



Malmgren Concert Series

presents

Music of Olivier Messiaen

Dan Sato

Kathleen Roland-Silversteen

The Hendricks Chapel Choir

Sunday, October 23, 2022

4 p.m.

Music of Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Program

O sacrum convivium (1937)

*The Hendricks Chapel Choir
José "Peppie" Calvar, director
Joseph Maxwell Ossei-Little, Hendricks Chapel Organ Scholar*

Selections from "Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus" (1944)

- I. Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus (The kiss of the Infant Jesus)
 - II. Regard des hauteurs (Contemplation of the heights)
 - III. Première communion de la Vierge (The Virgin's first communion)
- Dan Sato, pianist*

Selections from "Harawi: Chant d'amour et de mort" (1945)

La ville qui dormait, toi (The city that slept, you)
Bonjour toi, colombe verte (Good morning, green dove)
Montagnes (Mountains)
Doundou tchil
Dans le noir (In the dark)

*Kathleen Roland-Silversteen, soprano
Dan Sato, pianist*

All are invited to a reception in the entryway after the program.

We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation,
Firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee,
the Indigenous people on whose ancestral lands
Syracuse University now stands.

This program is a special installment of "Music and Message," a weekly series from Hendricks Chapel that features musical performances and spoken reflection from diverse religious and spiritual perspectives. These gatherings seek to nurture the soul and ignite the spirit.

Malmgren concerts are presented with support from the Malmgren Fund.

Texts and Translations

I. La ville qui dormait, toi.

La ville qui dormait, toi.
Ma main sur ton cœur par toi.
Le plein minuit le banc, toi.
La violette double toi.
L'œil immobile,
Sans dénouer ton regard, moi.

II. Bonjour toi, colombe verte

Bonjour toi, colombe verte,
Retour du ciel.
Bonjour toi, perle limpide
Départ de l'eau.
Ombre partagée.
Toi, de fleur, de fruit, de ciel et d'eau.
Chant des oiseaux.
Bonjour, d'eau.

III. Montagnes

Rouge violet, noir sur noir.
L'antique inutile rayon noir.
Montagne, écoute le chaos solaire du vertige.
La pierre agenouillée porte ses maîtres noirs.
En capuchons serrés les sapins se hâtent vers le noir.
Gouffre lancé partout dans le vertige.
Noir sur noir.

IV. Doundou tchil

Doundou tchil...
Piroutcha te voilà, o mon à moi,
la danse des étoiles, doundou tchil.
Piroutcha te voilà, o mon à moi,
miroir d'oiseau familier, doundou tchil.
Arc-en-ciel, mon souffle, mon écho,
ton regard est revenu, tchil, tchil.
Piroutcha te voilà, o mon à moi,
Mon fruit léger dans la lumière, doundou tchil.
Toungou, toungou, mapa, nama, kahipipas.

XII. Dans le noir

Dans le noir, colombe verte.
Dans le noir, perle limpide.
Dans le noir, mon fruit de ciel, de jour,
Lointain d'amour.
Mon amour, mon souffle!
Colombe, colombe verte, le chiffre cinq à toi,
La violette double, doublera, très loin,
Tout bas.
La ville qui dormait, toi.

The city that slept, you.

The city that slept, you.
My hand on your heart by you.
In the dead of the night the bench, you.
The double violet you.
The motionless eye,
with fixed gaze, me.

Good morning, green dove.

Good morning, green dove.
Returned from heaven,
Good morning, limpid pearl.
Leaving the water.
Shared shadow.
You, of flower, of fruit, of sky and of water.
Song of the birds.
Good morning, you of water.

Mountains

Purple red, black on black.
The ancient useless black ray.
Mountain, listen to the solar chaos of vertigo.
The kneeling stone bears its black masters.
The fir trees in tight hoods hurry towards the dark.
Chasm launched everywhere in the vertigo.
Black on black.

Doundou tchil...

Doundou tchil...
Piroutcha, here you are, o my own mine,
the dance of the stars, doundou tchil.
Piroutcha, here you are, o my own mine,
mirror of a familiar bird, doundou tchil.
Rainbow, my breath, my echo,
your gaze has returned, tchil, tchil.
Piroutcha, here you are, o my own mine,
my light fruit in the light, doundou tchil.
Toungou, toungou, mapa, nama, kahipipas.

In the dark

In the dark, green dove.
In the dark, limpid pearl.
In the dark, my fruit of the sky, of the day.
Far from love.
My love, my breath!
Dove, green dove, the number five for you,
The double violet will double, very far,
Very low.
The city that slept.

Notes on the Program by Piper Starnes

“O sacrum convivium” (1937)

After years of uncertainty, darkness and plague (much like today), the Renaissance arrived as an era for a resurgence in arts, culture and, of course, music. From the 13th to 16th century, educated and gifted vocalists sang sacred texts over complex music to tell stories, commemorate and give thanks. These choral works, known as motets, wove together several melody lines and intricate rhythmic patterns, creating stunning ribbons of sound.

Some 500 years later, Olivier Messiaen, a devout Catholic and master composer, wrote his first and only motet. In 1937, a Parisian clergyman commissioned him for an offertory piece. So, as Messiaen counted down the weeks to the birth of his first child, he occupied himself with “O sacrum convivium.”

Based on the Latin text of the same name, “O sacrum convivium,” meaning “O sacred banquet,” honors the body and blood of Christ. Upon communion, the mind and soul are fulfilled with grace and given a pledge of glory. The piece was composed when Messiaen was just 29 years old, and it previews the harmonic color he would later become known for.

“O sacrum convivium” sold over 138,000 copies during Messiaen’s lifetime. And despite its massive success, he denied requests to write another “simple” motet. In 1964, he wrote to his commissioner, insisting that the style no longer reflected his musical language: “I understand completely your desire to renew the liturgy and your horror of recent hymns—which I share! Unfortunately, I believe my music to be much too complex to be of use to you: it can only be played on the piano, on the organ, and above all by an orchestra, and is intended only for an initiated élite. I think it would be unsingable by a congregation and also by young children.... Besides, no hymns, however successful they are, can match the beauty of the most humble plainchant Alleluia! Why is so little plainchant sung, and even that without observing the rhythmic laws and the neumes?”

Powerful with humility, Messiaen’s composition is clear, expressive and just the beginning of what would come later in his career.

Selections from “Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant Jésus” (1944)

Wartime is hardly ever a good time for anyone. In 1940, when Olivier Messiaen was serving in the French army as a hospital nurse, he was captured by Nazi troops and imprisoned for nine months. Messiaen later said: “When I arrived at the camp, I was stripped of all my clothes, like all the prisoners. But naked as I was, I clung fiercely to a little bag of miniature scores that served as consolation when I suffered. The Germans considered me to be completely harmless, and since they still loved music, not only did they allow me to keep my scores, but an officer also gave me pencils, erasers, and some music paper.”

As a prisoner of war, Messiaen went on to compose his famous “Quartet for the End of Time,” a piece inspired by the New Testament Book of Revelation. Much of Messiaen’s music was deeply rooted in his Catholic faith and reflective upon Christ.

This was especially true for “Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant Jésus,” or “Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus” in English. Four years after his imprisonment, Messiaen composed the Regards in Paris during the city’s liberation from Nazi occupation. Though World War II was not quite over, Messiaen saw the light at the end of the tunnel, and his music reflected that.

The Regards were intended to complement 12 poems about the Nativity scene by Maurice Toesca. But the poems grew to 20 contemplations and two hours’ worth of music, earning it a reputation as one of the most demanding and impressive works in the entire piano repertoire.

This program’s selections from the Regards explore four themes: God, the Star and the Cross, Chords and Love. Solo pianist Dan Sato says, “It goes from a lullaby into this really grand galactic explosion of dissonance. It feels almost uncomfortable and nightmarish, but that is that extremism of expression. You’re just kind of left in a daze.”

If you listen closely, you might pick up on Messiaen’s scientific-like interpretation of the rhythm and harmony. The details are where his genius lies. Here, he brings to life a floating sensation of profound peace.

Selections from “Harawi: Chant d’amour et de mort” (1945)

High in the Andes mountains and throughout the Peruvian lowlands, there are millions of descendants from the ancient Incan Empire. In passing down their history, they share culture and folklore, most of which is communicated by word of mouth in their native tongue.

Quechua is the most widely spoken Indigenous language in the Americas. If you know “poncho,” “jerky” or “llama,” you’re already familiar with a few words that are derived from the language. Now you can add “Harawi” to your word bank.

“Harawi: Chant d’amour et de mort” is loosely defined as a love ending in death. Written in the midst of World War II, Olivier Messiaen incorporated it into a trilogy of song cycles on love, death and entry into a new world. While much of the narrative stems from a version of the Greek myth of Tristan and Isolde, Messiaen draws plenty of inspiration from Peruvian nature and spiritual concepts.

Messiaen mimics bird songs, paints cosmic pictures of star systems and traverses a black abyss through the piano’s bursts of notes and experimental runs. Meanwhile, the vocalist, singing in French, Quechua and onomatopoeic sounds, roams a wide range of pitches and colorful tones.

Messiaen’s synesthesia is to thank for that. His condition allowed him to perceive colors with sound and vice versa, resulting in an audio-visual experience of ribbons and rainbows. While most people don’t have synesthesia, it’s still possible to listen out for some of the imagery Messiaen wrote in ‘Doundou tchil.’ This song is reminiscent of ankle bracelets worn by the Peruvians during ritual marriage dances as manifestations of earthly love.

Yet, the lovers in “Harawi” will only find true fulfillment through death and a spiritual arrival to eternity.

Piper Starnes is a graduate student in the Goldring Arts Journalism program at the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Meet the artists

Dr. Dan Sato is a Japan-born, Hawaii-raised pianist, educator, and researcher who embodies the motto written on his favorite T-shirt, “88 keys, 10 fingers — no problem.”

Described by the legendary American virtuoso, André Watts as a musician of “exuberant spontaneity, deep conviction, and serious compositional understanding,” Dan indulges in a rich career performing solo, chamber music, art song, and operatic repertoire. He has been heard internationally through BBC, WQXR, CBC, KHPR, and major streaming media platforms, and has performed at New Orleans Piano Institute, Brevard Music Center, Chautauqua Music Festival, and Taconic Music’s Summer Festival. He frequently collaborates with artists of his generation including Joohyun Lee, Yeil Park, Rachel Doehring, and Hannah Tarley, and has recorded critically acclaimed albums with saxophonist, Diane Hunger, and cellist, Leah Plave. Exciting projects of the current season include two specially curated solo recital programs (“B+B+D=B” and “Syracuse Piano LIT with Dr. Dan”), as well as a performance of Olivier Messiaen’s monumental song cycle, Harawi with Dr. Kathleen Roland-Silverstein.

Affectionately referred to as “Dr. Dan,” he has coached students and taught keyboard literature, chamber music, and opera at Syracuse University, and was a faculty artist at the Perlman Music Program, ArtsAhimsa, and Notes By The Bay Music Festival. Dan currently specializes in solo piano transcriptions, both as a performer and transcriber. His adaptation of Ravel’s Introduction et Allegro was published by Muse Press in 2020, and he has since then served as their editor and scholarly consultant for selected works. He also gave the world premiere of Vincenzo Maltempo’s tour de force transcription of the Second Suite from Ravel’s Daphnis et Chloé, which was previously considered unplayable due to its extreme virtuosic demands. In 2021, his research resulted in an unprecedented solo symphonic recital involving orchestral repertoire associated with the Ballets Russes. To be informed about his current shenanigans, find him on Instagram @i.love.beethoven.and.unagi.

Dan completed his doctoral studies at the University of Miami Frost School of Music with the internationally renowned pianist, Kevin Kenner, and continues to be under the mentorship of Dr. Frank Heneghan. He has also studied with Chieko Munakata, Peter Coraggio, Donna Loewy, Judith Burganger, and André Watts.

Kathleen Roland-Silverstein is a highly regarded scholar and concert soloist, well known for her performance of contemporary art music, and for her contribution to scholarly research on Scandinavian song. She has been a featured singer with many music festivals, including the Tanglewood and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals, and has sung in Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Cambodia, Vietnam and throughout the United States. Dr. Roland was a senior Fulbright scholar to Sweden in 2009, and is the author of *Romanser: 25 Swedish Songs with Guide to Lyric Diction*. Dr. Roland serves as music reviewer for the *Journal of Singing*, the official journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. She is a member of the faculty at the Setnor School of Music, Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, where she teaches voice, vocal literature, and voice pedagogy.

**Please join us for these upcoming Music and Message and
Malmgren Concert programs, Sundays at 4 PM:**

October 30: Our Favorite Songs

Students from the Setnor School of Music's Jazz and Commercial Music program share popular song covers and original tunes and the Hendricks Chapel Choir performs David Hurd's anthem, "I was glad," for choir and organ.

November 6: New Choral Works — Malmgren Concert

The Syracuse University Singers perform a program of new choral music, including selected composers from around the country as part of the final concert of the regional conference for the Society for Composers, Inc. Themes include love, loss, and uncertainty. The second half of the program features music by distinguished composer and Syracuse alumnus, Nilo Alcala, whose music has been described as "extraordinary," "exuberant," and "hypnotic." Nilo will give a pre-concert talk about his works at 3:15 p.m.

November 13: Setnor Choirs in Concert

Setnor Sonority and Crouse Chorale present a fall choral concert with works by Dale Trumbore, Elaine Hagenberg, Veljo Tormis, Ivette Herryman, Kyle Pederson, Felix Mendelssohn, Eric Whitacre, Brandon Waddles, and Reginal Wright, among others.

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