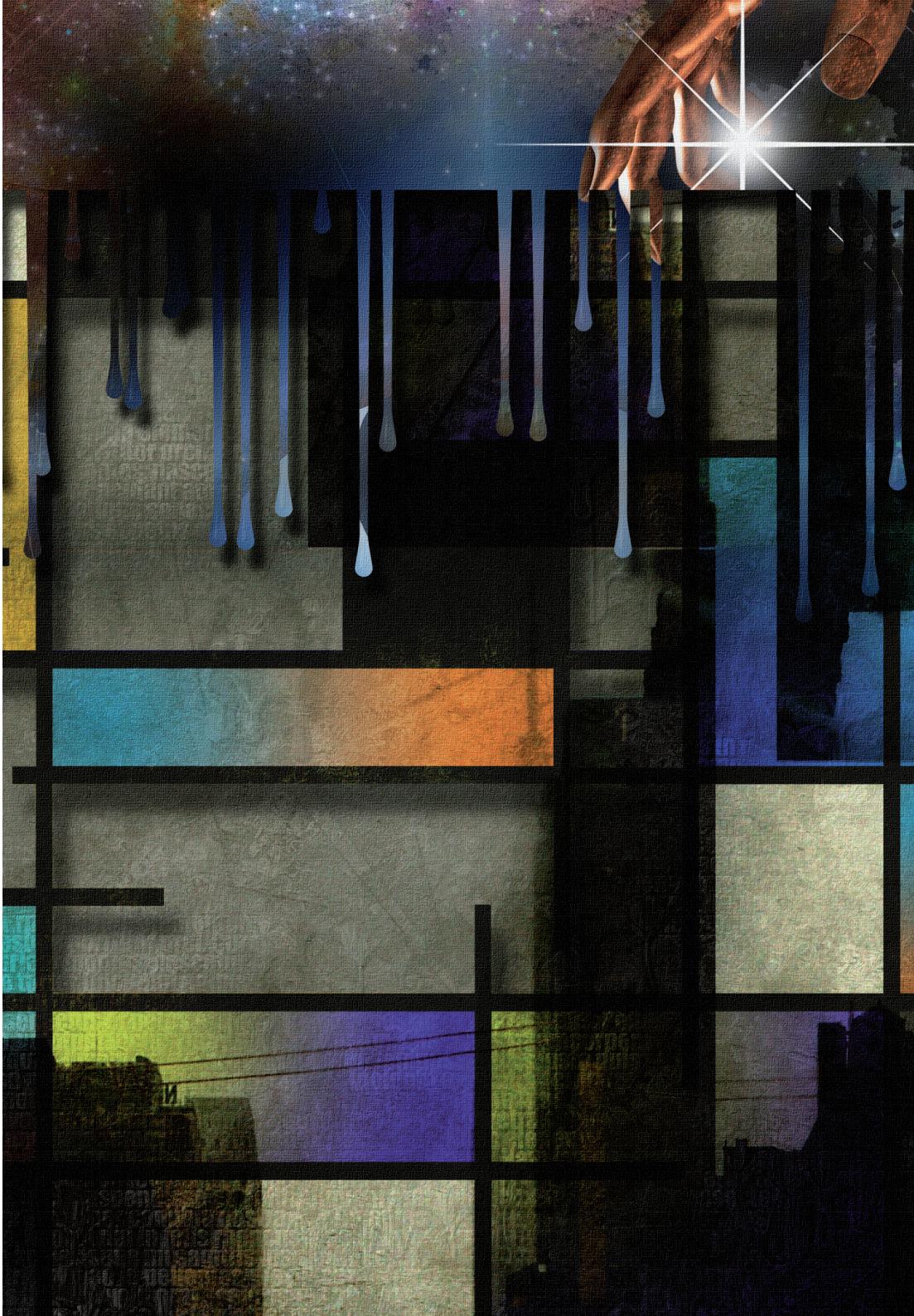




MESSIAEN

La Nativité du Seigneur
(The Birth of the Saviour)

Tom Winpenny, Organ



Olivier
MESSIAEN
(1908-1992)

La Nativité du Seigneur (1935)
(The Birth of the Saviour)

1 La Vierge et L'Enfant (The Virgin and Child) 7:02

Conçu par une Vierge, un Enfant nous est né, un Fils nous a été donné. Sois transportée d'allégresse, fille de Sion ! Voici que ton roi vient à toi, juste et humble. (Livre du Prophète Isaïe, IX, 5 – Livre du Prophète Zacharie, IX, 9)

Conceived of a Virgin, unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: behold thy King cometh unto thee, just and lowly. (Isaiah 9:6; Zachariah 9:9)

2 Les Bergers (The Shepherds) 6:34

Ayant vu l'Enfant couché dans une crèche, les Bergers s'en retournèrent, glorifiant et louant Dieu. (Évangile selon Saint-Luc, II, 20)

And when they had seen the babe lying in a manger, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God. (Luke 2:20)

3 Dessein éternels (Eternal Purposes) 5:39

Dieu, dans son amour, nous a prédestinés à être ses fils adoptifs, par Jésus-Christ, à la louange de la gloire de sa grâce. (Épître de Saint-Paul aux Éphésiens I, 5 & 6)

God in his love has predestined us to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace. (Ephesians 1: 5-6)

4 Le Verbe (The Word) 11:22

Le Seigneur m'a dit : Tu es mon Fils. De son sein, avant que l'aurore existât, il m'a engendré. Je suis l'image de la bonté de Dieu, je suis le Verbe de vie, dès le commencement. (Psaume II, 7 – Psaume CIX, 3 - Livre de la Sagesse VII, 26 – 1er Epître de Saint-Jean, I, 1)

The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son. From his bosom I was begotten, before the daystar. I am the image of the goodness of God, I am the Word of Life, which was from the beginning. (Psalms 2:7 & 110 (109):3; Wisdom 7:26; 1 John 1:1)

5 Les Enfants de Dieu (The Children of God) 3:48

À tous ceux qui l'ont reçue, le Verbe a donné le pouvoir de devenir enfants de Dieu. Et Dieu a envoyé dans leur cœur l'Esprit de son Fils, lequel crie : « Père ! Père ! » (Évangile selon Saint-Jean, I, 12 – Épître de Saint-Paul aux Galates, IV, 6)

To those that have received him, the Word has given power to become the children of God. And God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying 'Abba, Father'. (John 1:12; Galatians 4:6)

6 Les Anges (The Angels) 3:43

L'armée céleste louait Dieu et disait : Gloire à Dieu au plus haut des cieux ! (Évangile selon Saint-Luc, II, 13 & 14)

The heavenly host praised God, saying: Glory to God in the highest! (Luke 2:13-14)

7 Jésus accepte la souffrance (Jesus accepts Suffering) 4:47

Le Christ dit à son Père en entrant dans le monde : « Vous n'avez agréé ni holocaustes, ni sacrifices pour le péché, mais vous m'avez formé un corps. Me voici ! » (Épître de Saint-Paul aux Hébreux, X, 5 & 7)

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, Christ saith to his Father: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure, but a body hast thou prepared for me. Lo, I come! (Hebrews 10:5, 7)

8 Les Mages (The Magi) 8:39

Les Mages partirent, et l'étoile allait devant eux. (Évangile selon Saint-Matthieu, II, 9)

The wise men departed, and the star went before them. (Matthew 2:9)

9 Dieu parmi nous (God among us) 9:35

Paroles du communiant, de la Vierge, de l'Eglise tout entière : Celui qui m'a créé a reposé dans ma tente, le Verbe s'est fait chair et il a habité en moi. Mon âme glorifie le Seigneur, mon esprit a tressailli d'allégresse en Dieu mon Sauveur. (Ecclésiastique XXIV, 8 – Évangile selon Saint-Jean, I, 14 – Évangile selon Saint-Luc, I, 46 & 47)

Words of the communicant, of the Virgin, of the whole church: He that created me has rested in my tabernacle, the Word is made flesh and dwells in me. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Ecclesiasticus 24:8; John 1:14; Luke 1:46-47)

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

La Nativité du Seigneur (The Birth of the Saviour)

Olivier Messiaen was a towering figure of twentieth-century European music. His highly personal musical language drew heavily on the natural world, the music of Eastern cultures and, above all, his devout Catholicism. A talented pianist, Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1919 at a remarkably early age, and in 1927 joined Marcel Dupré's organ class, although he had never previously set eyes on an organ console. Dupré spent the first class demonstrating the instrument, and Messiaen returned the following week, having learnt Bach's *Fantasia in C minor* to an impressive standard. In 1931 he was appointed Organist at the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris, with support for his candidacy from Charles Tournemire and Charles-Marie Widor – two of the city's eminent organists. He would remain at La Trinité for more than sixty years, until his death.

Messiaen's early organ music, and works such as the song cycle *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936-37) [Naxos 8.572174], established him as an important figure in contemporary music. Captured whilst serving as a medical auxiliary during World War II, he composed the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (1940-41) [Naxos 8.554824] for performance with three fellow prisoners. On his release he was appointed Professor of Harmony (and later Professor of Composition) at the Paris Conservatoire. An inspiring teacher, from 1949 Messiaen taught at the annual Darmstadt Summer School, where his influence was profound. His pupils included the composers Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and George Benjamin. The underlying principles of Messiaen's highly individual style are set out in his two treatises: the *Technique de mon langage musical* (1944) and the *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* (unfinished at the time of his death, and completed by his wife Yvonne Loriod). Rather than attempting to impose his own style on his pupils, he would encourage them to find their own musical voice. Thus the individuality of Messiaen's music has always set it apart from that of other composers.

La Nativité du Seigneur (The Birth of the Saviour)

was composed in Grenoble in summer 1935. The first performance, at La Trinité in February 1936, was shared between the organists Daniel-Lesur, Jean Langlais and Jean-Jacques Grunewald. It followed the work which brought him attention as a composer for the organ, *L'Ascension* (1933-34: a transcription of an orchestral work, but with a spectacular new third movement, *Transports de joie*). Messiaen experienced a mild form of synaesthesia, and perceived specific colours on hearing different harmonies. Colour – in both harmony and timbre – is at the centre of Messiaen's musical ideology and plays a structural, rather than merely superficial rôle in all his works.

La Nativité established Messiaen as a visionary composer for the organ. It was one of a number of large-scale works for the instrument, which culminated in the monumental *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (1984) – one of many later works in which his passion for birdsong (which he transcribed into musical notation) features prominently. The achievement of his highly-personal style can be traced back to his time at the Conservatoire: Dupré had demonstrated the organ's possibilities for virtuosic display, Paul Dukas (his composition teacher) advanced the use of modality, and Maurice Emmanuel (his teacher of music history) had been an advocate of rhythmic freedom. Years later, Messiaen would describe himself as 'a musician – that is my profession: a rhythmologist – that is my speciality; and an ornithologist – that is my passion'.

The music of *La Nativité* can be seen as a synthesis of the innovations that had occupied Messiaen in the preceding years. In the lengthy preface to the published score, the composer sets out his *Modes of limited transposition* – special scales that form the basis of the intensely colourful harmonies in the cycle. Equally significant is Messiaen's use of rhythm, which is precisely notated but nevertheless sounds extremely flexible. Often, the rhythms are derived from Hindu *tālas* and from the fluidity of Gregorian chant. Rarely is a bar written in a 'conventional' metre.

Each movement of *La Nativité* serves as a musical commentary on a different aspect of the Christmas story. The number of movements – nine – is symbolic of the months of the gestation of the Christ Child. The opening movement – *La Vierge et l'Enfant* (The Virgin and Child) – is a triptych. A graceful and enchanting melody governs the outer sections, which evoke the Virgin's hushed awe as she cradles the infant Jesus. The central section depicts her joy and rapture at the birth: the pedal figuration suggests bells, whilst rising and falling chords evoke the rocking of the cradle. Against this is set an elaborate right hand melody based around the plainsong hymn *Puer natus est nobis* (Unto us a Child is born), representing Mary's joy.

A pictorial impulse is central to the second movement, *Les Bergers* (The Shepherds), as the shepherds kneel in wonder around the crib. Then, rising from their obeisance, they praise God as they return to their fields, piping joyful, carol-like melodies.

Desseins éternels (Eternal Purposes) portrays a more abstract image: our predestination, through Jesus Christ, to be God's adopted sons. A long-breathed melody – marked 'extremely slow and tender' and harmonised with slow-moving, shimmering chords – evokes a sense of the title's vision of timelessness.

The fourth movement, *Le Verbe* (The Word), signifies the birth of the Word of God. Its opening section, powerful and majestic, denotes God descending to earth in human form. The solemn second part presents a long, incantatory and exquisitely lyrical melody portraying the eternal, divine and ever-present Word.

The rhythmically charged opening of the next movement, *Les Enfants de Dieu* (The Children of God), grows in excitement and energy until for the first time in the cycle (and at its midpoint) the full resources of the organ are employed. This impassioned outburst subsides into calm and quiet, expressing the confident call of Christians, reborn as God's children.

The appearance of the angels in the next movement, *Les Anges* (The Angels), is vividly captured. Written for the manuals only, its brightness and rhythmic drive

imaginatively convey the beating wings of the heavenly host, which descends, pauses in homage, and then ascends – circling ever higher until out of sight.

The seventh movement, *Jésus accepte la souffrance* (Jesus accepts Suffering), marks a change in character. This dramatic movement starkly presents the agony of the Crucifixion which Christ will suffer in order to redeem mankind. The symbol of the Cross is heard in the prominent recurring four-pitch pedal motif. Highly-chromatic passages alternate with arresting *fortissimo* chords, before the cross motif, repeated and gaining in strength, draws the movement into a blaze of glory: Christ the Redeemer has appeared.

Les Mages (The Magi) evokes the journey of the Wise Men through the desert. The pedal part, freed, as often in Messiaen's organ music, from its usual rôle as the bass, plays a high melody representing the constant guiding star. The melody's contour suggests the plainsong hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus* (Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire). The manual chords evoke the passage of the caravan through the arid landscape.

The concluding movement, *Dieu parmi nous* (God among us), draws together the ideas of the preceding movements. The imposing theme from *Le Verbe*, signifying the descending Word of God, is heard in powerful chords which proceed to bottom C in the pedal and announce the Incarnation. A short reflection introduces a 'theme of love', the Communion between Christ and his people. The joyous and vital third theme signifies Mary's song of praise, the *Magnificat*, its rhythmic vigour and flexibility showing the influence of birdsong. In the following section, the 'theme of love' is developed, as the harmonic tension becomes more impassioned. An ascending statement of part of the 'Word of God' theme heralds the start of an exhilarating toccata, in the radiant key of E major. This masterly section – inspired, according to Messiaen's diaries, by the mountains close to Grenoble – evolves into a monumental conclusion.

Tom Winpenny

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

La Nativité du Seigneur

Olivier Messiaen fut l'une des figures emblématiques de la musique européenne du XXe siècle. Son langage musical extrêmement personnel était fermement ancré dans l'univers naturel, la musique des cultures occidentales, et surtout dans son catholicisme fervent. Pianiste de talent, Messiaen entra au Conservatoire de Paris en 1919, à un âge remarquablement précoce, et en 1927, il intégra la classe d'orgue de Marcel Dupré, alors même qu'il ne s'était jamais assis à un orgue. Pendant son premier cours, Dupré fit une démonstration sur l'instrument, et la semaine suivante, quand Messiaen revint, il avait appris par cœur la *Fantaisie en ut mineur de Bach et la joua remarquablement bien*. En 1931, il fut nommé organiste en l'Église de la Sainte-Trinité de Paris ; sa candidature avait bénéficié du soutien de Charles Tournemire et Charles-Marie Widor, deux des plus éminents organistes de la ville. Il devait occuper ce poste pendant plus de soixante ans, jusqu'à sa mort.

Les premières pages pour orgue de Messiaen, et des pièces comme le cycle de mélodies *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936-37) [Naxos 8.572174], l'établirent comme une voix importante de la musique contemporaine. Fait prisonnier alors qu'il était infirmit auxiliaire pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, il composa le *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (1940-41) [Naxos 8.554824], qui fut joué par trois de ses codétenu. Libéré, il fut nommé professeur d'harmonie, puis professeur de composition au Conservatoire. A partir de 1949, Messiaen dispensa son enseignement particulièrement stimulant pendant le cours d'été de Darmstadt, où son influence fut profondément ressentie : au nombre de ses élèves figurèrent Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen et George Benjamin. Les principes qui sous-tendent le style extrêmement caractéristique de Messiaen sont énoncés dans ses deux traités : la *Technique de mon langage musical* (1944) et le *Traité de rythme, de couleur et d'ornithologie* (inachevé quand il mourut, c'est son épouse, Yvonne Loriod, qui en termina la rédaction). Plutôt que de tenter d'imposer son style à ses élèves, il les encourageait à trouver leur propre voix musicale. Ainsi, l'individualité de la musique de Messiaen l'a toujours distingué de celle d'autres compositeurs.

La Nativité du Seigneur fut composée à Grenoble durant l'été 1935. Trois organistes se partagèrent l'exécution de sa création, donnée à La Trinité en février 1936 : Daniel-Lesur, Jean Langlais et Jean-Jacques Grunewald. Cet ouvrage faisait suite à *L'Ascension* (1933-34), qui avait fait connaître les capacités de compositeur pour orgue de Messiaen ; transcription d'une pièce orchestrale, il s'était vu adjointe un troisième mouvement spectaculaire intitulé *Transports de joie*. Doué de synesthésie, Messiaen percevait des couleurs spécifiques en fonction des différentes harmonies qu'il entendait. Ainsi, tant du point de vue de l'harmonie que des timbres, la couleur se trouve au cœur de la pensée musicale du compositeur et joue dans toutes ses œuvres un rôle structural plutôt que simplement superficiel.

La Nativité assura à Messiaen une réputation de visionnaire en matière de composition pour orgue. C'est l'un des grands ouvrages qu'il écrivit pour cet instrument et dont la série culmina avec le monumental *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (1984) – l'une de ses nombreuses œuvres de la maturité où transparaît clairement sa passion pour les chants d'oiseaux (qu'il transcrivait en notation musicale). On peut faire remonter la constitution de son style suprêmement personnel à la période qu'il passa au Conservatoire : Dupré avait démontré les possibilités virtuoses de l'orgue, Paul Dukas (le professeur de composition de Messiaen) souligna l'utilisation de la modalité, et Maurice Emmanuel (son professeur d'histoire de la musique) défendait la liberté rythmique. Bien des années plus tard, Messiaen devait se décrire comme un musicien – sa profession –, un rythmologue – sa spécialité – et un ornithologue – sa passion.

On peut voir la musique de *La Nativité* comme une synthèse des innovations qui avaient occupé Messiaen pendant les années précédentes. Dans la longue préface de la partition publiée, le compositeur formule ses *Modes à transposition limitée* – des gammes spéciales qui constituent la base des harmonies aux coloris intenses du cycle. Tout aussi significative est l'utilisation que fait Messiaen du rythme, qui est noté avec précision mais dont il émane néanmoins une impression d'extrême

flexibilité. Il arrive souvent que les rythmes dérivent des *deq-tâlas* hindous et de la fluidité du chant grégorien, mais il est rare que l'on rencontre un passage écrit dans une mesure « conventionnelle ».

Chaque mouvement de *La Nativité* sert de commentaire musical à un aspect différent du récit de Noël. Le nombre de mouvements symbolise les neuf mois de la gestation de l'Enfant Jésus. Le mouvement initial – *La Vierge et l'Enfant* – est un triptyque. Une mélodie aussi gracieuse que ravissante régit les sections externes, qui évoquent le ravissement muet de la Vierge berçant l'Enfant Jésus. La section centrale dépeint son extase face au nouveau-né : les traits de pédale font penser à des cloches, tandis que des accords ascendants et descendants illustrent le balancement du berceau. Sur cette toile de fond se déroule une mélodie de la main droite recherchée, fondée sur l'hymne de plain-chant *Puer natus est nobis* (Un Enfant nous est né), qui représente la joie de Marie.

Dans le deuxième mouvement, *Les Bergers*, un élán descriptif joue un rôle essentiel tandis que les bergers émerveillés s'agenouillent autour du berceau. Puis ils se relèvent et louent Dieu en s'en retournant aux champs, s'accompagnant de joyeuses mélodies de flûte qui rappellent des chants de Noël.

Desseins éternels illustre une image plus abstraite : notre prédestination, à travers le Christ, à devenir les enfants adoptifs de Dieu. Une mélodie prolongée – marquée « extrêmement lent et tendre » et harmonisée au moyen d'accords mesurés et chatoyants – suscite l'impression d'éternité évoquée par le titre du morceau.

Le quatrième mouvement, *Le Verbe*, décrit la naissance de la parole de Dieu. Sa section d'ouverture, puissante et majestueuse, montre le Seigneur qui prend forme humaine pour descendre sur terre. La solennelle seconde partie présente une longue mélodie incantatoire délicieusement lyrique qui décrit le Verbe éternel, divin et omniprésent.

L'ouverture rythmiquement chargée du mouvement suivant, *Les Enfants de Dieu*, se fait de plus en plus enjouée et énergique jusqu'à ce que, pour la première fois du cycle (et en son point central), les pleines ressources de l'orgue soient utilisées. Cet élán passionné s'apaise dans la quiétude, exprimant l'appel confiant des chrétiens qui renaissent en tant qu'enfants de Dieu.

L'apparition des Anges dans le mouvement qui suit est dépeinte avec beaucoup d'éloquence. Écrit uniquement pour les claviers, ce morceau présente un éclat et une verve rythmiques qui restituent avec

inventivité le battement des ailes des armées célestes, qui descendant, rendent hommage à l'Enfant puis remontent au ciel en décrivant des cercles de plus en plus hauts pour finir par disparaître.

Le septième mouvement, *Jésus accepte la souffrance*, marque un changement de caractère. Ce morceau dramatique présente les tourments de la Crucifixion que le Christ devra endurer pour sauver l'humanité. On trouve le symbole de la Croix dans le motif de pédale récurrent sur quatre degrés qui occupe une place prépondérante. Des passages extrêmement chromatiques sont alternés avec de saisissants accords *fortissimo*, puis le motif de la croix, répété et gagnant en force, entraîne le mouvement vers une apothéose : le Christ rédempteur est apparu dans toute sa gloire.

Le mouvement suivant, *Les Mages*, évoque le périple des rois mages à travers le désert. Comme cela se produit souvent chez Messiaen, la partie de pédale transcende son rôle de basse traditionnel pour entonner une mélodie aiguë symbolisant la fidèle présence de l'étoile qui guide les voyageurs. Le contour de cette mélodie fait penser à l'hymne de plain-chant *Veni, Creator Spiritus* (Viens, Esprit créateur). Les accords de clavier illustrent le passage de la caravane dans un paysage aride.

Le mouvement final, *Dieu parmi nous*, rassemble les idées des mouvements précédents. On entend l'imposant thème du *Verbe*, qui correspond à la venue de la parole de Dieu sur terre, sur des puissants accords qui procèdent du grave à la pédale et annoncent l'Incarnation. Une brève réflexion introduit un « thème amoureux », la Communion entre le Christ et son peuple. Le troisième thème, joyeux et plein de vie, est le chant de louange de Marie, le *Magnificat*, dont la vigueur et la flexibilité rythmiques dénotent l'influence des chants d'oiseaux. Dans la section suivante, le thème amoureux est développé tandis que la tension harmonique se fait de plus en plus passionnée. Une intervention ascendante du thème du Verbe annonce le début d'une toccata exaltante, dans la radieuse tonalité de mi majeur. Cette magistrale section – dont Messiaen puise l'inspiration, ainsi qu'il en fit part dans son journal intime, dans les massifs montagneux des environs de Grenoble – évolue vers une conclusion monumentale.

Tom Winpenny

Traduction française de David Ylla-Somers

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral
Harrison & Harrison, Durham, UK, 1962
Restored and rebuilt Harrison & Harrison, 2007-09

Great Organ
 16' Principal
 16' Bourdon
 8' Principal
 8' Diapason
 8' Spitzflute
 8' Stopped Diapason
 4' Octave
 4' Stopped Flute
 $2\frac{2}{3}'$ Quint
 2' Super Octave
 2' Blockflute
 Mixture IV-VI
 16' Bass Trumpet
 8' Trumpet
 4' Clarion
 Grand Cornet (tenor G)
 Choir to Great
 Swell to Great
 Solo to Great

Choir Organ
 16' Quintaton
 8' Open Diapason
 8' Gedackt-pommer
 8' Flauto traverso
 4' Octave
 4' Rohrflute
 2' Waldfilute
 $1\frac{1}{2}'$ Larigot
 Sesquialtera II
 Mixture IV
 8' Cromorne
 Tremulant
 Octave
 Unison Off
 Swell to Choir
 Solo to Choir

Pedal Organ
 32' Sub Bass
 16' Principal
 16' Major Bass
 16' Bourdon
 10' Quint
 8' Octave
 8' Gedackt
 5' Nazard
 4' Choral Bass
 2' Open Flute
 Mixture IV
 32' Fagotto
 16' Bombardon
 16' Fagotto (from 32')
 16' Bass Trumpet (Great)
 4' Shawm
 Choir to Pedal
 Great to Pedal
 Swell to Pedal
 Solo to Pedal

Swell Organ
 8' Open Diapason
 8' Rohr Flute
 8' Viola
 8' Celeste (tenor C)
 4' Principal
 4' Open Flute
 2' Nazard
 2' Octave
 16' Pedal Sub Bass
 Nave on Great
 Nave on Solo

Solo Organ
 16' Corno di Bassetto (Swell)
 Grand Cornet V (Great)
 8' Fanfare Trumpet
 Cimbelstern (6 bells)
 Octave
 Unison Off
 Great Reeds on Solo

Nave Organ (prepared for)
 16' Bourdon
 8' Diapason
 8' Rohr Flute
 4' Octave
 4' Spitzflute
 2' Super Octave
 Mixture IV
 16' Pedal Sub Bass
 Nave on Great
 Nave on Solo

Combination couplers
 Great and Pedal Combinations Coupled Generals on Toe Pistons

Balanced Swell Pedal (mechanical)
 Adjustable Choir
 Organ shutters (rotary dial)

The manual compass is CC-a, 58 notes; and the pedalboard compass is CCC-G, 32 notes

The Benedictine monastery of St Alban, founded about 739, was built on the site of the execution of Britain's first martyr, St Alban (d. c.250 AD). Various small organs are recorded as having existed in the Abbey Church before the monastery's dissolution in 1539, but after that there is no record of an organ in the building until 1820, three centuries after the townspeople of St Albans had bought the Abbey as their Parish Church. In 1861 a three manual organ by William Hill was installed: in 1885 it was enlarged and remodelled by Abbott & Smith of Leeds during the restoration of the building, which coincided with its elevation (in 1877) to Cathedral status. Further work was undertaken in subsequent decades to improve the projection of sound throughout the 521-foot-long building: new organ cases, designed by John Oldrid Scott, were installed in 1908 and in 1929 the organ was re-voiced by Henry Willis to be much louder.

In 1958 Peter Hurford was appointed as the Cathedral's organist: he was quickly gaining an international reputation as a brilliant performer and his appointment coincided with further restoration work to the Cathedral's fabric, which necessitated the dismantling of the mechanically-unreliable and tonally-inadequate organ. Working closely with an adviser, Ralph Downes, Hurford drew up a specification for a new instrument inspired by the latest trends in organ building from Europe; it would accompany services – in particular the core English cathedral repertoire – in both the nave and quire, and would also serve well for most of the solo repertoire. It would become the first English cathedral instrument to be built on neo-classical principles. The contract was placed with organ builders Harrison & Harrison of Durham: assembly in the Abbey began at Easter 1962 and the organ was dedicated in November of that year.

The instrument is based on the principles of open-foot voicing and relatively low wind pressures that Downes had employed in his work on the landmark organ for the Royal Festival Hall, London in the 1950s. Downes was closely involved with the scaling and voicing of the pipes, and he considered spatial separation of all divisions, with sufficiently wide scaling of wide-open flutes, important for the projection of sound. Around one third of the pipework

of the previous organ was re-used, but was completely re-voiced. Scott's 1908 cases were retained: the pipework of the Swell and Great sits in north and south cases respectively. Pedal ranks, at floor level in the organ loft, are placed in both the cases, and a new *Positive* case, designed by Cecil Brown, houses the Choir division. The result is a coherent classical sound – clear and focused to the listener even at the western end of the nave, and present to the performer. A fully-stocked Swell division and a wealth of 16' and 8' stops on other divisions make the organ highly effective and supportive for accompaniment of the traditional cathedral choral repertoire.

A comprehensive refurbishment of the organ was carried out from 2007 to 2009 by Harrison, the original builders, under the guidance of Andrew Lucas (the Cathedral's present Master of the Music). The soundboards were renewed and wind reservoirs restored; other parts of the instrument were returned to 'as new' condition. Compromises reached in the initial construction because of financial and other restraints were addressed: Principal stops at 2' pitch (curiously lacking on the original specification) are now available, and a fourth manual has been added for the Fanfare Trumpet. Originally on the Great, this stop was intended to act both as a solo and chorus reed: new 8' and 4' chorus reeds were provided for the Great in the restoration. A Nave division is prepared for on the Solo manual, which will further boost congregational singing down the great length of the nave. A 32' reed (extended to 16' pitch) and a Cimbelstern of six bells were also added, and the organ console was updated.

In 1963 Hurford founded the St Albans International Organ Festival and Competition, which secured the instrument's place in English organ-building history. For almost fifty years this organ has proved an inspiring and remarkably versatile instrument for its liturgical and concert demands.

Tom Winpenny

A more detailed history, *The Organs and Musicians of St Albans Cathedral* by Andrew Lucas, is available from St Albans Cathedral: www.stalbancathedral.org



Photo: Alan Herbert

Tom Winpenny

Photo: Simon Tottman



Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral, where he accompanies the daily choral services and directs the Abbey Girls Choir. Previously, as Sub-Organist at St Paul's Cathedral, London, he performed with the cathedral choir at the AGO National Convention, with the London Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, and played for great state occasions. He has broadcast on BBC Radio and featured on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*. He was organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, graduating with a music degree, and twice accompanying the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, broadcast worldwide. He studied with John Scott Whiteley, Alastair Sampson, Thomas Trotter and Johannes Geffert, winning first prize and the Audience Prize at the Miami International Organ Competition. As a soloist, he has performed in the United States, Europe and throughout Britain. Recent engagements include recitals in Coventry and Lichfield Cathedrals and organ soloist for John Rutter's Christmas concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. Amongst his recordings are critically-acclaimed recitals of music by Malcolm Williamson (Toccata Classics) and Lennox and Michael Berkeley (Resonus). For Naxos, his recordings include music for organ by Judith Bingham (8.572687) and – directing the St Albans Abbey Girls Choir – choral works by Mendelssohn (8.572836).

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Before he was thirty, Olivier Messiaen had written the work that established his worldwide reputation as a visionary composer for the organ, *La Nativité du Seigneur* (The Birth of the Saviour). A synthesis of his innovative compositional style, it is rich in colourful harmonies and precisely noted but flexible rhythms, many derived from Hindu tâlas and from the metre of Gregorian chant. This musical commentary on the Christmas story is divided into nine movements evoking timeless grace, beauty, radiance, exhilaration, and majesty. Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral, the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain.

Olivier
MESSIAEN
(1908-1992)

La Nativité du Seigneur (1935)
(The Birth of the Saviour)

1	La Vierge et l'Enfant (The Virgin and Child)	7:02
2	Les Bergers (The Shepherds)	6:34
3	Dessein éternels (Eternal Purposes)	5:39
4	Le Verbe (The Word)	11:22
5	Les Enfants de Dieu (The Children of God)	3:48
6	Les Anges (The Angels)	3:43
7	Jésus accepte la souffrance (Jesus accepts Suffering)	4:47
8	Les Mages (The Magi)	8:39
9	Dieu parmi nous (God among us)	9:35

Tom Winpenny, Organ

This recording has been generously supported by Rogers Covey-Crump, Malcolm Bury, Margaret & Stephen Leese, and Chris Huggett & Rosemary Leak. Thanks are also due to the Dean and Chapter of St Albans Cathedral, and to Andrew Lucas for their generous assistance with this project.

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