

1 Messiaen in 1942: a working musician in occupied Paris

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Introduction

While 1942 was not a particularly productive year for Messiaen in terms of new compositions or important premieres, it shows him established as a working musician and as a teacher at the Conservatoire (to which he had been appointed in 1941), participating in numerous concerts, and overseeing the first publication of two of his major works: the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* and *Les Corps glorieux*. It also provides glimpses of Messiaen working as a composer of incidental music for the theatre (a little-known aspect of his career), of his dealings with the bureaucracy of the occupying powers and of his struggle to find a publisher for the treatise that was to become his *Technique de mon langage musical*. There are three main sections to this study:

- A documentation of Messiaen performances in Paris during his captivity (from July 1940 to April 1941) and an outline of Messiaen's first few months (from May to December 1941) after his return from captivity and his brief spell in Vichy,¹
- A detailed examination of Messiaen's musical activity in 1942 as a performer, and critical evaluations of his work, publications, commissions, and the campaign to secure publication of his 'Traité'.² His public concert-giving activities are documented in the weekly journal *L'Information musicale* published in Paris during the Occupation – a source not only of listings but also of reviews.³ Additional evidence can be found in Messiaen's diary (see below), in printed programmes, in studies of cultural

¹ This intriguing episode is described in detail in Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, *Messiaen* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 104–11.

² 'Traité' was Messiaen's working title for his *Technique de mon langage musical*, and is not to be confused with his later seven-volume *Traité de rythme, de couleur et d'ornithologie*.

³ The first issue of *L'Information musicale* was published on 22 November 1940, and the last (no. 158) on 19 May 1944. For a detailed study of this periodical, see Myriam Chimènes, 'L'Information musicale: une "parenthèse" de La Revue musicale?', *La Revue des revues*, no. 24 (1997), 91–110.

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life in Vichy France and occupied Paris,⁴ in general historical works on the period⁵ and from personal communications.⁶

- An annotated transcription of significant entries from Messiaen's pocket diary for 1942.⁷ This remarkable document (minutely written in pencil) tells us a good deal about preparations for concerts and publications, future plans, meetings with musicians and others, and, occasionally, something of the obstacle course erected by the occupying powers.⁸

1941: Silesia and the return to Vichy France: Pierre Messiaen tells the story of Stalag VIII-A

Wednesday 15 January 1941 was a landmark in Messiaen's career: the first performance of the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* in Hut 27B at Stalag VIII-A in Görlitz (Silesia, Poland). The circumstances of this performance have been the cause of much recent scholarly endeavour.⁹ Messiaen's capture and his time as a prisoner of war were recalled by his father, Pierre Messiaen, just three years after the events had taken place. Pierre's book *Images* was published in June 1944, while Paris was still occupied, and provides what appears to be the earliest detailed account of his son's captivity.

In May 1941, Olivier arrived from Silesia where he had been in captivity. We never grew tired of hearing his stories. He had left Verdun after which he had emptied his powder magazines and burned some petrol depots. He left with some others and

⁴These include Myriam Chimènes, 'Alfred Cortot et la politique musicale du gouvernement de Vichy', in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 2001), pp. 35–52; Manuela Schwartz, 'La Politique musicale dans les territoires conquis par l'Allemagne nazie', in Pascal Huynh (ed.), *La Troisième Reich et la musique* (Paris: Musée de la Musique/Fayard, 2004), pp. 131–40; Jean-Pierre Roux (ed.), *La Vie culturelle sous Vichy* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1990); and Hervé Le Boterf, *La Vie parisienne sous l'occupation* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1997).

⁵In particular, Jean-Paul Cointet, *Paris 40–44* (Paris: Perrin, 2001); Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford University Press, 2001); and Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France 1940–1944* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

⁶Notably a letter from Pierre Boulez and personal recollections of Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen.

⁷Messiaen's pocket diaries from 1939 to his death are in the private archives of Mme Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen.

⁸For further information about Messiaen's activity in the years 1939–45, see Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, pp. 91–141. For specific information on the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, see also Rebecca Rischin's *For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) and, for *Visions de l'Amen*, Nigel Simeone's 'Messiaen and the Concerts de la Pléiade: "a kind of clandestine resistance against the Occupation"', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 81, no. 4 (November 2000), 551–84.

⁹See 'Er musizierte mit Olivier Messiaen als Kriegsgefangener: der französische Cellist Etienne Pasquier im Gespräch mit Hannelore Lauerwald', *Das Orchester* Vol. 47, no. 1 (January 1999), 21–3; also cited in Rischin, *For the End of Time*, esp. pp. 61–70; and Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, pp. 94–103.

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headed for Epinal, with two small boxes of manuscripts and music on the back of his bicycle. They were caught by the Germans, who had a special method of surrounding their enemies with motorcycles and moving them along with rhythmical shouts. Then, ten days in a garage at Nancy; overpowering heat and smells, with no water or any latrines; they fed themselves on tinned food. Then ten more days in a camp at Brabois-Villers. They were herded into padlocked cattle wagons from which they could not escape; four days by rail from Nancy to Görlitz, among the urine and excrement, with nothing to drink and nothing to eat. He caught dysentery and stayed for a month in the hospital run by Polish nuns; each room had a portrait of Hitler between the crucifix and a picture of the Holy Virgin.

Silesia is a sinister place; with a long winter – with no respite from the icy cold, no respite from the east wind, but with a grey sky which was illuminated by sublime colours at dawn and at dusk . . . The morning assembly in the courtyard was terrible and on several of these occasions Olivier fainted. There was food to eat, but it was awful: Olivier still loathes barley soup and cod. How did he manage to write his quartet on the Apocalypse [*Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*] there? He met some old fellow-students from the Conservatoire, he volunteered for all the early morning fatigues so that he might be free during the daytime, and the German sergeant in charge of the mail took an interest since he knew that Olivier was an organist and composer. The first performance took place on Christmas night,¹⁰ in front of fellow-prisoners who were astounded by such complex and original music. There were three types of prisoners at the Block House in Görlitz: the Poles who were despised and treated dreadfully, the Flemish Belgians who were given a semblance of consideration, and the Walloon Belgians and the French who were subjected to a mixture of respect and harshness.¹¹

Marcel Dupré's role in securing Messiaen's release was a crucial one. He later recalled how he visited Fritz Piersig (at the Propaganda-Staffel in Paris) in early 1941 to plead the case for Messiaen, and was assured that 'in ten days' time, at the latest, he will be in an office'.¹² Dupré's intervention was clearly effective. An emotional letter from Messiaen to Claude Arrieu announcing his newly found freedom allows us to date his return from Silesia (via Nuremberg and Lyon) to Neussargues in the Cantal. He wrote to her on 10 March 1941:

I am free! with my wife and little Pascal! in Neussargues! (Cantal). Do I need to tell you what joy this gives me? I am gradually getting used to family life again, in fact to life pure and simple . . . I brought back from over there a *Quartet for the End of Time* in eight movements, for violin, clarinet, cello and piano: I am very proud of it as it was written under such difficult circumstances!¹³

¹⁰'Christmas night' seems – fortunately – never to have been taken up by any other later writers despite being another attractive potential myth to add to the much-mythologised story of this premiere.

¹¹Pierre Messiaen, *Images* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1944), pp. 339–40.

¹²Marcel Dupré, 'Souvenirs', unpublished typescript, dated 'Noël 1956', pp. 126–7; English translation in Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, p. 110.

¹³The complete text of this letter is published in Nigel Simeone, 'Offrandes oubliées: Messiaen in the 1930s', *Musical Times* (Winter 2000), 33–41.

Messiaen performances in Paris November 1940 to April 1941

While Messiaen was in Görlitz, his music had continued to be performed in Paris. On 8 November 1940, the Orchestre Symphonique Français, conducted by Hubert d'Auriol, performed the fourth movement of *L'Ascension* (*Prière du Christ montant vers son Père*) in a 'Concert spirituel' which also included the *Prières* by André Caplet and the *Cantique du Soleil* by Jacques Chailley, an occasion briefly reviewed by Suzanne Demarquez in *L'Information musicale* (29 November 1940, p. 49). In the issue of 20 December 1940 (p. 137) there is an announcement for another 'Concert spirituel' given by the same orchestra and conductor, which took place on Sunday 22 December 1940, at the Eglise des Dominicains, 222 Faubourg Saint-Honoré. The soloists include the soprano Claire Croiza (replaced before the concert by Ginette Guillamat) and Ginette Martenot (who was Hubert d'Auriol's wife) on the Ondes Martenot. The programme included Messiaen's 'Oraison: Ondes et orchestre'. Presumably this was an arrangement of the 'Oraison' from *Fête des Belles Eaux* for six Ondes Martenot. A review of the concert appeared in the 3 January 1941 issue of *L'Information musicale* (p. 104) in which Jean Douel's only comment of the work was that 'in Messiaen's "Oraison", it is important not to confuse pianissimo and imperceptibility'.

On Tuesday 18 February 1941, at 5pm, André Jolivet gave a talk on 'Berlioz et les quatre Jeune France' at the Théâtre des Mathurins – the second 'Concert-Causerie' in a series which included (among others) Honegger on Franck and Stravinsky (25 March), Auric on Ravel and Satie (27 April) and Sauguet – the organiser of the series – on Rameau and Bizet (6 May). The programme for Jolivet's lecture (with a cover designed by Jean Cocteau) includes details of the music performed, starting with three songs from Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été*, and ending with three from Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi* ('Epouvante', 'Le Collier', 'Prière exaucée') sung by Marcelle Bunlet, with Irène Aïtoff at the piano.¹⁴

This appears to be the first concert of music explicitly by members of *La Jeune France* to be given during the Occupation, and several more were to follow.¹⁵ But two months earlier, the Association de Musique Contemporaine (AMC) had included Messiaen's music in its concerts. As an organisation the AMC aspired to fill a gap in the city's musical life under the Occupation:

¹⁴The complete programme is printed in Nigel Simeone, 'Group Identities: La Spirale and La Jeune France', *Musical Times* (Autumn 2002), 33.

¹⁵Simeone, 'Group Identities: La Spirale and La Jeune France'.

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This Association, founded during the war, has resumed its activities with an enlarged scope: it appeals to the most eminent and representative composers of the young Parisian school, without any clique-like attitudes. Within its committee as well as its programmes, the AMC has tried to bring together musicians of every school and every tendency, and those who belong to the principal chamber music societies of Paris, whose activities have been interrupted by the war. These include the [Société] Nationale, Triton, the SMI, the SIMC, the concerts of *Revue Musicale*, Jeune France, Sérénade etc.¹⁶

The AMC's first five concerts of the 1940–41 season included works by Maurice Jaubert, Daniel-Lesur, Jean Rivier, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc (the premiere of the *Sextuor* in its definitive version, on 9 December 1940), Henri Tomasi, Claude Delvincourt, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, Marcel Delannoy, and Messiaen's *Chants de terre et de ciel* performed by Marcelle Bunlet and Simone Tilliard on 23 December 1940.

The committee of the AMC embraced a wide range of stylistic tendencies, and, indeed, political opinions, and despite the focus on chamber music in its programmes, it included conductors (notably Fourestier and Munch) as well as composers. The Honorary President was Florent Schmitt. Robert Bernard (then also editor of *L'Information musicale*) was the Secretary, and the members were Tony Aubin, Georges Auric, Henri Barraud, Louis Beydts, C. (Eugène) Bozza, Pierre Capdevielle, Georges Dandelot, Marcel Delannoy, Claude Delvincourt, Maurice Duruflé, Louis Fourestier, Jean Françaix, Marius-François Gaillard, André Jolivet, Jeanne Leleu, Raymond Loucheur, Jean Marietti, Charles Munch, Francis Poulenc, Jean Rivier, Henri Sauguet and Alexandre Tcherepnine.¹⁷ This list includes two composers (Schmitt and Delannoy) who became members of the 'Groupe Collaboration' and others whose stance was either apolitical or hostile to the occupying powers.¹⁸

Messiaen re-establishes himself in Paris

Messiaen's first harmony class at the Paris Conservatoire was on 7 May 1941 (an analysis of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*). He quickly

¹⁶ From the manifesto printed as part of the advertisement which appeared in *L'Information musicale* (22 November 1940), 30, and in several subsequent issues. The SMI was the Société Musicale Indépendante, and the SIMC was the Société Internationale de Musique Contemporaine.

¹⁷ Programmes and list of committee members from *L'Information musicale* (22 November 1940), 30.

¹⁸ For details of members of this group, see, for example, the notice in the

clandestine resistance journal *Musiciens d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 6 (June 1943), 4: 'Echos . . . La presse communique: La section musicale du groupe "Collaboration", sous la présidence de M. Max d'Ollone auquel s'étaient joints MM. Piersig, Sonnen, Florent Schmitt, Francis Casadesus, Gustave Samazeuilh, Marcel Delannoy, Eugène Bigot, a offert au cercle européen, un déjeuner au célèbre compositeur et chef d'orchestre japonais M. Eki-tal-ahn.'

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established a rapport with one of the brightest students in his class, and a note in his diary for 9 June mentions an appointment ‘chez Mme Sivade, marraine de Lorient pour *Préludes*’. According to Yvonne Lorient, she had been given a copy of the *Préludes* by her teacher Lazare Lévy, and she had quickly learned them all by heart.¹⁹ Lorient was planning to play them in a private recital at Mme Sivade’s home (53 rue Blanche) – which was also to include Jolivet’s *Mana* and music by Bach – and wanted to work on them with the composer. Within a few months, she was regularly playing selections from the *Préludes* at public concerts in which Messiaen himself was often also appearing.

Marcel Herrand, co-director of the Théâtre des Mathurins, invited Messiaen (presumably as soon as he was back in Paris) to give a concert there, and arrangements were put in hand for an important Parisian premiere in the theatre (36 rue des Mathurins, near the Madeleine). The concert was to take place during the late afternoon, when the building was otherwise unused, before the main evening performance.²⁰ On Tuesday 24 June, at 5pm, the first Paris performance of the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* ‘écrit en captivité’ according to the flyer, was given by André Vacellier (clarinet), Jean Pasquier (violin), Etienne Pasquier (cello) and Messiaen (piano), along with songs performed by Bunlet and Messiaen, and the *Thème et variations* played by Jean Pasquier and the composer. Messiaen’s diary for 1941 gives the complete programme for this concert (which is not given on the flyer or the large poster):²¹

4 Mélodies: ‘Le Sourire’, ‘Epouvante’, ‘Le Collier’, ‘Résurrection’
Thème et Variations
Quatuor pour la fin du Temps

Messiaen also noted in his diary that Lorient was the page-turner. The reviews included an enthusiastic response by Serge Moreux in *L’Information musicale*, a largely welcoming one by Honegger in *Comoedia*, and a hostile notice by Marcel Delannoy in *Les Nouveaux Temps*.²²

In the ‘Echos’ column of *L’Information musicale* for 11 July 1941 (p. 757), an unsigned article declared that: ‘Jeune France is not dead. The proof is to be found in the concert on 18 July at 5 pm, at the Hôtel de Sagonne, given by Olivier Messiaen, Daniel Lesur, Yves Baudrier and André Jolivet . . . This overdue event is not only a chance to keep up to date with the activities of “The Four” of La Jeune France, who have some huge projects planned for the new season in October. We will also have another chance to hear the *Quatuor*

¹⁹ Personal communication.

²⁰ Rischin, *For the End of Time*, p. 80.

²¹ Copies of both are in the present author’s collection.

²² For more on this, see Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, pp. 112–13.

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pour la fin des[!] *Temps* by their leader, which was unanimously greeted as a French masterpiece after the recent concert devoted to its composer's music at the Théâtre des Mathurins.' The concert was reviewed by José Bruyr in *L'Information musicale* a week later (25 July, p. 804):

This final concert of the season was the last, but not the least . . .

By Messiaen: a piece from his *Quatuor pour la fin des*[!] *Temps* which, moving as it was in its simplicity, did not achieve the same significance as the whole work from which it was detached; then the broad and well-crafted *Variations* for violin and piano.

By Jolivet: two *Complaintes du Soldat* about which I said so many good things at the first performance (and retract none of them – quite the opposite!), then a Suite for String Trio. Even though this was its first performance, the work is not a very recent one. It seems that the style which increasingly deserves to be called 'Jolivian' is grafted here onto a more conventional base. This is most apparent in the two 'Arias', especially the second which is none the less moving for it. By contrast, the 'Fugue en rondeau', despite its doubly classical form, has vigour, life and freedom: a captivating fountain.

By Daniel-Lesur: a simple Pavane and three *Poèmes* set to music with compelling poetry: how much I would like to hear 'Neige' again! Finally, *Le Musicien dans la Cité* to finish with, which is by Yves Baudrier and which nobody could overlook thanks to the talented dedication brought to it by Nadine Desouches, an intelligent and sensitive interpreter for Jeune France. These four have the advantage of performers of the highest order: it is impossible to imagine the *Complaintes* sung by anyone other than Pierre Bernac, nor the pieces for strings played by anyone other than Jean, Pierre, and Etienne, or by Jean and Etienne alone.

The solidarity of *La Jeune France* was again apparent in a letter written by Jolivet to *L'Information musicale* and published in the issue of 24 October 1941 (p. 207). Jolivet was responding to an article by Armand Machabey published on 3 October (pp. 98–9), in which the author lamented the current state of French music, and the apparent lack of any obvious successor to Honegger. Jolivet's riposte is a stirring tribute to his friend Messiaen:

Mes chers amis,

I read in *L'Information musicale* today the article by M. Machabey entitled 'Arthur Honegger et la Musique Française'. Its oversimplicity is curious. I refer particularly to the final paragraph.

1. Honegger has little chance of rallying the majority.

Nor did Lully, Gluck, or César Franck 'rally' anybody. And of these four, it is Honegger who has tried least hard to 'adapt to French taste', and he is much the better for it.

2. 'We find ourselves in front of a kind of void: the style of the last few years has begun to sound jaded, there are no clear tendencies, no boldness, and not even any magnificent failures.'

M. Machabey limits himself to the names of leading figures, and I suggest just one to him: Olivier Messiaen. He should study, even if he is not able to hear performances, the *Poèmes pour Mi* (in the orchestral version), the *Chants de Terre et de Ciel*, *La Nativité du Seigneur*, 'Le Combat de la Vie et de la Mort', and the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*.

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It is easy to examine them as all these works are published. M. Machabey should be able to notice that the 'style' is not in the least jaded, that the 'tendencies' are clearly affirmed, that 'boldness' is apparent in every bar, and that the 'magnificence' of this music preserves us from a 'long and mediocre monotony'.

I give my permission for these remarks to be published. Through their blunt brevity they should prevent us from forming the false impression that our generation is incapable of inheriting the legacy of Rameau, of Berlioz and of Debussy.

'Combat de la vie et de la mort', in fact 'Combat de la mort et de la vie', is the fourth movement of *Les Corps glorieux*. Messiaen had completed this cycle of 'Sept visions brèves' on 29 August 1939 (a date printed in the first edition), but it was not published until June 1942. The earliest public performance of any part of the work (two movements) did not take place until 28 December 1941, two months after Jolivet's letter was printed.²³ Messiaen had presumably invited Jolivet to hear him play the work at La Trinité, perhaps on the same occasion that he invited his students to hear it (22 July 1941, according to Messiaen's diary).

By December 1941, conditions in Paris had become exceptionally difficult, with the imposition of curfews, and days when the Métro stopped running at 5.30pm. These developments were recorded in Jean Guéhenno's diary for 8 December, and he continued: 'It is 6.30 p.m. and I am watching evening fall. There's not a sound, not a breath. And this is Paris!'²⁴

Messiaen in 1942

The miserable start of 1942 was also noted by Guéhenno. On 7 January he remarked on the desecration of the Parisian landscape:

One by one the statues in Paris are disappearing: the ball in the Place des Ternes, which Fargue amusingly described as resembling an atomiser, Chappe and his telegraph, the two pharmacists in the boulevard Saint-Michel. The other day in the Place du Panthéon, I saw Rousseau being dismantled. Poor 'citoyen', you are going to become the soul of a canon.²⁵

January and February 1942 were also exceptionally cold. On 14 February, Guéhenno described the wretched state of the city:

Nothing can adequately describe the monotony, the resigned stupidity of life in Paris. It is very cold. Everyone huddles up at home without a fire. The only food is from the provisions sent to those who are fortunate enough to have parents living in the country.²⁶

²³ Messiaen played 'Joie et clarté des corps glorieux' and 'Combat de la mort et de la vie' at the Palais de Chaillot in a recital on 28 December 1941.

²⁴ Jean Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires* (Paris: Gallimard, Livre de Poche, 1968 edition), p. 255.

²⁵ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires* p. 266.

²⁶ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires* p. 275.

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The bookseller Adrienne Monnier, in her 'Letter to Friends in the free Zone', dated February 1942, wrote:

Hardest of all to put up with, we are all of the same opinion, is the cold. In the bookshop, where I have had a wood stove installed, it is bearable, but my apartment, like those of most people, is glacial; I can neither read nor write. Every night I light my kitchen stove, and it is while installed next to this dear stove that I am writing to you today.²⁷

The harsh weather and chronic lack of heating inevitably had an impact on concerts as well. In November 1943, when he was 18, Pierre Boulez arrived in Paris to study. His memories of the difficult circumstances in which concerts were given are telling, but, despite the extreme cold, audiences continued to come to concerts in large numbers:

The working conditions were not terribly helpful, because most of the halls were not heated during the winter and musicians played with their overcoats and mittens on to try and brave the cold. The tuning of the wind instruments was less than perfect, as you can imagine. Nevertheless, people came in large numbers to all artistic events, concert halls were always full, and theatres too. It was the only way for people to resist the drab conditions of life.²⁸

For Messiaen, the bitterly cold January 1942 included two important performances. The first was a free concert by the Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, on Sunday 11 January. Charles Munch conducted three works by former prisoners of war: Jean Martinon (*Stalag IX*), Maurice Thiriet (*Oedipe Roi*, with narrations read by Jean Cocteau), and Messiaen's *Les Offrandes oubliées*. The concert ended with a Munch speciality: Roussel's Third Symphony. An unsigned 'note liminaire' in the printed programme for the concert explains its rationale:

It is no accident that the names of Jean Martinon, Olivier Messiaen and Maurice Thiriet have been brought together on the same programme. They are united by very strong links . . . as brothers in arms and fellow-prisoners . . . Jean Martinon and Maurice Thiriet met Olivier Messiaen again at Verdun. All three of them had the good fortune to be liberated at about the same time, bringing back from their exile works which were the result of weeks and months of reflection. Two of these works for orchestra (Martinon and Thiriet) are presented for the first time in public at this concert. We should add that Albert Roussel, whose Third Symphony ends the programme, was a friend who gave encouragement and advice to these three young musicians. He would be delighted by this selection, and the presence of his work at this concert becomes doubly significant.

Less than a week later, on 17 January, Messiaen gave a performance of the work which he had written in captivity. The *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*

²⁷ Richard McDougall (ed. and trans.), *The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), p. 404.

²⁸ Pierre Boulez, letter to the present author, 3 February 2000.

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received its second Paris performance in the music room of the magnificent eighteenth-century home of Comte Etienne de Beaumont, at 2 rue Duroc (7th arrondissement) as one of the concerts for the members of his 'Centre d'échanges artistiques et de culture française'. The printed programme (with a pictorial cover by Valentine Hugo) includes a note by Messiaen and a leaflet of Messiaen's commentaries 'read by the composer before each movement'. De Beaumont was clearly taken with Messiaen's music, as in early June 1942 he sent the composer a cheque for 1,000 francs in payment for a commission. Messiaen wrote to thank de Beaumont on 4 June, and noted the details (a maximum of twenty players, to be delivered by January or February) in his diary, but the work was never written.²⁹ De Beaumont, however, continued to support Messiaen. He wanted to put on the first performance of the *Vingt Regards* (a plan that came to nothing), but it was in his home that the first, private, performance of *Harawi* was given, on 26 July 1946 by Marcelle Bunlet and Messiaen. Again, the audience was provided with a handsome programme for this event – with a front cover of *The Three Graces* by Picasso, and the titles of the songs reproduced in a facsimile of Messiaen's handwriting.

The cold spell continued, but artistic life was thriving in adversity. On 14 February 1942, at the 169th concert of Le Triptyque in the Salle Debussy, Messiaen's *Trois Mélodies* were sung by Lia Dassil, accompanied by Messiaen. On 21 February, at the next concert in the Triptyque series, Yvette Grimaud played two of Messiaen's *Préludes*: 'Plainte calme' and 'Les Sons impalpables du rêve'. The concert of music by La Jeune France at Mme de Drouilly's on 15 March was probably the first time Yvonne Loriod (aged 18) played any of Messiaen's music in public: two of the *Préludes* (nos 5 and 8). Messiaen played his *Thème et variations* with Malvesin at the same concert.

A 'Concert de musique contemporaine' put on by Le Triptyque on 19 March included a group of 'Six mélodies' performed by Marcelle Bunlet and the composer: *Le Sourire*, *Prière exaucée*, *Epouvante*, *Le Collier*, *Résurrection* and a relatively rare outing for the *Vocalise-Etude*. The next evening, on 20 March, starting 'à 20 heures très précises' (according to the programme), Messiaen was at the Salle de l'Ancien Conservatoire to play his *Thème et variations* with the violinist Henri de Malvesin.

A note in the 'Echos' column of *L'Information musicale* on 27 March 1942 (p. 882) reported an event which had taken place two days earlier, also involving Bunlet and Messiaen: 'The Mass for solo voice, organ and drum by André Jolivet was given its first performance at the Chapel of the Franciscan Brothers [rue Marie-Rose, Paris 14e] by Marcelle Bunlet on

²⁹This letter is in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City. An English

translation is printed in Hill and Simeone, *Messiaen*, p. 116.