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THE UNIVERSE OF SYMBOLIC IMAGES IN OLIVIER MESSIAEN'S EARLY VOCAL CYCLES¹

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to reveal the secret of the names in “*Poèmes pour Mi*” and “*Trois Mélodies*” as the bearers of the highest meaning of Messiaen’s musical and poetic works. Decoding the symbolism of the text in the studied vocal cycles is a necessary condition for performers. Understanding the symbolic and conceptual content of the musical works allows the author’s idea to be conveyed to the audience as accurately as possible. For this, approaches and methods proven in musicology were used. Among them, there were a historical approach and biographical method,

¹ The study was conducted on Tetyana Zharkikh’s “*Poèmes pour Mi*” as the Embodiment of the Creative Universe of Olivier Messiaen doctoral thesis materials basis.

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which allowed us to determine the place of these vocal compositions in the creative heritage and identify their connection with Messiaen's life circumstances, as well as structural-functional and onomasiological analyses, that revealed the features of musical dramaturgy. A study of individual numbers from "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" proved that in his early works, Messiaen had already declared himself as a composer-poet, in whose works images of Eternity, symbols filled with joy, which became a deep source of understanding had been recorded. The features of his thinking are manifested at all levels of meaning formation: musical, poetic, including onomasiological.

Keywords: Onomasiological analysis, creative universe, vocal cycle, semantic image, composer-poet.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN'İN ERKEN SES DÖNGÜLERİNDEKİ SEMBOLİK İMAJLARIN EVRENİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Olivier Messiaen'in müzikal ve şiirsel eserlerinin en yüksek anlamının taşıyıcıları olarak "*Poèmes pour Mi*" ve "*Trois Mélodies*" deki isimlerin sırrını ortaya çıkarmaktır. İncelenen ses döngülerindeki metnin sembolizmini çözmek, icracılar için gerekli bir koşuldur. Bestelerin içeriğinin derin anlamı hakkında net fikirler, yazarın yaratıcı hakkındaki fikrinin mümkün olduğunca doğru bir şekilde izleyiciye iletilmesini sağlayacaktır. Bunun için müzikolojide kanıtlanmış yaklaşımlar ve yöntemler kullanıldı. Bunlar arasında, Fransız bestecinin yaratıcı mirasında vokal kompozisyonların yerini belirlememizi sağlayan tarihsel bir yaklaşım ve Üstadın yaşam yolu ayrıntılarının incelenmesine dayanan biyografik yöntem vardı. Yerel teorik okulda geliştirilen müzik eserlerini analiz etmenin yapısal-işlevsel yöntemi, kompozisyon ve müzik dramaturjisini inceleme fırsatı sağladı. Onomasiolojik analiz, incelenen vokal döngülerinin Fransız yaratıcının manevi ideallerinin özü olarak değerlendirilmesine katkıda bulundu. "Üç melodi" ve "Mi için Şiirler"deki bireysel sayıların incelenmesi, Olivier Messiaen'in daha erken eserlerinde kendisini bir besteci-şair olarak ilan ettiğini, eserlerinde Sonsuzluğun imgelerinin, neşeyle dolu sembollerin, tükenmez bir bilgi kaynağı olan kaydedildiğini kanıtladı. Olivier Messiaen'in dehası orada anlam oluşumunun her düzeyinde belirdi: müzikal, şiirsel, onomasiolojik dahil. Olivier Messiaen, annesi Cécile Sauvage ve sevgilisi Claire Delbos'un (Mi)

isimlerinin bir dizi karşılıklı dönüşüm ve anlam içerdiği bulundu. İsimlerinin ses yapısı, besteci-şairin incelenen vokal ve şiirsel eserlerin sembolizmini yarattığı malzemeydi. Döngü analizi, eserin içeriğine iki katmanın ifşasına katkıda bulundu: Sonsuzluk ve insan yaşamı. Yazar, "Şiirler" de, Tanrı tarafından kutsanmış bir evlilik olan dünyevi yaşamdan evlilik yoluyla Sonsuzluğa geçiş fikrini somutlaştırdı. Müziğin evrenin bir parçası olmasına izin veren insan varoluşunun kapsamı, insanın kozmik bir varlık ve kozmosun evrensel bir düzen olarak algılanması, bestecinin bu çalışma kapsamındaki iki vokal döngüsünde tam olarak temsil edilen tarzının özelliklerini tanımlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Onomasiyolojik analiz, yaratıcı evren, vokal döngüsü, semantik imge, besteci-şair.

INTRODUCTION

One of the areas of contemporary musicology is the study of the composer's creative work as a reflection of his personality structure and as an analogue of the author's creative universe.

The concept of "universum", which arose in the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers, being projected onto art, takes on the meaning of the process of the artist's endless approach to the Truth, which has the properties of entity inclusiveness. Despite the presence of common qualities that characterize the creative universe per se, in the heritage of different authors, it often acquires different meanings. Thus, Olivier Messiaen's (Photo 1) creative universe is a new specific quality of contemporary music figurative structure, striving to capture a different measure of spirituality, to sense within itself new levels of relationships with the world.

Turning to such a study approach involves studying a work of art as a kind of its creator's spiritual universe properties reflection. A similar function is also characteristic of Olivier Messiaen's "*Trois Mélodies*" ("Three melodies") and "*Poèmes pour Mi*" ("Poems for Mi") vocal cycles. This work has not previously been interpreted as an analogue of the Avignon artist's creative personality. The chosen perspective of the study allows us to introduce these vocal cycles into the circle of the composer's works, reflecting the structure of his personality.



Photo 1. Olivier Eugène Prosper Charles Messiaen (1908 – 1992).

Although the chamber-vocal heritage of Olivier Messiaen constitutes a rather small part of the composer's work, nevertheless, these vocal cycles fully give an idea of the creative search process inherent to the author. In the composer's practice, musical cycles of different types have been historically formed and developed: vocal and instrumental, chamber and symphonic, suite and concert, and so on. In their musicological understanding, the figure of the composer is central.

There are five vocal cycles in Olivier Messiaen's heritage: "Two ballads of Villon" (1921), "Three melodies" (1930), "Poems for Mi" (1936), "Songs of Earth and Heaven" (1938) and "Harawi. Song of Love and Death" (1945). "Two ballads of Villon" were not published and were a "first attempt at writing" of the young musician. However, the dating of "Two ballads of Villon" indicates that the search for a creative "ego" of Olivier Messiaen began with vocal music.

According to Olivier Messiaen's creative work periodization proposed by Tetyana Zharkikh (2013), the creation of these vocal cycles fell on the early period (1929 – 1948), representing its various stages. "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" were written at the first stage of *development* and attracted special attention because they were the first published music works of this genre. According to Nataliya Savitska's (2008) concept, the early period of the composer's creative work manifested itself as "*personification of spiritual and ethical origins of existence, autonomous psycho-emotional reality that determines the scale of future spiritual and professional perspective*" (p.90). The beginning of Olivier Messiaen's creative path was an indisputable confirmation of this Ukrainian musicologist's maxim, since it was during this period that the French Master's religious figurative sphere formation, the aspiration towards the divine process began, which was the basis of his creative work. The affirmation of faith as the main human spirit

support can be found in Olivier Messiaen's vocal cycles being analysed, which determines the chosen subject relevance.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

The presented study was dedicated to the chamber-vocal heritage of Olivier Messiaen, the world-famous French composer of the 20th century. Individual numbers from two of his vocal cycles, "Three melodies" and "Poems for Mi", written at the beginning of his career, were considered, which would further determine the scale of the composer's entire spiritual and professional perspective. The study involved an analysis of these works' musical and poetic content symbolism to establish the artistic methods characteristic of the French maestro.

The purpose of this paper was to reveal the secret of the names in "*Poèmes pour Mi*" and "*Trois Mélodies*" as the bearers of the highest meaning of Olivier Messiaen's musical and poetic works. Decoding the symbolism of the text in the studied vocal cycles is a necessary condition for performers (both vocalists and instrumentalists). Clear ideas about the compositions' deep meaning will allow the author's idea to be conveyed to the audience as accurately as possible.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that for the first time in musicology Olivier Messiaen's creative personality as a universal maestro specificity and the features of its disclosure in the "Poems for Mi" and "Three melodies" cycles has been revealed, and the musical and poetic symbolism of these works has been decoded.

Limitations

Due to the fact that "The universe of symbolic images in Olivier Messiaen's early vocal cycles" was presented within the limits of the permissible page volume, many of the French composer's aesthetic and musical thinking features remained "in the margins" of the scientific study. However, we hope that acquaintance with the proposed paper will allow all those interested not only to continue studying Messiaen's language uniqueness, but also at least slightly to lift the mysterious veil in Messiaen's creative "laboratory".

METHOD

For the purpose of comprehensive disclosure of the study topic, approaches and methods proven in musicology were used. Among them, there were a historical approach, which allows us to determine the place of vocal compositions in the French composer's creative heritage (his creative

work periodization), and the biographical method, based on the Master's life path details study. A structural-functional method of musical works analysing provided an opportunity to study composition and musical dramaturgy of the musical works. Onomasiological analysis has allowed us to determine the deep meanings of proper names in the musical works, to understand how the name shapes the dramaturgy and the narrative of the work, and to facilitate the performer's task of conveying the author's idea to the audience.

RESULTS

Analysing the aforementioned works of the French Master, the authors of this paper tried to decode the symbolism of not only the poetic and musical texts, but also to reveal the entire symbol-creating context of "*Trois Mélodies*" and "*Poèmes pour Mi*", using onomasiological method proposed by Olena Roshchenko (2006).

For onomasiological analysis of music development, it is important to interpret a work of art as a name, to understand artistic integrity as a title (designation) of the spiritual essence expressed in it: "*The entire space of the work serves as a manifestation of the spiritual essence <...>, naming it can be interpreted as its name*" (Florensky, 1990: 362). From which it follows that the name semantically expresses a piece of music. The unity of the name and the musical work is expressed by the integrity factor inherent in onyma (nomen proprium). A piece of music is a space of artistic images represented by name's force field. The motivation for using onomasiological analysis of music is also due to the leitmotif interpretation as a proper name musical equivalent. The leitmotif, interpreted as a semantic equivalent of a word, takes the form of revealing the name in music. The range of musical phenomena subject to onomasiological analysis of this type is limited by the presence of proper and common nouns in the verbal series. The range of musical phenomena subject to onomasiological analysis of this type is limited by the presence of proper and common names in the verbal series.

The type of onomasiological analysis of music proposed by Olena Roshchenko is intended to identify semantic images contained in the name as a sign-symbol of a personal type, to consider a musical-verbal work as the name disclosure, to determine onyma functioning features as a sensible personality form. The disclosed proper name in Olivier Messiaen's vocal cycles covers "the full circle of personality's energies" (Florensky, 1990: 354), bringing the artistic whole together.

Aesthetics of Messiaen's "miracle"

According to François Langlois (2008: 33), Messiaen's *mélodie* of 30s was the composer's creative "laboratory". In the compositions of that period Olivier Messiaen appeared as a singer, "*because Messiaen united in one melodic line ("the noblest element of music") a triple song: the maternal song (it constituted the intimacy of the human being), the spiritual song (it projected a man, mystically, into the cosmos) and the human song (it revealed personal passions)*". Thanks to the above, the author of the vocal cycle achieved an organic integrity between music and poetry. For Olivier Messiaen, the presentation of himself as a poet could be explained by a purely French understanding of the word value, the suggestive impact of this word on the audience. The entire musical texture indicated this composer's intention. However, for Olivier Messiaen, a poetic language came from a musical language and explained it. He felt the verse symbolism in a poetry at alliterative-assonance techniques level, i. e. the author had an excellent understanding of diction issues, the phonetic features of vowels and consonants, their symbolic manifestations, which was used in the creation of Messiaen's vocal compositions. In this regard, the performer's role (soprano) increased, the interpretation of which would not take place unless a spiritual mystery between the singer and the composer-poet arose, capable of illuminating the author's thoughts, feelings, conveying them to the consciousness of people and not leaving them indifferent.

Each of Olivier Messiaen's vocal cycles had a dedication. Vocal cycles of the 1930s "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" were no exception, these were a tribute to the memory of the composer's beloved mother and his first wife, a violinist, Claire Delbos. Thus, already in Olivier Messiaen's early compositions, his autobiographical creative method and universalism as one of the main artist's features were evident.

The vocal-poetic cycles "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" were rich in symbolism permeating both the musical and verbal series. In this study, the disclosure of this symbolism is possible using the above-mentioned onomasiological method.

The artistic peculiarity of this onomasiological analysis lays in the fact that in "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi", an intersection of the names immediately arose under the "miracle" sign. The "miracle" is based on the internal rhyme technique. Olivier Messiaen reveals the hidden meaning that becomes clear in the process of a magical name formation. Through the alliteration of the names, the composer-poet highlights the character's inner nature fundamental feature. The internal rhyme technique helps to clarify the name's content, the personal essence in the forms of an image

and an idea. It should be noted that the sacred symbolic nature of the main characters' names arose only as a result of their intersection. The key onyms (names) of the French composer Olivier Messiaen, Cécile Sauvage and Claire Delbos contain semantic codes of all vocal cycles. The sound structure of the names of the composer, his mother and wife became the source material from which the symbolism of the studied vocal-poetic texts, created at the early stage of the Master's creative work, arose. These names represented a kind of pulsating, flickering entity, containing a whole series of mutual transformations and meanings.

Cécile comes from the Latin *Caecus* which means "blind". For the Roman Catholics, Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of music, musicians, composers, singers and poets. In real life, Cécile Sauvage was known as a maternity poet ("*poétesse de la maternité*"), whose lyrical poems revealed the depths of a woman's soul.

Claire in French means clear, associated with purity and light. In the name "Mi", French phonemes perform a special symbolic function: on the one hand, this is a shortened version of madam (or missis) Messiaen, that is, a wife, a spouse, on the other hand, at the sound-pitch level, "*mī*" is a note E.

Olivier means olive. The olive tree is mentioned at the beginning of the Holy Bible, in connection with the flood that God sent to the earth in anger because "*the wickedness of man was great in the earth*" (King James Bible, 1611/2025, Genesis 6:5). Noah, sent by God on a stormy voyage, learned about the flood end by sending a dove: "*And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so, Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth*" (King James Bible, 1611/2025, Genesis 8:11). In the Holy Bible, the olive tree is a symbol of God's blessing, and its branch is an emblem of peace and renewal. Primarily, the olive tree symbolizes faithfulness and constancy. Also in Psalms it is said: "*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever*" (King James Bible, 1611/2025, Psalms 52:8). The composer's surname **Messiaen** sounds like a "messiah" (fr. *messie*), which means anointed. According to Paul Florensky, a name magically influences a person's destiny, the name "*is a verbal organism, and in it, its sound has an important meaning*" (Florensky, 1990). And indeed, the name and surname of the great French musician miraculously appeared in his life: he was the most religious composer of the 20th century who preached the "*truths of the Catholic faith*" (Samuel, 1994: 295).

The sound structure of Cécile Sauvage, Claire Delbos (Mi) and Olivier Messiaen's names became the original sound material from which the composer-poet created the symbolism of his vocal-poetic cycles.

When you first hear the title of a "Poems for Mi" vocal cycle, a question arises: what is hidden behind the name Mi? In Messiaen studying literature, you can read that this was a diminutive name for the composer's first wife Claire Delbos. Why did Olivier Messiaen's darling get the name Mi in the cycle dedicated to her? The answer lied in her profession of composer and violinist. It is known that violin strings are tuned in fifths: *sol (G)*, *re (D)*, *la (A)*, *mi (E)*. In this range, *mi* is the highest string, which has a clear and pure timbre, a sound that can be likened to a heavenly, angelic, divine voice. If the *mi (E)* string in a violin tuning can be associated with a spiritual height, with the tendency for the human soul towards the divine, with the embodiment of the feminine principle, then *sol (G)* as the basis, the foundation of the violin's sound tuning, its inherent deep low timbre, is associated with the male voice, the voice of her husband. Confirmation of this can be found further in the analysis of these vocal cycles.

One of the semantic codes of a vocal cycle is hidden in the first word of the title: *poèmes*. The component of *poèmes* common name coincides with the onyma **Messiaen**, which indicates a spiritual connection between the author and the main character Mi, with whose name each poem is associated. Moreover, individual phonemes **e**, **o**, **s** of *poèmes* are part of the **Delbos** sound structure. Thus, the idea of the "Poems for Mi" entire work has already been put in the first word.

At the musical level, the works under study are permeated with a Gregorian symbolism, since these vocal-poetic cycles are written in the style of the Gregorian chant, which is a part of the mass. A mass common name (Italian **missa** from Latin **missa**) has a common phonemic-semantic basis and fits completely into the author's name **Messiaen**. The name **Mi** of the main character fits into a **missa** Latin variant, moreover, her name has a common seme with the composer's name: **Mi** can be separated as a part of **Messiaen**, like his rib, similar to Adam and Eve. Thus, a mass intersects with the names of the married couple. Due to the fact that the Gregorian chant is a part of the mass, in the style of which the entire "Poems for Mi" vocal-poetic cycle is written, this fact is symbolic.

"Miracles" as a consequence of the spirit's absolute power

Each number of the vocal-poetic cycles under study contains the names of the main characters, key

words and their semantic interactions with musical symbols. In this paper, we will consider only individual numbers from French composer's two vocal cycles.

"Three Melodies" ("*Trois Mélodies*" for soprano and piano, 1930) were written three years after the death of Cécile Sauvage, the French composer's mother (1883 – 1927), who, as Olivier Messiaen admitted himself (Samuel, 1994: 296), had a huge influence on his personality formation. In particular, she passed on her poetic gift to her son, thanks to which in all of Olivier Messiaen's vocal works, the author was presented in two guises: a composer and a poet. An exception is the "Three Melodies" vocal cycle, in which, in addition to his own poems, the French composer included one poem by his mother (#2 "*Le sourire*", "The Smile").

"*Trois Mélodies*" vocal cycle consists of three numbers: #1 "*Pourquoi?*" ("Why?"), #2 "*Le sourire*" ("The Smile") and #3 "*La fiancée perdue*" ("The Lost Bride"). Content of #1 is a whole series of questions to which the music work's main character doesn't find answers: *Pourquoi les oiseaux de l'air/Pourquoi les reflets de l'eau/Pourquoi les nuages du ciel/Pourquoi?* and so on. The beauty of nature and the change of seasons no longer fascinate him, but why? #2 extols the special tenderness of a maternal poetry. #3 provides an answer to the question posed in #1. The very title of this number compares Olivier Messiaen's mother to a lost bride, i.e. for her son, she is pure and adored as a bride, but after her death, he realizes the scale of the loss. All the light, all the bright colors are gone, the only thing left is to pray and ask God: *Donnez-lui votre grace puissante / Qu'elle ignore la souffrance, les larmes! / O Jésus, bénissez-la! Elle! / Donnez-lui le repos, Jésus!* #3 precedes the later "Poems for Mi" vocal cycle.

A whole series of semantic codes #3 "*La fiancée perdue*" ("The Lost Bride") from "Three melodies" are hidden in such words as angel, sunny, wing, lily. The components of *l'ange ensoleillé*, *aile*, *Lys* common names and the note "*sol*" (G) coincide with the onyms Cécile Sauvage, however, each number of the "Three melodies" vocal cycle is associated with her name. The beginning of #3, the first part with the note *sol*, which is the nominal note of Cécile Sauvage, indicates that in the emphatic construction that sounds again and again in the poetic text, beginning with the word "*c'est*":

C'est la douce,

This is a tenderness,

C'est l'ange de la bonté,

This is a beauty angel,

C'est un après-midi ensoleillé,

This is a sunny day,

C'est le vent sur les fleurs,

This is the wind on the flowers.

With the list of tropes in the same vocal part's repeated phrase, the composer's mother is implied. In addition, the note "*sol*" completely coincides with the first part of the French word *Soleil*, which means "sun". By choosing this note as his mother's nominal note, the composer in #3 expressed all his love, which was imperishable for him. This is confirmed by the word "*d'or*" (gold) sounding on the highest note "*la*" (*A*²), as Eternity symbol.

Each phrase in #3 is associated with the notes "*sol-mi*" (G-E), "*fa-sol*" (F-G) or "*fa-mi*" (F-E). If the note "*mi*" (E), which is a part of the French composer's name, is combined with the note "*fa*" (F), you get an analogue of "*familial*", the French word for family. Thus, Olivier Messiaen testified to his unity and inseparable blood connection with the vocal cycle's main heroine.

If "Three Melodies" are associated with the composer's mother, then "Poems for Mi" (for soprano, 1932) are associated with his marriage to Claire Delbos. Vocal cycle "Poems for Mi" is the only one in Olivier Messiaen's vocal work arranged for orchestra. In this regard, "Poems for Mi" can no longer be interpreted as an exclusively chamber piece of music. This fact indicates that "Poems for Mi" originally had the characteristics of a concert piece, it had been laid down in the piano part and then manifested itself in the orchestral presentation. Thus, "Poems for Mi" has a dual character: on the one hand, it is a chamber vocal cycle, and on the other, it is a concert sacred work with features of a mass. Going beyond the chamber frames means the uniqueness of "Poems for Mi" compared to other Olivier Messiaen's vocal cycles. This music work reveals the religious and aesthetic views of the author, there the pictures of Eternity and time are captured, the space of Love is outlined, the divine essence of the world is grasped: its beginning (#1 "Thanksgiving", #2 ("Landscape"), destruction (#3 "The house"), horror (#4 "Terror"), chaos (#7 "The two warriors"), creation (#5 "The wife"), harmony (#6 "Your voice", #8 "The necklace") and exultation (#9 "Prayers fulfilled").

Onomasiological analysis #2. **Paysage (Landscape)** of "Poems for Mi" vocal cycle leads to miraculous metamorphoses. The note *mi* (E), phonetically linked to the main heroine's name and which is the beginning of "Landscape," is inextricably linked to the note *la* (A) which appears literally in every measure (in 21 from 24). The semantic culmination of this poem: "*Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu*" combines both *mi* and *la*. These notes are associated with Claire Delbos by Olivier Messiaen, moreover, her name is also encoded in the sound composition of the words *le*

lac (lake), *gros bijou bleu* (big blue jewel). Thus, the composer veiledly dedicated this poem to his wife.

A “miracle” reflection is also confirmed by the fact that if the notes *la* (A) and *mi* (E), which are the musical symbols of Claire Delbos, are pronounced as one word, then an absolute sound analogue of the French word *l’amie* appears, which is translated as girlfriend or sweetheart, that is, the idea of dedication is confirmed at the pitch and semantic levels.

In this number of the vocal cycle, the key words are **a lake, a jewel, a road, a way**. **A lake** is a reflection of the sky, a paradise on Earth. **A jewel** is a gift from God that must be accepted with gratitude; it is love in the context of this poem. **A road, a way** is a human life. Moreover, in the poetic text, a symbolic expression of **the Sun**, the image of Christ, was introduced. This interpretation goes back to Malachi’s prophecy, where it is said: “*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...*” (King James Bible, 1611/2025, Malachi 4:2). The quote “*between the wheat and the sun I see her face*” indicates that this love is illuminated by Heaven.

It is no coincidence that “Landscape” is the second number of the vocal cycle. **2** serves as an indication of **the dual nature of Christ**: human and divine, and **2** symbolizes the union of the beloved.

Olivier Messiaen used colour images in the poetic text of this poem. Blue is the colour of the sky, symbolizing **Heaven** and **heavenly love**, green is the colour of spring and vegetation, and therefore it has become a symbol of the victory of spring over winter or life over death.

The dramaturgy of this poem can be schematically represented in the form of a triangle with vertices **ABC**, where **A** (the summit) is a lake (the ideal), **B** is a traveller (one), **C** is a girl (two), their way of life is a striving for the higher, for the summit, for the ideal. Thus, “*le lac comme un gros bijou bleu*” is the dominant theme of the poem, repeated three times, it is that ideal which ends in marriage, a union blessed by God.

In the poetic text of “Landscape”, the motives of Paul Verlaine’s poetry, which perceived nature as a symbol of love, are very noticeable.

Let’s compare this Olivier Messiaen’s poem (see word for word translation) with a passage from Verlaine’s poem “*Beams*” (“Sunrays”):

Et nous voilà marchant par le chemin amer.

Le soleil luisait haut dans le ciel calme et lisse,

*Et dans ses cheveux blonds c'étaient des rayons d'or,
Si bien que nous suivions son pas plus calme encor.*

Paul Verlaine

(Author's word for word translation)

And here we were walking along the bitter road.
The sun shone high in the calm and smooth sky,
And in her blond hair there were rays of gold,
So we followed in her footsteps even more quietly.

*Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.
La route pleine de chagrins et de fondrière,
Mes pieds qui hésitent dans la poussière,
Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.
Et la voilà, verte et bleue comme le paysage!
Entre le blé et le soleil je vois son visage:
Elle sourit, la main sur les yeux.
Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.*

Olivier Messiaen

The lake like a big blue jewel.
The road full of sorrows and quagmires,
My feet that hesitate in the dust.
The lake like a big blue jewel.
And there it is, green and blue like the landscape!
Between the wheat and the sun I see her face.
She smiles, her hand is over her eyes.
The lake like a big blue jewel.

From the above passage it follows, that Olivier Messiaen borrowed some poetic images from Paul Verlaine, who had remained true to his thesis that it had been necessary to speak unclearly about the unclear. He turned the poem into a kind of poetic puzzle, the purpose of which was to hint at something mysterious, unknown, which could be comprehended not by the mind, but by the soul.

An important point, which Olivier Messiaen took from Paul Verlaine, was the poetic text suggestive features of the sounds. They are directly dependent on the intensity of their use. For example, frequently repeated sounds [l] and [m] can increase the degree of positive or negative impact of the text on the audience.

Olivier Messiaen's poetry is consonant with the main postulate of Paul Verlaine that poetry must be musical, since the poem, being a poet's soul direct outpouring, is addressed not to the mind, but to the feeling of the audience. It must, like music, inspire, not tell. This requirement brings impressionism closer to symbolism.

Following Paul Verlaine, Olivier Messiaen introduced into the poetic text of "Landscape" phrases in impressionist style. They lost the action with the predicate-verb, and they became static and contemplative. The author's versification is based on *vers libre* (free verse). The poetic text consists of short, laconic phrases that, like the brushstrokes of an impressionist artist, appear on the canvas. The author expanded and supplemented the verbal-musical text with colour images that corresponded to the atmosphere and the content of the second number.

Ontological top of #2 "*Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu*" ends three times with the note *si* (B). Thus, Olivier Messiaen emphasized that nature and its "eternal laws", the laws of a higher order, were corrected by the Spirit and harmonized with the divine law. *L'Esprit* (the Spirit) corresponded to the musical symbol – the note *si* (B). This hypothesis was also confirmed in "Thanksgiving" (the first number of the vocal cycle): in the 26th measure, the note *si* (B) coincided with the word *L'Esprit*, in addition, *si* fit completely into *L'Esprit*.

Musical composition #3 "*La fiancée perdue*" from "Three melodies" vocal cycle has a two-part form with contrasting parts without an introduction.

After the slow #2 "*Le sourire*", the third number is perceived as extremely emotional: tempo Vif (Lively), moving forward melody built on an ascending stepwise progression with a leap on P4 at the end of the phrase, impulsive chordal accompaniment.

The first part (Score 1) has two theme developments (23 m.+27 m.), which do not have integrity in their structure: fragmentation into phrases of non-square structure. This is Cécile Sauvage's theme. Both developments begin with the same repeating melody in the vocal part, which can be interpreted as a kind of the composer's mother epigraph, however, if in the first section the vocal part contains quarter durations, then in the second the melody is enlarged, built with half durations and sounds more complete.

In this part, the composer used musical symbols to convey the verbal text. Incremental movement upward in quarter and half durations with an intonation point on a perfect fourth (la^2) at the end of the phrase “*comme une aile très haut dans une coupe d’or*” (translated as “like a high wing in a golden cup”), illustrating Olivier Messiaen’s admiration and love for the woman who had given him life. The second part (Score 2) has 17 measures in its structure, it is contrasting and narrative, which is achieved by changing the tempo to *Modéré* (Moderately). This section is the most important in all of #3, and the choice of a slower tempo is understandable: the author addressed God, this was a supplication prayer.

Vif ***f***

Chant

C'est la dou - ce fi - an -

mf

Piano

cé - e, C'est l'an - ge

de la bon - té,

Score 1. First part #3 “La fiancée perdue”.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is organized into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are in French: "C'est un grand lys blanc comme une ai - le, très haut dans u - ne cou - pe d'or!". The piano part features a variety of textures, including arpeggiated chords, sixteenth-note runs, and block chords. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The score concludes with a final vocal note and a sustained piano chord.

C'est un grand lys

blanc comme une ai - le,

très haut dans u - ne cou - pe

d'or!

Score 2. Second part #3 "La fiancée perdue".

It is important to note that the final #9 in “Poems for Mi” vocal cycle is also a supplication prayer, but there it is a song of praise to God, an ode to Joy, a prayer of Thanksgiving, therefore the author used a cross-shaped intersection at a distance and this is also a mutual reflection: in measures 9, 10, 11 the ray is directed downwards, as a supplication prayer, and in 24 it is directed upwards, like a symbol of ascension (Score 3).

9 *f* Don - nez - moi votre grâ - ce,

24 *f* Voi - ci ton jour de

25 *ff* gloi - re

Score 3. #9 “Poèmes pour Mi”.

In “*La fiancée perdue*”, in the first part, the melody structure has a gradual ascending movement, in the second part, the melody is built on a gradual descending movement (Score 4). In the first and the last measures of the melodic line, the elements of Gregorian chant were used in the structure: strictness, melodic restraint, its subordination to the verbal text, descending motions with long durations (half and a whole note) and filling with ascending motions with shorter durations (quarter and eighth notes).

Modéré *p* Jé - sus,

Modéré *pp* bé - nis - sez - la!

Score 4. Second part #3 “*La fiancée perdue*”.

The culmination of “*Qu'elle ignore la souffrance...*” (“That she ignores the suffering”) is something of an exception, as there are leaps on d4 and P4. In general, all the texture features contribute to the visual associations of a kneeling person in a supplication prayer. The last word “Jesus” (Score 5) sounds on a lasting chord in two octaves of the low register of the piano, which evokes associations with funeral bells. Moreover, in the musical text of the appeal to God, Cécile Sauvage’s nominal note *sol* (G) suddenly disappears, that is, the bell rings for her, her soul leaves for another world.



Score 5. Finale #3 “*La fiancée perdue.*”

The sound melodic organization of “Landscape” poetic text from “Poems for Mi” vocal cycle is precisely embodied in musical intervals and nuances.

This piece of music begins with a bell-like sound, and at the same time, it performs a boundary function, a kind of stop chord that separates the heavenly images from the vale of suffering. In the 3rd measure, a falling “ray” appears, which “connects” Heaven with the Earth. A psalmody appears where the road, the “sorrowful path” begins. Then the stop chord boundary appears again, which seems to carry out a change of a “scenery”, and the ascending wave-like motion in the piano texture is a symbol of Gospel (the good news).

In “*Technique de mon langage musical*” (Messiaen, 1944) Olivier Messiaen gave the emphasis and the subsequent decline achieved by means of additional duration (measure 13) in “Landscape” as a classic example of his rhythmic techniques.

The poetic text indicates the appearance of a clarification image, but the theme of the sorrowful path continues in the music. Love is a pledge of clarification. Thus, the entire musical form of the second part can be represented as follows:

A B A C A

3m. 5m. 3m. 10m. 3m.

This is a double three-part rondo-shaped form. “A” is invariably repeated in three stanzas and completes the work (Score 6), which symbolizes the ideal as completion in marriage, turning into Eternity.

Tres modéré
gracieux

Chant *mf*

Le-lac comme un gros bi - jou bleu.

Piano *mf* *pp*

Score 6. Refrain theme #2.

In general, the poem consists of 5 consecutive sections. The symbolism of the number 5 is associated with the divine manifestation of love. The indivisible number 5 can be considered as a composite (3 + 2), the number of the symbolic unity of a man and a woman, the number of love. In “Landscape”, there is a comparison of two symbols: the earthly paradise and man’s way of the cross. Graphically, it can be represented as follows (see Figure 1).

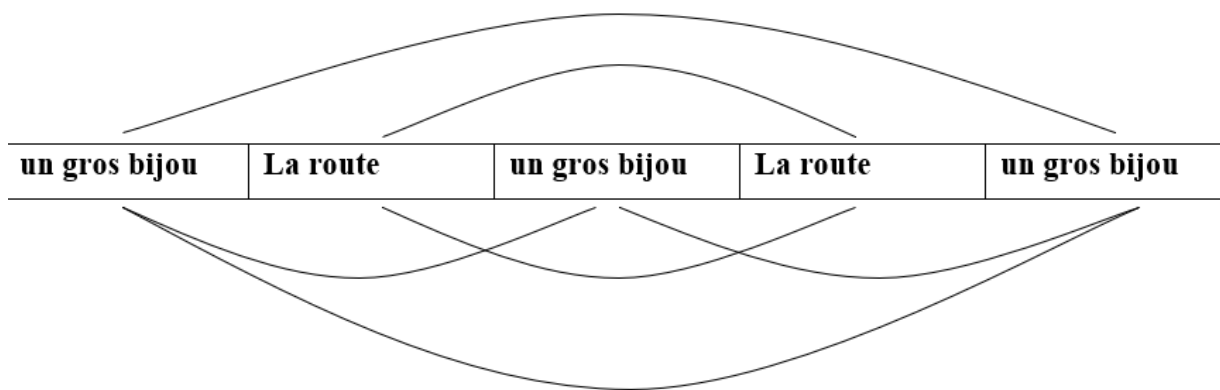


Figure 1. “Landscape” graph.

This is an arched composition, where the jewel performs a framing and center-forming function. Between the stages of a repose, there are heavy pictures of the way. This poem is built on the

interaction of several dramatic layers: along with arched dramaturgy, the levels of which are reflected in the graph, there is a through line of development connecting individual episodes of the music work. Threefold repetition of **a jewel** leads to a higher and more qualitative level of its understanding. Thus, it can be stated that “Landscape” was written according to the target dramaturgy principle, i.e., **the jewel** that appeared at the beginning and the end of musical work was the target, but to achieve it, one had to go through a life path of “sorrows and quagmires”.

All 5 sections of the poem are like steps of ascent to the final target. From the graph, it follows that the higher is reflected in the lower, and the main target of the human path is the “heavenly lake jewel”.

DISCUSSION

Among the musicians of the last century, Olivier Messiaen stands out as the most unique figure not only as a composer, but also as a scientist, thinker, music theorist, tutor, organist and pianist. Olivier Messiaen's works are represented by a wide range of different genres, themes and musical-figurative features, which are the subject of a study by many musicologists. In this paper, we focus only on some of them.

Thomas Barker's (2012: 55) study is related to “Turangalila Symphony”, which in world musical practice remains a special cultural phenomenon due to spiritual determinants. At the same time, the specifics of the work's content, its implementation methods and the associated cultural meanings, caused by the composer's ideological attitudes, his aesthetics and mentality, remain a problem that has not been fully resolved.

Several works by Vincent P. Benitez are dedicated to various areas of the French composer's activity: pedagogy and its influence on future generations of musicians (Benitez, 2000: 118-119); improvisational aspect of Olivier Messiaen's works and its impact on contemporary music (Benitez, 2008: 129-130); Olivier Messiaen's role as a serialist definition, his compositional techniques analysis, and their connection with the musical avant-garde (Benitez, 2009: 269); Saint Thomas Aquinas' theology as a source of Olivier Messiaen's musical and philosophical thinking (Benitez, 2010: 102).

Within the framework of modern musicological discourse, there is a tendency to interpret musical texts through the prism of religious and philosophical symbolism. This theme can be observed in Çağdaş Soylar's (2020) article, where in her study of Olivier Messiaen's “*Regard Des Anges*” she

considers it not only from the standpoint of a structural form, but also in the context of the composer's mystical and Christian beliefs. It has been determined that Messiaen's entire system of motifs, rhythms, and modalities serves as a reflection of his profound theological worldview. Analysis of this musical work's background allows for a deeper understanding of its connection with the hidden sacred content, which through the personal and transcendent reveals the multi-layered nature of the musical image.

The study we propose allows to penetrate the creative process of the brilliant French Master, and thereby to make an attempt to decode the symbolic images of his vocal cycles created at the dawn of his creative work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A study of individual numbers of Olivier Messiaen's vocal cycles "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" reveals Olivier Messiaen's image, his creative type as a composer-poet, who displayed "images of Eternity, symbols filled with joy, an inexhaustible source of knowledge" (Claudel, 1992). Olivier Messiaen's genius is manifested here at all levels of meaning formation: musical, poetic, including onomasiological. It was found that names of Olivier Messiaen, his mother Cécile Sauvage and his beloved Claire Delbos (Mi) contained a whole series of mutual transformations and meanings. The sound structure of their names was the material from which the composer-poet created the symbolism of the vocal and poetic works being studied. The cycles analysis contributed to the works' content two levels (which were Eternity and human life) disclosure. "Three melodies" is a supplication prayer related to the death of the composer's mother. In "Poems for Mi" Olivier Messiaen embodied the idea of the transition from earthly life to Eternity through marriage, a matrimony blessed by God. This cycle is the only one in Olivier Messiaen's vocal heritage that has an orchestral version, so it goes beyond the chamber music, and this is also what makes "Poems for Mi" unique in comparison with other composer's vocal cycles.

The study of "Three Melodies" and "Poems for Mi" makes it possible to assert that the early creative period of Olivier Messiaen was extremely significant for the composer. Its rather long duration was due to the fact that this was not so much a formation period, but rather the discovery of those lines that would become end-to-end, this was a period of approval and consolidation of Olivier Messiaen's artistic method's basic principles. In the French composer's creative work, progress didn't stop, it was a continuous path, his art was the

development of faith and music synergy as the main idea. Using rhetorical expressions terminology, it can be said that his creative path was a constant ascent, anabasis.

The author manifested himself as a portrait leitmotif master in “Three Melodies” and “Poems for Mi”, where the composer’s autobiography, related to his mother Cécile Sauvage and his wife Claire Delbos, was richly presented. Both leitmotifs can be traced both in music in the usual sense of the word, and in “verbal music”, which is defined as a reflection of the external cosmic order or an expression of the internal “soulful music”. The onomasiological method applied in this study to both the musical and verbal texts revealed the fact that Claire Delbos was the composer’s source of inspiration and her coded image permeated the entire “Poems for Mi” vocal cycle, and the mother in “Three melodies” evoked bright memories and the pain of loss. The main sense of the vocal and poetic opuses were Eternity and time, heavenly and earthly, the divine essence of the world.

The analysis of the work done and the data from studies allow us to conclude that Olivier Messiaen’s vocal cycles “Poems for Mi” and “Three Melodies” were a reflection of his creative universe.

This study has allowed us to touch the rich and multi-layered symbolic universe of Olivier Messiaen’s early vocal cycles only to a small extent. The limitation of the chosen music material is evident: each new perspective of his creative work reveals new layers of meaning that require separate consideration. The deeper the scholar delves into the composer’s musical and poetic universe, the further the horizon of interpretations recedes, opening up prospects for new theoretical and performance approaches. This is the special value of Messiaen’s heritage: it remains an inexhaustible source of artistic and spiritual meanings, encouraging the constant expansion of the research field. Thus, further study can develop both in an academic direction (deepening the analysis, new methodologies, interdisciplinary comparisons) and in an applied direction targeting performers, music teachers and a wide audience.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Modern müzikolojinin önemli yönlerinden biri, bestecinin yaratıcılığını onun kişiliğinin içsel yapısının bir yansıması ve bireysel yaratıcı evreninin sanatsal bir analogu olarak incelemektir. Antik Yunan felsefesinde ortaya çıkan "evren" (üniversum) kavramı, sanat bağlamında sanatçının Hakikate varoluşun her şeyi kuşatan özüne sonsuz bir şekilde yaklaşma çabası anlamını kazanır. Yaratıcı evrenin genel bazı özellikleri olsa da, farklı sanatçıların mirasında bu evren özgün anlamlarla dolup taşar. Özellikle Olivier Messiaen'in sanatsal evreni, çağdaş müziğin yeni bir imgesel niteliğini somutlaştırır; bu müzik, yenilenmiş bir maneviyat boyutunu ifade etmeye ve dünyayla ilişkilerin yeni düzeylerini hissettirmeye yöneliktir. Bu tür bir araştırma yaklaşımı, sanatsal eserin yazarının manevi yapısının bir yansıması olarak analiz edilmesini öngörür. Bu işlev Messiaen'in "*Trois mélodies*" (Üç Melodi) ve "*Poèmes pour Mi*" (Mi için Şiirler) vokal döngülerinde de izlenebilir. Bu eserler daha önce Avignonlu sanatçının yaratıcı kişiliğinin yansıması olarak ele alınmamış olsa da, seçilen analitik bakış açısı bu vokal eserlerin bestecinin manevi özünü temsil eden müzik külliyyatı içine dâhil edilmesini mümkün kılar. Olivier Messiaen'in çalışmalarının genel periyodizasyonu çerçevesinde, vokal döngülerinin yaratılması bestecinin gelişiminin çeşitli aşamalarını kapsayan erken aşamasına (1929-1948) düşer. Özellikle, "Üç Melodi" ve "Mi İçin Şiirler" ilk aşamada yazarın tarzının oluşumu döneminde yazılmıştır. Bu eserler özel ilgiyi hak ediyor, çünkü Messiaen'in çalışmalarında vokal türünün ilk basılı örnekleri oldular. Bestecilik yolunun başlangıcı, dini bir figüratif sistemin ortaya çıkması, ilahi olana odaklanma - sanatının temel kavramı ile işaretlenmiştir. İnancın insan için manevi bir destek olarak fikri, seçilen araştırma yönünün alaka düzeyini belirleyen analiz edilen vokal döngülerinde somutlaştırılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Fransız bestecinin yaratıcı stilinde içkin olan sanatsal yöntemleri belirlemek için eserlerin müzikal ve şiirsel içeriğinin sembolizmini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makalenin temel amacı, Olivier Messiaen'in müzikal ve şiirsel kompozisyonlarında derin anlamın taşıyıcıları olarak hareket eden "*Poèmes pour Mi*" ve "*Trois mélodies*" vokal döngülerinin başlıklarının semantik anlamını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu eserlerdeki sembolik alt metni çözmek, icracılar (hem vokalistler hem de enstrümantalistler) için gerekli bir koşuldur, çünkü anlamın derinliğinin farkındalığı, yazarın niyetini dinleyicilere mümkün olduğunca doğru bir şekilde iletmeyi mümkün kılar. Eserin bilimsel yeniliği, müzikolojik analiz çerçevesinde Olivier Messiaen'in yaratıcı kişiliğinin evrensel bir sanatçı olarak özgünlüğünün ilk kez ana hatlarıyla ortaya konulmuş olması ve "Mi için Şiir" ve "Üç Melodi" döngülerindeki tezahürünün

özelliklerinin yanı sıra bu bestelerin müzikal ve şiirsel sembolizminin çözümlenmesinin gerçekleştirilmiş olmasıdır. Araştırma konusunun kapsamlı bir şekilde açıklanması için modern müzikolojide test edilen yaklaşımlar ve yöntemler kullanılır. Özellikle, tarihsel yaklaşım, Fransız bestecinin yaratıcı mirasının genel bağlamında vokal eserlerin yerini belirlememize olanak tanır ve biyografik yöntem, sanatçının kişisel yaşam yolu ile müzikal fikirleri arasındaki bağlantıyı izlememize olanak tanır. Yerli teorik okulda oluşturulan yapısal-işlevsel analiz, eserlerin kompozisyonel yapısını ve dramaturjik mantığını kapsamlı bir şekilde incelememize olanak tanır. Onomatolojik yaklaşım ise, vokal döngülerini Olivier Messiaen'in manevi ideallerinin somutlaşmış hali olarak düşünme olasılığını açar. Müzik üzerine onomatolojik analiz, bir sanat eserinin bir isim olarak anlaşılmasına ve onun sanatsal bütünlüğünün eserde bulunan manevi özün bir tanımı olarak anlaşılmasına dayanır. İsim, müzik eserini semantik olarak temsil eder ve isim ile müzik materyali arasındaki birliğin sağlanması, isimdeki bütünlük sayesinde gerçekleşir. Müzik eseri, isimler aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilen sanatsal imgelerin etkileşimi için bir alan olarak görünür. Onomatolojik yaklaşımın kullanımı, aynı zamanda leitmotifin, özel ismin müzikal bir analogu olarak algılanmasından da kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu kavramdaki leitmotif, sözlü bir eşdeğerin anlamını kazanır ve ismi ses biçiminde ortaya koymanın bir yolu haline gelir. Bu tür bir analiz, metinlerinde özel veya genel isimlerin bulunduğu eserler için geçerlidir. Önerilen yaklaşım, isimde gizli olan semantik yapıları kişisel karakterin bir sembolü olarak ortaya çıkarmayı, vokal-enstrümantal eseri ismi açığa çıkarma süreci olarak düşünmeyi ve onimin kişiliğin semantik bir biçimi olarak nasıl işlev gördüğünü belirlemeyi mümkün kılar. Olivier Messiaen'in vokal döngülerinde isim aslında kişiliğin enerjilerinin tüm yelpazesini kapsar ve eserin sanatsal bütünlüğünün birleştirici merkezi olarak işlev görür. Olivier Messiaen'in ses döngülerinin bireysel sayılarının analizi - "Üç Melodi" ve "Mi İçin Şiirler" bestecinin, müzik ve kelimeler aracılığıyla Sonsuzluğun imgelerini, neşeli sembolleri, tükenmez bir bilgi kaynağını somutlaştıran bir sanatçı-şair olarak yaratıcı figürünü daha derinden anlamamızı sağlar. Messiaen'in dehası, içerik yaratmanın her düzeyinde kendini gösterir: müzikal, şiirsel, onomatolojik. Bestecinin kendisinin, annesi Cecile Sauvage'ın ve sevgili eşi Claire Delbo'nun (Mi) isimlerinin derin bir sembolik anlam taşıdığı ve sanatsal bir bağlamda karşılıklı dönüşüm gösterdiği bulunmuştur. Ses yapıları, bu eserlerde müzikal ve şiirsel sembolizm yaratmak için malzeme haline geldi. Çalışma, iki ana semantik katmanı tanımlamamızı sağladı. Sonsuzluk ve insan hayatı. Böylece, "Üç Melodi" bestecinin annesinin kaybıyla bağlantılı bir dua isteğidir ve "Benim İçin Şiirler" Tanrı tarafından

kutsanmış manevi bir birlik olarak evlilik yoluyla dünyevi olandan ebedi olana geçiş fikrini somutlaştırır. "Benim İçin Şiirler" döngüsü, Messiaen'in vokal mirasının oda sesinin kapsamının ötesine geçen ve onun ayrıcalığını vurgulayan orkestra versiyonuna sahip tek döngüsüdür. Çalışmanın sonuçları, bestecinin yaratıcılığının erken döneminin olağanüstü önemini doğrulamaktadır. Bu aşama, daha sonra tüm stiline nüfuz edecek olan önde gelen sanatsal çizgilerin tanımlanması kadar biçimlendirici değildir. Messiaen'in yaratıcı yolu sürekli bir gelişmedir, ana fikrin - inanç ve müziğin birliği - açığa çıkmasıdır. Retorikte, sanatı "anabasis" ile karşılaştırılabilir sürekli bir manevi yükseliş. "Üç Melodi" ve "Şiirler"de Messiaen portre leitmotifinin ustası olarak görünür: annesi ve eşiyle ilişkilendirilen otobiyografik özellikler hem müzikal yapıda hem de hem dışsal kozmik düzeni hem de içsel "ruhun müziğini" yansıtan "sözlü müzikte" izlenir. Müzikal ve metinsel analize uygulanan onomatolojik yaklaşım, Claire Delbo imgesinin "Benim İçin Şiirler" döngüsünün yaygın bir ruhsal baskın ögesi olduğunu ve anne figürünün "Üç Melodi"de parlak anıların ve kayıp acısının kaynağı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Genel olarak, bu vokal döngülerin A. Messiaen'in bireysel yaratıcı evreninin bir tezahürü olduğu söylenebilir; burada Sonsuzluk ve Zaman, göksel ve dünyevi, kutsal ve kişisel olan tek bir sanatsal bütünde birleştirilmiştir.