

## PREFACE

In 2012, while working on Messiaen's sketches, I came across several pages of piano score, written in rapid and decisive handwriting, in Messiaen's preferred working medium of faint pencil. The manuscript appeared to be in an advanced state of completion, and was evidently a draft of an unknown composition. The music is based on birdsong (as was much of Messiaen's piano music), but birdsong used in a new way, with features unique in Messiaen's output. The main soloist is the *fauvette passerinette* (the subalpine warbler, *sylvia cantillans*). A note in the margin dates composition to August 1961 at Petichet, Messiaen's summer retreat in the French Alps.

The manuscript is contained in one of Messiaen's birdsong notebooks, the *Cahiers de notations des chants d'oiseaux*, held in a private collection belonging to the late Mme Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The catalogue number of the *cahier* is BnF-musique, MS 23023. The birdsong sources for the music are notations found in the same *cahier* and in two others – BnF-musique, MS 23020 and MS 23072.

The main difficulty in realising Messiaen's sketch was deciphering his handwriting, which is very hard to read, though always meticulous in detail. The outer sections of the piece – which feature the song of the soloist – are entirely finished, down to details of pedalling and even fingering. The middle is more fragmentary and required a certain amount of detective work. The order of events was determined by following Messiaen's alphabetical scheme, and I was able to supply missing dynamics or marks of articulation by consulting the notations of birdsong on which the music is based. Everything in the score is therefore by Messiaen. The only additions I have made have been in order to clarify Messiaen's notation: all these are detailed in the Editorial Notes.

Until this discovery it has been puzzling that Messiaen composed nothing in 1961. It now seems likely that he used this fallow year for planning a second cycle of piano pieces to follow the earlier *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1956–8). *La Fauvette Passerinette* shows important differences, however. Where in *Catalogue d'oiseaux* the harmonic structure of each piece comes from evocations of place – the sea, mountains, trees reflected in a river – Messiaen's new approach is to work with the birdsong alone, apart from a few background colour chords. Since the birdsong has to create its own harmony, the writing is richer than in the *Catalogue*, a stepping stone to the birdsong style in *La Fauvette des jardins* (1970) and to the fabulous refinement of birdsong, through harmony and instrumentation, in the opera *Saint François d'Assise* (1975–83).

Another consequence of creating his structure from birdsong alone is that Messiaen uses the birds to confront or imitate one another, in a kaleidoscopic juggling of their characteristics: near/far, similar/dissimilar, active/passive, fluid/static. The most prominent innovation is the sense of development. The solos for the *fauvette passerinette* undergo a transformation: they begin in a lyrical style that becomes increasingly hard-edged, developing in a purposeful way that absorbs motifs from the songs of other birds that share its habitat. As a result, the final section is both a virtuoso finale – a thrilling toccata that rampages towards the finish – and a recapitulation that sums up the birdsongs heard in the piece.

The disappearance of *La Fauvette Passerinette* is understandable. By the end of 1961 Messiaen was occupied with plans for an orchestral work for Debussy's centenary in 1962, and soon afterwards three more commissions came his way, for *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* (1964), *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* (1964) and *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1969). The second 'catalogue of birds' was never fulfilled, and *La Fauvette Passerinette* was put away and forgotten.

I should like to thank the many people who gave encouragement and advice, among them Sally Cavender and Elaine Gould (of Faber Music), Christopher Dingle, Hélène Frichot (of the Fondation de France), Jeremy Hughes, who expertly copy-edited the score, and Roger Wright. Particular thanks are due to Tom James, who typeset the music and who gave invaluable advice and assistance.

Loriot

Très modéré

(143)

*mf ff mf ff*

Ped. Ped. [\*]

Fauvette mélanocéphale (dans un buisson de kermès)

146

Modéré Un peu vif

*p ff f mf f mf f*

Ped. [\*] Ped. Ped. \* Ped. Ped.

(146)

Modéré

*mf f mf*

\* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. 11 11

149

Modéré Un peu vif Un peu lent

*p ff pp p p*

Ped. \* [Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.]

Rossignol

Vif

Un peu vif

Un peu lent

Un peu vif

Un peu lent

(150)

*ff f p mf p*

(Ped.) [Ped.] Ped. Ped. Ped.

227

*f* *mf*

(dessous)  $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$  (dessus)  $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 1 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 1 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 4 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$

Ped. Ped. Ped. \*

229

(dessus)  $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 1 \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 4 \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$

(dessous)  $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 4 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 4 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$

Ped.

230

(dessous)  $\begin{matrix} 4 \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 1 \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 4 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$

(dessus)  $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 3 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 3 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 4 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$   $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 4 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$

*f* *mf*

Ped. \* Ped. \*

(232)

*p* *f*

Ped.

235

*mf*

Ped.