

# PORTFOLIO OF RECORDED PERFORMANCES AND EXEGESIS:

## Messiaen's Musical Language for the Jazz Pianist —

An exploration through performance

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## ABSTRACT

Moving beyond Gunther Schuller's *Third Stream* amalgamation of classical and jazz, this study explores whether the musical language of Olivier Messiaen can make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance. Initially, my project sought to answer such questions as: What elements of the musical language of Messiaen already exist in the jazz vocabulary? Am I able to extend this further? What are the timbral structures and pianistic effects within Messiaen's musical language? What will be the most effective application of Messiaen's musical language to jazz piano performance? Endeavouring to answer the final question led me to consider such aspects as whether the project should be limited to quoting Messiaen motifs, arranging Messiaen melodies, replacing jazz harmonic structures on standards with examples from Messiaen's musical language or whether it would be better to approach the research conceptually. The work of Hubert Nuss provided encouraging reassurance that this was not an impossible task.

In order to articulate this conception, the initial challenge was to decide how the classical and jazz worlds might meet in a 'Messiaen' technique. The approach adopted was similar to that used for undergraduate jazz study, namely, immersion in the piano scores and recordings of Messiaen's music as well as by live performances. This was followed by the development and assessment of a contrived approach when specific techniques, such as tonal colourings or harmonic structures, were developed through prepared exercises and consciously included in my performance. It was then compared with an intuitive approach when no such precise parameters were established.

This submission consists of CD recordings of two public recitals and an exegesis. It documents the development of this Messiaen technique and discusses its application in my performances. It also demonstrates the ways that Messiaen's musical language can be used within jazz piano performance to provide a colour that distinguishes jazz piano performance in a competitive field.

CD 1: Recording of Recital 1 – 9 May 2009

Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall at EMU Recording Studio, The University of Adelaide

Associate Artists: Mario Marino – Drums, Sam Riley – Acoustic Bass

CD 2: Recording of Recital 2 – 29 August 2009

Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall at Emu Recording Studio, The University of Adelaide

Associate Artists: Mario Marino – Drums, Sam Riley – Acoustic Bass

CD 1: The Contrived Approach

Tracks	<i>Alice In Wonderland</i>	Fain/Hilliard
1-3	Control, Contrived and Intuitive Takes	(Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Tracks	<i>So In Love</i>	Porter
4-6	Control, Contrived and Intuitive Takes	(Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Tracks	<i>Sweet Lullaby</i>	Djuric
7-9	Control, Contrived and Intuitive Takes	
Tracks	<i>Wouldn't It Be Lovely</i>	Lerner/Loewe
10-12	Control, Contrived and Intuitive Takes	(Deanna Djuric, arr.)

CD 2: In Search of the Middle Ground

Track 1	<i>I Love You</i>	Porter (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 2	<i>Alice In Wonderland</i>	Fain/Hilliard (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 3	<i>There's Something About That Name</i>	Gaither (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 4	<i>Maria</i>	Bernstein/Sondheim (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 5	<i>The Rainbow Connection</i>	Williams/Ascher (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 6	<i>So In Love</i>	Porter (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
Track 7	<i>Steps</i>	Corea
Track 8	<i>Free Improvisation/The Peacocks</i>	Djuric/Marino/Riley Rowles (Djuric, arr.)
Track 9	<i>Messiaen Sketch</i>	Djuric

## DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Deanna Djuric and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Deanna Djuric  
15 December 2009

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Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall at EMU Recording Studio, The University of Adelaide

Associate Artists: Mario Marino – Drums, Sam Riley – Acoustic Bass

### CD 2: Recording of Recital 2 – 29 August 2009

Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall at Emu Recording Studio, The University of Adelaide

Associate Artists: Mario Marino – Drums, Sam Riley – Acoustic Bass

### CD 1: The Contrived Approach

Tracks	<i>Alice In Wonderland</i>	Fain/Hilliard
1-3	Control, Contrived and Intuitive Takes	(Deanna Djuric, arr.)
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### CD 2: In Search of the Middle Ground

Track 1	<i>I Love You</i>	Porter (Deanna Djuric, arr.)
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Track 9	<i>Messiaen Sketch</i>	Djuric



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research project is to investigate whether Messiaen's musical language can make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance. It examines the musical language of Olivier Messiaen, specifically within his piano works, to identify a catalogue of characteristic timbral structures and pianistic effects in order to assess their potential contribution to the performance resources of the jazz pianist. This submission consists of CD recordings of two public recitals and an exegesis. It documents the development of this Messiaen technique and discusses its application in my performances.

At the outset, it is interesting to note that, ironically, Messiaen disliked jazz. As Messiaen commented, "Personally, I've never had an affection for jazz. I'm sorry to say it, but I think that jazz is a 'robber' whose 'innovations' are, really, borrowing from previous symphonic music" (Cited in Samuel 1976: 119). He "never believed in jazz" and "thought that the poetic and refined figure of Maurice Ravel was spoilt in his last year by this influence of jazz" (Cited in Samuel 1976: 119). German pianist, Hubert Nuss has offered a possible explanation for Messiaen's dislike of jazz and why the world of improvisation did not create a connection between jazz and Messiaen. He argues that the answer lies within the rhythmic aspect of Messiaen's musical language. Nuss explains that Messiaen's view of rhythm was the opposite to the way jazz is played, regular beats sounding artificial to him (pers. com. 2007). This comment may be cross-referenced to the publication *Music and Colour: Conversations with Claude Samuel* where Messiaen proposes that rhythmic music "is music that scorns repetition, squareness and equal divisions and that is inspired by the movements of nature, movements of free and unequal durations" (Samuel 1986: 67). Messiaen's response to jazz as a 'rhythmic music' was:

Jazz is based on a foundation of equal note values. Through the use of syncopation, it also contains rhythm, but these syncopations exist only because they're placed over equal note values, which they contradict. In spite of the rhythm produced by this contradiction, the listener once again settles down to the equal note values that bring great tranquillity. (Samuel 1986: 68)

Despite Messiaen's dislike for jazz, it cannot be denied that jazz musicians seem to have an affinity with his music.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Comparisons have also been drawn between the harmonic language of Messiaen and Gershwin (Anderson 1992: 450). For example, Gerald Levinson in an email to Dr. Graham Williams, another student of Messiaen's composition class in the 1970s, recounts how when Levinson played *The Leper's Dance of Joy* and the final

The project was divided into three stages, the first stage incorporated listening to numerous recordings especially those by Yvonne Loriod (Erato Disques 1968, 1973), a practice journal, monthly maintaining a sonic journal, studying Messiaen's scores especially his piano scores such as *La Colombe* (1929), *Visions de l'Amen* (1943) and *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus* (1944), as well as reading literature such as by Hill and Simeone (2005), Messiaen's *The Technique of my Musical Language* (1944), Williams (1978) and Samuel (1976, 1994). It also included invaluable personal communication with other musicians including Hubert Nuss (2007), Bill Stewart (2007), Marc Copland (2006, 2007) and Bill Carrothers (2006).

It was also imperative to explore what aspects of Messiaen's musical language had already been applied to the jazz vocabulary. For example, it can be found in the intuitive application of the 'ambience' Messiaen achieved, as discussed by Bill Carrothers (Copland and Carrothers 2006 esp. tracks 1, 7, 8 and 10; pers. com. 2006), the incorporation of the sound-colour relationship of harmony, that is, colour to drive the function of harmony as approached by Marc Copland (Copland and Carrothers 2006; pers. com. 2007), the arrangement of Messiaen's melodies and compositions for use within a jazz ensemble such as the work of Kevin Hunt (pers. com. 2006)<sup>2</sup> and finally, the use of the Modes of Limited Transpositions as scale choice for improvisation and composition as demonstrated by Sean Wayland (pers. com. 2006). The first stage also included the identification of a lexicon of devices and development of technical exercises to allow the practice of the vocabulary from Messiaen's musical language. These exercises aimed to provide a vocabulary from which a performer would be able to draw upon in a spontaneous manner and enhance the broader language of jazz piano performance.

The second stage of the performance-based project shifted emphasis from daily technical exercises to their application in performance. A "contrived" approach has been adopted for the purposes of this study to describe the consciously managed application of devices from the lexicon to jazz piano performance. While this contrived approach was clearly not desirable for the final outcome, it was an imperative part of the research process. Recital 1 documents the results of this approach. The final stage of this project was to bring together all the aspects of the research in Recital 2 in order to create an aesthetic performance that was a true reflection

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chorus of *St Francois d'Assise* to his publisher, his publisher burst out in laughter and began to sing Gershwin's *I've Got Rhythm* (pers. com. 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Although the arrangement of Messiaen's melodies and compositions for use within a jazz ensemble is a valid approach and undertaken by Kevin Hunt, this approach is beyond the scope of this project.

of who I am as an artist. It relied upon the feedback of my supervisors, my mentors, my peers and ultimately, my own intuition.

It became evident as the project progressed that it was impractical to integrate large portions of Messiaen's musical language into a single performance. Similarly, it was recognised that many of Messiaen's ideas were readily accessible through his earlier publications and a detailed study of a large volume of recent scholarship (e.g. Messiaen 1994), published about Messiaen's ideas and worthy of a PhD level study, was beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, by close consultation with supervisors including one who had studied with Messiaen, access to Messiaen's ideas and theories through performance was possible and in a manner that facilitated incorporation of elements of his style into jazz improvisation. In the process, it was further recognised that small segments of the language, which would still bear a Messiaenesque mark, should become the focus of this study. In setting such limitations, it was also decided that bird song, form and the rhythmic aspect of Messiaen's musical language were less conducive to amalgamation in the jazz pianist's vocabulary within a timeline that was practical for this project.

Finally, while it is unquestionable that the focus of the research has been on Messiaen's harmonic vocabulary, there has also been a subtle, unanticipated impact of Messiaen's musical language that has affected and enriched my performance. This more pervasive impact of Messiaen's musical language beyond his harmonic vocabulary is, thus, reflected in the title and discussion presented here.

## 2. SETTING THE GROUND WORK

### 2.1. Developing the Lexicon

The lexicon for this study was initially developed from an analysis of *La Colombe* (1929). An early work of Messiaen's, it was selected for its simplicity and accessibility. The seminal writing of Messiaen (1944) and other piano compositions such as *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus* (1944) also provided additional sources to identify the characteristics of his musical language that might provide a contribution to the jazz pianist.

These characteristics or “devices”<sup>3</sup> are identified here with separate appellations to assist with identification and recall.

### 2.1.1. Parallel Chords

Parallel chords are found in bars 1-2 and bars 11-12 of *La Colombe*. They are triads built within Mode II (refer Appendix A, page 32) and are used as a decoration of superior resonance. Bill Evans popularised the use of parallel chords within the Dorian mode during the modal era.<sup>4</sup> Although the use of parallel chords is not new to jazz, Messiaen’s use of parallel chords may be considered unique and distinguishable. Another example to illustrate Messiaen’s use of this concept is found in bars 20-21 of *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille* and bars 17-19 of *Première Communion de la Vierge*. Here we also find an example of orchestral writing as the low resonance in bar 21 is functioning as a ‘gong’.

### 2.1.2. Turning Crystal

“Turning Crystal” is a term coined by Dr. Graham Williams to describe this device (pers. com. 2006). Bar 9 of *La Colombe* is a melodic development of the motif stated at bar 4. At bar 9, however, we see the embryonic beginnings of the ‘turning chord’ idea that Messiaen explores later in his career. Conceptually, it is a melodic motif or bass note that remains consistent while a set of harmonic variations give the effect of the protracting light from a turning crystal. In this case, the example is a repeated 2-note phrase where the harmony beneath is changed to give it an altered colour. Messiaen uses a modal approach, as opposed to a diatonic one, to choose the notes for the intervening voices.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1.3. Taking A Melodic Line Through A Mode

Before 1941, when the central source of Messiaen’s melodic patterns was birdsong, the intervallic structure of plainchant was often used by Messiaen (Johnson 1975: 20). He would transform the intervallic structure of plainchant into his own modal system while preserving its elemental melodic shape and rhythmic quality (Johnson 1975: 21). Examples of melodic phrases from other composers which have been filtered through Messiaen’s modes are also demonstrated in *The Technique of my Musical Language* (1944). Bars 1-5 of *La Colombe* clearly illustrate the way Messiaen uses melody within the mode as opposed to the key. Here

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this study, the term “device” has been adopted to describe the characteristic derived from Messiaen’s musical language that can be applied within jazz piano performance.

<sup>4</sup> Davis, Miles. 1959. “So What” *Kind Of Blue*. CD Columbia. CL 1355.

<sup>5</sup> Another example of this effect can be heard in bars 44-61 *Première Communion de la Vierge*.

the key is E major, but filtered through the second transposition of Mode II.<sup>6</sup> In this study, it was initially thought this device should be applied to an existing melody, but after experimentation, the original melody was retained.

#### 2.1.4. Chord On The Dominant

The chord on beat one of bars 21 and 22 in *La Colombe* is an E major 6/9 chord which Messiaen rests on the second inversion. Here we find, perhaps in embryonic form, Messiaen's Chord on the Dominant. The Chord on the Dominant is a chord in second inversion, containing all the notes of the major scale (Messiaen 1944: 50). A sense of suspension is created when a chord is placed on its dominant. Similarly, suspension has been a part of the jazz palette.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the use of the Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas has also been referred to as having a 'stain-glass window' effect (Messiaen 1944: 50).

#### 2.1.5. Melodic Resonance

Melodic resonance is used to describe the way Messiaen uses 9ths, mi 9ths, 7ths and 14ths to cause the melody to resonate. Examples of this may be found in the last two bars of *La Colombe* where the left hand is playing the melody at *pp* and the right hand is causing the resonance by being placed a 14<sup>th</sup> above while played as *ppp*. The resonance effect is achieved by the intervallic tension and the use of dynamics.

#### 2.1.6. Superior And Inferior Resonance

Messiaen (1944: 51) speaks of the 'Effects of Resonance' in terms of "effects of pure fantasy, similar by a very distant analogy to the phenomenon of natural resonance." An example of superior resonance can be found in *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille* in bar 31 and bar 20 of *Première Communion de la Vierge*. Inferior resonance can be found in bar 16 of *Première Communion de la Vierge*. The bar beforehand features parallel chords in Mode II which concludes with the tonic in second inversion. Messiaen then extends the sound with an inferior resonance.

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<sup>6</sup> We see this kind of writing emerge in jazz during the modal era when melodies were derived from the ancient Greek modes, predominantly the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian modes.

<sup>7</sup> Although not used in the same manner as Messiaen's theory, John Coltrane's *Naima* (1973) is an example of how suspension has been used in jazz.

### 2.1.7. Mode II

Known as the Dominant 8-note scale and already common in the jazz vocabulary,<sup>8</sup> Mode II (refer Appendix A, page 32) can contribute and extend what already exists in jazz by way of harmonic structures as outlined in *The Technique of my Musical Language* (Messiaen 1944: 59, 60) and Hubert Nuss (2000: 6).

### 2.1.8. Mode III

Although not found in the initial analysis of *La Colombe*, Mode III became a part of the lexicon. Mode III contributes to the lexicon by scale choice and harmonic structures. For more detail, refer to Appendix A, page 37 (see further Messiaen 1944: 60, 61).

Once the lexicon was established, the next stage involved developing a Messiaen technique.

## 2.2. Establishing Messiaen-derived Technical Exercises for the Jazz Pianist

To develop a method to facilitate the assimilation of these research findings on Messiaen's musical language into jazz piano performance itself, it was necessary to develop the lexicon into technical exercises in order to enable the performer to draw upon them spontaneously during performance. In this process, therefore, they would become an integral part and enhancement of the broader language of jazz piano performance.

In performance, we draw from an intrinsic palette that has been developed by an intimate acquaintance with the jazz style through aural absorption, transcription and rote learning. It is also important to develop improvisational capability in all keys. This is this method that I adopted in order to allow Messiaen's music to enhance my jazz piano performance. Appendix A (refer pages 31-46) is an explanation of the vocabulary drawn thus far from the vast array of Messiaen's musical language.

The ultimate goal is for jazz piano performance to be enhanced by use of vocabulary from Messiaen's musical language and for this vocabulary to be assimilated to such a degree that it is clearly evident within intuitive performance.

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<sup>8</sup> As documented by George Russell in his 1959 publication, *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*.

The next section discusses the method devised to apply the daily technical exercises to jazz piano performance in order to achieve this goal.

### 3. BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

#### 3.1. The Contrived Approach

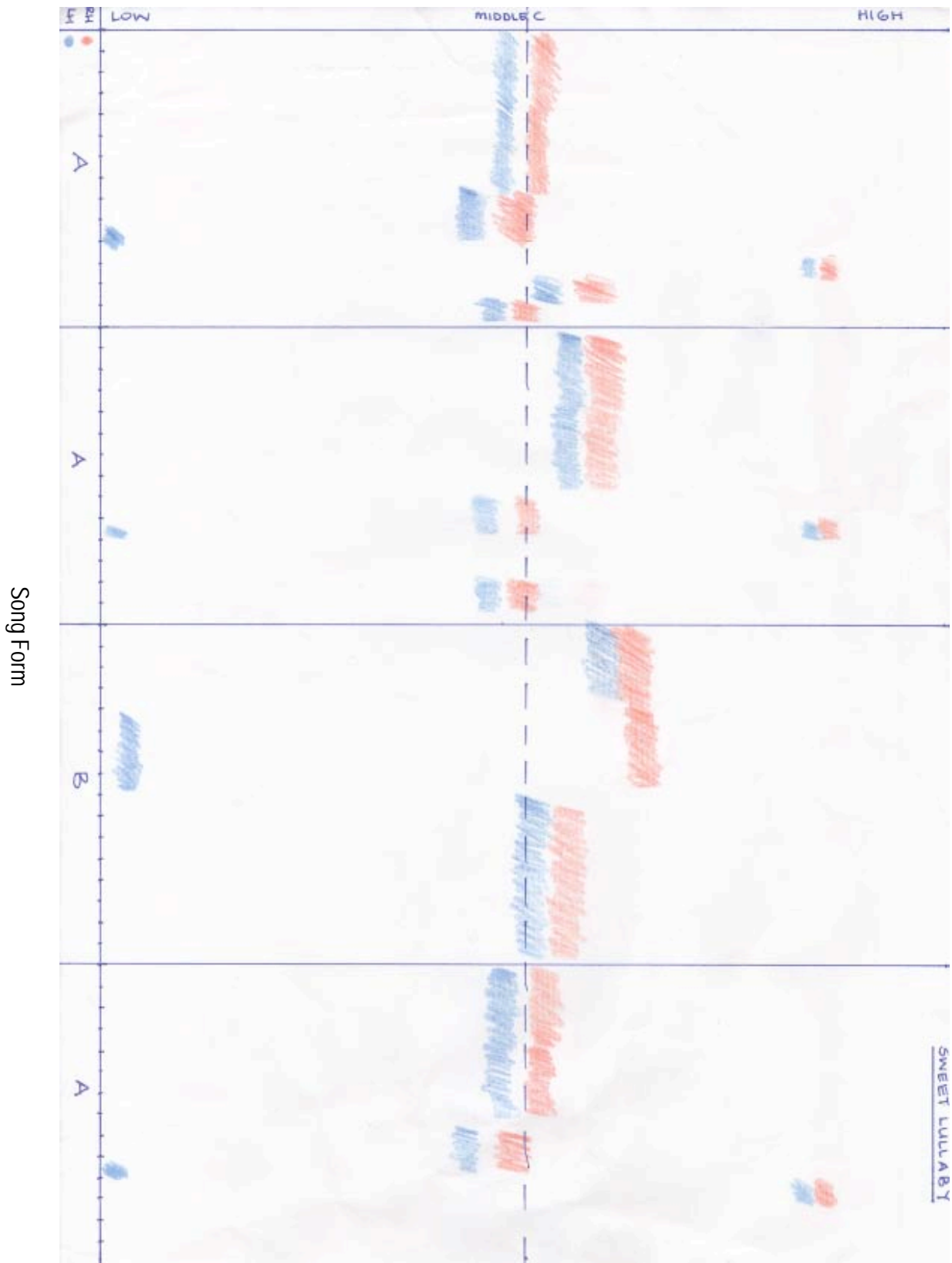
The next phase of the project required a “contrived” application of the selected Messiaen technique and devices. Naturally, the ultimate goal of this process was to draw from the Messiaen palette developed in an intrinsic and intuitive manner. However, in order to achieve this goal, the material required some time of exploration through performance-based research. This was accomplished via the sonic journal and performing at the Postgraduate Forum at the Elder Conservatorium. The first example of this contrived approach was to apply it to an existing, original composition entitled *Sweet Lullaby*<sup>9</sup> (refer CD 1–tracks 7-9). Hearing the harmonic structures from Mode III and breaking the habit of keeping the hands within close range proved a challenge. However, purposeful application of harmonic structures from Modes II and III and devices such as superior, inferior and melodic resonance were employed. Graphic notation was utilized to assist with the exploration of registers on the piano<sup>10</sup> (refer Figure 1).

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<sup>9</sup> This example was performed at a Postgraduate Forum at the Elder Conservatorium on 24 October 2007 prior to Recital 1 as a test case for whether Messiaen’s musical language could make a valid contribution to jazz piano. In light of the feedback received at the forum, Recital 1 began to take its current shape.

<sup>10</sup> The use of graphic notation assisted in analysing how the left hand and right hand were using the registers. It was a means of visualizing where the majority of the playing would occur and the location of the playing that challenged standard performance practice.

Piano Register



Song Form

Figure 1 An example of graphic notation used for the performance of Sweet Lullaby at the Postgraduate Forum, 24 October 2007.



The outcome of this initial experiment was well received during the forum and the feedback supported the feasibility of presenting the first recital in this manner. Thus began the process of applying this method to existing compositions for the preparation of Recital 1.

### 3.2. Recital 1

Recital 1 presents the compositions in three versions to review the evolution of the material and to compare the outcomes. It was an important part of this performance-based research process as it provided a means to assist in future aesthetic decision-making.<sup>11</sup> The performance explores devices to their maximum potential, leaving to one side musical taste. The first version is the “control” take, the second is the “contrived” take and finally, the third is the “intuitive” take.<sup>12</sup> The control take was a presentation of the composition as it may have been performed before the commencement of this study. The contrived take was the piece demonstrating how Messiaen’s musical language could be consciously applied into the existing structure. The intuitive take was to document a performance of the piece without any prior or pre-meditated preparation. It was entirely unrehearsed.

On reflection, presenting the first recital in this manner may have proven difficult to hear three different versions of the same song in sequence. The process was also tiring from a performance perspective. Nevertheless, it proved to be a useful method for the purpose of the project in assessing the contribution of Messiaen’s musical language to jazz piano performance.

Table 1 (refer page 10) summarises the devices from the lexicon employed in the contrived and intuitive approaches in Recital 1. As noted previously, control versions of the compositions (refer CD 1–tracks 1, 4, 7 and 10) are not included in Table 1, since they do not incorporate any devices, although they were performed to provide a point of aural comparison.

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<sup>11</sup> The program notes that accompany Recital 1 (refer CD 1) can be found in Appendix B (refer page 48) and further explain this approach.

<sup>12</sup> As Recital 1 was recorded for examination purposes and performed in a recording studio setting, the recording term “take” has been adopted for the purpose of this study.

Recital 1	Alice In Wonderland <i>Contrived</i>	Alice In Wonderland <i>Intuitive</i>	So In Love <i>Contrived</i>	So In Love <i>Intuitive</i>	Sweet Lullaby <i>Contrived</i>	Sweet Lullaby <i>Intuitive</i>	Wouldn't It Be Lovely <i>Contrived</i>	Wouldn't It Be Lovely <i>Intuitive</i>
Mode II Harmonic Structures	Head <sup>13</sup> Solo <sup>14</sup>		Solo: Bridge	Head: Bridge Solo	Head Solo	Intro. Head: Bridge	Head	Head Solo
Mode III Harmonic Structures	Head Solo		Bridge		Head Solo			
Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas			Head: Last 12	Head: Last 12			Head	Intro. Head
Other Harmonic Structures								
Superior Resonance	Solo	Head		Head Out	Head	Intro. Head	Solo	Intro. Head
Inferior Resonance	Solo	Head	Solo: Bridge	Solo	Head Solo	Intro. Head	Solo	Head
Parallel Chords	Head		Solo: Bridge	Solo	Solo	Intro	Solo	Head
Melodic line through a mode								
Melodic resonance		Head		Solo: Beginning	Head	Head	Solo	Head
Superimposition	Head	Solo	Head: Bridge	Head: Bridge			Head Solo	
Pedal		Head				Intro	Head	

Table 1 *Recital 1*

<sup>13</sup> In this study, the term "head" refers to the statement of the composition's melody.

<sup>14</sup> In this study, the term "solo" refers to the improvisation on the composition in accordance with standard jazz practice.

An initial perusal of Table 1 highlights how some devices are heard more frequently in this performance and suggests that they had been more easily absorbed by rote learning than others. For example, Mode II harmonic structures and related devices, such as parallel chords, were easily applied to chords functioning as an altered dominant 7. Similarly, superior and inferior resonance was easily applied to establish resonance and lay foundations for melodies or improvisation. Table 1 also shows how the Chord on the Dominant voicings made less impact when applied in Recital 1 because they already share similar tonalities to that of existing jazz harmonic structures. By comparison, the lack of any annotations in Table 1 for “other harmonic structures” and “melodic line through a mode” reveals the extent to which devices, such as the harmonic structures of Mode III, had taken a longer period than the time available to that stage of the project to be absorbed mentally, aurally and physically. Thus, the performance in Recital 1 was limited to what was easily accessible to the fingers and the ear.

Let us now look more closely at selected examples from Recital 1.

The objective of the contrived approach in Recital 1 was to apply the concepts and devices derived from Messiaen’s musical language in an intellectualised manner, pushing the boundary as much as possible without extensive concern for what might later be perceived as success or failure. The contrived performance of *Alice in Wonderland* (refer CD 1–track 2) is an excellent example. Messiaen would superimpose a mode upon a mode (Messiaen 1944: 68) and create pedals over which melodies would be placed independent of the music in the alternate stave. (Messiaen 1944: 55). This version of *Alice in Wonderland* incorporates both of these devices simultaneously with a harmonic pedal in Mode III over which the melody in the key of C major is played by the bass (refer Figure 2).

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 12  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 2 *The Introduction and A-section of the contrived version of Alice In Wonderland.*

Additional devices occur during this performance. For example, superior resonance which is heard at CD 1–track 2, 4:16 and, on this occasion, is a direct quote from Messiaen (refer Appendix A, page 45, Exercise 3). Upon reflection, the inferior resonance (refer CD 1–track 2, 3:47, 3:53, 4:13 and 5:06) may be viewed as obtrusive and could be better cultivated and refined for use in performance. It does, however, show that there is potential for future use, as it offsets and complements the notes played in the upper register in a manner not too dissimilar to the resonances used in Messiaen's music. In terms of ensemble, the cymbal scratches heard during the melody's reprise (refer CD 1–track 2, 6:31-6:43, 6:47) complement and capture the resonance created by the harmonic pedal played in the upper register of the piano, as well as add to the overall ambience the arrangement creates. Overall, this contrived arrangement of *Alice in Wonderland*, creates an atmosphere and colour that offers insights into the possibilities for using Messiaen's musical language by a jazz pianist.

On review, the comparison of the intuitive performance of *Alice in Wonderland* (refer CD 1–track 3) was somewhat disappointing. As previously mentioned, the intuitive performances of the compositions were entirely unplanned and unrehearsed. The objective was to allow the performer's intuition to direct the musical decisions without any self-talk or self-assessment of the performance. This was the first attempt at an intuitive performance for the recital. Consequently, uncertainties on how to change from cerebral thinking and connect to intuitive feeling contributed to its lack-lustre performance. One may ask: How intuitive could these performances be during this recital, especially considering that the compositions had been performed twice directly before the final intuitive performance? In reply, it is obvious that the two other performances must have influenced the outcome. The contrived works would have been a strong influence on the intuitive works.

The second composition of the recital, *So in Love* (refer CD 1–tracks 4-6), was included for the broader impact of Messiaen's musical language. The contrived version of this piece was reharmonized and the feel was changed to highlight the melody. Although it is not directly from the developed lexicon, its perspective was influenced by Messiaen's love of melody (Messiaen 1944: 13). The bridge was open for exploration from Mode II. The blend is much more aesthetically pleasing and the inferior resonance is better refined. The registers of the piano are also explored more effectively. The piano tone and dynamics (in comparison to the piano tone of the first take of *Alice in Wonderland* of CD 1–track 1) could be improved to achieve an increased subtle contrast of pianistic colours.

*Sweet Lullaby* (refer CD 1–tracks 7-9), the third composition of Recital 1, had been the first composition in which the contrived approach was employed during the research process. The devices applied in the contrived version (refer CD 1–track 8) of this composition included: Mode III; superior and inferior resonance; melodic resonance; an exploration of registers; harmonic structures from Mode II including contrary motion; and harmonic structures from Mode III. Overall, this offering of the contrived approach proved to be successful and provided a pleasing outcome. A closer examination offers further insights into of the devices adopted (refer Figure 3).

# Sweet Lullaby

Deanna Djuric

**A**

F#m7/B B7alt F#m7/B B7alt Fm7/Bb Bb7alt Fm7/Bb

F#mi Δ(add,7) Bb7(♭13) F#9 Bb7(♭13) Fmi Δ(add,7) A7(♭13) F9

Mode III Harmonic Structures, Third Transposition Mode III Harmonic Structures, Second Transposition

8 Bb7alt F7 F#7 G#7 F7 C#m7/F# F#7alt C#m7/F# F#7alt

A7(♭13) F13(♯1) F#13 G#13 F13 C#mi Δ(add,7) F7(♭13) C#mi Δ7(add7) F7(♭13)

Inferior Resonance Mode III Harmonic Structures, Second Transposition

**A**

15 F#m7/B B7alt F#m7/B B7alt Fm7/Bb Bb7alt Fm7/Bb

Harmonic Structures similar to first A-section

22 Bb7alt F7 F#7 G#7 F7 C#m7/F# F#7alt C#m7/F# F#7alt

Superior Resonance Melodic Resonance

**B**

29 F7(♯11) Gb7(♯11) F7(♯11) Gb7(♯11) F7(♯11) Gb7(♯11) F7(♯11) Gb7(♯11)

Mode II Harmonic Structures Contrary Motion also serving as Superior and Inferior Resonance

37 Eb7(#11) E7(#11) Eb7(#11) E7(#11) Eb7(#11) E7(#11) Eb7(#11) E7(#11)

45 **A** Ebm7/Ab Ab7alt Ebm7/Ab Ab7alt Fm7/Bb Bb7alt Fm7/Bb

52 Bb7alt F7 F#7 G#7 F7 C#m7/F# F#7alt C#m7/F# F#7alt

Mode III Harmonic Structures, Fourth Transposition

Mode III Harmonic Structures, Second Transposition

Superior Resonance

Mode III Harmonic Structures, Second Transposition

Figure 3 *The contrived version of Sweet Lullaby.*

As Figure 3 shows, Mode III harmonic structures provide the groundwork for the A-sections over which the melody is played. Examples of superior resonance are heard at bars 24 and 54 (refer CD 1-track 8, 0:54 and 1:56), while inferior resonance is heard at bar 10 (refer CD 1-track 8, 0:22). Endeavouring to explore the registers as an extension of existing standard performance practice, the second A-section is taken up the octave (refer Figure 2, bar 15; CD 1-track 8, 0:33). Towards the end of this A-section, the right hand plays the melody as melodic resonance, then quickly drops the register to play the Mode III chords (refer bars 24-28; CD 1-track 8, 0:55).

The bridge provides another example of register exploration. Here at bar 29, the two hands are taken to the upper range of the piano (refer CD 1-track 8, 1:04). It also uses harmonic



structures from Mode II. Contrary motion is then employed at bars 33-34 (refer CD 1–track 8, 1:14), with the two hands separating to the extremities of the keyboard in order to explore how the registers can contribute to the creation of resonance. This idea is utilized once more at bar 53 (refer CD 1–track 8, 1:53) with the hands more than an octave apart which directly contradicts standard performance practice. Exploring the registers in this manner also provided a means of applying superior and inferior resonance as part of the melody, as opposed to simply creating a pianistic effect. The improvised solo continues by superimposing Mode II harmonic structures over Mode III (refer CD 1–track 8, 2:06; Appendix A, page 36, Exercise 12 descending) and continues to employ devices established in the initial statement of the melody.

The contrived approach may be viewed as a contradiction in relation to jazz performance. However, at this point in the project, it was necessary to adopt, as some of the devices such as Mode III proved difficult to apply. This approach also endeavoured to challenge standard performance practice which ultimately contributed to the overall impact of Messiaen's musical language on this study.

The intuitive performance of *Sweet Lullaby* (refer CD 1–track 9) proved to be the climax of the recital. By this point in the recital, an understanding of what was required from the intuitive performance had been reached as the self-talk and thinking began to dissipate. The promise of jazz piano performance that is enhanced and enriched by immersion in Messiaen's musical language clearly emerges from the intuitive performance of *Sweet Lullaby*.

The final composition for Recital 1, *Wouldn't It Be Lovely* (refer CD 1–tracks 10-12), demonstrates beautifully, through the three versions, the journey, method and outcome to this point of the research project. The contrived version (refer CD 1–track 11) provided a strong offering of what is feasible with the devices from the lexicon. Consequently, although it had been premeditated that the A-sections would demonstrate the use of Mode II, what actually occurred during the performance had not been premeditated at all. The form was disregarded during the improvised solo and became modal in nature, making use of Mode II. The improvisation was set up by an inferior resonance, thereby providing a basis for the improvisation to develop from (refer CD 1–track 11, 1:57). The devices from the lexicon were better refined in use and context. A melodic line (refer Figure 4) was taken from Messiaen's

musical language and its shape had been adapted and used as a motif during the improvisation (refer CD 1–track 11, 2:30; also refer Figure 5).

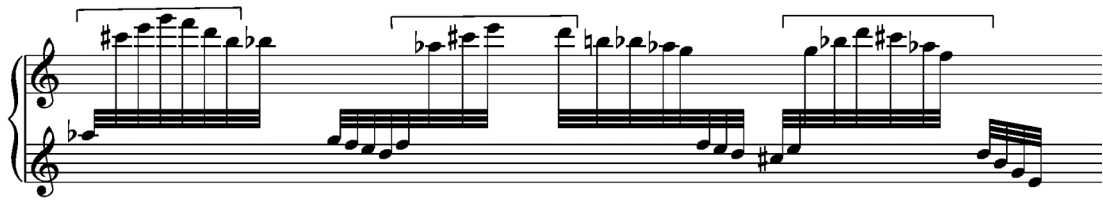


Figure 4 *Bar 35 of Première Communion de la Vierge.*



Figure 5 *Excerpt of improvisation from the contrived version of Wouldn't It Be Lovely.*

It is also exciting to hear the ensemble interaction with the devices. For example, the inferior resonance heard at CD 1–track 11, 3:03 is echoed by the drums at CD 1–track 11, 3:05 and then followed again by the piano at CD 1–track 11, 3:06. From the Messiaen-derived technique, major triads can be heard descending in minor 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals (refer CD 1–track 11, 3:43 and Appendix A, page 34, Exercise 7). Using the actual melody from the A-section of the head provides melodic resonance in minor 9<sup>th</sup> interval (refer CD 1–track 11, 4:34), as heard in *La Colombe* (bars 21 and 22). The effective use of descending Mode II diatonic triads (refer Appendix A, page 34, Exercise 4) can be heard at CD 1–track 11, 4:48. It was a very exciting experience.

It could be argued that perhaps some devices were overused during the improvisation and that there was no logical flow or development of ideas during the solo. However, one of the objectives of the contrived performance was to push the limits of the material without excessive concern for what might later be perceived as success or failure. This improvisation definitely explores the limits of Mode II and other devices, demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of the material.

Upon the commencement of the intuitive performance of *Wouldn't It Be Lovely* (refer CD 1–track 12), there was a new level of uncertainty introduced into the performance that had not occurred previously. On reflection, the contrived version of *Wouldn't It Be Lovely* (refer CD 1–track 11) had moved beyond the planned approach, opening up the form in the improvisation to

a more intuitive performance. Ironically, the intuitive performance remained within the traditional ballad form.

The outcomes achieved through this recital were pleasing. The process of method and journey of the study was documented and the limits of the material explored via performance. As a comparison between the contrived and intuitive versions began, the question of how to balance and blend devices from Messiaen's musical language to jazz piano performance became more crucial to resolve. This led to the next stage in the research project, namely, the search for the middle ground.

#### 4. IN SEARCH OF THE MIDDLE GROUND

The predicament in preparing for Recital 2 was finding the best balance of Messiaen's musical language with jazz piano performance. The search, having become so subjective, seemed to be endless and intimidating as there were no necessarily right or wrong answers. In order to alleviate the inward wrestle of what was enough versus what was too much, the decision was made to have the outcomes for each composition driven by personal aesthetic choice. Some ideas were more effective than others. Thus, additional time will allow the growth and development of this amalgamation. Recital 2 presents the research project at the time of performance.

##### 4.1. Recital 2

The next level of refinement proved to be a challenge. In searching for the middle ground between the musical languages of the jazz pianist and Messiaen, only selected devices from the lexicon would be employed. In addition, the performance would be guided by personal aesthetic choice. Consequently, Messiaen's musical language would become an additional colour to the jazz pianist's palette in Recital 2 and would not be applied in every composition. Further information pertaining to Recital 2 can be found on the Program Notes in Appendix B (refer page 50).

Recital 2	I Love You	Alice In Wonderland	There's Something About That Name	Maria	The Rainbow Connection	So In Love	Steps	Free Improv. /The Peacocks	Messiaen Sketch
Mode II Harmonic Structures	Intro. Head		Outro.		Head	Head Solo: Bridge			
Mode III Harmonic Structures	Head	End of Bridge			Bridge			Free Improv. Head	
Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas					Head	Head			Head Solo
Other Harmonic Structures									
Superior Resonance		Bass solo	Solo		Head		Solo	Free Improv. Head	Drum Solo
Inferior Resonance	Intro.			Head	Head	Ending		Free Improv.	
Parallel Chords	Intro.		Solo					Bridge	
Melodic line through a mode									
Melodic resonance			Solo						
Superimposition	Solo					Head & Solo: Bridge			
Pedal	Head Solo				Head				Head Solo
Conceptual		Bridge	Head In: Tutti Head out: Turning Crystal			Ending		Free Improv.	

Table 2 *Recital 2*

Table 2 (refer page 20) presents the summary of the devices employed in Recital 2. Once again, there are no entries for “other harmonic structures” and “melodic line through a mode.” Clearly, these devices from the initial structure of the lexicon proved difficult to employ at this point in the study, suggesting that perhaps they would be better for future use when time would allow further exploration of their full potential. Table 2 also contains fewer annotations when compared with those appearing in Table 1. This reflects the different objectives of each recital; Recital 1 used the devices as much as possible while Recital 2 was seeking a compromise based on aesthetic choice. There is also an additional row in Table 2 entitled “conceptual.” It was included there to acknowledge the indirect impact of Messiaen’s musical language throughout the project.

The compositions *Maria* (refer CD 2–track 4) and *Steps* (refer CD 2–track 7) were included in the recital to help the audience have a sense of release from any tension that may have been caused by the application of the devices from Messiaen’s musical language. Therefore, use of devices from Messiaen’s musical language was not expected in these compositions. However, one small reference to Messiaen’s musical language did occur in the performance during the melodic statement of *Maria* when a low resonance can be heard (refer CD 2–track 4 at 1:15, 2:17 and 6:56). Messiaen inspired voicings also colour the opening chorus of the improvisation of *Steps* (refer CD 2–track 7, 0:21-0:32).

The works that found the middle ground successfully in this recital were *I Love You* (refer CD 2–track 1), *The Rainbow Connection* (refer CD 2–track 5), *Free Improvisation*, *The Peacocks* (refer CD 2–track 8) and *Messiaen Sketch* (refer CD 2–track 9). To a lesser degree, *There’s Something About That Name* (refer CD 2–track 3) could be deemed as successful. Let us look at these works more closely.

The use of the pedal point in the introduction of *I Love You* (refer CD 2–track 1) enabled the use of superimposition, thereby creating a sense of openness in the performance. The pedal enables effective use of devices and harmonic structures from Mode II.<sup>15</sup> The continuation of the pedal during the improvisation extends the use of Mode II.<sup>16</sup> The pedal also delays the

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<sup>15</sup> Exercise 4 from Appendix A, page 34 can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 0:07. Exercise 8 from Appendix A, page 35, can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 0:19.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Exercise 6 from Appendix A, page 34 can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 3:11; Exercise 1 from Appendix A, page 34 can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 3:31. Exercise 9 from Appendix A, page 35 can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 3:43; Exercise 4 from Appendix A, page 34 can be heard on CD 2–track 1, 3:46.

sense of a walking bass-line which creates a tension that exists for the entire performance. Upon first hearing, it may be preferable to hear the pedal as resolving to a walking bass-line. However, on reflection, the tension creates an interesting ambience.

Messiaen's devices can also be heard during the opening of the solo improvisation in *There's Something About That Name* (refer CD 2-track 3). Melodic resonance (refer CD 2-track 3, 1:31) and harmonic structures from Mode II (refer CD 2-track 3, 1:40) are used before the solo settles into time and form. Setting up the improvisation in this manner proves to be a valid way of incorporating Messiaen's musical language into jazz piano performance. Interestingly, the *tutti* line (refer CD 2-track 3, 1:16 and bars 35-38 of Figure 6) leading into the improvisation was based on a melodic contour which Messiaen himself derived from Moussorgsky's *Boris Godounov* and deemed as "beloved" (Messiaen 1944: 31) (refer to Figure 7).

Figure 6 consists of two musical staves. The top staff is for Piano (Pno.) and shows measures 29 through 34. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb), and a 4/4 time signature. Chords B<sup>A</sup> and Fm7/Bb are indicated above the staff. The music is marked *p misterioso*. The notation includes a series of chords and melodic fragments. Above the staff, the text "Pno Only" is written for the first part and "Bass and Drums In" for the second part. The bottom staff is also for Piano (Pno.) and shows measures 35 through 38. It begins with a bass clef, the same key signature and time signature. The notation shows a descending melodic line in the bass register.

Figure 6 *The tutti line leading into the improvisation.*

Figure 7 shows a single musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains five notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C5, which form a descending minor third interval (Bb-G).

Figure 7 *The five notes which open Moussorgsky's Boris Godounov (Messiaen 1944: 31).*

The improvisation builds up towards the melody's reprise where a conceptual approach from Messiaen's musical language has been employed. Here, the melody consists of descending minor thirds (Bb-G) at bars 1-4, 9-12 and 17-20 (refer Figure 8). Moreover, the reprise of the melody has been reharmonized with jazz harmony, focusing on changing the function of the melodic notes to imitate Messiaen's turning crystal concept as demonstrated in *La Colombe*<sup>17</sup> (refer Figure 9).

<sup>17</sup> Another example can also be found at bar 19 of *La Colombe* (see score page 3).

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 23  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 8 *The reharmonized reprise of There's Something About That Name.*



Figure 9 La Colombe bar 9.

Therefore, the reprise of the melody does not directly apply Messiaen's musical language, but broader impact is implicit. In contrast, the ending lends itself to the application of harmonic structures from Mode II (refer CD 2-track 3, 4:34-4:54, 5:00-5:09). Superior and inferior resonances may also have been added to dramatise of the ending, but were, in this case, neglected. This once again demonstrates the need for intimate familiarity with the material for truly successful integration.

*The Rainbow Connection* (refer CD 2-track 5) successfully captured the new world that had been created via the contrived performances of Recital 1 without totally sacrificing the norm of jazz performance. The introduction utilises inferior resonance, offset by Chord on the Dominant voicings which function as superior resonance (refer Figure 10). This creates a harmonic pedal over which the melody is played. Moving through the varying registers on the piano during the A-sections proved technically challenging.



NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 25  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 10 *The Introduction and A-section of The Rainbow Connection*.<sup>18</sup>

Mode III is employed during the bridge in order to create an esoteric atmosphere and sense of suspension (refer CD 2–track 5, 1:18). The improvisation settles into a somewhat familiar format which provides a sense of release for the listener after such a crafted melodic statement. As the statement of the melody had adequate application of Messiaen’s musical language, it was decided to refrain from using it during the improvisation. *The Rainbow*

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<sup>18</sup> “DC” corresponds to “Chord on the Dominant”. Refer to the DC Harmonic Structures Chart in Appendix A, page 41.

*Connection* is, perhaps, the most successful work to incorporate all aspects of the research journey, creating an outcome that clearly demonstrates the valid contribution that Messiaen's musical language makes to jazz piano performance.

To further extend the pleasing outcomes of the intuitive performances of the first recital, the *Free Improvisation* (refer CD 2–track 8) was included. Again, it was not premeditated or rehearsed with the ensemble. During the performance, the decision was made to give predominance to Mode III and melody. In comparison to Mode II, Mode III has a characteristic sound that is not so common in standard jazz performance. The performance outcome of *Free Improvisation* (refer CD 2–track 8), although an acceptable performance, feels somewhat restrained and conservative. The ideas could have been explored to their full potential.

In another work, *The Peacocks* (refer CD 2–track 8, 5:25), conventional jazz structure was disregarded in light of the preceding free improvisation. The feel and time for *The Peacocks* was played in a *rubato* manner, allowing for freedom as well as attempting to feature the melody. As explained previously, superior resonance is generally used to offset the inferior resonance. This concept was applied in the bridge when the bass plays the melody and, thus, the piano plays superior resonances in Mode II (refer CD 2–track 8, 7:36). The cymbal work from the drums adds to the overall resonance created in the room which was not effectively caught by the recording (refer CD 2–track 8, 6:00, 7:00, 8:59, 9:02). The resonance created by the ensemble once the piece had concluded was that of fragile glass, an atmosphere that left the room ringing (refer CD 2–track 8, 9:15). Perhaps one could liken it to Messiaen's crystals or space imagery or the opening of "Amen de la Création" in *Visions de l'Amen* (bars 1-10). This is another example of the broader impact that Messiaen's musical language had upon this jazz piano performance.

During the course of the research project, the voicings of the Chord of the Dominant (refer Appendix A, page 39), despite bearing a similarity with existing jazz piano voicings, proved to be very interesting, especially for its associated appoggiaturas. Messiaen described them as having a stain-glass window effect (Messiaen 1944: 50). In order to assist with exploring the possibilities of these voicings, *Messiaen Sketch* (refer CD 2–track 9) was composed early in the study as an exercise to search for ways to integrate these harmonic structures. This composition was included in the recital to document the contribution it made to the research process. *Messiaen Sketch*, conventional in its form and function, allowed for scrutiny of the

voicings in a situation that is common to standard jazz practice. The appoggiaturas, however, proved difficult to integrate, but still may contribute to future work. In the performance of *Messiaen Sketch*, the first two voicings from the Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas are used in the introduction in a manner not too dissimilar from a montuno<sup>19</sup> (refer CD 2–track 9, 0:19). The bass provides not only the dominant pedal for the voicings, but also the harmonic structure of the composition. An attempt to use the appoggiaturas in the repeat of the melody is managed (refer CD 2–track 9, 1:01), but their dissonant quality means that they were used minimally. The improvisation then settles into a conventional format (refer CD 2–track 9, 1:29). Due to the minimal use of devices from the lexicon during the melodic statement, perhaps use of devices such as superior, inferior and melodic resonance or superimposition could have been employed during the improvisation. In light of building tension during the solo, this improvisation endeavours to take advantage of the appoggiaturas in a rhythmic manner (refer CD 2–track 2:53). It is partially successful, but requires further refinement in its delivery. It certainly demonstrates a possible and valid contribution to jazz piano performance. As the performance progresses towards the end of the drum solo, superior resonance is appropriated as a means of bringing the ensemble back into the reprise of the melody (refer CD 2–track 9, 3:55). Perhaps use of inferior resonance first would have provided a base for the superior resonance to function more effectively. Once again, the ending proves to be an avenue for the application of Messiaen's musical language (refer CD 2–track 9, 4:42).

*Alice in Wonderland* (refer CD 2–track 2) was included in this recital yet again for its potential as demonstrated in Recital 1. Although it is an acceptable performance, it did not fully satisfy the aim for this second recital. In Recital 1, the contrived version (refer CD 1–track 2) produced an interesting outcome and the intuitive version (refer CD 1–track 3) a less than pleasing one. It was included in Recital 2 with the hope of finding the middle ground between these two versions. It leads one to ask whether the contrived version of Recital 1 provided a valid contribution after all. It certainly was the most successful of the three versions of *Alice in Wonderland* in that it truly captured the sounds of Messiaen while extending further what already exists in jazz.

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<sup>19</sup> A "montuno" can be described as a "traditional, two-measure ostinato piano pattern derived from the *son* style." (Mauleon-Santana, Rebeca. 1999. "A Review of the Clave." *101 Montunos*. CA: Sher Music. 9.)

The final composition of Recital 2 for discussion is *So In Love* (refer CD 2–track 6). The intuitive version from Recital 1 held promise for further development and its inclusion in Recital 2 was to seek a better outcome of the middle ground. Like Recital 1, the bridge still remained a vehicle for the superimposition of devices and harmonic structures from Mode II. For this performance, however, the bridge was borrowed from the contrived version of Recital 1. In hindsight, the bridge of the intuitive version provided a more interesting perspective of the use of harmonic structures from Mode II and could have possibly been further explored during the melody's reprise in Recital 2. Although the straight-8 feel was preserved from the intuitive version (refer CD 1–track 6), due to the long form, the tempo was increased. Consequently, the melody was not featured in the same manner as originally intended in Recital 1. The ending (refer CD 2–track 6, 3:44) was inspired by the opening phrases of bars 1-4 found in *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille* (refer Figure 11 and 12)<sup>20</sup> in terms of its structure, shape and use of inferior resonance.



Figure 11 *Closing phrase of So In Love.*

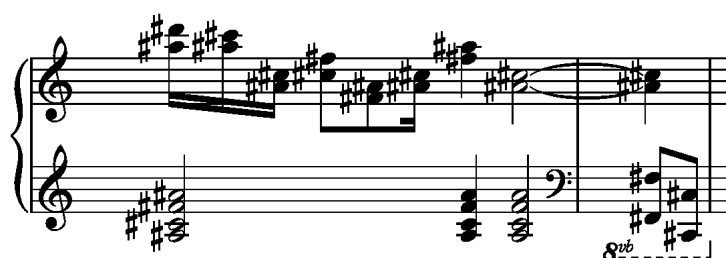


Figure 12 *Opening phrase of Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille bars 1 and 2.*

In this manner, it made a conceptual contribution to the performance. Did the performance of *So in Love* provide any evidence in the search of the middle ground in comparison to the performances of Recital 1? Overall, it was a stronger piano performance, but perhaps a little restrained in the application of Messiaen's musical language in comparison to the intuitive

<sup>20</sup> As opposed to Messiaen's example (refer Figure 12) where the harmony is suspended on the dominant, the closing phrase of Figure 11 employs this device to resolve to the tonic.

version of Recital 1. The intuitive version of Recital 1 provides a much more satisfying result of the possibilities that can be created through the application of Messiaen's musical language.

A number of general conclusions may be drawn from this search for the middle ground. First, the direct use of the devices from the lexicon was not necessarily sufficient to translate the colour of Messiaen's musical language. Second, creating an overall ambience, driven by the resonance of the ensemble, proved to be a valid option in communicating the contribution that Messiaen's musical language could make to jazz piano performance as exemplified in *The Rainbow Connection* (refer CD 2–track 5) and the *Free Improvisation/The Peacocks* (refer CD 2–track 8) performance.<sup>21</sup> Third, time constraints restricted true mastery of the Messiaen-derived technique in all keys.

## 5. CONCLUSION: THE ONGOING PATH OF DISCOVERY IN PERFORMANCE

This research project commenced by asking the question, "Can Messiaen's musical language make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance?" To answer this question, a performance-based process identified a lexicon of devices and established daily technical exercises to develop and integrate an intrinsic vocabulary for improvisation. The integration of more difficult devices, such as Mode III, was assisted by a contrived approach. The search for the middle ground between the languages of Messiaen and jazz occurred through a more intuitive approach.

The project has shown that Messiaen's musical language can make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance. As the discussion has shown, the application of the devices from the lexicon worked well in introductions, endings, pedal points and open solos. However, it is clear that some devices from the lexicon were applied more effectively than others. For example, the harmonic structures from Modes II and III, the Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas, superior and inferior resonance and devices such as parallel chords, melodic resonance, superimposition and arpeggiated pedals proved to be applicable within the context of a live performance. It is also clear that a number of the devices from Mode II, already known to the jazz pianist through use of the Dominant 8-note scale, were extended in this study. By comparison, some devices, such as taking a melodic line through a mode, other harmonic

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<sup>21</sup> It was also evident in Recital 1 during the *Alice in Wonderland* contrived performance (refer CD 1–track 2) and the *Sweet Lullaby* intuitive performance (refer CD 1–track 9).

structures and Messiaen's melodic contours were less effective in recital at this stage of the research project. They await future development.

Upon reflection, Recital 2 was somewhat restrained with its application of Messiaen's musical language, especially in comparison to some of the exciting colours and outcomes explored in the contrived versions of Recital 1 and in the sense of discovery evident in the intuitive performances there. Although there is a sense of Messiaen's musical language throughout Recital 2, often in pleasing and subtle ways, it must be said that some of the contrived offerings from Recital 1 revealed more exciting possibilities for the manner by which Messiaen's musical language contributes to jazz piano performance. It is possible that personal aesthetic decisions may, ultimately, have proved to be a limitation in the successful integration of Messiaen's musical language in Recital 2 due to the need for further mastery of the devices. Nevertheless, both recitals are evidence of the contribution that Messiaen's musical language can make to jazz piano performance.

During the course of recital preparation, one unexpected discovery was that it was unnecessary to strictly use the devices from the lexicon in order to capture Messiaen's musical language. As noted previously, the colour of Messiaen's musical language could also be translated by imitating the overall ambience driven by resonance and the incorporation of the sound-colour relationship of harmony. It brought to light the indirect impact of Messiaen's musical language in that there was an overall change of approach toward voicing, harmonic perception and general sound in the delivery of the performance on a conceptual level. It also suggests another possible contribution that Messiaen's musical language could make to jazz piano performance.

Finally, this research has also revealed that, although interest in Messiaen's musical language does exist amongst jazz musicians, there is little to be found in formal documentation. Thus, it is hoped that the lexicon and the Messiaen-derived technical exercises will provide a resource for jazz pianists.

Needless to say, the journey through Messiaen's musical language has been both enriching and satisfying. It is evident that Messiaen's musical language can make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance and this project has shown its potential for the future.

# APPENDIX A

## Messiaen-derived Technical Exercises for the Jazz Pianist

## MESSIAEN-DERIVED TECHNICAL EXERCISES FOR THE JAZZ PIANIST

### Mode II

Mode II or the Dominant 8-Note Scale is not idiosyncratic to Messiaen alone. It is also found in the music of Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky, while jazz musicians use it as a scale choice for the dominant 7 chord (#11, #9, b9). The scale is constructed of a semitone, tone and is transposable three times. The first transposition commences on C, the second transposition on C# and the third transposition on D. Two diminished 7 chords a tone apart are found within this scale. One can also start the scale on the second degree reversing the intervals to tone, semitone. This version of the scale is referred to as the Diminished Scale.

Messiaen provided a very detailed description of Mode II. He describes the first transposition as:

Blue-violet rocks speckled with little gray cubes, cobalt blue, deep Prussian blue, highlighted by a bit of violet-purple, gold, red, ruby and stars of mauve, black and white. Blue-violet is dominant. (Samuel 1986: 64)

The second transposition is entirely varied from the first:

Gold and silver spirals against a background of brown and ruby-red vertical stripes. Gold and brown are dominant. (Samuel 1986: 64)

The third transposition is portrayed as:

Light green and prairie green foliage, with specks of blue, silver and reddish orange. Dominant is green. (Samuel 1986: 64)

Although these descriptions are expressive in their detail, this researcher does not have the ability to see the colours in the same way. It is hoped that the knowledge and insight of Messiaen's musical mind and an understanding of the sound-colour relationship will eventually directly influence spontaneous choices made during a performance. Nevertheless, the attempt to visualize his descriptions as a means to better understand his language has been an interesting endeavour. In this respect, Nuss cites Messiaen in his unpublished booklet *New Colours for Jazz Improvisation: An Approach to the Modes of Olivier Messiaen*:

I believe that most people are in possession of a kind of sixth sense, which makes them feel the relationship sound-colour on a subconscious level that they cannot understand. They do not have to see the colours as I do! The main thing is: these two senses are connected. (Cited in Nuss 2000: 2)



Messiaen states that Mode II has three transpositions. It is therefore possible to have only three overall colours for each of the transpositions. When developing technical work to facilitate the usage of Mode II in a spontaneous manner during a performance for this study, however, the exercises were designed to be transposed through twelve keys. As Mode II is a dominant 7 chord with a (#11), (#9) and (b9), this scale is viewed predominantly as a V function chord. Mode II is considered as the twelve tones divided into three groups of four related by a minor third i.e. C-Eb-Gb-A, Db-E-G-Bb and D-F-Ab-B. The exercises are derived from a combination of pre-existing exercises from the jazz vocabulary, Messiaen's *The Technique of my Musical Language* (1944), the composition *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille* (1944) and Hubert Nuss (2000).

## Mode II

NOTE:

This music score is included on pages 34-36 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

### Mode III

The intervallic construction of Mode III is that of tone, semitone, semitone and is transposable four times. The first transposition commences on C, the second transposition commences on Db, the third transposition on D and finally, the fourth transposition on Eb. Whereas Mode II can be considered as diminished, Mode III is often referred to as augmented. The twelve tones are divided into four groups of three related by a major third i.e. C-E-Ab, Db-F-A, D-Gb-Bb and Eb-G-B. Although it is difficult to isolate the function of the scale, the chords found within the scale are the dominant 7 (b13), the minor major 7 (add b7) and the half diminished (major 9).

Although Messiaen does not provide a description of colour for all the transpositions of this Mode, he believes that the second transposition is the best mode. He describes it as follows:

Horizontally layered stripes: from bottom to top, dark gray, mauve, light gray and white with mauve and pale yellow highlights – with flaming gold letters of an unknown script and a quantity of little red or blue arcs that are very thin, very fine, hardly visible. Dominant are gray and mauve. (Cited in Samuel 1986: 64)

This scale and its harmonic structures have proven to be a challenge to use spontaneously during performance and, thus, were used in a somewhat contrived manner. In order to assist recognition and recall, a system influenced by Nuss' approach was established in which each harmonic structure from Mode III was identified as either dominant 7 (b13), the minor major 7 (add b7) or the half diminished (major 9) and related within its grouping.

The exercises are derived from Messiaen's *The Technique of my Musical Language* (1944) and, due to their difficulty, are at this stage practised only in the four transpositions rather than all twelve keys. Messiaen claims that the Chord of Resonance includes all the notes of Mode III (Messiaen 1944: 50), but in actual fact it is missing one note. Exercise 4 includes the missing note on the Chord of Resonance and is transposed through twelve keys.

## Mode III

NOTE:

This music score is included on pages 34-36 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

### Chord on the Dominant

The Chord on the Dominant (hereafter referred to as DC) contains all notes of the major scale built upon the dominant of the tonic. This is regularly utilized with its transpositions over a common bass note. A simplified example may be C major in root position, or Ab major in first inversion to F major in second inversion (Grahams Vol. 2 1978: 120). For example,



Figure 1 *A simplified example of transpositions over a common bass note.*

Messiaen also employs the DC and its transpositions over a common bass note with appoggiaturas which he describes as “multicolour work, bring forth an effect of a stained-glass window” (1944: 50). The appoggiaturas may also be used as added notes to create new structures. The DC and its transpositions are structures that are not dissimilar to those already existing in jazz. However, it is worthy to note that Messiaen was using these structures from as early as the 1930s. This is, without doubt, far earlier usage of such structures than in jazz piano performance.

For the purpose of this study, the structures of DC and its transpositions were identified as DC 1, DC 2, DC 3, DC 4 and DC 5, as well as a corresponding chord quality and function in jazz terminology. A chart was compiled to illustrate the possibilities for use of the structures as individual voicings. The technical exercises developed for the DC include transposing the structures through twelve keys, transposing the DC and its transpositions as a harmonic progression through twelve keys, as well as repeating the process with the associated appoggiaturas. More specifically, the x-axis presents DC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 as the position and intervallic structure of the chord in the progression created by Messiaen (refer Appendix A, Exercise 2, page 40). By comparison, the y-axis presents the Roman numerals as the possible chord function within the context of jazz harmony. Each of the staves correlating with the y-axis contains the chord quality.

## Chord on the Dominant

NOTE:

This music score is included on page 40 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

## DC Harmonic Structures Chart

NOTE:

This music score is included on pages 41 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

### Other Harmonic Structures

Messiaen created numerous harmonic structures and clusters. For example, as found in bars 26 and 30 of *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille* (see Figure 2).

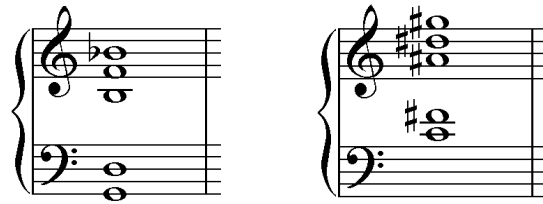


Figure 2 *Bars 26 and 30 of Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille.*

Such structures are already in consistent use in jazz and have been avoided. One notable exception is *The Chord in Fourths* which contains all notes of Mode V (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 *The scale of Mode V.*

The chord can be identified as C major 7 with a suspended 4<sup>th</sup> (#9) and (#11). This structure, transposed through 12 keys was added to the daily exercises. Sadly, due to the time constraint of the project, this structure was not utilized during the recitals, but reserved for future use.



## Other Harmonic Structures

Chord in Fourths - play through 12 keys



Messiaen, Olivier. *Technique de Mon Langage Musical Vol. 2*. (Trans. John Satterfield, Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1944), example 213.

### Superior and Inferior Resonance

Superior and inferior resonances can be generalised as harmonic structures or clusters used at the extreme registers of the keyboard. Their function seems to be not so much melodic as it is orchestral and provides timbral interest. Using these concepts, one may create an improvised version of superior and inferior resonance. An excellent example, however, can be found in bar 30 of *Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille*. This example provided the basis from which other superior resonances can be improvised. Another important structure to consider is the Chords of Contracted Resonance found in *Visions de l'Amen* (refer Example 2, page 45).

Six examples of superior resonance and two examples of inferior resonance from Messiaen's piano works were identified for application in improvisation.

# Superior Resonance

Example 1

Messiaen, Olivier. "Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bar 31.

## Chords of Contracted Resonance

Example 2

Messiaen, Olivier. "Amen des Étoiles, de la Planète à l'Anneau" *Visions de l'Amen*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1943. Page 20, bar 2.

Example 3

Messiaen, Olivier. "Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bars 12 & 16.

Example 4

Messiaen, Olivier. "Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bars 57 & 61.

Example 5

Messiaen, Olivier. "Je Dors, Mais Mon Coeur Veille" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bar 67.

Example 6

Messiaen, Olivier. "Première Communion de la Vierge" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bar 35.

Messiaen-derived Technical Exercises for the Jazz Pianist  
 Superior Resonance  
 Deanna Djuric

# Inferior Resonance

Example 1



Musical notation for Example 1, showing a piano exercise in bass clef. The notation includes a complex rhythmic pattern with a sharp sign (#) and a fermata over a note.

Messiaen, Olivier. "Première Communion de la Vierge" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bar 16.

Example 2



Musical notation for Example 2, showing a piano exercise in bass clef. The notation includes a flat sign (b) and a fermata over a note.

Messiaen, Olivier. "Première Communion de la Vierge" *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus*. Paris: Durand & Cie, 1944. Bar 20.

Messiaen-derived Technical Exercises for the Jazz Pianist  
Inferior Resonance  
Deanna Djuric

# APPENDIX B

## Recital Program Notes

## *Messiaen's Musical Language for the Jazz Pianist: An Exploration through Performance*

Deanna Djuric  
Master of Music -- Music Performance (Jazz)  
Elder Conservatorium of Music,  
The University of Adelaide

Recital 1 (Live Recording)  
Saturday 9 May 2009



The purpose of this research project has been to explore whether Messiaen's musical language can make a valid contribution to jazz piano performance. It investigates the musical language of Olivier Messiaen, specifically within his piano works. It explores how the researcher's musical performance as a jazz pianist can be enhanced and enriched by exposure and immersion in this language. Thus, the broader aim of this project is to further enrich what already exists for the jazz pianist by applying elements of sound, colour and texture found in Messiaen's timbral structures and pianistic effects to the jazz repertoire.

Today's performance will demonstrate and document the musical development to this stage of the research process. It will include use of Messiaen's harmonic structures from Mode II, Mode III, the Chord on the Dominant and its appoggiaturas, superior resonance, inferior resonance and superimposition.

The repertoire will be performed in three takes. The first take will be performed as a *control*, with which the proceeding takes can be compared. The *control* take will be the performance of the piece as it may have been performed prior to the commencement of this research project. In order to assist the process of immersion, a portion of the research project was dedicated to crafting the findings into existing song structures. This process has been dubbed the *contrived* take. Essentially, jazz is an improvised music, so this process conflicts with the genre. Nonetheless, the *contrived* nature of the study was necessary in building the language into the performance. A *contrived* take will, therefore, then be presented. Once the *contrived* stage of the study began to take shape, the performance began to include aspects of Messiaen's musical language intuitively. I will, therefore, also present an *intuitive* take today. This take will document what comes through the performance naturally.

## Repertoire:

Alice In Wonderland

Fain/Hilliard

For the *contrived* version of this piece, I have focused on the use of harmonic structures from Mode III and the superimposition of those structures under the melody.

So In Love

Porter

This piece was stripped back to just the melody and lyrics at the commencement of constructing the *contrived* take. Messiaen's approach towards melody is what inspired the simplicity of this arrangement; the melody is to reign supreme. There are uses of harmonic structures from Mode II in the bridge and the final section contains Chord on the Dominant and appoggiaturas.

Sweet Lullaby

Djuric

This piece was the first one to go through the *contrived* process. The objective was to apply the harmonic structures from Mode III to piano performance. There are also uses of the harmonic structures from Mode II along with superior and inferior resonance. Graphic notation was originally used in the plotting out of this piece to assist with use of piano range in a manner similar to Messiaen.

Wouldn't It Be Lovely

Lerner/Loewe

Use of superimposition dominates the *contrived* version of this piece. The superimposition is a self-contained unit over which the melody is placed, however, the bridge is unaffected. There are uses of the harmonic structures from Mode II and the Chord on the Dominant.

### *EMU Recording Studio*

*Drums: Mario Marino*

*Bass: Sam Riley*

*Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall*

*Messiaen's Musical Language for the Jazz Pianist:  
An Exploration through Performance*

Deanna Djuric  
Master of Music -- Music Performance (Jazz)  
Elder Conservatorium of Music,  
The University of Adelaide



Recital 2 (Live Recording)  
Saturday 29 August 2009

In Search of the Middle Ground:

Messiaen's musical language and its incorporation into the language of the jazz pianist has been the focal point in the development of repertoire for the two recitals of this Master's degree. The driving force behind the preparation of this second recital has been the search for the middle ground between jazz piano performance and Messiaen's musical language. Today's recital does not mark the end of the journey, but is one of a new beginning. It serves to document the outcomes of this research project to date as part of a never-ending path of discovery and immersion, which will continue to be cultivated and nurtured over time.

Further to the methodology established and demonstrated through performance in the first recital, this second recital aims to extend from the outcomes established. In contrast to the first recital, where the material was presented three times to illustrate the research process, the purpose of this performance is to extract the findings from the previous recital and present them within the context of a 60-minute jazz piano trio performance. This aesthetic decision thus uses Messiaen's musical language in a limited manner, as applying it to every piece has the potential to make all the works sound too similar for the listener. In this second recital, aspects of Messiaen's musical language will only be applied as an additional colour to the jazz pianist's palette.

Essentially, the rationale behind choosing the repertoire was to create a performance that expresses who I am as a jazz pianist and enable the effective usage of devices from Messiaen's musical language. Thus, the ultimate objective of this research project is to create a 'voice' or 'colour' that is unmistakably identified as my own.

The expected impact of this research project was to enrich the jazz pianist's palette through the addition of devices from Messiaen's musical language. The broader impact on my own work as



a jazz pianist through undertaking this research project was unexpected; the new-found knowledge of Messiaen's musical language has caused me to think differently about the approach to the repertoire, the instrument, jazz concepts and practices.

## Repertoire:

I Love You

Porter

This work lends itself to the use of pedal points for which devices from Mode II can be applied.

Alice In Wonderland

Fain/Hilliard

This composition has been included once again on the program with the objective of refining development explored in the first recital and to further extend the search for a middle ground between the two languages.

There's Something About That Name

Gaither

While there may not be any direct usage of Messiaen's musical language, this work does contain a perspective of Messiaen's 'stain-glass window' concept. The minor thirds that are prevalent in the melody have been re-harmonized in the re-statement of the melody so that the note's vertical context changes every time, thereby giving a kaleidoscopic effect. Messiaen also gleaned inspiration from the simplicity of plainsong. This church song has been chosen for the same inspiration.

Maria

Bernstein/Sondheim

This piece has no intentional use of Messiaen's musical language. In order to avoid the repertoire sounding alike, the aesthetic decision was made to use Messiaen's musical language in a limited manner in the program, utilising it as an additional colour within the context of a performance.

### The Rainbow Connection

Williams/Ascher

A recurring harmonic pedal incorporating inferior and superior resonances occurs, for the most part, in the A-sections. The bridge utilises Mode III while the final six bars make use of Mode II inspired voicings.

### So In Love

Porter

This piece was included in my first recital. I felt that the *intuitive* performance held potential for development and, thus, it has been included in today's recital. Messiaenesque voicings can be identified in the bridge.

### Steps

Corea

The modality of the piece has the potential for uses of superior/inferior resonances and harmonic structures from Mode II and Mode III.

### Free Improvisation

Djuric/Marino/Riley

In the spirit of the *intuitive* performance from the first recital, this free improvisation which is not pre-meditated or rehearsed, will be an opportunity to record the intuitive nature of the research project.

### The Peacocks

Rowles

The melody sings for itself. Harmonic structures from Mode II and Mode III as well as superior and inferior resonance will be utilised.

### Messiaen Sketch

Djuric

This piece was composed very early in the research project in order to explore the Chord on the Dominant. It has been performed at the Postgraduate Masterclasses during the candidature and today is an opportunity to finally document and record it.

### *EMU Recording Studio*

*Drums: Mario Marino*

*Bass: Sam Riley*

*Sound Engineer: Peter Dowdall*

*Supervisors: Dr. Kimi Coaldrake, Bruce Hancock*

*Special thanks: Dr. Graham Williams, Lynne Arriale*

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