Messiaen's *Et exspecto resurrecionem mortuorum* expresses the Absolute by means of static, hieratic musical phenomena organized in cycles, i.e., always repeating the events in the same order. This is most effective when the repetition involves only one minimally modified event (as in the First and Fifth movements), analogous to how the intense repetition of a *mantra* is capable of inducing the mind into concentration and a state of less fluctuations. As a composer, Messiaen cannot help indulging in musical variety and composing cycles with from two to five events. Furthermore, the events disposed in cyclical time are in themselves *circular*, properly speaking, in the sense that its internal, smaller events succeed each other in complex and unpredictable order, producing an all-pervading sense of repetition that causes the diachrony of events to be replaced by a sense of synchrony or absence of time. Slowness, lengthy silences and resonances also contribute to the creation of a static, suspended, dilated and unchanging flow of time, like the impassive, hieratic Absolute. All this is conveyed by musical change, which is a paradox…, intended to produce in the listener an experience of the sacred through sound. As for ecstasy, the listener's concentration may vary, and it is not always guarantee it will be reached, but this music itself has the characteristics of an ecstasy, and make ecstasy, to the listener, at least, a possibility.

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