

4-2011

Performance of Olivier Messiaen's work *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus*

School of Performing Arts

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CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

GRANT APPLICATION

I. Applicant/Organization: Music division, School of Performing Arts

II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Beth Wiemann

b. Title: Chair, Music division

c. Campus Address (include Email and Telephone): Class of 1944 Hall

III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date(s):

The UMaine Music Division proposes to sponsor a performance of Olivier Messiaen's epic work *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus* (1944) for piano solo. This performance is scheduled for March 16, 2012, memorializing the 20th anniversary of Olivier Messiaen's death.

The opportunity to experience a live performance of this work happens maybe once in a lifetime. It is a massive work (lasting approx. 2 hours and 15 minutes) and the demands on the pianist(s) are extreme. The *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus* (The Twenty Adorations/Gazes of the Infant Jesus) takes you through the boundless colorful world of Messiaen's music. The work will be divided into three sections to be performed by three local Maine pianists. First section (movements I through VI) will be performed by Chiharu Naruse; second section (movements VII through XIII) will be performed by Annie Antonacos; final section (movements XIV through XX) will be performed by Bridget Convey. Bios of these pianists, who will also be giving masterclasses to pianists in the Music Division, are attached to this application.

IV. Budget Proposal Form must be attached.

Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of reports for any previous grant awards, including final budget and attendance figures.

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION VIA EMAIL TO: wanda.maddencarr@maine.edu

For questions regarding the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series, please contact Wanda Madden-Carr at 1-1516

Bridget Convey, piano

A musician who enjoys performing music of our time, pianist Bridget Convey has found much fulfillment in collaborating with living composers. Originally from New York, Bridget began performing contemporary repertoire under the guidance of percussionist Raymond DesRoches, and was given the opportunity to collaborate with composers, including Dary John Mizelle. In 1995 Bridget relocated to Southern California and was fortunate to work with composers such as Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, Arthur Jarvinen, Morton Subotnick, Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith, Vinny Golia, Donald Crockett, Steven Hoey, Mel Powell, James Tenney among many others. Upon finishing her Masters of Fine Arts degree at the California Institute of the Arts she founded, directed and was pianist for "ensemble GREEN", an eleven piece new music ensemble.

As a soloist and ensemble musician, Bridget has been heard throughout the United States performing music of diverse periods and styles. She has performed at venues such as Lincoln Center (NYC) and Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (Los Angeles, CA) (with the Los Angeles Philharmonic); "Sundays Live" Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Ojai Music Festival, CA; Fechin Institute Chamber Concert Series, Taos, NM; Idyllwild School of the Arts New Music Festival, CA; Maybeck Performing Arts Studio, Berkeley, CA; Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME; University of Maine at Augusta; University of Maine at Orono; University of Southern Maine; Southern Utah University and many others.

Bridget has specifically been sought after as a New Music pianist and featured musician at several National and International Festivals in the United States. During Spring 2009 she presented "Demystifying 20th Century Piano Music" at the MMTA Spring Convention at UMaine and at the University of Southern Maine. Bridget was invited to perform at the International New Music Festival at CSSN, Las Vegas, NV; was "Artist in Residence" at the University of Minnesota-Duluth Spring New Music Festival; and was guest artist at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (Columbus, OH).

Since Bridget relocated to Maine she has performed throughout Central and Southern Maine as a soloist and ensemble musician. She works regularly with the Maine Music Society's Androscoggin Chorale and CODA Chorus; and has worked with composers Richard Nelson, Vineet Shende, Elliott Schwartz, Nancy Gunn, Bruce Fithian, Daniel Sonenberg and Scott Harris. Bridget currently resides in Hallowell with her husband and two dogs.

Anastasia Antonacos, piano

Anastasia Antonacos is a member of the artist faculty at USM. She has given notable performances around the world as a solo recitalist and chamber musician. She has played at venues such as the Salle Cortot, Casa Orfeo, Holland's Alkmaar Conservatory, and Alice Tully Hall. She has also played in Greece, Russia, France,

and Belgium, as well as various places in the U.S., including Washington D.C., where she testified for funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

She won First Place at the International Young Artist Music Competition in Bulgaria, and she holds prizes from the Capdepera International Piano Competition in Mallorca and the Indianapolis Matinee Musicale Competition. In 2004 the Greek Women's University Club of Chicago awarded her the Kanellos Award. She attended the Holland Music Sessions, the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, and the Wilhelm Kempff Beethoven Course in Positano, Italy, where she was one of eight pianists selected for an intensive study of Beethoven led by John O'Connor.

Dr. Antonacos has made solo appearances with the Portland Symphony Orchestra and the Bangor Symphony Orchestra. She has collaborated with violinist Joseph Silverstein, and with members of the Vermeer, Cassatt and DaPonte Quartets. She holds a doctorate in piano performance from Indiana University. She has been a chamber music coach at Bay Chamber Concerts' Next Generation program for many years, and she regularly serves as a masterclass teacher and adjudicator.

Chiharu Naruse, piano

Chiharu holds a Masters Degree in Music Performance and a Masters Degree in Music Instruction from the Hochschule Fur Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. In Berlin, Chiharu studied piano under Klaus Baessler and Lied Accompaniment under Wolfram Riegar. Chiharu has performed throughout the world in recitals and piano competitions including a piano concert to benefit Amnesty International in Germany, the Hyogo Piano Competition in Japan (silver prize), the Clara Haskil piano competition in Switzerland, the Pescara Academie Piano Competition in Italy and the International Mozart Wettbewerb in Salzburg Austria.

In the spring of 2002, Chiharu moved to the United States to study under Frank Glazer. Since her arrival Chiharu has given several recitals at Bates College, played concerts with the Portland String Quartet, DaPonte String Quartet and Frank Glazer, performed Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, Mozart Piano Concerto K466 and the Rachmaninoff Second Piano Concerto with the Augusta Symphony, performed as a featured artist at the Ocean Park Music Festival and the Franco-American Heritage Center. Chiharu has also toured extensively throughout the world playing concerts in France and Japan.

In addition to maintaining a regular performance schedule Chiharu is also a well-respected music teacher, chamber music coach, music competition adjudicator and accompanist, with many of her students receiving competition prizes. Chiharu currently is a member of the applied music faculty at Bates College and University of Maine Farmington, has a teaching studio in Hallowell, Maine and is a member of the faculty at the Portland Conservatory of Music.

For more information on Chiharu please visit her website at www.chiharunaruse.com/

Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Fund Budget Proposal Form

Applicant/Organization: Music Division, School of Performing Arts
 Responsible Officer: Beth Wiemann, Chair, Music Div.
 Event Title: Performance of Olivier Messiaen's work *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus*
 Event Date: March 16, 2012

Total Program Budget: \$820
 Amount Committed by Applicant Organization: \$460
 Total Amount Requested from Other Funding Sources: _____
 Please List Sources & Amounts below:

 Amount Requested from CA/DLS Committee: _____ \$360 *
 Revenues, if any, expected (fees, ticket sales): _____ **

**Concert ticket sales go against our concert expenses, such as piano tuning and box office staffing. These revenues are not available for guest artist fees.

Budget Breakdown of Expenses and funds to be used:	CADLS	Other
Honoraria/Services (explain below)	\$ <u>300</u>	\$ <u>300</u>
<u>\$200 for each of the three pianists involved</u>		
<u>in the public performance and the masterclasses</u>		
<u>with UMaine music students</u>		
 Travel	 \$ <u>60</u>	 \$ <u>60</u>
<u>gas expenses for the three pianists</u>		
 Lodging/Meals	 \$ _____	 \$ _____
Advertising	\$ _____	\$ <u>50</u>
Printing	\$ _____	\$ <u>50</u>
Supplies and Materials	\$ _____	\$ _____
Other (must specify below)	\$ _____	\$ _____

Total Expenses from CA/DLS funds: \$ 360 *
 Total Expenses from other funds: \$ 460
 (These two totals should equal the "Total Program Budget" listed above)

*These amounts should be identical and should not exceed 50% of the total program/event budget. Please note that CA/DLS funds may not be used for receptions and do not normally fund UM employee wages. If an award is granted based on this proposal, reimbursement of expenses will not exceed the total CA/DLS request and will be limited to the types of expenditures outlined above. 9/08

Cultural Affairs Committee
and
Distinguished Lecture Series
c/o Erinn Rossignol
201 Alumni Hall
University of Maine

April 21, 2011

To: Beth Wiemann

From: Melissa Mayard & Dan Sandweiss, Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Cultural Affairs Committee and Distinguished Lecture Series, it gives us great pleasure to inform you that your proposal, Performance of Oliveier Messiaen's work *vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus*, has been awarded \$360.00.

Please contact Erinn Rossignol at 1-1591 to discuss the procedures in place for the submission of financial expenses related to this award at your earliest convenience.

The following acknowledgement is required on ALL promotional material: ***This event was supported in part by a grant from the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series.***

Attached is a form for your use to summarize the benefits derived from this grant. This form should be submitted within 30 days after the conclusion of the event. Timely submission of your summary will be considered as part of any future funding requests.

The Cultural Affairs Committee members congratulate you and wish you much success on this project.

cc: Pam McManus

Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Grant Report Form

Applicant Organization: Music Division, School of Performing Arts

Contact Name: Beth Wiemann

Campus Address: Class of 1944 Hall

Phone: 581-1244

E-mail: beth.wiemann@umit.maine.edu

Summary of Program for which grant funds were awarded, including a brief description, place where the program was held; and date and time:

A performance of Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus* (1944) by guest pianists Bridget Convey, Annie Antonacos and Chiharu Naruse was held in Minsky Recital Hall on March 16, 2012. The performance of this epic work for solo piano was accompanied by video projections (run by UMaine faculty member Beth Wiemann) and by program notes by the pianists and from the composer's original essays about the work.

The guest pianists also gave a masterclass for UMaine student pianists earlier in the day, at 3PM in Minsky Recital Hall. Students of Baycka Voronietsky and Ginger Hwalek performed for and were critiqued by Ms. Convey, Ms. Antonacos and Ms. Naruse in front of an audience of fellow students and teachers.

How many people attended the event(s)? If possible describe the different audiences that this program served (i.e. UMaine Students, general community, teachers, etc.).

Approximately 30 students/faculty and community members attended the concert, including the students that were coached in the afternoon masterclass.

How was the event promoted? Please attach copies of promotional material.

Concert posters were distributed around campus, and digital copies were distributed on the SPA website, the SPA Facebook pages, and through email by both SPA faculty and the guest pianists. The concert was also listed in our hard-copy Spring Events calendar.

Please describe any modifications to program or budget made after award:

Please attach a final budget to this form.

MESSIAEN EXPENSES (March 16 performance)

Bridget Convey honorarium	200.00	-200.00
Anastasia Antonacos honorarium	200.00	-400.00
Chiharu Naruse honorarium	200.00	-600.00
Posters/programs printed	120.00	-720.00
Cultural affairs grant	360.00	-360.00

of the *Theme of God* separated by asymmetrical swellings. The third theme is melodic. It is followed by the first theme with fireworks and more asymmetrical swelling. Finally, ringing of bells, forming a dominant pedal and recalling the chords of the preceding movements.

Exposition: Complete presentation of the "theme of God," as a glorious fanfare. Long coda on the *Theme of God* – triumph of love and joy, tears of joy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Saturday . March 17 . 7:30PM

Sunday . March 18 . 2:00PM

Minsky Hall

READER'S THEATRE

Clouds

by *Aristophanes*

Wednesday . March 21 . 7:30PM

Minsky Hall

THOMAS GANSCH

With the *UMaine Jazz Ensemble*

Special Guests *Trent Austin & Karel Lidral*

Thursday . March 22 . 7:30PM

Minsky Hall

I AM SESSION WITH THOMAS GANSCH

Friday . March 23 . 12-3PM

Class of 1944 Hall . Rm 100

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS



MESSIAEN CONCERT

FEATURING

CHIHARU NARUSE . ANASTASIA ANONACOS . BRIDGET CONVEY

FRIDAY - MARCH 16 - 7:30PM

MINSKY HALL

WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE HOLD ALL APPLAUSE UNTIL
EACH ARTIST HAS COMPLETED THEIR SET

This event was supported by a grant from the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series.

SPA

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MAINE

**Olivier Messiaen: *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (1944)
for solo piano**

Performed by pianists:

Chiharu Naruse, Anastasia Antonacos & Bridget Convey

- I. *Regard de Père* (Contemplation of the Father)
- II. *Regard de l'étoile* (Contemplation of the Star)
- III. *L'échange* (The Exchange)
- IV. *Regard de la Vierge* (Contemplation of the Blessed Virgin)
- V. *Regard de Fils sur le Fils* (Contemplation of the Son upon the Son)
- VI. *Par Lui tout a été fait* (Through Him Everything Was Made)

Chiharu Naruse, *piano*

-five minute interval-

- VII. *Regard de la Croix* (Contemplation of the Cross)
- VIII. *Regard des hauteurs* (Contemplation of the Heights)
- IX. *Regard du Temps* (Contemplation of Time)
- X. *Regard de l'Esprit de joie* (Contemplation of the Spirit of Joy)
- XI. *Première communion de la Vierge*
(First communion of the Blessed Virgin)
- XII. *La parole toute puissante* (The all-powerful Word)
- XIII. *Noël* (Christmas)

Anastasia Antonacos, *piano*

-five minute interval-

- XIV. *Regards des Anges* (Contemplation of the Angels)
- XV. *Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* (The kiss of the Child Jesus)
- XVI. *Regard des prophètes, des bergers et des Mages*
(Contemplation of the Prophets, the Shepherds and the Magi)
- XVII. *Regard du silence* (Contemplation of silence)
- XVIII. *Regard de l'Onction terrible*
(Contemplation of the Awesome Anointing)
- XIX. *Je dors, mais mon cœur veille* (I sleep, but my heart waketh)
- XX. *Regard de l'Eglise d'amour* (Contemplation of the Church of Love)

Bridget Convey, *piano*

XV. *The kiss of the Child Jesus*

At every communion, the Child Jesus sleeps beside us near the door; He then opens it upon a garden and throws Himself in the light to embrace us.

Theme of God in the style of a lullaby. Sleep — the garden — arms extended toward love — the kiss — the shadow of the kiss. An etching furnished my inspiration for this movement: it showed the Child Jesus leaving the arms of His mother to kiss little sister Therese. All this is symbolic of communion, of divine love. One must love in order to love that picture and this music, which aims to be as soft as the heart of heaven; there is nothing else.

XVI. *Contemplation of the Prophets, the Shepherds, and the Magi*

Exotic music — tom-toms and hautboys [antique oboes], huge and reedy consort..

XVII. *Contemplation of silence*

Silence in the palm of the hand, inverted rainbow... Every silence in the manger reveals music and color that are the mysteries of Jesus Christ. Polymodality [use of medieval church harmonies], rhythmic canon through the addition of a dotted note, special chords, "Theme of Accords." The entire piece is intricately chiseled, for a piano work. Ending: alternating chords, multicolored and impalpable music, gemstones, and colliding reflections.

XVIII. *Contemplation of the Awesome Anointing*

The Word assumes its human nature; awesome Majesty adopts Jesus's flesh. An ancient tapestry depicts the Word of God as combat, with Christ astride a charger. One sees only His two hands clasping the hilt of a sword, which He brandishes through a cloud of lightning bolts. That image influenced me. In the introduction and the coda, gradually slowing notes are superimposed on gradually accelerating notes, and vice versa.

XIX. *I sleep, but my heart waketh*

Love poem, dialogue of mystical love. Rests play an important part. It is not the angel's bow that smiles down on us — it is sleeping Jesus, who loves us on His Sunday and grants us oblivion.

XX. *Contemplation of the Church of Love*

Grace makes us love God as He loves Himself after the rays of night and the spirals of distress, here are the bells, the glory, and the loving kiss... The full passion of our arms embracing the Invisible.

Form (the development precedes the exposition):

Development: First theme in a non-retrograde rhythm, amplified to the right and left; that theme is interrupted by inverted fireworks. Then, three

X. *Contemplation of the Spirit of Joy*

Vehement dance, drunken horn-like tonalities, transport of the Holy Spirit. The joy of God's love in the soul of Jesus Christ. I have always been struck by the fact that God is happy — and that His continual and ineffable joy inhabited the soul of Christ. Joy is, for me, a transport, an intoxication in the maddest sense.

Form: Oriental dance in the extreme-low range, in unequal neumes, like plainchant [notation in medieval Roman Catholic liturgy]. First development on the *Theme of Joy*. Asymmetrical swelling. Three hunting-tune-like variations. Second development on the *Theme of Joy* and *Theme of God*. Then, reprise of the Oriental dance, with the extreme-low and extreme-high ranges together. Coda [ending] on the *Theme of Joy*.

XI. *First communion of the Blessed Virgin*

A tableau in which the Blessed Virgin is shown kneeling, bent forward in the night — a luminous halo surrounds her form. Her eyes shut, she worships the fruit hidden within herself. This scene takes place between the Annunciation and the Nativity; it is the first and greatest of communions.

Theme of God, soft volutes, stalactites, and interior embrace. Recall of the theme of the “Virgin and Child” in my “Nativity”. Ever more enthusiastic Magnificat. Special chords with pulsations in the low register, representing the heart of the beating Child within his mothers’ breast. The Theme of God vanishes. After the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary worships Jesus within herself... my God, my Son, my Magnificat! — my love without voice.

XII. *The all-powerful Word*

Monody with pulsations in the low register.

This child is the Word, which sustains all things through the power of its voice.

XIII. *Christmas*

Carillon — the bells of Christmas sing with us the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

XIV. *Contemplation of the Angels*

Shimmering, percussion; powerful breaths sounding immense trombones; thy servants are flames of fire...and then, the songs of birds drinking azure — and the angels are amazed: for God has joined, not with them, but with the human race.

In the first three stanzas; flames, rhythmic canon, and breaking up of the chordal theme. Fourth stanza: bird songs. Fifth stanza: the angels are amazed.

The images projected during the performance were chosen for each specific movement, by the pianists themselves. The artists and titles are listed below:

- I. Artist Unknown: *Virgin and Child with Balaam the Prophet*
- II. Artist Unknown: *The Making of the Heavenly Light*
- III. Michelangelo: *The Creation of Adam*
- IV. Theophanes the Greek: *The Don Virgin*
- V. Marc Chagall: *Creation*
- VI. Marc Chagall: *The First Four Days*
- VII. Pablo Picasso: *The Crucifixion*
- VIII. Alphonse Mucha: *Holy Mount Athos*
- IX. Wilhelm List: *Vision of Eternity*
- X. Wassily Kandinsky: *All Saints I*
- XI. Geroges Seurat: *Seated Woman*
- XII. Salvador Dali: *The Trinity*
- XIII. Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *A Christmas Carol*
- XIV. Giotto Di Bondone: *Scenes from the Life of Christ. Lamentation*
- XV. Gustav Klimt: *Hope II*
- XVI. Pablo Picasso: *Bacchanalia de Turew*
- XVII. Odilon Redon: *Silence 3*
- XVIII. Odilon Redon: *Evocation aka Head of Christ*
- XIX. Gustav Klimt: *Baby 1917-1918*
- XX. William Blake: *Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*

Sincere thanks to: Will Hertz; Delmar Small and Bowdoin College; Emery Community Arts Center and the Arts Institute of Western Maine; Beth Wiemann and the University of Maine; Dan Sonenberg; Annie and Chiharu for agreeing to tackle this wonderful project with me.

Program Notes by Will Hertz

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) *Vingt Regards Sur L'Enfant-Jésus*

Olivier Messiaen, one of France's most influential composers and teachers in the 20th century, was a unique combination of mystic and musical revolutionary.

On the mystic side, he himself cited three underlying elements in his music. The first was his Roman Catholic faith; "all of my music," he said, "is at the service of the dogmas of Catholic theology." The second was the theme of human love. The third was love of nature, as exemplified by his meticulous analysis and frequent quotation of bird songs.

As a musical revolutionary, he introduced a range of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic innovations:

- scales alternating whole and half-steps in different patterns;
- asymmetrical rhythms created by adding time values to individual notes;
- melodic-rhythmic cells that expand or contract irregularly, unfolding in free and continuous variation;
- replacement of conventional chords by sound complexes designed for maximum color and intensity; and
- the combination of higher harmonics with fundamental tones to create what he termed "rainbow" or "stained glass window" effects.

Messiaen summed up his philosophy as follows:

My faith is the grand drama of my life. I am a believer, so I sing words of God to those who have no faith. I give bird songs to those who dwell in cities and have never heard them, make rhythms for those who know only military marches or jazz, and paint colors for those who see no more.

Messiaen was born in Avignon in 1908, the son of poet Cecile Sauvage and Pierre Messiaen, a teacher of English who translated Shakespeare's plays into French. While Cecile was pregnant, she published a sequence of poems in which she anticipated his career as a musician "who sings in my being - with his blue birds and his golden butterflies." Messiaen later traced to his mother's intuitive insight his mysticism and love of bird songs.

IV. *Contemplation of the Blessed Virgin*

Innocence and tenderness. The woman of Purity, the woman of the Magnificat [hymn of the Virgin Mary], the Blessed Virgin, contemplates her Child. I have tried to express purity in music: this requires a certain degree of strength — coupled with much naïveté and childlike gentleness.

V. *Contemplation of the Son upon the Son*

Mystery, rays of light through the night — refraction of joy, the birds of silence — the person of the Word in a human nature — marriage of the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ. This represents, of course, the Son-Word contemplating the Son-Child-Jesus. Three sonorities, three modes, three rhythms, three superimposed tunes, "Theme of God" and rhythmic canon through the addition of a dotted note. Joy is represented by bird songs.

VI. *Through Him Everything Was Made*

Multiplicity of spaces and times; galaxies, photons, reverse spirals, inverted thunderbolts; through "Him" (the Word) everything was made. In an instant, creation reveals the luminous shadow of its Word.

This is a fugue in which the subject is never repeated: as early as the second entrance, it changes rhythm and register. Notice the divertimento during which the upper voice expresses the subject as a non-retrograde rhythm, and where the *fortissimo* bass repeats a fragment of that subject in asymmetrical swellings. The middle incorporates very short and very long values (representing the infinitely small and infinitely large). Then, retrograde reprise of the fugue, like a crayfish. Mysterious *stretto* [a passage in which the subject's notes are "squeezed together"]. *Fortissimo Theme of God*: victorious presence, the face of God behind the flames and turmoil. Creation reprises and sings the *Theme of God* as a chordal canon.

VII. *Contemplation of the Cross*

Theme of the star and the Cross.
The Cross said to him: you shall be priest in my arms...

VIII. *Contemplation of the Heights*

Glory in the heights. The heights descend upon the manger like the song of a lark. Birdsong: nightingales, thrushes, warblers, chaffinches, goldfinches, warblers, serins, and mostly larks.

IX. *Contemplation of Time*

Mystery of the plenitude of time. Time sees within itself the birth of He who is eternal. This theme is short, cold, strange, like de Chirico's [early 20th century Italian painter] egglike heads; rhythmic canon.

and from reverent meditation to love songs to wild folk dancing. The movements become increasingly intense, and the cumulative impact is overpowering.

Music critic Justin Davidson sums it up:

Olivier Messiaen's was a muscular, physical faith, expressed in revelatory bursts and deafening epiphanies. He sermonized through sonic spectacle: Doomsday drums, masses of trembling strings and explosions of ecstatic chimes. But he did not really need a symphony orchestra to achieve this dazzling, stained-glass luminescence. His colossal opus is threaded through with brilliantly hued harmonies and a visceral, mystical urgency. Using nothing but a poor, percussive piano, he evokes heavenly fanfares and seraphs' thundering harps, as well as the fragile trace of a prayer floated in the wind. *Vingt regards* is the musical equivalent of a one-man reenactment of the Bible.

© 2012 by Willard J. Hertz

Vingt Regards sur L'enfant Jésus Composer's Note

In the published score for *Vingt Regards sur L'enfant Jésus*, Messiaen provided a running commentary for the twenty movements. Here is that commentary, including the composer's cryptic and mystical references, in a translation by Dennis Vannier.

I. *Contemplation of the Father*

Complete statement of the theme of God.

And God said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

II. *Contemplation of the Star*

Theme of the Star and the Cross. Jolt of grace...The star shines naïvely, surmounted by a cross.

III. *The Exchange*

Descent in a trail of light, ascent in a spiral; awesome human—divine communion; God becomes man so that we may become gods. God is the motif of alternating thirds: that which does not change, that which is small. Man is the remaining fragments, which grow and grow and become huge, following a process of development I call "asymmetrical swelling."

After a precocious childhood, Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatoire at age eleven where he earned five first prizes: counterpoint and fugue, piano accompaniment, organ and improvisation, music history, and composition. In 1931 he was named organist at Paris's monumental Église de la Sainte-Trinité, a post he held until his death. In the 1930s he also began his career as a teacher at the Schola Cantorum de Paris where the focus was on instrumental music as opposed to the opera at the Conservatoire.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Messiaen, at the age of 31, enlisted in the French army. The following May, he was taken prisoner by the Germans at the battle of Verdun and held for a year at a prisoner-of-war camp in Silesia, in occupied Poland. To relieve "the cruelty and horrors of the camp," he wrote the *Quartet for the End of Time* for performance by himself as pianist and three other prisoners – a violinist, a cellist and a clarinetist. The first performance took place in January, 1941, before an enthralled audience of 5,000 fellow prisoners, and the quartet is now considered a masterpiece of the 20th century chamber-music repertory.

After his release in May, 1941, Messiaen returned to Paris where he was appointed a professor of harmony at the Paris Conservatoire and later professor of composition. Several of his students became leading composers – notably, Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Kurtág and Iannis Xenakis. Another student was a young pianist, Yvonne Loriod, who became a prominent concert artist and interpreter of Messiaen's music, and, 18 years later, his second wife.

For Loriod, Messiaen composed a series of pieces featuring the piano, including in 1944, the enormous solo piano cycle *Vingt Regards sur L'Enfant-Jésus* (*Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus*). This work grew out of a chance meeting with the writer Maurice Toesca (1904-1988) at a private performance of the *Quartet for the End of Time*. Toesca asked Messiaen for twelve short piano pieces to accompany a radio presentation of Toesca's poems on the Nativity. Within four months this modest commission had grown into a two-hour piano epic for Loriod's concert performance.

With twenty movements of challenging difficulty, *Vingt Regards* is one of the most ambitious and exhausting piano works ever composed. Generally, the work is represented on concert programs by a selection of movements. We hear the entire work, with the heavy burden of performance shared by three pianists.

This piece has also generated a large body of analysis by various writers, including Richard Freed, Peter Hill, Brian Mix, Jeffrey Payne and Messiaen himself, which I have drawn on for these notes.

Significantly, there is a disagreement among these experts on the appropriate English translation of the French word *regards* in the title. The French-English

dictionary definition is "look" or "glance," and early analysts of the work used "gaze" and "watch." However, these terms lack the elements of reverence and mysticism so fundamental in Messiaen's thinking. Another writer has used the term "worship," but this implies a formal religious service. More recently writers have settled on "contemplation," and that is the word used here. One thing is clear – the French word does not embrace the common English use of "regards" to mean a greeting or "best wishes" as in the close of a letter or phone call.

Vingt Regards consists of twenty intense miniatures depicting musically twenty different contemplations of the infant Jesus. These contemplations reflect varied points of view, including God the Father, the Virgin, the angels, the prophets, the shepherds and the Magi, and such symbolic entities as the Cross and Time. The result is a highly complex structure embodying, along with Messiaen's customary mysticism, moments of tenderness and sensuality, bird songs, the pyrotechnics of Franz Liszt, and an abundance of dissonance.

In the work's publication in 1944, the composer included this note of what he had in mind:

Contemplation of the Infant-God in the cradle and the various ways in which He is considered, from the inexpressible contemplation of God the Father to the multiple contemplation of the Church of Love, also embracing the prodigious contemplation of the Spirit of Joy, the so tender contemplation by the Virgin, and then that of the Angels, the Magi and unmaterialized or symbolic concepts (Time, the Heavens, Silence, the Star, the Cross).

Messiaen then cited three main themes:

- *Theme of God*, stated fully at the start of movement No. 1, "Contemplation of the Father", and consisting of five chords *ppp* in the piano's lower register. It is then repeated episodically in several subsequent movements.
- *Theme of the Star and the Cross*, presented in movement No. 2, "Contemplation of the Star", after five introductory measures, chant-like, in unison but in the piano's higher and lower registers. It is also repeated episodically in subsequent movements.
- *Theme of Agreement*, a series of four chords, each with four notes, which circulate from movement to movement in various forms, harmonies, rhythms and moods. It is first heard in movement No. 6, but is barely noticeable in the torrent of notes which characterize the movement.

Analysts have also identified in individual movements these supplemental themes: *Theme of Mystical Love*, *Theme of Oriental Dance and Plainsong* and *Theme of Joy*.

These themes function as abstract ideas rather than as the repeated refrains in a rondo. For example, the *Theme of God*, stated as an underlying chord progression in movement No. 1, returns in No. 5 as a *cantus firmus* under bird song, in No. 6 as a "victorious" face behind the flames, in No. 10 as a vehement dance, in No. 15 as a lullaby, and in No. 20 as a triumphant depiction of love and joy. [A *cantus firmus* is a foundation tune above and below which other voices are woven.]

The *Theme of the Cross*, initially stated in No. 2 in measured unison widely spaced on the keyboard, returns in No. 7 with note values stretched and forming a *cantus firmus* to upper layers of circling harmonies.

In the published score, Messiaen also points out the numerological significance of the order of the movements:

The 'Regard de la Croix' bears the number 7 (a perfect number) because the sufferings of Christ on the Cross restored the order that was disturbed by sin, and the angels are confirmed in grace in No. 14 (two times 7). The 'Regard du temps' bears the number 9 [representing] the nine months of maternity common to all children, and the 'Regard de Ponction Terrible' has the number 18 (two times 9) — here, divinity is poured out over the humanity of Christ in the one person who is the Son of God. The two pieces which speak of creation and the divine government of creation are No. 6 (because 6 is the number of [days, of] creation) and No. 12 (two times 6).

Other writers have also pointed out Messiaen's preoccupation with the number "3", reflecting the Trinity and the Holy Family. They cite, for example, his heavy use of thirds in No. 3; occasional use of triple sonorities, three simultaneous rhythms and three superimposed tunes; and his use in half of the *regards* of three musical staves.

Another focus of attention is Messiaen's remarkable gift for musical representations – his imitations, for example, of heartbeats in No. 1 and later of such instruments as oboes, carillons, church bells, and percussion (tom toms, bass drums and Asian gongs). In *Regard No. 8: Contemplation of the Heights*, we hear the calls of seven different species of birds – skylark, nightingale, blackbird, chaffinch, goldfinch, serin and warbler -- reflecting his life-long interest in musical ornithology.

It is possible, of course, to disregard these abstruse elements and listen to this music simply as twenty adventures into a new sound world. The variety of sounds and moods that Messiaen draws from the piano is astounding – from delicate lacework to thunderous chords, from passages of hymn-like simplicity to those of challenging harmonic complexity, from static rhythms to propulsive polyrhythms,

Anastasia Antonacos has given notable performances around the world as a solo recitalist and chamber musician. She has played at venues such as the Salle Cortot, Casa Orfeo, Holland's Alkmaar Conservatory, and Alice Tully Hall. She has also played in Greece, Russia, France, and Belgium, as well as various places in the U.S., including Washington D.C., where she testified for funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Dr. Antonacos has made solo appearances with the Midcoast Symphony Orchestra, the Portland Symphony Orchestra, and the Bangor Symphony Orchestra. She has collaborated with violinist Joseph Silverstein, and with members of the Vermeer, Cassatt and DaPonte Quartets. She has been a chamber music coach at Bay Chamber Concerts' Next Generation program for many years, and she regularly serves as a masterclass teacher and adjudicator. She holds a doctorate in piano performance from Indiana University in Bloomington, and she is a member of the full-time piano faculty at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Bridget Convey is a soloist and ensemble musician, pianist who has been heard throughout the United States performing music of diverse periods and styles. She has performed at venues such as Lincoln Center (NYC) and Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (Los Angeles, CA) (with the Los Angeles Philharmonic); Ojai Music Festival, CA; Fechin Institute Chamber Concert Series, Taos, NM; Maybeck Performing Arts Studio, Berkeley, CA; Bowdoin College, ME; UMaine, University of Maine at Augusta; University of Southern Maine; Southern Utah University; among many others.

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Since Bridget relocated to Maine she has performed throughout Central and Southern Maine. She works regularly with the Maine Music Society's Androscoggin Chorale and pianist Chiharu Naruse. Bridget is on the faculty of University of Maine at Farmington and Bates College.

Bridget received her Diploma from Mannes College of Music, NYC (Pre-college Division) 1989; BFA from State University of New York at Purchase 1993; and MFA from the California Institute of the Arts 1997. She currently resides in Hallowell with her husband and two dogs. Bridget can be heard on Navona, Cuneiform, Independent and Nataraja labels.

Chiharu Naruse, pianist, holds a Master Degree in Music Performance and a Masters Degree in Music Instruction from the Hochschule Fur Music Hanns Eisler in Berlin. In Berlin, Chiharu studied piano under Klaus Baessler and Lied Accompaniment under Wolfram Rieger. Chiharu has performed throughout the world in recitals and piano competitions including the Hyogo Piano Competition in Japan(silver prize), the Clara Haskil piano competition in Switzerland,the Pescara Academie piano competition in Italy and International Mozart Wettbewerb in Salzburg, Austria.

In the spring of 2002,Chiharu moved to the United States to study under Frank Glazer. Since her arrival, Chiharu has given several recitals at Bates college and University of Maine at Farmington and at Augusta. She has also played concerts with the Portland String Quartet, with the DaPonte String Quartet, and with Frank Glazer. She has performed Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, Mozart's Piano Concerto K466, and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto with the Augusta Symphony. Also, she has performed as a featured artist at the Ocean Park Music Festival and at the Franco-American Heritage Center.

In addition to maintaining a regular performance schedule, Chiharu is also a well-respected music teacher, chamber music coach, music competition adjudicator and accompanist, with many of her students receiving competition prizes. Chiharu currently is a member of the applied music faculties at Bates college and the Portland Conservatory of Music.

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