



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

Olivier Messiaen, a French composer and organist, wrote *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* in the winter of 1940-41 while a prisoner of war at Stalag VIIIA prison camp in Görlitz, Germany (present-day Zgorzelec, Poland). Drafted into the French army at the outset of World War II, Messiaen was captured by the Germans in May 1940. While held at Stalag VIIIA, Messiaen met fellow prisoner-musicians, clarinetist, Henri Akoka, violinist, Jean le Boulaire, and cellist, Étienne Pasquier. The prison guards allowed Messiaen to keep a few of his scores, and provided him with paper, pencils, and erasers. Messiaen first composed the *Intermède*, and later wrote the other seven movements around it to complete *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*. Messiaen filled out the quartet as the pianist. A devout Catholic, Messiaen wrote that *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* was inspired by the following text from the *Book of Revelation* (Rev. 10:1-2, 5-7, King James Version): "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire... and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.... And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever ... that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished...." Performing on decrepit instruments, Messiaen, Akoka, Boulaire, and Pasquier premiered *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* outside in the rain at Stalag VIIIA on January 15, 1941 to an audience of a couple hundred fellow prisoners and guards.

Messiaen provided the descriptions to each movement in the preface to his score. Included in this program are the translations of his text.

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Doctoral Recital

Kathryn Brunhaver, cello

Colleen White, clarinet

with

Valerie Nelson, violin

Eduardo Moreira, piano

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts In Cello Performance and Clarinet Performance

Kathryn Brunhaver is a student of Steven Pologe
Colleen White is a student of Louis DeMartino

Beall Concert Hall
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 6:00 p.m.



Quatuor pour la fin du Temps (1940-41)
(Quartet for the End of Time)

Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)

I. Liturgie de cristal (Crystal Liturgy)

Between three and four in the morning, the awakening of birds: a solo blackbird or nightingale improvises, surrounded by a shimmer of sound, by a halo of trills lost very high in the trees. Transpose this onto a religious plane and you have the harmonious silence of Heaven.

II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Vocalise, for the Angel who announces the end of Time)

The first and third sections (very short) evoke the power of the mighty Angel, crowned with a rainbow and clothed by a cloud, who sets one foot upon the sea and one foot upon the earth. In the middle section – these are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. On the piano, gentle cascades of blue-orange chords, garlanding with their distant carillon the quasi-plainsong chanting of the violin and cello.

III. Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of the Birds)

Clarinet solo. The abyss is Time, with its sorrows and its weariness. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and joyful songs!

IV. Intermède (Interlude)

A scherzo of more superficial character than the other movements, but linked to them nonetheless by melodic reminiscences.

V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus (Praise to the Eternity of Jesus)

Jesus is here considered as the Word. A long phrase for the cello, infinitely slow, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of this powerful and gentle Word, 'which the years can never efface'. Majestically, the melody unfolds in a kind of tender and supreme distance. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God, and the Word was God.'

VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes (Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets)

Rhythmically the most characteristic piece of the set. The four instruments in unison are made to sound like gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the apocalypse followed by various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announcing the consummation of the mystery of God). The use of added values, augmented or diminished rhythms, and non-retrogradable rhythms. Music of stone, fearful granite sonorities; the irresistible movement of steel, enormous blocks of purple fury, of icy intoxication. Listen above all to the terrible fortissimo of the theme in augmentation and the changes in register of its different notes, towards the end of the piece.

VII. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Tangle of rainbows, for the Angels who announces the end of Time)

Certain passages from the second movement return. The mighty Angel appears, and above all the rainbow which crowns him (the rainbow: a symbol of peace, wisdom and of all sounding and luminous vibrations). In my dreams, I hear recognized chords and melodies, I see known colors and forms; then, after this transitory stage, I pass beyond reality and submit in ecstasy to a dizziness, a gyratory interlocking of superhuman sounds and colors. These swords of fire, these flows of blue-orange lava, these sudden stars; this is the tumult of rainbows!

VIII. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus (Praise to the Immortality of Jesus)

A long violin solo, acting as a pendant to the cello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second eulogy? It is addressed more specifically to the second aspect of Jesus – the man Jesus – to the Word made flesh, resurrected immortally to grant us life. It is all love. Its slow ascent towards the extreme high register is the ascent of man towards his God, of the Child of God towards his Father, of the deified Being towards Paradise.