OLIVIER MESSIAEN’S *COULEURS DE LA CITÉ CÉLESTE:* A CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE

by

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To my grandmother, Mary “Betty” Elizabeth Jackson (1921–2012)
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ABSTRACT

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) was one of the leading composers of the twentieth century. He was renowned for developing his own personal style of composition of which he outlined in his *Technique de mon Language Musical*. This style includes the use of color chords, birdsong, plainchant, and Hindu and Greek rhythms. His compositions were written for, and championed by conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Kent Nagano, Seiji Ozawa, and of course his primary artistic partner, pianist Yvonne Loriod.

Over the course of his compositional career, Messiaen wrote five works for winds and percussion. The first three works *Oiseaux exotiques*, *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, and *Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum* were written over a span of eight years early in Messiaen’s career from 1956 to 1964. The last two works *Un Vitrail et des Oiseaux* and *La Ville d’En-Haut* were written over a span of two years late in Messiaen’s career from 1986 to 1987. Of all five works, *Oiseaux exotiques* has received the most attention from scholars and conductors thus far.

The second work, *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* is underperformed and will benefit from additional study. This study is intended to increase the number of informed performances of *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* in the United States by serving as a guide that will assist the conductor in gaining the understanding necessary to approach this monumental work.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) was one of the leading composers of the Twentieth Century. He was renowned for developing his own personal style of composition which he outlined in his *Technique de mon Language Musical*. This style includes the use of color chords, birdsong, plainchant, and Hindu and Greek rhythms. His compositions were written for and championed by conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Kent Nagano, Seiji Ozawa, and of course his primary artistic partner, pianist Yvonne Loriod.

Over the course of his compositional career, Messiaen wrote five works for winds and percussion. The first three, *Oiseaux exotiques*, *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, and *Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum* were written over a span of eight years from 1956 to 1964. The last two works *Un Vitrail et des Oiseaux* and *La Ville d’En-Haut* were written late in Messiaen’s career from 1986 to 1987. Of all five compositions, *Oiseaux exotiques* has received the most attention from scholars and conductors thus far, including a well-known conductor’s guide by Paula Holcomb. Of the remaining works for winds and percussion, *Couleurs* will benefit most from a similar document. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to generate a conductor’s guide for Olivier Messiaen’s *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* that intends to address compositional intent and techniques through analysis, possible conducting options and challenges, and considerations that may simplify the rehearsal process.
NEED FOR THE STUDY

Many of the most significant works in the repertoire do not require a conductor’s guide. In the case of Hindemith’s *Symphony in B-flat*, for example, published analyses and discussions of the origins of the work are enough. However, many of Messiaen’s works are challenging to understand, extremely demanding to perform and conduct, and particularly difficult to approach from a rehearsal standpoint. Perhaps for these reasons, his works are relatively underperformed. However, Holcomb’s rehearsal guide for *Oiseaux exotiques* has clearly made that work more accessible to conductors and ensembles, and the work is performed with some regularity by symphony orchestras, new music ensembles, and wind ensembles.

One of Messiaen’s true masterpieces, *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, is every bit as challenging as *Oiseaux exotiques*. The technique demanded of the clarinets, keyboards, piano soloist, and conductor; the rhythmic precision required of the entire ensemble; the fast tempos and challenging tempo relationships; the constantly fluctuating and unusual meters; and the fragmented form require additional attention from the conductor. The scholarship that is currently available is helpful for understanding the contents of the work, but lacks what is necessary to develop a method to best approach the composition from a rehearsal and performance standpoint. Perhaps this is why *Couleurs* is not programmed or performed as often as *Oiseaux exotiques*. Consequently, a conductor’s guide that will help the conductor study, rehearse and perform the work is very much in order. The author hopes that this document will result in an increased number of performances of this landmark composition.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Written in 1956 at the request of Pierre Boulez for the Orchestra of the Domaine Musical to feature piano soloist Yvonne Loriod and published by Durand in 1959, *Oiseaux exotiques* was Messiaen’s first composition for winds, percussion, and piano soloist. Throughout the remainder of his career, he would use this basic combination of voices on three other occasions including *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. Designed for a small hall, *Oiseaux exotiques* is continually performed by symphony orchestras as well as wind ensembles. This probably remains the most performed of Messiaen’s works for winds and percussion. There is considerable scholarship on *Oiseaux exotiques*, perhaps most notably Paula Holcomb’s study.

Holcomb completed her study titled “*Oiseaux Exotiques* by Olivier Messiaen: A Conductor’s Score Study Guide” in August 1992. The study includes brief biographical information; pertinent information regarding Messiaen’s interest in ornithology, Greek and Hindu rhythms, and salient compositional techniques; a brief discussion of Moment Time analysis employed in *Oiseaux exotiques*; and a score study guide correlated to a theoretical analysis with possible rehearsal techniques which might emphasize the expressive aspects and formal elements of the score.¹ Her proposed rehearsal guide for *Oiseaux exotiques* is directed towards professional musicians with limited rehearsal time. Holcomb’s document contributed to the initial concept for this study.

Messiaen’s second work for winds, percussion, and piano soloist; *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* was completed in 1964. The composition is one of the first to combine many

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¹ Paula K. Holcomb, “*Oiseaux Exotiques* by Olivier Messiaen: A Conductor’s Score Study Guide” (DMA diss., Northwestern University, 1992.)
of the compositional techniques outlined by Messiaen in his seven volume compositional
treatise, *Technique de mon Language Musical*, including color chords, birdsong,
plainchant, and Hindu and Greek rhythms.  Each contributes to the mystic character of
his work. Taruskin claims that Messiaen’s spiritual vision and the purposes that he
wished for his music to serve place he and Scriabin in the same esthetic place.

*Couleurs* is discussed in detail by two of the most prominent Messiaen
bibliographers, Johnson and Hill. Each presents the work as part of a personal and career
narrative of Messiaen. Discussion includes his first inspiration for the composition,
requests of Strobel’s commission, Messiaen’s intention for the work, a brief discussion of
the compositional materials that he utilized, and the significance of color to the work as a
whole. *Couleurs* is also amongst the topics discussed in Messiaen’s conversations with
Samuel subtitled *Music and Color*. Here, Messiaen gives a personal account of the
development of *Couleurs* including his initial struggles with the unique commission, the
process that led him towards his final product, and the use of all of his special
preoccupations (religious concerns; mysticism; the sound-color relationship; Hindu and
Greek rhythms; symmetrical permutations of durations; plainchant themes; and
birdsongs). Messiaen’s remarks served as the foundation to begin the conductor’s
analysis included in this guide.

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3 Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century: The Oxford History of
4 Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press,
1975), 166–70.
5 Peter Hill and Nigel Simemone, *Messiaen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,
2005), 254–56.
6 Claude Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel*,
Music theorists and musicologists, as well as his fellow composers, have taken an interest in Messiaen since early in his career. Since 1977, three theoretical analyses have focused on *Couleurs*. In 1977, Quilling, published a theoretical analysis of *Couleurs*. He examined Messiaen’s compositional techniques through a historical, mystical, and religious viewpoint. His study shows how, for the first time, Messiaen combined all of his preoccupations religious, birdsong, color, and Hindu and Greek rhythms under the umbrella of mysticism into one composition. Quilling also includes a measure by measure chart showing the location of all the various components, the orchestration, and the total structure of the work.\(^7\)

In 1981, Wallendorf prepared a theoretical analysis of *Couleurs*. She used the analysis to indicate the important role of timbre in forming the large-scale design.\(^8\) In 1989, Montgomery released another theoretical analysis. She summarized Messiaen’s *Technique de mon Language Musical* with the aim of understanding *Couleurs* more fully. Montgomery’s document includes a checklist of seventeen musical structures and processes from *Couleurs* that she utilizes in a comparative analysis.\(^9\)

More common than lengthy analyses have been short scholarly articles published focusing on specific aspects of *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. In their Fall 1982 issue the *American Bandmasters Association Journal* included an article by Shepard addressing the symbolic elements of *Couleurs*. The intention was not to attempt a detailed analysis


\(^{9}\) Mary Ann Montgomery, “Musical and Poetical Structures in Olivier Messiaen’s *Couleurs De La Cité Céleste* and Ted Hughes’s *Crow*” (PhD diss., Ohio University, 1989).
of the work, but instead to get more wind conductors to appreciate and understand Messiaen’s composition. Shepard outlines the way in which the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic parameters relate to the symbolism of the chosen verses. Birdsong, plainchant, color chords, Hindu and Greek rhythms, and overall form are discussed. Shepard states that in order to understand this composition fully as Messiaen intended it, it is necessary to understand that he chose each aspect of the work because of its symbolic relationship to the colors of the Holy City.  

More recently, an article written by Rosen included in the February 1995 issue of *Percussive Notes* addresses percussion terminology in *Couleurs*. Rosen translates and provides explanations for Messiaen’s requests in the published score and percussion parts. Directing percussionists towards Rosen’s article may alleviate problems that arise and save time once rehearsal begins.

Other scholarly articles are analytical in nature but focus on specific compositional techniques utilized as opposed to the composition as a whole. In 2007, Keym contributed an article to *Messiaen Studies* addressing Messiaen’s mosaic form, the art of the most intensive contrast. A portion of his article was devoted to mosaic form in *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. Keym stated that the work demonstrated the most refined mosaic form in Messiaen’s instrumental music including no fewer than forty-six sections. Most recently in 2010, Wai-Ling contributed an article to *Tempo* dealing with Messiaen’s use of plainchants as colored time in *Couleurs*. He proposes that Messiaen’s varied settings of

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the plainchant lie at the core of understanding of the work. He argues that the four plainchants are adapted to the historical models of gamelan, *Klangfarbenmelodie*, parallel organum and chorale suggesting that Messiaen may have read into them different ways in which past composers colored melodies, and went on himself to enrich them further with his sound-color materials, the modes of limited transposition and the color chords included. Wai-Ling’s arguments assist in gaining a better understanding of the theoretical relationship between time and color in Messiaen’s work.

**METHODOLOGY**

As is documented in Appendix E, there have only been six scheduled performances of Messiaen’s *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* in the United States since the beginning of 2011. This study is designed to increase awareness of and interest in Messiaen’s prominent work for winds, percussion, and piano soloist. The last of the six performances noted above took place at the University of South Carolina in December 2014 and was conducted by this author. The opportunity to prepare the score, observe and participate in the rehearsal process documented in Appendix F, and conduct a performance of *Couleurs* informed this study.

Attempts were made to contact prominent active conductors that have programmed (Franz Welser-Möst and Simon Rattle) or performed (Zubin Mehta, Michael Tilson Thomas, Esa-Peka Salonen, and Alan Gilbert) the work hoping that they would provide helpful conducting and rehearsal recommendations that may contribute to this study. Instead, responses indicated the lack of performance and complexity of the composition.

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A telling example stated, “I am sorry but the maestro has conducted this work only once, he cannot answer your questions without some preparations and for this he simply does not have the time, I am afraid.” Examples akin to this are all the more reason why this guide is necessary.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One is an overview of the study including the introduction and statement of purpose; need for the study; a review of relevant literature; methodology; and the structure of the study behind the conductor’s guide for Olivier Messiaen’s *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. Chapter Two is dedicated to the background behind Messiaen’s composition. It includes details of the commission, the composition itself, and Messiaen’s intent for the work. Chapter Three is a conductor’s analysis that addresses Messiaen’s use of color, birdsong, plainchant, Hindu and Greek rhythms and their significance to the overall form of the composition. Chapter Four is dedicated to rehearsal considerations for the conductor, including the approach to the first rehearsal, conducting decisions, tempo transitions, percussion concerns, and addressing color. Chapter Five provides a conclusion with recommendations for further study. Appendix A is an English translation of the commission and premiere information from the preface of the score. Appendix B is an English translation of the first authors note. Appendix C is an English translation of the second note from the author. Appendix D is an English translation of Messiaen’s notes within the score. Appendix E lists the scheduled performances of *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* in the United States since 2011. Appendix F outlines the rehearsal schedule for the University of South Carolina Wind Ensemble December 2014 performance of *Couleurs* that helped inform this study. Appendix G is
an annotated discography of commercial recordings of *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. 
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND

Composition and Premiere

The second of at least three commissions Messiaen received late in 1962 came from Heinrich Strobel, a German music critic known to be a supporter of new music and largely responsible for the revival of the Donaueschingen Festival in the early 1950s. The work that would become *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (*Colors of the Celestial City*) was discussed at a dinner party on December 13, 1962 attended by Olivier Messiaen, Yvonne Loriod, Suzanne Tezenas, Strobel, and Pierre Boulez. Messiaen noted some preliminary thoughts on the new piece in his diary:

For Strobel, compose *Fragment From The Apocalypse*. Re-read the Apocalypse, and find a language for leitmotifs, applied to the main ideas, characters, symbols, and colors of the Apocalypse.\(^\text{15}\)

After returning to Paris on July 10, 1963 following a trip to South America, Messiaen began working on *Couleurs*.\(^\text{16}\) It was not long before his progress was slowed. On July 18, his second wife and longtime artistic partner Yvonne Loriod became ill and was admitted to the hospital.\(^\text{17}\) Nevertheless growth continued as Messiaen found time to compose between visits to the hospital. Loriod’s recovery was slow and she

\(^{14}\) Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, 252.  
\(^{15}\) ibid, 252.  
\(^{16}\) ibid, 253.  
\(^{17}\) ibid, 253.
was not discharged until August 31. Immediately following her release the Messiaen’s left for their vacation home in Petichet, where Messiaen continued his work on *Couleurs*.

Interestingly, Messiaen’s first inspiration for *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* predated Strobel’s request by more than two years. In September 1960, just as he was finishing *Chronochromie*, Messiaen noted in his diary “Write a work on ‘La Muraille *Multicoloree*’.” This “wall of many colors” referred to the penultimate chapter of the *Book of Revelation*, with its description, “a wall great and high.” This is the first time in many years that Messiaen was contemplating a major religious work, one on a recurring theme in his music, the Apocalypse a subject that he had explored in great depth in *Quatour pour la fin du temps*. However, overtly religious subjects had been absent in Messiaen’s recent output. In fact, a decade had passed since the *Livre d’Orgue*, and nearly twenty years since *Vingt Regards*, his last religious work written for the concert hall.

The commission from Strobel gave Messiaen the chance to realize the work he envisioned in 1960. Strobel specified a very unusual instrumentation, a trio of xylophones and a trio of trombones. After some thought, Messiaen realized this could tie in with his existing idea for a work on the Apocalypse:

I had accepted but was very unhappy, for I couldn’t see how I was to use these instruments. Finally after long reflection, it occurred to me that trombones had an apocalyptic sound, so I re-read the Apocalypse looking for quotations from it.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{18}\) ibid, 253.  
\(^{19}\) ibid, 254.  
\(^{20}\) ibid, 254.  
\(^{21}\) ibid, 254–55.
Deciding which instruments to use other than those requested by Strobel proved much easier for Messiaen. His initial plan was for solo piano with brass (four trumpets and four trombones), a trio of pitched percussion (xylophone, vibraphone, and xylorimba), with cencerros (and perhaps also crotales), chimes, and tam-tams. Messiaen actually noted in his *cahiers*, the diaries where he transcribed birdsongs and recorded compositional ideas as they came to him, a version almost identical to this (with marimba replacing xylorimba) that was agreed on by Boulez, who would conduct the premiere of Strobel’s commission.22

The next step was to reduce the role of the piano, which replaced the xylophone in the trio of pitched percussion, and to add woodwinds: piccolo, oboe, English horn, E-flat clarinet, B-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, and contrabassoon. The third and final instrumentation was the simplification and combination of the first two. The piano serves as soloist; there are ten brass adding two horns to the trumpets and trombones; in the trio of pitched percussion the original vibraphone is replaced by marimba; and the rest of the percussion is reallocated to cencerros, bells, four gongs and two tam-tams.23

According to Messiaen, the percussive sonority of the three xylophones, which he adapted to be a trio of keyboard percussion (xylophone, xylorimba, marimba) allowed him to use bird songs provided he add piano.24 With birds in mind, Messiaen added a few clarinets to vary the timbres. His interest in timbre also led to the addition of the piccolo trumpet in D and the bass trombone. Messiaen’s final product was scored for solo piano, xylophone, xylorimba, marimba, three clarinets, piccolo trumpet in D, three

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22 ibid, 255.
23 ibid, 255.
trumpets, two horns, three trombones, bass trombone, set of cencerros (omglocken), set of tubular bells (chimes), four gongs, and two tam-tams. It was premiered by the Orchestra of the Domaine Musical of Paris with Pierre Boulez conducting and Yvonne Loriod as the piano soloist. The premiere took place at the Donaueschingen Festival in Germany on October 17, 1964 (See the English translation of Figure A.1 in Appendix A).

Intent

Messiaen’s intention with *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* was a glimpse of eternity stating “the work never finishes, never having truly begun.” The feeling of timelessness in the composition is produced by weaving many strands of music together. These appear intermittently on the surface of the music at different stages of their life cycle. Messiaen described the work in similar terms, as being like a play with different

Figure 2.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, Recommended Set-Up

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characters and subplots superimposed. The materials utilized in *Couleurs* are remarkably rich. According to Messiaen, this work brings together all of his special preoccupations described in his *Technique de mon Language Musical*. These include religious concerns, love of the mysterious, the relationship between color and sound (Messiaen had sound-color synesthesia), stained-glass concepts, Hindu and Greek rhythms, symmetrical permutations of durations, plainchant themes, and bird songs.

Messiaen utilized five quotations from the Apocalypse as source material for *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (See the English translation of Figure C.1 in Appendix C):

“There was a rainbow around the throne…” (*Revelation*: Chapter Four, Verse Three).

“And the angels had seven trumpets…” (*Revelation*: Chapter Eight, Verse Six).

“The star was entrusted with the key to the pits of the abyss…” (*Revelation*: Chapter Nine, Verse One).

“The light of the holy city was like crystalline jasper…” (*Revelation*: Chapter Twenty-one, Verse Eleven).

“The foundations of the wall of the holy city were adorned with every jewel: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, sardius, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst…”(*Revelation*: Chapter Twenty-one, Verse Nineteen and Twenty).

As a whole, the penultimate chapter of the *Book of Revelation* describes the “wall of many colors” which served as the inspiration for Messiaen in this composition. A detailed description of the wall is as follows:

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26 ibid, 255.
A wall great and high…and the building of the wall of it was of jasper…and the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth; a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh; a jacinith; the twelfth, an amethyst.⁴⁸

According to Messiaen, these quotations from the Apocalypse were “extraordinary, extravagant, surrealistic, and terrifying.”⁴⁹ As a result, they encouraged his love of the mysterious and the mystical to flourish. His music is at its most dramatic when it makes direct reference to the Bible. In Messiaen’s biography, Peter Hill cites an example where the upbeat is a flashing figure on the piano, marked in the score as “the star that has the key of the abyss,” followed by a plunge into the depths on gongs and tam-tam. The Biblical source for Messiaen’s musical symbolism is the fourth of the five quotations from Revelation listed previously “and the first angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.”

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Example 2.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 134–40
An example of this is Messiaen’s treatment of the colors of Celestial Jerusalem.

This paradise was represented in the Apocalypse as a shimmering of colors. For Messiaen this image was not unlike the reflection of light off of stained-glass windows.
viewed from a distance.\textsuperscript{30} Despite one’s inability to identify the specific religious figures, a viewer is still dazzled by the colors: blues and reds, even with a few patches of yellow and green producing an enormous violet to the eye. According to Messiaen, in the \textit{Revelation of Saint John the Divine}, Saint John described his celestial visions in the same way. Thus, when speaking of divinity, he can be translated as saying “there was a rainbow around the throne” where the idea of majesty is associated with the radiance of color. Likewise when speaking of the Holy City, he says, “the light of the holy city was like crystalline jasper.” Messiaen describes jasper as “mottled with red and green; while as for jasper crystal, this is an extremely rare stone that is not only endowed with all colors of the rainbow but is translucent.”\textsuperscript{31} Finally Saint John’s translation states “the foundations of the wall of the Holy City were adorned with every jewel: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, sardius, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst” which together are the colors of the rainbow.

An understanding of Messiaen’s intent for \textit{Couleurs de la Cité céleste} is necessary for the conductor to possess the insight needed to begin analysis. The symbolic focus on the scripture from the \textit{Book of Revelation} informs Messiaen’s compositional design. The compositional techniques addressed in the following conductor’s analysis were chosen by Messiaen to best represent the religious contents of his work.

\textsuperscript{30} ibid, 139.
\textsuperscript{31} ibid, 139.
CHAPTER III
CONDUCTOR’S ANALYSIS

Color

Color is paramount in *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. In this work, Messiaen attempts to translate the colors mentioned in the Apocalypse via a sound-color relationship. Because of his sound-color synesthesia, a trait he shared with Scriabin, another composer linked to mysticism, different sound combinations triggered him to see specific colors. When speaking with Samuel about this work, Messiaen stressed its union between form and color stating that the work “turns on itself, lacing its temporal blocks, like the rose window of a cathedral with its brilliant and its invisible colors.”

Each of its melodic and rhythmic themes, the complexes of sounds, and timbres evolve in the manner of colors. Up to this point in his career, Messiaen had not taken his preoccupation with the relationship between sound and color this far. In *Couleurs*, certain sound combinations correspond to certain color combinations. Descriptions in his *cahiers* demonstrate that for Messiaen, color was as much a passion as timbre. For *Couleurs* he delineated the names of the colors in the score and even designed the cover of the printed score himself, cutting out red lettering and sticking it on a blue background.

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33 ibid, 256.
Figure 3.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, Cover of the Published Score

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He hoped to impress his vision upon the conductor, who would in turn transmit the vision to the players. Messiaen often referenced an example where the brass “play red;” the woodwinds “play blue,” and so on. The colors are expressed in the music as a series of twelve-tone chords where in all twelve chromatic tones are present. The chords are played by the full ensemble minus the bass trombone, xylophone, and some of the metallic percussion. These chords are not parallel or in clusters, but rather voiced chords emphasizing different timbres and groupings of the twelve tones.

Example 3.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 63–68

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34 Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color*, 139.
Example 3.2 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 72–79
Example 3.2 continued
The colors as they appear in order are: yellow topaz, light green chrysopase, green crystal; emerald green, violet amethyst; red, orange, and gold; red carnelian; emerald green, blue sapphire, and gold; pink, mauve and grey; red speckled with blue; blue violet; orange, gold, and milky white; and violet. This creates a difficulty for listeners and performers who cannot hear color as Messiaen did. According to Messiaen biographer Peter Hill, the best hope of grasping a piece of Messiaen’s experience is in the moments of stillness, when color chords merge slowly, like a stone turned in the light.  

Birdsong

Even though color was a strong focal point for Messiaen, specific color in music is subjective for most people. The conductor will find that birdsong and chant are of greater importance to the interpretation of this composition than color. It is the birdsong that gives this composition its distinguishing sound. Birds dominate each large section. Their songs are heard solo, combined with the chants, rhythms, and colors. Even when no song is present, birdsong-like material is used. *Couleurs* contains five birds from New Zealand (Parson Bird, Yellowhead, Bellbird, South Island Green Kaka, Takahe); ten from Brazil (Bare Throated Bellbird, White Necked Thrush, Red Breasted Toucan, Guaxo, Pauraque, Greyish Saltator, Cotinga, Blackbill Scythebill, Long Necked Wren, Rofous-bellied Thrush); three from Venezuela (Stripe-back Wren, Yellow rumped Cacaque, Tropical Mockingbird); one from Canada (Western Meadow Lark); and two from the Argentinian pampa (Great Kiskadee, Rufous Ovenbird).

The work begins with the song of the Tui, also referred to as the Parson Bird from New Zealand played by the clarinets, piano soloist, and keyboard percussion.

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Nine birdsongs repeat at least once, but none more than three times. The bellbird and Bare-throated bellbird are repeated three times;
Example 3.4 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 48–52

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the Great kiskadee twice;
Example 3.6 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 5–9
and the Stripe-backed Wren, Parson Bird, Western Meadow Lark, White-necked Thrush, Great Saltator, Pauraque each once. It is likely that Messiaen discovered many of these birds during his time in South America immediately prior to beginning this composition, but he did include some exotic birds that he had only heard on recordings.

According to Messiaen, he used bird songs for their intrinsic beauty and as a symbol of heavenly joy.\(^{36}\) In his conversations with Claude Samuel he stated “among the artistic hierarchy, the birds are probably the greatest musicians to inhabit our planet.”\(^ {37}\) Birds certainly play their part in symbolizing his vision of the Apocalypse “extraordinary, extravagant, surrealistc and terrifying.”\(^ {38}\) As he did previously in *Oiseaux exotiques*, Messiaen borrowed bird songs from distant parts of the world, songs that would never

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\(^{36}\) Samuel, *Olivier Messiaen Music and Color*, 140.
\(^{37}\) Quilling, “Olivier Messiaen’s *Couleurs,*” 22.
\(^{38}\) Hill and Simone, *Messiaen*, 255.
otherwise be brought together. When speaking to Samuel he referred to it as an imaginary museum of birdsong. The birdsong is representative of the continued exploration reflected in his notebook from the early 1960s.

Plainchant

Messiaen had been using birdsong extensively since the early 1950’s, but he had not utilized plainchant themes in his composition since _Vingt Regards_ in the mid-1940’s. According to Messiaen, he took up this idea again because plainchant contains some marvelous melodies. In _Couleurs_, he included four Alleluias from the _Liber Usualis_, each of which carried symbolic meaning. Listed in order they are:

- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Alleluia di 8° dim. après Pentecote)
- Alleluia for Corpus Christi (Alleluia du Saint-Sacrement)
- Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter (Alleluia du 4e dim. après Paques)
- Alleluia for the Feast of the Dedication (Alleluia de la Dédicace)

All of these alleluias are relevant by the association of their verse texts to the symbolic content of the work. Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost and Alleluia for the Feast and Dedication signify the importance of the church and are representative of the celestial city, the overall subject of Messiaen’s work. In contrast Alleluia for Corpus Christi and Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter signify Christ’s resurrection and the redemption of his followers through the sacrifice of his body and blood.

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39 Samuel, _Olivier Messiaen Music and Color_, 140.
40 ibid, 140.
41 Quilling, “Olivier Messiaen’s _Couleurs_,” 16–19.
42 ibid, 16–19.
According to notes jotted in his *cahiers*, while Yvonne Loriod was in the hospital in August 1963, one of Messiaen’s first ideas for *Couleurs* was for an alleluia arranged as a *Klangfarbenmelodie*, with successive notes played by bells, piano, and horn.\(^43\) In his finalized score, the Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter which enters for the first time in the middle section of the work at rehearsal forty-one, just prior to the first entrance of the tala is treated this way. The horn and piano are still present, the bells are replaced by cencerros, and clarinets are added. Different instruments play different notes of the melody. The treatment of this alleluia shows the freedom Messiaen took with the chant. Here he did not choose to use the Alleluia part of the chant, but rather two fragments from the verse. Aside from this, very little resemblance remains.

\[\text{Figure 3.2 Liber Usualis 827, Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter}\]

\(^43\) Hill and Simone, Messiaen, 255–56.
Example 3.8 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 210–221
The Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost is the most frequently used and is presented as a brisk fanfare, with jangling gongs and cencerros. It appears in different versions throughout the work and is combined with Sharngadeva and Greek rhythms.

Figure 3.3 Liber Usualis 1014, Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost
Example 3.9 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 38–47
The two remaining alleluias are not altered from their original form, an unusual procedure for Messiaen. They are also used sparingly. The Alleluia for Corpus Christi is an extended brass chorale that closes section one and the work as a whole. The contrast of this slow homophonic passage with the rest of the work is very striking and makes it stand out.

Figure 3.4 *Liber Usualis* 944, Alleluia for Corpus Christi
Example 3.10 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 161–73

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The Alleluia for the Feast of the Dedication is also only used twice. It is divided in half, appearing in two places, but the second entrance is the continuation of the chant not the repetition. It appears at the opening of section three and is combined with the Alleluia for the Eighth Day after Pentecost both times.

Figure 3.5 Liber Usualis 1251, Alleluia for the Feast of Dedication
Example 3.11 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 349–56

* On doit entendre d’abord "l’alleluia de la Dédicace". Tous les instruments qui le jouent sont sur le même plan d’intensité : on doit jeter avec précision des harmoniques. On doit entendre aussi "l’alleluia du 8e dimanche après Pentecôte" au Piano (et aux percussions). Tout doit passer... y compris les notes accentuées des 3 xylos... y compris les harmoniques des trompettes, trombones, et trombone basse (qui joueront cependant **pp**). L’ensemble doit donner l’impression des couleurs feintes d’un vif trait énoisé.

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Example 3.11 continued
Hindu and Greek Rhythms

Messiaen’s interest in and use of Hindu and Greek rhythms began during his time as a student at the Paris Conservatoire. He credits his music history teacher Maurice Emmanuel, also an established composer, with introducing him to these rhythmic systems. As early as 1933 in *L'Ascension: Four Meditations for Orchestra* these rhythms became an important part of Messiaen’s composition. In early works the choice to utilize a particular rhythm was based on the variety that it would provide. This is because Messiaen was not yet aware of the specific symbolic associations of the rhythms in the Sharngadeva Table, named for its developer, 13th Century Indian theorist Sharngadeva. Similar to the plainchant already discussed, rhythms utilized in *Couleurs* were included symbolically. Rather than mechanically ending durations by adding a thirty-second note as he had when utilizing Greek and Hindu rhythms in the past, Messiaen formed a tala by stringing five Hindu and three Greek rhythms together. A tala is defined in Indian classical music as a regular repeating rhythmic phrase, or the rhythmic pattern of any composition.

Messiaen begins with “tritiya,” meaning “a third,” and also the third rhythm on the Sharugareva Table. It is symbolic of the Trinity as well as Christ’s Resurrection on the third day.44 “Pratâpacekhara” is two-fold “pratâpa” meaning splendor, majesty, or dignity and “cekhara” meaning best or most beautiful. Together the rhythms stand for most beautiful splendor and represent the Holy City as described by John from the Apocalypse.45 “Vijaya” meaning “victory” is symbolic of the victory of Christ over

44 ibid, 6.
45 ibid, 6.
death. “Râgavardhana” is also two-fold “râga” meaning color, desire, or love and “vardhana” meaning increasing or growing. Together they translate as “increasing in color” or “growing in love.” This is representative of the color component of the piece discussed earlier. It resembles a stained-glass window as well as the celestial city being the fulfillment of God’s love for man and man’s love for God. The symbolic intention of “Gajalîla” is difficult to comprehend. It has four durations and the fourth duration is dotted. “Gajalîla” translates as “game or play of the elephant,” and four is the number of Ganesha, the Hindu Elephant God. As a result, “Gajalîla” represents the illumination of the mind symbolizing the divine enlightenment.

Listed as they appear the tala includes: “tritîya,” “gajalîla,” “pratâpacekhara,” “vijaya,” “cretique,” “aristophanien,” “râgavardhara,” and “tritîya.” “Cretique” is repeated and extended by diminution bringing the total to eight rhythms before returning to “tritîya.” Within the tala each rhythm is only stated once or twice, making them difficult to recognize. The tala is applied to the second and third sections of the work. It appears in its entirety at rehearsal forty-two and again at rehearsal sixty-two, both times in section two. “Phalecien” is included following “cretique” and prior to “aristophanien” in the second statement of the tala. In the third section of the work, the tala is broken up and utilized to support the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost which is presented as a Klangfarbenmelodie.
Example 3.12 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 325–26
Example 3.13 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 346–48

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- Tritiya
- Gajalila
- Pratâpacekhara
- Vijaya
- Cretique (1st time)
- Cretique (2nd time)
- Phalacean
- Aristophanean
- Râgavardhana
- Tritiya

Figure 3.6 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, Hindu and Greek rhythms in the tala

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Form

_Couleurs de la Cité céleste_ is a representation of Messiaen’s stained glass technique in that it is a collage of musical fragments. The composition consists of an introduction, three large sections, and a coda. Section one concludes with a refrain. There is an extended repeat of section two prior to the beginning of section three. Finally, the work concludes with the same refrain material that completed section one.

The introduction begins at rehearsal one and consists of the alternation of the first four birdsongs (Parson Bird, Great Kiskadee, Stripe-backed Wren, Yellowhead) followed by the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Section one begins at rehearsal nine with the song of the Bellbird alternating with color chords (yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, crystal, emerald green, violet amethyst, red orange and gold, red carnelian, blue sapphire and gold, and pink mauve and grey) and the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. The refrain begins at rehearsal twenty-seven with the Abyss, followed by the introduction of the song of the Western Meadow Lark and the Alleluia for Corpus Christi. Section two follows at rehearsal thirty-three alternating between multiple birdsongs (Bare-throated bellbird, White-necked thrush, Toucan, Guaxo, Great Saltador, Pauraque) followed by the Abyss, the Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and the introduction of the tala. The extended repeat of section two begins at rehearsal forty-seven with the songs of the Bare-throated bellbird, the White-necked thrush, the Bare-throated bellbird, the Great Kiskadee, the Cotinga, the Black-billed Scythebill, the Great Saltador, and the Pauraque. This is followed like section two with the Abyss, the Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and another complete statement of the tala. Rehearsal sixty-one is the beginning of section three. It begins with combinations of the Alleluia
for the Dedication of the Church and the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost followed by the return of color chords (orange, gold, milky white, violet, blue violet).

The coda begins at rehearsal eighty with a repeat of the Stripe-backed Wren followed by portions of the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost and the tala overlapping with songs of the New Zealand Kaka, the Yellow-rumped Cacaque, the Long-billed Wren, the Rufous-bellied Thrush, the Takahe, and the Rufous Ovenbird. Next, the Tropical Mockingbird appears followed by the Abyss and a repeat of the Bellbird. The refrain returns in its original form at rehearsal ninety-three to conclude the work. Each of these small sections is an event, and by stringing these events together, Messiaen has created a musical mosaic of the Celestial City.

Introduction-Rehearsal 1

- Parson Bird-#1
- Great Kiskadee-#2
- Stripe-backed Wren-#3
- Great Kiskadee-#4
- Yellowhead-#5
- Parson Bird-#6
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost-#8

Section 1-Rehearsal 9

- Bellbird-#9
- Colors (yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, crystal)-#11
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost-#12
- Colors (emerald green, violet amethyst, red orange & gold)-#13
- Bellbird-#14
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost-#17
- Colors (yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, crystal)-#18
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost-#19
- Bellbird-#21
- Colors (emerald green, violet amethyst, red carnelian)-#24
- Colors (emerald green, blue sapphire & gold, pink mauve & grey)-#24
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost-#25
- Colors (red carnelian, emerald green, blue sapphire & gold, pink mauve & grey)-#26

Figure 3.7 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, Outline of the Form
Refrain-Rehearsal 27

- Abyss-#27
- Western Meadow Lark-#31
- Alleluia for Corpus Christi-#32

Section 2-Rehearsal 33

- Bare-throated Bellbird-#33
- White-necked Thrush-#34
- Bare-throated Bellbird-#35
- Red Breasted Toucan-#36
- Guaxo-#37
- Paraque-#38
- Greyish Saltator-#39
- Abyss-#40
- Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter-#41
- Tala-#42

Section 2 Extended Repeat-Rehearsal 47

- Bare-throated Bellbird-#47
- White-necked Thrush-#48
- Bare-throated Bellbird-#49
- Great Kiskadee-#50
- Cotinga-#52
- Blackbill Scythebill-#53
- Paraque-#55
- Greyish Saltator-#56
- Abyss-#57
- Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter-#58, #61
- Tala-#62

Section 3-Rehearsal 67

- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost/Alleluia for the Dedication of the Church Combinations-#67, #76
- Colors (orange gold milky white, violet, blue violet)-#73

Figure 3.7 continued
Coda-Rehearsal 80

- Stripe-backed Wren-#80
- Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost
- Long Necked Wren-#81
- South Island Green Kaka
- Yellow rumped Cacaque
- Rufous-bellied Thrush
- Takahe-#82
- Rufous Ovenbird-#85
- Tala
- Tropical Mockingbird-#86
- Abyss-#87
- Bellbird-#88

Refrain-Rehearsal 93

- Abyss-#93
- Western Meadow Lark-#97
- Alleluia for Corpus Christi-#98

Figure 3.7 continued
CHAPTER IV

REHEARSAL CONSIDERATIONS

The First Rehearsal

As indicated by the detailed analysis above, it is necessary for the conductor to have an extensive understanding of Olivier Messiaen’s compositional techniques and output before attempting to study or rehearse *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*. Once the conductor has spent the necessary time alone with the score, he or she may find this work difficult to approach from a rehearsal standpoint. It is important to remember when planning the rehearsal cycle that the difficulty of this piece demands extended rehearsal blocks from the start. For those that typically schedule the rehearsal cycle in proportion to the length of each work on the program, *Couleurs* will provide a challenge. With a length of about seventeen minutes, it is not likely to be the longest work on the program, but it will easily be the most difficult. As a result, it demands a considerable amount of rehearsal time even if individual players do their best to prepare in advance. Realizing that each conductor is faced with a different rehearsal situation, a specific recommendation is challenging. However, it is necessary when reading the work for the first time to have a minimum of an hour planned, preferably two hours with a short break.

Planning an extended rehearsal allows for the conductor to give an overview of
the work, approach its contents section by section, speak about the individual compositional components, address repetition within the work, and review larger sections before the first rehearsal comes to a close. As indicated in the analysis above, *Couleurs* is a collage of musical fragments. This design does not lend itself well to a run-through at the beginning of the rehearsal process. A better use of rehearsal time would be to approach Messiaen’s work section by section with hopes of making it through larger portions before the conclusion of the rehearsal block.

The introduction outlined in the analysis above can be broken down into smaller sections by the metered silence that Messiaen includes. Allow the players to gain familiarity with rehearsal one to four (parson bird, great kiskadee, banded wren), followed by rehearsal four to six (great kiskadee, yellowhead), then rehearsal six to eight (parson bird), and finally rehearsal eight to nine (“seven angels with seven trumpets”). Together these four short fragments form a relatively small section where the players can gain familiarity with Messiaen’s unique style and the confidence necessary to move forward. Before playing this short introduction in its entirety, the conductor should take the opportunity to speak to the players about Messiaen’s use of birdsong and plainchant within the context of *Couleurs* in hopes of a more informed reading.

Moving forward a similar approach to section one, section two, section three, and the coda will pay great dividends as the rehearsal cycle progresses. Section one, rehearsal nine through rehearsal thirty-two includes: color chords, additional birds, musical material representing “the star that has the key to the abyss” and “comes the lightening which crosses the sky,” and additional plainchant that is set as a chorale. The sections are easily identifiable and at times more readable here due to the abrupt changes
in tempo. However, the transitions this demands may prove challenging later in the rehearsal cycle. After reading rehearsal eleven, thirteen, eighteen, twenty-four, twenty-six bring attention to the specific colors and color changes that Messiaen requests. Also focus on the way these chords are put together. Finally, bring attention to the return of the plainchant from the introduction, before addressing the new plainchant that concludes this section at rehearsal thirty-two.

The musical material that Messiaen utilizes as he makes programmatic reference to the stars, the sky, lightning, and the abyss between rehearsal twenty-seven and thirty-one should be brought to the attention of the players because of its symbolic meaning and return later in the work. The conductor should make players aware of new birds as they appear: the bellbird at rehearsal nine, fourteen, and twenty-one that serves as an introduction and interruption to the color chords; and the western meadowlark in a cadenza-like passage for the piano prior to the first appearance of the chorale. The chorale that concludes section one (Alleluia for Corpus Christi) is a change of pace for the players, but does provide a different challenge. Communicate that the chorale is presented in mode two from Messiaen’s Modes of Limited Transposition to assist with pitch. The players will recognize this as the octatonic collection or their diminished scale. Also, indicate the importance of following the phrase markings included in the score because the resonance of the release in the hall and the silence that follows is as important to Messiaen as the notes themselves.

Section two, rehearsal thirty-three through rehearsal sixty-six, includes: birds, the abyss, additional plainchant treated as *Klangfarbenmelodie*, the tala, and concludes with an extended repeat of itself. As in section one, the conductor should bring attention to
each new bird as it appears: the bare-throated bellbird at rehearsal thirty-three, the white-necked thrush at rehearsal thirty-four, the toucan at rehearsal thirty-six, the guaxo at rehearsal thirty-seven, the pauraque at rehearsal thirty-eight, the grayish saltador at rehearsal thirty-nine, the return of the great kiskadee at rehearsal fifty, the cotinga at rehearsal fifty-two, and the black-billed sythebill at rehearsal fifty-three. The concept of the abyss was introduced to the players in section one, but not its specific musical representation. It is important for the horns, trombones, and gongs/tam tam to recognize this material as it returns and they are continually featured. New plainchant appears at rehearsal forty-one and may be unrecognizable to some due to its setting as a\textit{Klangfarbenmelodie}. It is important for the conductor to realize that this begins what may be the most difficult portion of the work. The sparse scoring of the\textit{Klangfarbenmelodie} (Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter) feels uneasy and will provide a challenge for the players involved, particularly when it suddenly returns later in this section. In addition, the tala is introduced for the first time in its entirety at rehearsal forty-two. As a result of the intricate nature of the Greek and Hindu Rhythms included in the tala and Messiaen’s sparse scoring techniques, this statement and its return at rehearsal sixty-two are quite demanding for the players. It is important to help the players gain familiarity with the tala in this rehearsal, but be able to move forward realizing that there is rhythmic work that can only be done successfully outside of the rehearsal setting through individual practice. Regardless of the experience of the players, the conductor may find it helpful to suggest that players write in their rhythms for both tala’s and be prepared to count through them during the next rehearsal.
The extended repeat begins at rehearsal forty-seven with the return of the bare-throated bellbird heard before and concludes at the end of the second complete tala. The conductor should assist the players by bringing attention to the material that returns, while taking additional time to work through the material that appears for the first time, specifically the birds noted above. The new material beginning with the cotinga at rehearsal fifty-two will prove difficult for the players. The substantial increase in tempo at rehearsal fifty-two makes it necessary to conduct this section in one. This results in four consecutive downbeats, one for each measure between rehearsal fifty-two and rehearsal fifty-three that may be tough to follow. A method for conducting this section will be discussed in greater detail later in the document.

Example 4.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 274–77

Section three, rehearsal sixty-seven through rehearsal seventy-nine includes: the return of Messiaen’s musical representation of “seven angels with seven trumpets,” the presentation of plainchant combined with Greek and Hindu Rhythms, the presentation of two plainchants simultaneously, and the dramatic return of color chords. The return of plainchant in the form of the “Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentacost” at rehearsal
sixty-seven provides familiarity for the players following the tala. At rehearsal sixty-eight, rehearsal seventy, rehearsal seventy-two, and rehearsal seventy-seven the combination of plainchant and Greek and/or Hindu Rhythms provide the players with a challenge rhythmically. However, instructing the percussionists to attack right with the piano soloist should help the precision.

Example 4.2 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 346–48

It is imperative to bring to the attention of the players that Messiaen combines two plainchants for the first time at rehearsal sixty-nine and again at rehearsal seventy-one. In each of these moments, the conductor must make decisions about the conducting pattern because Messiaen has not indicated a recommended pattern like earlier in the score: \( \frac{3}{8} \frac{3}{16} \frac{3}{8} \frac{3}{16} \).
Color chords return convincingly at rehearsal seventy-three. The conductor should bring to the attention of the players the new color of each system framed by a silent fermata. Their efforts to play exactly what is written dynamically will help to produce the proper color. Non-synthesetic’s may not be able to see the colors, but they will be able to recognize the timbre changes that result from the changes of voicing and the silence that follows.
It is worth noting for the conductor these color chords are followed by a portion of the Alleluia that has not yet appeared. Because of this, Messiaen is able to finish this section of the work with the most complete statement of the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. This adds an additional sense of closure for the players and audience alike prior to the extensive piano cadenza that begins the coda.
Example 4.5 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 395–402
Example 4.5 continued

The coda, rehearsal eighty to the end, includes: isolated birds and overlapping birds in combination with Greek and Hindu Rhythms from the tala, the abyss, a return of the musical material representing “the star that has the key to the abyss” and “comes the lightening which silhouettes the sky,” and the chorale that brought section one to a close. It is worth noting for the conductor that material from rehearsal eighty-one through eighty-five is extremely taxing for the individual players. Realizing further rehearsal will be needed to make sense of this section, it is important for the players to gain an understanding of their individual roles. In this case, it may be worthwhile to schedule at least a portion of a rehearsal without brass. The clarinetists and the pianist are different birds (long-billed wren, New Zealand kaka, yellow rumped cacique, and rufous-bellied thrush). It is essential they play their material in time, but know they are not supposed to be together. Perhaps more difficult are the percussion parts. The cencerros and chimes are responsible for plainchant in the form of snapshots from the tala (ex: Alleluia for the
Based on earlier events, it should not come as a surprise that the return of the abyss at rehearsal eighty-seven is followed by an appearance of the bellbird at rehearsal eighty-eight. However, this time it is greatly extended and lasts until rehearsal ninety-three where the musical material for “the star that has the key to the abyss” returns. It is important to let the players know what they will see from this point on. It should be recognizable to them as they saw similar material at the conclusion of section one. Be
sure to follow the phrase markings Messiaen requests for the finale chorale at rehearsal ninety-eight. The silence that results is as important as the notes themselves.

Example 4.7 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 505–12
Conducting Approach

One of the most difficult parts of performing any of Messiaen’s works is deciding how to approach the constant changes in tempo and meter that are so characteristic. *Couleurs* is no exception. Messiaen’s efforts to eliminate any sense of a continuous pulse provide challenges for the conductor and the players. Perhaps because he realized the complexity of his own creation, Messiaen includes recommendations for conducting patterns in the score. Unfortunately, it does not take long to realize that he did not include the markings in the individual parts of the players or the soloist. Duple subdivisions based on thirty-second notes are indicated with □, while triple subdivisions based on thirty-second notes are indicated with △. In context, the last measure before rehearsal two is 3+3+2 / 32 and Messiaen recommends the conductor show three large beats subdivided as △ △ □.

Example 4.8 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 5–9
At times Messiaen utilizes two other symbols that indicate a similar macro pattern, but a different subdivision. Duple subdivisions based on sixteenth notes are indicated with \[\text{\textcopyright}\] while triple subdivisions based on sixteenth notes are indicated with \[\text{\textcopyright}\]. For example, the second measure after rehearsal twelve is a 2+3/16 and Messiaen recommends that the conductor show two large beats subdivided as \[\text{\textcopyright}\] \[\text{\textcopyright}\].

Example 4.9 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 69–71

Later at rehearsal twenty in the 2/16 bar, Messiaen simply includes \[\text{\textcopyright}\]. There are measures like this throughout, and it is best if they are conducted in one.
Other examples that work best conducted in one are the four measures between rehearsal fifty-two and rehearsal fifty-three, isolated measures following rehearsal fifty-three and rehearsal fifty-four, consecutive measures at rehearsal fifty-nine and rehearsal sixty, isolated measures following rehearsal sixty-nine and rehearsal seventy-one, and an instance following rehearsal ninety-four.

In most cases, Messiaen’s conducting pattern indications are best, but occasionally tempo may get in the way. In the third and fourth measure following rehearsal thirty-eight Messiaen requests $3/16 \quad \square \quad \square \quad 2/16 \quad \square \quad \square$ at a tempo of eighth note is equal to 144. This makes the sixteenth note equal to 288. His request to conduct individual sixteenth notes at this tempo is simply not possible. As a result, it is best to interpret the $3/16$ as $\Delta$ and the $2/16$ as $\square$, and to conduct both measures in one.
Example 4.11 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 199–202
In order for *Couleurs* to be an honest representation of Messiaen’s intent it is important for the conductor to recognize his or her role. As is indicated above, Messiaen was very particular with his wishes for the conductor. There are many French phrases that are important to recognize when preparing to conduct, rehearse, and perform this work. One of the most basic which applies directly to the conductor is “sans battue.” This is an indication to the conductor the section which carries this label should not be beaten through. All of these sections, the first of which appears at rehearsal three are piano solos, some longer than others.

Example 4.12 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 10–18

This indication is usually followed by “battue” meaning beaten. Even if there are rests that follow, like at rehearsal four, the silence is measured and Messiaen intended for it to be beaten through.
Example 4.13 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 19–23
These indications appear successively at rehearsal twenty-seven and rehearsal twenty-eight, rehearsal thirty-one and rehearsal thirty-two, rehearsal thirty-nine and rehearsal forty, rehearsal fifty-six and rehearsal fifty-seven, rehearsal eighty and rehearsal eighty-one, rehearsal eighty-six and rehearsal eighty-seven, rehearsal ninety-three and rehearsal ninety-four, and rehearsal ninety-seven and rehearsal ninety-eight.

There are portions of *Couleurs* that may benefit from subdivision by the conductor. Sometimes Messiaen has suggested this as an option in the score. For example, in section two of the work, both times the tala appears in isolation, and in its entirety (rehearsal forty-two and rehearsal sixty-two), Messiaen indicates “battre á 4, en subdivisant légèrement” meaning beat in four, with slight subdivision. At first glance, metered in 4/8 with a tempo of eighth note equals seventy-two, this does not seem necessary and is actually quite awkward. However, the rhythmic difficulty and sparse orchestration of the Greek and Hindu Rhythms demands this special attention. Seeing individual sixteenth notes from the conductor will help the players to place each of their entrances with confidence, strengthening the conglomerate rhythm. For example, the entrance of the trumpets and trombones which begins the second statement of the tala at rehearsal sixty-two proves to be particularly difficult due to the absence of the downbeat. Allowing these players to see the sixteenth notes through a slight subdivision of the eighth note will provide better guidance for their entrance.
Example 4.14 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 325–26

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Although these two complete statements of the tala are the only places where Messiaen recommends subdivision, there are other locations throughout the work where it may prove necessary to best serve the players. The sudden and dramatic change in tempo at the “tres lent” following rehearsal thirty and rehearsal ninety-six should be subdivided. Allowing the players to see sixteenth note equals sixty rather than eighth note equals thirty will assist the percussionist with placement of the gong and tam-tam strikes, as well as the clarinets and brass with the precision of the unison sixteenth notes that follow. Once the downbeat following the unison sixteenth notes is reached, subdivision is no longer needed, as it would interfere with the horn and bass trombone’s attack and sustain of the pedal note.

Example 4.15 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 144–48
At rehearsal seventy-two and rehearsal seventy-seven; the piano, cencerros, and chimes are in complete unison at a relatively slow tempo, eighth note equals sixty-six. In both spots, beating sixteenth notes will assist with the accuracy of the challenging rhythm.

Example 4.16 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 371–72

Following the return of the colors chords at rehearsal seventy-three, there is a unison upbeat rhythm in the piano and the keyboards at “Un peu lent.” Players will have more success with the clarity of these attacks if the conductor subdivides the 3/8 and 2/8 before the fermata.
Example 4.17 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 373–776

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The same is the case with the “Un peu lent” following rehearsal seventy-four, the “lent” following rehearsal seventy-five, and the “lent” just before rehearsal seventy-six. Due to a tempo of sixteenth note equals sixty at rehearsal seventy-six it is best for the 3/8 and 2/8 just before rehearsal seventy-seven to be subdivided as well. The accuracy of the extended chorale that ends Messiaen’s work may be improved with subdivision. The 3+2/16 measure occurring five before the end can be challenging for the players to feel at this tempo. Although it may seem contrary to the style it could be helpful to subdivide this measure. If the conductor chooses to subdivide, it is advisable to also subdivide both the 2/8 measure preceding the 3+2/16 as well as the 3/8 that follows. This will result in the most seamless transition in and back out of the subdivision.

Example 4.18 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 507–09
Tempo Transitions

Many of Messiaen’s tempos throughout the work demand extreme technical proficiency from the clarinets, keyboards, and piano soloist. It is key for the conductor to realize that some of Messiaen’s tempos may be impossible to reach, or at the very least may sound frantic. Due to Messiaen’s presence, performances and recordings done with Pierre Boulez conducting and Yvonne Loriod as piano soloist shed some light on slightly slower tempos the composer may have deemed acceptable for *Couleurs*. Either way, Messiaen, like many other composers from the second half of the 20th Century, was very particular with his desires for performance. Once the players gain the technical proficiency to play through the challenging birdsongs at a pace Messiaen would find acceptable, transitions in tempo prove troublesome. The players must fight the urge to anticipate upcoming tempo changes. One of the most difficult parts about conducting this work is assisting the players through these transitions.

The first instance where this applies is the “modéré” at rehearsal six. At this point the tempo changes from eighth note equals 126 to eighth note equals 100. The transition is made more challenging for the conductor by the silence that fills the measure before rehearsal six. The conductor must internalize groupings of thirty-second notes in the rest just prior to the tempo change following the downbeat of rehearsal six. Adding to the complexity, just two measures later, at “un peu vif,” the tempo returns to eighth equals 126.

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Other tempo changes begin with silence. For example, at rehearsal eight, the first statement of the Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost is presented at eighth note
equals 108 for three measures, but is directly followed by four measures of silence at eighth note equals 126 before birds return at rehearsal nine.

Example 4.20 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 38–47
The tempo changes do not always involve measured silence. Transitions become even more difficult for the players when they do not have rests to gain a sense of the new pulse. At rehearsal eleven, color chords are introduced at eighth note equals fifty (three measures), immediately followed at rehearsal twelve by an Alleluia statement at eighth note equals 120 (three measures), back to color chords at rehearsal thirteen at sixteenth note equals forty (eight measures), followed by the bellbird at rehearsal fourteen at eighth note equals 126. There are four different tempos within a span of fifteen measures that are not related in any way.

In order to be successful with these transitions, it is imperative for the conductor to address challenges with tempo from the beginning of the rehearsal cycle. When rehearsing, rather than give a preparatory beat in the new tempo, the conductor is best served to conduct a measure or two of silence in the previous tempo, and then adjust to the new tempo following the downbeat attack. This should ensure that the conductor and the players do not prematurely forecast the tempo change.

Another instance where changing tempos pose a challenge for the conductor is rehearsal fifty-nine. At “vif,” Messiaen asks for a tempo of dotted sixteenth note equals 200. The fast tempo, and the conglomerate rhythm between the clarinets and high brass, make it necessary to isolate this measure. Notify the wind players that the piano soloist has the combination of their isolated efforts, but the pattern of one plus two is reversed and becomes two plus one. Furthermore, the measure in question is followed by a single silent measure at sixteenth note equals ninety-six connecting to the return of the brass in the next measure at a third tempo of eighth note equals 144.
Later, between rehearsal eighty-one and rehearsal eighty-six, a tempo of eighth note equals 120, in combination with the technical demands of overlapping birds between all three clarinetists and the piano soloist, requires isolated rehearsal with a clear pulse from the conductor. It is important that the conductor be in touch with the needs of the individual clarinetists and the piano soloist in this difficult passage. Although it may sound improvisatory to an audience, the score indicates it should be metered. Lacking the presence of a downbeat, the piano soloist may find it particularly helpful to see a large cue from the conductor at rehearsal eighty-four.
The conductor’s ability to assist the players with feeling a clear sense of pulse through transitions between seemingly unrelated tempos can determine the success of the performance of *Couleurs*.

**Percussion Concerns (Xylorimba & Gongs and Tam-tams)**

The published score for Messiaen’s work includes three different keyboards centered in front of the conductor. Two of the keyboards, xylophone and marimba, are common percussion instruments utilized in wind ensemble and full orchestra settings. The third keyboard, which is placed directly in front of the conductor, is more of a mystery for percussionists today. The xylorimba is a pitched percussion instrument
corresponding to the xylophone with an extended range of five octaves.\textsuperscript{51} It is not a combination of the xylophone and the marimba as the name may suggest. The lower notes of the xylorimba sound like a xylophone rather than a marimba on account of the bars being thicker and narrower than those of a marimba.\textsuperscript{52} Messiaen wrote for this instrument until his death in 1992, but for the most part it had fallen out of favor with prominent orchestral composers by the early 1980’s. Today’s xylorimba’s are relatively rare and difficult to obtain. Typically, if available at all, they must be rented and can be quite expensive. Due to the extended range, a marimba is a better substitute than a xylophone. However, because one of the other keyboard parts is written for marimba, the mallet selection for these two parts becomes very important. The xylorimba part must be a contrast to both the xylophone and marimba carrying a middle timbre without overpowering them dynamically. Usually, this will result in a harder marimba mallet being used on the marimba that is substituting for the xylorimba. It is essential to have the xylorimba player demonstrate different mallet strengths in context to be sure they make the choice that results in an equal balance between all of the keyboards.

Due to the significance of resonance for Messiaen within \textit{Couleurs} it is important to choose the two gongs and two tam-tams very carefully. If the supply of these instruments is limited, it may be important to consider purchasing additional options or borrowing what is necessary to make this part of the work as effective as possible. The gongs and tam tams should each resonate on a different pitch from high to low. At the “trés lent” following rehearsal thirty, and a similar trés lent following rehearsal ninety-six Messiaen notes the following with an astrisk in the score “bang the tam tam fff to ensure

\textsuperscript{51} Rosen, “Terms Used in Percussion,” 61.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid, 61.
the continuation of the sound swells, the density, and the extension of the resonance.

Great!” (Appendix D)

Example 4.23 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 144–48

With Messiaen’s encouraging request in mind, it is important for the player to realize, due to the size and scope of the tam-tam as compared to the higher gongs, they must play the gongs loudly enough so they are not buried by the attack of the tam-tam. Trusting the dynamic alone here may not be enough to get the effect Messiaen clearly desires. Please note that it may be necessary to the ask percussionists to delay their attacks slightly when playing in unison with the winds or the piano so that all voices speak together.
Approaching Colors

As indicated in the title and the analysis, the interpretation of color is critical to this work. Messiaen’s ability to see color as triggered by sound influenced his compositional choices. The moments themselves have already been recognized in this document, but their compositional design is vital for the conductor and players to realize in order to best serve Messiaen’s intentions. Specific dynamic relationships begin at rehearsal eleven. Yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, and crystal are produced by the voicing of the chords in combination with a piano dynamic for the clarinets and cencerros; pianissimo for the trumpets, horns, and trombones; mezzo forte for the gongs; and forte for the piano soloist. The placement and voicing of the pitches change, but the dynamic levels are maintained.

Example 4.24 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 63–68
When color chords return at rehearsal thirteen dynamics play an even greater role.

Yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, and crystal are presented with the addition of the chimes at piano. However, on the downbeat of the fourth measure the dynamic level in the clarinets changes to mezzo forte. The dynamic change results in emerald green and violet amethyst.

Example 4.25 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 72–75
Later, following a phrase marking in the middle of the fifth measure, the color changes to red, orange, and gold. This is accomplished by the clarinets returning to a dynamic level of piano, which puts them at the second level. Instead, the brasses become the primary voice.

Example 4.26 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 76–83
Example 4.27 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, mm. 121–27
At rehearsal twenty-four red carnelian is achieved by way of similar dynamic levels to the block colors chords at rehearsal eleven. However, this time there are multiple chord changes per measure resulting from the rhythm and orchestration. After an extended hold that begins on the last thirty-second note of the first measure, and releases on the first thirty-second note of the fourth measure, Messiaen includes a phrase marking followed by the attack of a new color chord (emerald green, blue saphire, and gold). The next color change does not directly follow the phrase marking as one might expect, but is delayed to the following attack on the upbeat of three. Pink, mauve, and grey emerge to close the section. In order for Messiaen’s synesthetic intentions to be realized, it is important for the conductor to notice and understand each of these minor alterations and then bring them to the attention of the players. Throughout the rehearsal process, a timbre Messiaen desired may be as close as asking the players to “play red” or “play blue.” reinforcing the need for compositional understanding to aid in a successful and accurate performance.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study is one of the few where Messiaen’s *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* for winds, percussion, and piano soloist is examined and analyzed. The information collected in this document regarding the concept and development of the work as a whole, the creation of a conductor oriented analysis, and the suggested considerations for the rehearsal process are essential for the conductor. The resulting conductor’s guide for *Couleurs* is unique and absolutely necessary to increase informed performances of this great work. As only the second document of its kind devoted to Messiaen’s works for winds and percussion, the other an intensive study of *Oiseaux exotiques*, more scholarship on his works for winds and percussion is essential.

*Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum*,\(^53\) the most accessible work for the traditional wind ensemble or symphony orchestra without strings, could benefit from a conductors guide. The theoretical analyses available, as well as Messiaen’s notes included in the score, provide a good starting point for score study but are not enough for this work of epic proportions. Its historical significance and complexity is demanding of increased study. There is very little scholarship on either *Un Vitrail et des Oiseaux*\(^54\) or *La Ville d’En-Haut*\(^55\) both written very late in Messiaen’s career. Both works emerged

following the lapse in production that Messiaen struggled with after completing his monumental opera Saint-François d'Assise. Informed performance of each work by way of a conductor’s analysis is warranted. The results may be documented through scholarship with hopes these two late works for winds, percussion, and piano soloist will get more attention from conductors in the future.

Regarding the subject of this document, professional conductors that have programmed, or will program Couleurs de la Cité céleste are of interest. Among those who have conducted or programmed the work in recent years are, Zubin Mehta, Michael Tilson Thomas, Esa-Peka Salonen, Alan Gilbert, Franz Welser-Möst, and Sir Simon Rattle. Their level of experience conducting Messiaen’s works, their decision to program Couleurs, the companion works they choose to include on their program, the type of hall where it was performed, their rehearsal schedule, their approach to specifics addressed in this guide, and their willingness to program Couleurs again are worth investigating.


Figure A.1 *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, Preface to the published score

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This work was commissioned by Heinrich Strobel for the Donaueschingen Festival.


56 The English translations in Appendices A–D were prepared by Emily Stumpf. Stumpf is a flute performer and teacher based in Columbia, South Carolina where she is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance at the University of South Carolina. She holds a Master of Music in Performance from the same institution and a Bachelors of Music with a double major in French from Grove City College.
APPENDIX B: ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE FIRST AUTHOR’S NOTE

Première Note de l’Auteur

La forme de cette œuvre dépend entièrement des couleurs. Les thèmes mélodiques ou rythmiques, les complexes de sons et de timbres, évoluent à la façon des couleurs. Dans leurs variations perpétuellement renouvelées, on peut trouver (par analogie) des couleurs chaudes et froides, des couleurs complémentaires influençant leurs voisines, des couleurs dégradées vers le blanc, rabattues par le noir. On peut encore comparer ces transformations à des personnages agissant sur plusieurs scènes superposées et déroulant simultanément plusieurs histoires différentes.

Alléluias de plain-chant, rythmes hindous et grecs, permutations de durées, chants d’oiseaux de différents pays : tous ces matériaux accumulés sont mis au service de la couleur et des combinaisons de sons qui la supposent et l’appellent.

Les sons-couleurs sont à leur tour symbole de la “Cité céleste” et de “Celui qui l’habite. Hors de tout temps, hors de tout lieu, dans une lumière sans lumière, dans une nuit sans nuit... Ce que l’Apocalypse, plus terrifiante encore dans son humilité que dans ses visions de gloire, désigne seulement par un éblouissement de couleurs...


Figure B.1 Couleurs de la Cité céleste; Preface to the published score

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First Authors Note

The configuration of this work depends entirely on the colors. The melodic or rhythmic themes, the complex sounds and tones, develop in accordance with the colors.
In the perpetually changing variations, one can find (for example) the colors of hot and cold, some complimentary colors influenced by each other, some colors that degrade towards white, and then back to black. One can compare these transformations to the effect of characters in many scenes superimposed upon each other and unwinding several different stories.

There are the Alleluias of plainchant, rhythms of the Hindu’s and the Greek’s, permutations of duration, songs of birds from different countries: the accumulation of all this material is in service to the colors and the combinations of sound that are implied and called for.

The colorful sounds are to be a symbol of the “Celestial City” and the “one” who lives there. Beyond a time, beyond a place, in a light without light, in a night without night… That the Apocalypse, more terrifying again in its humility than in its visions of glory, is designated only for an explosion of colors…

The songs of birds from New Zealand oppose “The Abyss”: with the sounds of trombone pedals, the resonance of clarinets, enveloping tam-tams, and the height that reenters in the depth. The Bellbird of Brazil opposes the rainbow and milky white—emerald green, amethyst violet—purple violet and blue violet. The moments “seven angels of the seven trumpets,” and “the star was entrusted with the key to the pits of the abyss” seem to stake out this great fan of colors: yet, the work doesn’t end—instead it has just really begun: it turns on itself, intertwining its color blocks, like a cathedral rose window with blazing and invisible color.
APPENDIX C: ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE SECOND NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Deuxième Note de l’Auteur

Cette œuvre prend source en cinq citations de l’Apocalypse:

1) “Un arc-en-ciel encerclait le trône...” (Apoc., IV, 3)
2) “Et les sept anges avaient sept trompettes...” (Apoc., VIII, 6)
3) “On donna à l’étoile la clef du puits de l’abîme...” (Apoc., IX, 1)
4) “L’éclat de la ville sainte est semblable au jaspe cristallin...” (Apoc., XXI, 11)

Évoquées par des ensembles de sons, on y trouve différentes combinaisons de couleurs, telles que:

Topaze jaune, chrysoprase vert clair, et cristal - émeraude verte, améthyste violette - rouge, orange, et or - sardoine rouge - rouge, taché de bleu - bleu violet - orangé, or, blanc laiteux - violet - émeraude verte, bleu saphir, et or - rose, mauve, et gris.

On y trouve encore des rythmes hindous et grecs, et des “permutations symétriques de durées”.

Enfin, j’y ai utilisé, très partiellement, quelques thèmes de plain-chant, et, plus fréquemment, des chants d’oiseaux.

Thèmes de plain-chant:


Oiseaux qui chantent dans la partition, classés par pays:

Nouvelle-Zélande:
Oiseau Tui (prosthemadera novaeseelandiae) - Oiseau cloche (anthornis melanura) - Mohoua à tête jaune (mohoua ochrocephala ochrocephala) - Nestor de Nouvelle-Zélande (nestor meridionalis septentrionalis) - Râle Takahé (notornis mantelli mantelli).

Argentine:
Hornero (furnarius rufus) - Bentveo (pitangus sulphuratus).

Brésil:
Grive à ventre roux (turdus rufigenalis) - Troglodyte à long bec (thryothorus longirostris) - Araponga (procnias nudicollis) - Toucan (ramphastos dicolorus) - Saltator cendré (saltator coerulescens) - Engelouvent à collier blanc (nyctidromus albicollis).

Figure C.1 Couleurs de la Cité céleste; Preface to the published score

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This work comes from five citations of the Apocalypse:

1. There was a rainbow around the throne... (Revelation: Chapter Four, Verse Three)
2. And the angels had seven trumpets... (Revelation: Chapter Eight, Verse Six)
3. The star was entrusted with the key to the pits of the abyss... (Revelation: Chapter Nine, Verse One)
4. The light of the holy city was like crystalline jasper... (Revelation: Chapter Twenty-one, Verse Eleven).
5. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, sardius, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst… (Revelation: Chapter Twenty-one, Verse Nineteen and Twenty).

Evoked by the combination of the sounds, there are many different color combinations that can be found, such as

Yellow topaz, light green chrysoprase, and crystal—emerald green, violet amethyst; red, orange and gold; red carnelian; red speckled with blue, blue violet; orange, gold, milky white; violet, emerald green, blue sapphire, and gold; pink, mauve, and gray.

Again, there can be found many rhythms of the Hindu’s and Greek’s, and the “symmetric permutations of length.”

I have used, only partially, some themes of plainchant and, more frequently, birdsong.

Themes from plainchant:

Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost—Alleluia for the Fourth Sunday after Easter—Alleluia for the Dedication of the Church—Alleluia for Corpus Christi.

Birds that sing in the score are classified by country:

New Zealand:
Parson bird (prosthemadera novaeseelandiae)—Bellbird (anthornis melanura)—Yellowhead (mohoua ochrocephala ochrocephala)—South Island Green Kaka (nestor meridionalis septentrionalis)—Takahe (notornis mantelli mantelli).

Argentina:
Rufous Ovenbird (furnarius rufus)—Great Kiskadee (pitangus sulphuratus).

Brazil:
Rufous-bellied thrush (turdus rufiventris)—Long necked wren (thryothorus longirostris)—Bare throated bellbird (procnias nudicollis)—Red Breasted Toucan (ramphastos dicolorus)—Greyish Saltator (saltator coerulescens)—Paraque (nyctidromus albicollis).

Venezuela:
Tropical Mockingthrush (mimus gilvus)—Striped-back Wren (campylorhynchus nuchalis)—Yellow Rumped Cacque (cacicus cela).
Canada:
Western Meadow Lark (sturnella neglecta).

Remarks—for the New Zealand birds, the translation sometimes retains the Maori name, such as: Parson bird (Tui) or Takahe, for example. For the Argentinian birds, I have preferred the well-known Spanish names. The French Canadians, call Western Meadow Lark: the starling of the west. There are no difficulties with the three birds from Venezuela. For the Brazilian birds, certain names are not possible to officially translate into French. I have thus inscribed on the music the names in Portuguese. These are: Guaxo, Corocochó (Cotinga), Arapaçú (Black-billed Sythebill), and Sabiá-coleira (White-necked Thrush). We find, in addition, in the score, the names of Hindu and Greek rhythms and durations of inversions with a sequence number. The performers do not have to worry: simply do exactly the durations and nuances marked. If the conductor is interested in the mechanism and the symbolism of these rhythms, he can read about them in my "Treatise of rhythm" in the chapters devoted to Greek rhythm, ancient India, and the permutations of the symmetrical durations.

Note to the conductor—the sign \( \square \) indicates a beat with the value of two thirty-second notes. The sign \( \triangle \) indicates the beat of a value of three thirty-second notes. The sign \( \square \) indicates the beat of a value of two sixteenth notes. The sign \( \triangle \) indicates a beat of a value of three sixteenth notes.
APPENDIX D: ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MESSIAEN’S NOTES IN THE SCORE

Page 5 This sixteenth note in the three trombones and the bass trombone only works if it is \textit{fff}. In contrast, the same sixteenth in the first tam-tam must be \textit{p}, for to not interfere with the resonance of the second tam-tam at \textit{ff}.

Page 7 Here: the principal color and music are the brasses—with the clarinets remaining at the second level.

Page 8 Here: the principal color and music are the brasses—with the clarinets remaining at the second level.

The clarinets are at the same level as the brass.

Page 9 The clarinets remain at the second level.

Page 12 Here: the principal color and music are the brasses—with the clarinets remaining at the second level.

Page 15 The clarinets are at the same level as the brass.

Page 16 The clarinets are at the same level as the brass.

Page 18 Bang the tam-tam \textit{fff} to ensure the continuation of the sound swells, the density and the extension of the resonance. Great!

The second horn doubles the bass trombone.

Page 21 Abruptly link to the roar of the Bare-throated Bellbird

Page 25 The low notes and the pedal sounds of the trombones, bass trombone and French horn, have to be huge, and minimize the diminuendo as much as possible. On the contrary, the clarinets (who have the most resonance) must diminuendo and then disappear. The ensemble must have height, depth. The gong and tam-tam should play strong enough to increase the effect.

The second horn doubles the bass trombone.
Page 26 The horns and the clarinets attack $s$fz diminuendo, in the spirit of bells. The piano marked $ff$ in the low notes is to continue the klangfarbenmelodie. The two notes on the chimes: $pp$—to differentiate the end of the klangfarbenmelodie preceding it.

Page 32 Attack links to the roar of the Bare-throated Bellbird.

Page 38 The low notes and the pedal sounds of the trombones, bass trombone and French horn, have to be huge, and minimize the diminuendo as much as possible. On the contrary, the clarinets (who have the most resonance) must diminuendo and then disappear. The ensemble must have height, depth. The gong and tam-tam should play strong enough to increase the effect.

The second horn doubles the bass trombone.

The horns and the clarinets attack $s$fz diminuendo, in the spirit of bells. The piano marked $ff$ in the low notes is to continue the klangfarbenmelodie.

Page 40 The horns and the clarinets attack $s$fz diminuendo, in the spirit of bells. The piano marked $ff$ in the low notes is to continue the klangfarbenmelodie.

Page 49 This sixteenth note in the three trombones and the bass trombone only works if it is $ff$. In contrast, the same sixteenth in the first tam-tam must be $p$, for to not interfere with the resonance of the second tam-tam at $f$.

Page 50 We must hear the “Alleluia for the Dedication of the Church.” All the instruments are playing at the same level of intensity. The melody must spring forth spontaneously from the harmonies. It must enter with the “Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday of Pentecost” and the piano (and the omglocken.) Everything must be heard including the accented notes in the three xylophones, including the harmonies of the trumpets, trombones, and bass trombones (who play $pp$ nevertheless). The ensemble must give the impression that they are the abundance of colors of a sunny stained glass window.

Page 52 We must hear the “Alleluia for the Dedication of the Church.” All the instruments are playing at the same level of intensity. The melody must spring forth spontaneously from the harmonies. It must enter with the “Alleluia for the Eighth Sunday of Pentecost” and the piano (and the omglocken.) Everything must be heard including the accented notes in the three xylophones, including the harmonies of the trumpets, trombones, and bass trombones (who play $pp$ nevertheless). The ensemble must give the impression that they are the abundance of colors of a sunny stained glass window.

Page 55 The clarinets are at the same level as the brass.

The two fermatas are extremely long. Each fermatas value is a little more than four sixteenth notes where the sixteenth equals forty.
The gong plays \(mf\), to obtain enough resonance. The piano solo holds the pedal with force, and leads the reverberation of the gong at the same time, whose colors are like the harmonics—all of the ensemble stops exactly at the duration indicated.

Page 56 The gong plays \(mf\), to obtain enough resonance. The piano solo holds the pedal with force, and leads the reverberation of the gong at the same time, whose colors are like the harmonics—all of the ensemble stops exactly at the duration indicated.

Page 57 The clarinets are at the the same level as the brass.

The gong plays \(mf\), to obtain enough resonance. The piano solo holds the pedal with force, and leads the reverberation of the gong at the same time, whose colors are like the harmonics—all of the ensemble stops exactly at the duration indicated.

Page 58 The tam-tam plays \(mf\), to obtain enough resonance. The piano solo holds the pedal with force for five measures and leads the reverberation also for a long time with the tam-tam—the ensemble ceases at rehearsal seventy-seven.

Page 60 This sixteenth note in the three trombones and the bass trombone only works if it is \(fff\). In contrast, the same sixteenth in the first tam-tam must be \(p\), for to not interfere with the resonance of the second tam-tam at \(ff\).

Page 62 Rehearsal eighty-one and eighty-six excluded: we must hear the three clarinets (the second and third as much as the first!) We must also hear the piano solo— and, in places, the three xylophones.

Page 63 Third Clarinet \(ff\)

Page 65 Third Clarinet \(ff\)

Page 66 The low notes and the pedal sounds of the trombones, bass trombone and French horn, have to be huge, and minimize the diminuendo as much as possible. On the contrary, the clarinets (who have the most resonance) must diminuendo and then disappear. The ensemble must have height, depth. The gong and tam-tam should play strong enough to increase the effect.

The second horn doubles the bass trombone.

Page 71 Bang the tam-tam \(fff\) to ensure the continuation of the sound swells, the density and the extension of the resonance. Great!

The second horn doubles the bass trombone.
APPENDIX E: SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 8, 2011</td>
<td>University of California-San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28–30, 2011</td>
<td>New York Philharmonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5, 2011</td>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2012</td>
<td>Music Academy of the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 23, 2014</td>
<td>Oberlin Conservatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 2014</td>
<td>University of South Carolina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure E.1 Scheduled performances of *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* in the United States since 2011 (Robert King Music & G. Schirmer, Inc.)
APPENDIX F: REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 7, 2014</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 13, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14, 2014</td>
<td>2 hours (with Professor Phillip Bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 18, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour (Clarinets &amp; Keyboards only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 20, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 21, 2014</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 25, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour (with Professor Phillip Bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour (with Professor Phillip Bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 2014</td>
<td>1 hour (Dress Rehearsal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure F.1 University of South Carolina Wind Ensemble Rehearsal Schedule for *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (Conductor-Dr. Scott Weiss, Assistant Conductor-Michael T. King, Piano Soloist-Professor Phillip Bush) University of South Carolina
Le Piano Et Les Oiseaux Et Messiaen
Label: King Records
Format: LP
Country: Japan
Released: 1973
Conductor: Hiroyuki Iwaki
Piano Soloist: Kaori Kirmura

Olivier Messiaen: De Canyons Aux Étoliies/Oiseaux Exotiques/Couleurs De La Cité Céleste
Label: CBS
Format: CD
Country: England
Released 1988
Conductor: Esa-Pekka Salonen
Piano Soloist: Paul Crossley

Olivier Messiaen: Couleurs De La Cité Céleste/Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum/L’Ascension
Label: Erato
Format: CD
Country: Germany
Released: 1993
Recorded in 01/1966, Église Notre-Dame du Liban, Paris
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod

Messiaen: Works for Wind Ensemble
Label: Chandos
Format: CD, now download only
Country: England
Released: 1994
Netherlands Wind Ensemble
Conductor: Reinbert de Leeuw
Piano Soloist: Peter Donohoe
Olivier Messiaen: Sept Haïkaï/Couleurs De La Cité Céleste/Un Vitrail Et Des Oiseaux/Oiseaux Exotiques
Label: Naïve Montaigne
Format: CD
Country: France
Released: 2000
Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
Ensemble InterContemporain
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod

Messiaen Editions
Label: Warner Classics
Format: CD
Country: France
Released: 2005
Groupe Instrumental à Percussion de Strasbourg
Orchestre de Domaine Musical
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod

Myung-Whun Chung Conducts Messiaen
Label: Deutsche Grammphon
Format: CD
Country: Germany
Released: 2008
Orchestre Philharmonique du Radio France
Conductor: Myung-Whun Chung
Piano Soloist: Catherine Cournot

Les Percussions De Strasbourg – 50th Anniversary Edition
Label: Accord
Format: Download only, not available in the USA
Country: France
Released: 2012
Groupe Instrumental à Percussion de Strasbourg
Orchestre de Domaine Musical
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod
Messiaen: Orchestral Works
Label: Deutsche Grammphon
Format: CD
Country: Germany
Released: 2012
Orchestre Philharmonique du Radio France
Conductor: Myung-Whun Chung
Piano Soloist: Catherine Cournot

Erato
Label: Erato
Format: CD
Country: France
Released: 2013
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod

Messiaen: Complete Edition
Label: Deutsche Grammphon
Format: CD
Country: Germany
Released: 2013
Orchestre Philharmonique du Radio France
Conductor: Myung-Whun Chung
Piano Soloist: Catherine Cournot

Pierre Boulez: The Complete Erato Recordings
Label: Erato
Format: CD
Country: France
Released: 2015
Conductor: Pierre Boulez
Piano Soloist: Yvonne Loriod
APPENDIX G: RECITALS

University of South Carolina
School of Music

IN A DOCTORAL REHEARSAL RECITAL

submitted by

Michael T. King
Candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree
In Conducting

Thursday, January 29, 2015
2:20pm
Large Rehearsal Room-Koger Center for the Arts

Nocturno, op. 24 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
(1809–47)

Three Japanese Dances Bernard Rogers
I. Dance with Pennons (1893-1968)
II. Mourning Dance ed. Timothy Topolewski
III. Dance with Swords

King Lear Variations David Amram
b. 1930

The Glass Bead Game James A. Beckel Jr.
I. The Call & Awakening b. 1948
II. Father Jacobus
III. Magister Ludi Coronation & Death

J.D. Shaw, Horn
MICHAEL T. KING, conductor
in
DOCTORAL RECITAL

Thursday, February 20, 2014
2:30 PM
Large Rehearsal Room  •  Koger Center for the Arts

Monument Fanfare and Tribute
Philip Rothman
(b. 1976)

Asimov’s Aviary
Joel Puckett
(b. 1977)

Suite of English Folk-Dances
Ernest Tomlinson
(b. 1924)
I. Jenny Pluck Pears
II. Ten Round Lass
III. Dick’s Maggot
IV. Nonesuch
V. Hunt the Squirrel
VI. Woodcock

Colors
Bert Appermont
Yellow
(b. 1973)
II. Red
III. Blue
IV. Green

Brad Keesler, trombone

Dionysiacues, Opus 62
Florent Schmitt
(1870-1958)
rev. Hauswirth

Mr. King is a student of Dr. Scott Weiss.
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Conducting.
presents

MICHAEL KING, conductor

in

GRADUATE LECTURE RECITAL

USC Wind Ensemble
Phillip Bush, piano

Friday, December 5, 2014
3:30 PM • Room 016

Olivier Messiaen’s Couleurs de la Cite celeste:
An Informance

Couleurs de la Cite celeste

Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)

Mr. King is a student of Dr. Scott Weiss.
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Conducting.
University of South Carolina

School of Music

IN A DOCTORAL COMPILATION RECITAL

submitted by

Michael T. King

Candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree
In Conducting

Fantasia in G, BWV 572: Gravement  
J.S. Bach  
(1685-1750)  
trans. Goldman

English Folk Song Suite  
Ralph Vaughn Williams  
(1872-1958)

I. Seventeen Come Sunday  
II. My Bonny Boy  
III. Folk Songs from Somerset

Lord Tullamore  
Carl Wittrock  
b. 1966

Moon by Night  
Jonathan Newman  
b. 1972

Serenade for Band  
Vincent Persichetti  
(1915-1987)

The Machine Awakes  
Steven Bryant  
b. 1972

Urban Requiem  
Michael Colgrass  
b. 1932