TRADITION AND INVENTION IN THE MUSIC OF HENRI DUTILLEUX

Part I

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TRADITION AND INVENTION IN THE MUSIC OF HENRI DUTILLEUX

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This study of the music of Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013) tracks a subtle trajectory: that of a composer whose lengthy career of slow, careful innovation was both tempered and informed by a firm grounding in the musical traditions of Europe, and of his native France. His approach resulted in a modest but exquisite body of work. By viewing his work through varied lenses and in different contexts, one aims to describe that approach, and eventually to contend with questions of his musical style.

By inferring a larger linearity of language between the music of this period and his later work, the first part, ending with the Second Symphony of the late 1950s, challenges the view of the young composer as unoriginal and derivative.

The second part is a detailed view of his explorations in form, harmony and narrative in two pieces from the 1970’s: Sur une meme accord, a short prelude for piano, and the string quartet Ainsi la nuit. By viewing the first piece as preparation for the second, his major chamber work, in the context of a workshop setting, we see the impact of Proust’s influential ideas take musical shape.
A view of his progression and developments on the orchestral plane, the final part is primarily concerned with two works from the 1970s: the cello concerto *Tout un monde lointain…*, and *Timbres, espace, mouvement* for orchestra. By articulating the change from a closed-form design to one of self-reference and interconnectivity, this study observes the changes in his musical language that continued through his mature work.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Reno, NV in 1979, Sean Shepherd recently completed his tenure as the Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow of the Cleveland Orchestra, culminating with the premiere of *Tuolumne* in April 2013, written for Franz Welser-Möst and the orchestra. After residencies with the Reno Philharmonic (2010-12) and Cleveland (2011-13), he currently serves as the New York Philharmonic’s first Kravis Emerging Composer. Other recent performances include those with the National, BBC and New World symphony orchestras, at festivals in Aldeburgh, Heidelberg, La Jolla, Lucerne, Santa Fe, and Tanglewood, and with leading European ensembles including Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, the Asko | Schönberg Ensemble and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Conductor-champions include Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert and Welser-Möst; composer-conductors Oliver Knussen and George Benjamin; and Pablo Heras-Casado, Susanna Mälkki and Matthias Pintscher. His recent orchestral work, *Magiya*, written for Carnegie Hall’s newly established National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America, toured the US and Europe in summer 2013 in the orchestra’s first performances, with Gergiev. Recent chamber commissions include those for the St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble and the Claremont Trio for performances in New York and opening of the Renzo Piano-designed addition to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

In 2011, Shepherd was named as the USA Van Dusen Fellow by United States Artists, winner of the 2009 triennial Benjamin H. Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he was the 2008 Deutsche Bank
Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin, and a first-prize winner in the 2005 international Lutoslawski Award. He attended masterclasses at Tanglewood (2005) and Aspen (2006), the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme (2007), and a Fall 2007 composer residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France. He was a top prizewinner in student competitions including the Robbins Family Prize at Cornell, the Palmer Dixon Prize at Juilliard and the Indiana University Dean's Award, and earned awards and commissions from organizations such as the Sue Knussen Composers Fund, ASCAP, the National Society of Arts and Letters, Ensemble X, and the New York Youth Symphony. His education includes degrees in composition and bassoon performance from Indiana University, and a master's degree from The Juilliard School. His music is published by Boosey & Hawkes.
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When considering the body of work of French composer Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013), from his early pieces as a student at the Paris Conservatoire in the 1930s through to works completed in 2009, any commentator would note a slow, steady, even subtle musical trajectory. Like many composers born before or between the First and Second World Wars, one may easily link that path to larger political developments and draw obvious connections to both his wartime experiences and to the short- and long-term effects of such societal upheaval at an especially sensitive period in his (then young) artistic life. One may also easily categorize the young Dutilleux and his early education in the French Conservatoire system of the 1930s as the product of a rigorous technical training combined with a loosely-defined set of stylistic (and nationalistic) dogmas. The successful culmination of that training, his planned four-year stay at the Villa Medici as the 1938 winner of the Prix de Rome, was cut short after 4 months due to the deteriorating political situation in 1939, and soon after, Dutilleux found himself a soldier. Thrown by global events off a tradition-bound, institutionally sanctioned path to prominence, he returned to a changed Paris and began an incremental, individual, even self-contradictory
search for new avenues of musical expression, while never leaving his training and habits far behind.

With certain qualifications, many articles and monographs concerning Dutilleux’s music place the orchestral suite *Métaboles* of 1964 as the first representative work of his so-called stylistic maturity.\(^1\) While similarities of technique, expression and musical narrative may in fact appear in Dutilleux’s (predominantly orchestral) output since the 1960s, to define any composer’s stylistic “maturity” is to imply that a stylistic immaturity was somehow overcome. The notion of maturity serves the overly reductive myth that one’s work will improve or stabilize with age and experience; Mendelssohn, Tolstoy, Ginsberg, Brando, Stockhausen and the Rolling Stones could be arguably be held as examples of artists whose most relevant or significant work was not at the end of their life. Dutilleux himself has further complicated the matter by refusing the publication and performance of many works composed before the Second Symphony (1955-9), including the ballet *Le Loup*, specifically because he does not find them to be representative of his output.

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Biographers have ascribed this reticence to a notorious self-criticism and high personal standard, but remembering two conditions that applied to many composers working at mid-century in varied guises might provide a closer insight. The first, which Dutilleux discussed with Claude Glayman at some length, was the lack of access to a wide contemporary repertoire and exposure to the music of composers outside of France, including that of Bartók, Berg, Schoenberg, Hindemith and Prokofiev, before (as a result of official Conservatoire teaching policies) and during the Second World War.

From 1945 all this music suddenly reappeared in France together...It was certainly a rich diet, but it presented a danger. It was both too late and too much all at once. The risk, for young composers like us, was that we might take the most striking elements from this composer and that, and effectively turn into eclectics.

One is reminded of far more extreme postwar versions of this phenomenon for composers such as Witold Lutosławski in Poland and György Ligeti in Hungary. Yet, also remarkable in the cases of Ligeti and Lutosławski was the revolutionary scale of the change in their music after coming into contact with the existing work of those such as Cage and Stockhausen in the late 1950s, a type of radical transformation that Dutilleux never underwent. One could even argue in the case of the Eastern Bloc composers that the lengthy, devastating isolation they endured, when coupled with the rush of new

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3 Ibid., 21.
information, propelled their experimentation into sharper, more poignant focus. While his sense of experimentation was more tempered (perhaps by inverse deduction; his experiences working as a producer at Radio France provided him with a constant view of the latest developments both domestic and international), Dutilleux’s work leading up to *Métaboles* is not apologetic or circumspect; his Second Symphony, when judged on its own merits, can fairly be called his first masterpiece.

Another facet of his resistance to his earliest work’s presence (which we are reminded is significant: the Sonatine for Flute and Piano, a *pièce de concours* from 1942, remains, to his irritation, his most-performed and most-recorded work) in his catalogue could have roots much closer to home. He stands far from center in a specifically French definition of the composer prodigy, a complicated concept which had been long promoted by both educators and the Parisian musical establishment: if his first stylistically representative piece truly didn’t emerge until Dutilleux was 49, he was nothing if not a late bloomer. When one compares him to his major influences, like Ravel, whose *Menuet Antique* was completed age 20, or even his closer contemporaries such as Messiaen (with his piano *Préludes* finished at 19) or Boulez (barely 30 when *Le Marteau sans maître* was premiered), Dutilleux’s twenty-year period—roughly the 1940s and ‘50s—of incremental shifts and refinements in his musical expression may appear plodding or unengaged. Like his
contemporaries such as Lutosławski or Elliott Carter, his widening influence in his home country in the 1970s and ‘80s might have surprised those whose viewpoint that the truest talent was found in early bloom or those who believed in a system that was committed to cultivating that talent would surely enable just rewards as quickly as possible, as it had in France before with great success. Even though his slow yet sure-footed evolution toward what he considers his veritably original work also more closely represents the typical trajectory of composers of later generations, perhaps he still bristles at the idea of his long steep: processing influences, developing his craft, gradually taking on more ambitious projects. Only in retrospect can he (or we) attempt to draw lines between work in development and work fully developed.

Meanwhile, also in Paris, the years between 1940 (Dutilleux’s demobilization and return to Paris) and 1965 (the Cleveland premiere of Métaboles) bore witness to massive changes in French cultural and musical life, many of which were directly tied to the political realities of a changed post-war France. As Dutilleux discussed, the meager, unstable cultural presence in occupied Paris gave way to a huge influx of information, with the Vichy Government-nationalized Radio France reorganized as free (in 1944) and leading the charge in music by broadcasting programming that promoted both French music and a wide survey from abroad. Dutilleux himself was
hired as one of the first radio producers after the war and was charged with commissioning composers and organizing performances until his resignation in 1963 to commit to full-time composition. In this capacity, he was kept aware and often in close contact with the hotbed of activity in Paris: Pierre Schaeffer’s early electronic experiments, which evolved into musique concrète; and the teachings of Olivier Messiaen and René Leibowitz about the Second Viennese School — one one of whose pupils, Pierre Boulez, was to become a musico-political force unto himself, and one with whom everyone in France, Dutilleux included, would eventually have to reckon. He was around age 30 when he read Leibowitz’s books and occasionally attended his public lectures, but confessed to be more curious about the music that Leibowitz played and promoted than the commentary itself. Dutilleux says that he “came from a different part of the musical world,”⁴ but it is at this time, in the late 1940s, that the short age gaps—about seven years between Messiaen and Dutilleux and nine between the latter and Boulez—separate these composers into distinct generations. Consider 1948, the year that Messiaen’s Turangalîla-Symphonie, Dutilleux’s Piano Sonata and Boulez’s Second Piano Sonata were completed. Messiaen and Boulez, teacher and student (and both system-minded composers), were driving headlong toward total serialism, with Messiaen’s Mode de valeur et d’intensités and Boulez’s work toward Structures, Livre I following in the next years. Dutilleux’s Sonata, his largest statement so

⁴ Glayman, trans. Nichols, Mystery and Memory, 32
far, was downright traditional by comparison: fluctuating between tonal and modal palettes, in a standard, three-movement idiom (though not without its formal sophistication), and with nods more seemingly aimed at pieces by Dukas and Fauré than his contemporaries, the Sonata seemed to put him worlds apart from certain contemporaries at the time. As Dutilleux sees it:

I have often felt the ten-year gap between me and the generation of 1925 as a kind of break, perhaps because of the war but also because I followed the path of official teaching. My evolution was already well in hand at the time this break happened; and here I’m speaking of the upheaval caused in so many young composers by the revelation of the twelve-tone system. Basically, if we leave aside any question of sensibility, I think I could easily have become, for a short time, a serialist composer—a phrase one hardly hears pronounced these days!—if I consider a certain orientation of thinking, a sort of rigor which chimed quite well with my temperament. … For the composers of that generation serialism was a way of finding themselves and of avoiding certain influences. I’m thinking of the pupils of Messiaen, and how it was Messiaen himself who encouraged them to go to Leibowitz. In my case, my evolution was already in progress, so the problem was a different one. My main reservation over this twelve-tone technique has always been that I could not really accept the basic principle of abolishing all hierarchies between the different degrees of the chromatic scale.\(^5\)

Dutilleux’s main compositional concerns and insecurities at the time, on the technical, aesthetic and even emotive fronts, seem to lie elsewhere, often revolving around questions of “Frenchness” in music and other art. While he is eager to celebrate the pinnacles of French art and to extol his heroes, be they Ravel or Proust or Delacroix, the quintessentially or stereotypically French facets of his music appear to plague him. He claims that as early as

1940, in his first year after returning to Paris, “I had already come to feel that in my future works I should have to keep my distance from a certain spirit in French music, defined by the worlds of clarity, charm, elegance, balance.”6 He describes his work on the Sonata for Piano eight years later as “from a period when I was busy trying to find my own voice. I wanted to move gradually towards working in larger forms, and not to be satisfied with short pieces—to get away, if you like, from a way of writing that was ‘typically French.’”7 We may assume that one level of his anxieties may be rooted in his distaste at the time for the “modern” contemporary musical diet, including hearty helpings of the work of Les Six and the neo-classical Stravinsky, a diet he and all of Paris was fed in his student years. However, his questions regarding received notions of a traditional national musical character and his relationship to it never appear to fade after this period, even after his voice (and its megaphone) had been solidified. Yet, despite these certain efforts, his attempt to position himself as an outsider (or: his reluctance to accept himself as an insider) is not absolute. In describing the Sonata, he reflects on “a kind of sensuality in the harmony. It is a constant in my style and a constant in French music in general. Harmonic sensuality has always been claimed as a characteristic of French music.”8 Furthermore, his conflicted attitudes about his influences give rise to contradictions: when describing his First Symphony, he mentions

7 Ibid., 29.
8 Ibid., 29.
the work’s multiple preoccupations with the concept of formal symmetry, which play out over broad dimensions, summing up, “Overall, I prefer the language of my Second Symphony, but I’m still attached to the First for its sense of balance.” Here, we are expected to differentiate, from the superficial and over-generalized French sense of balance that he aimed to avoid, his personal and carefully-wrought symphonic designs. In this case, it’s Dutilleux’s balance, not France’s. Also notable is the fact that this attitude had merely hardened in him with age; the more French he appeared (especially to outsiders), the more he did protest.

I should like to be quite specific about the fact that I’m a little suspicious about being always presented as a quintessentially French composer. My reaction is a rather defensive one against a ready-made view of French music that is particularly prevalent outside France. People always advance the same notions of balance, elegance and wit that seem to me highly restrictive.  

We should take the creator’s views seriously. We may also observe this sense of distancing and unease as a crucial component of Dutilleux’s incremental advances, French or otherwise, toward the better defined, more personal set of techniques and expressions that emerged over the course of his “early” work. With ever-sharpening focus, he spent these twenty-plus years doggedly honing in on something rather specific while, for the time being, the wider world seemed content to spin right around him.

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9 Glayman, trans. Nichols, Mystery and Memory, 35.

10 Ibid., 99.
When regarding Dutilleux’s music of this period, commentators like Daniel Humbert and Caroline Potter approach the issue of originality in a blunt manner, perhaps following the composer’s lead on the issue. Discussing these 20 to 30 years as a progressive narrative, noting greater sophistication in each new piece, one can easily conclude that Dutilleux improved, and in doing so that his music thus became more relevant. By removing the issue of originality as an analytic obstacle, and by separating (though noting with due respect) an investigation of his avenues of musical expression from likely sources, it is possible to discuss this music in a different series of narratives. In so doing, by highlighting often subtle changes in musical habit individually, one aims to articulate a different clarity. Also, in scrutinizing specific threads running through these pieces, one may also draw authentic connections between the music of this period and his later works, in the interest of inferring a larger linearity of language—one based on the composer’s evolving techniques as well as his evolving style. In the domains of harmony, gesture, rhythm and instrumental technique, one sees a craftsman in increased control of widening horizons: the language simultaneously expands and concentrates, even while the composer’s fundamental musical fascinations are somehow revealed to be similar in 1940 and 1965. The conversation with regard to Dutilleux’s earliest music may be most interesting by looking not at what it followed, but toward where it led.
Dutilleux’s training in harmony and counterpoint, with Victor Gallois in Douai as a boy and with Jean and Noël Gallon at the Conservatoire, formed the likely base of the harmonic procedures one finds in the work of this time, appearing most obviously before the First Symphony. The four concours pieces of the 1940s are written in a largely tonal idiom, following specific, key-driven formal plans, with mostly expected global outcomes. In these short, character-driven, “utilitarian”\textsuperscript{11} works for solo instrument and piano, usually minor-key or modal openings (always with piano in the murky bass clef, solo) give way, over the course of two or three often connected movements, to the triumphant, often closely related major. The Sonatine for Flute and Piano from 1943, for example, starts in D minor, ending in the relative F major, and its counterpart for trombone, the Chorale, Cadence et Fugato from 1950 starts in a weak E major and ends in the same place, but later leaving no doubts about its certainty. However, beyond these traditional plans, one can see some early germinations of his harmonic curiosity, which he credits the legendary Jean Gallon with attempting to draw out, stating, “he managed to awaken… that harmonic sensuousness which was no doubt inborn, but he developed it further.”\textsuperscript{12} Although evidence of his personal revelations on the architectural or structural fronts are mostly delayed until work from the Piano Sonata onward, his explorations on the vertical aspects of his craft are well underway

\textsuperscript{11} Henri Dutilleux, interview with Dom Angelico Surchamp, \textit{Zodiaque}, 135 (January 1983), 17.

\textsuperscript{12} Glayman, trans. Nichols, \textit{Mystery and Memory}, 12.
by the ‘40s, and they become a primary focus in the symphonies of the ‘50s.

Even in pieces like the Sonatine and the earlier *Sarabande et Cortège* for bassoon and piano, and within the pseudo-tonal rubric in which they are cast, Dutilleux displays certain rudimentary traits that govern his harmonic thinking. He maintains rather tight control of his elements, and in building vertical sonorities, he often demonstrates the prevalence of one or two interval-classes over others (suggesting a building-block approach to harmony and prefiguring his more advanced, pronounced work in this realm). He then employs those harmonic entities in the service of musical character, and deploys them to provide contrast, using Debussyean techniques to drive the musical drama. The language is often the standard fare of the day: whole-tone and octatonic scales, quartal and quintal harmonies, extended tertiarian elements, and poly-tonalities color a tonal framework defined not necessarily by hierarchical, functional autonomy, yet maintaining a magnetic, idiom-inflected key centricity.

Two examples highlight Dutilleux’s controlled use of harmonic blocks of varied lengths and dimensions, placed in sharp relief, likely to draw attention to changes of musical character. Beginning in m. 19 (fig. 2) in the *Sonatine*, the piano introduces a variant of the opening theme (further discussed in detail
in example 1.4), based largely on the interval of the minor second (with a secondary importance of the fourth and fifth)—a chromatically-inflected incantation centered on E over an F-centric drone, with tertian major-

Ex. 1.1 - Sonatine for Flute and Piano, mm. 19-30.
minor ambiguities. An interruption by the flute pick-up to m. 23 signals a new landscape altogether, an unfettered, pastoral diatonicism in C major, accompanied by quintal harmony in bass motion by fifth: the drone idea takes on a referential character in tone and timbre. Finally, in m. 27, the latent major second elements from m. 23 predominate a transitional section, a whole-tone soundscape seemingly lifted from a page of Debussy, before returning to the opening material in m. 30.

Another example shows Dutilleux’s deployment of such elements on a more flexible scale: one marked less by regular phrases and more by individual gesture, in the *Sarabande et Cortège*.

Ex. 1. 2 - *Sarabande et Cortège*, mm. 41-45.

Beginning in m. 42, this final phrase of the closing section of the *Sarabande* section incorporates several defined harmonic devices in both vertical and
horizontal directions in quick succession, with some elements sounding simultaneously. Leading into the passage, the bassoon finishes a long descent to a low D, completing the final version of the modal opening theme (see further discussion on p. 19, and in ex. 1.8), at which point Dutilleux rounds out the phrase in the piano by referencing, with bass octave Ds, an earlier pedal figure on beat 2, underneath a chord which is subjected to planing, down by major seconds and thirds. In m. 43, the bassoon ascends in a gesture of contracting intervals—starting with a whole-tone collection, then in m. 44 an octatonic scale—resting on the benign fifth scale degree, A. Below, he ends the movement with an arpeggiated quartal/quintal gesture and chord with only three pitches sounding: D, G, and A, leaving no (major or minor) third scale degree: an open-ended, possibly questioning, moment leading into the funeral march movement.

Within the mostly extended-tertian tonal language in these pieces, one quickly sees evidence of Dutilleux’s gravitation toward inherently spicy and/or ambiguous realms, and of his ease at incorporating these elements into his work. In both the Sarabande and the Sonatine, he exploits properties of the minor-major seventh chord (I, b3, ♭5, #7), the naturally-occurring seventh chord built on the first degree of the harmonic-minor scale. In both pieces, he uses the chord in second inversion, built upward from the fifth of the chord. In the Sarabande, the chord appears first in m. 12, and becomes a prominent sound
throughout the movement, as seen in the planing example in m. 43 (ex. 1.2):

Ex. 1.3 - Sarabande et Cortège, mm. 12-14.

In the *Sonatine*, the same chord becomes the basic melodic DNA for the entire first movement, as seen from m. 1. This particular spacing highlights certain resonant intervals and chords that appear with continuing regularity in his later music, including the major tenth between the outer voices, the major seventh in inner voices (D—C-sharp), and the successive major thirds (F—A—

Ex. 1.4 - Sonatine for Flute and Piano, mm. 1-3.
C-sharp), the augmented triad, the rootless pinnacle in tonal ambiguity and a sound that provides seemingly limitless fascination for him as he continues his development of a personal harmonic language. This example also highlights another preoccupation: the major/minor, split-third ambiguity of the opening theme, another sound in which he revels. Here, in this simple, incantatory rendering, in octaves in piano, the minor third of the chord, F, prevails, but not without a sprinkling of F-sharp on beat 2 of m. 2. In addition to destabilization of a specifically major or minor mode, while still maintaining a strong center, the minor-second clash can be explored over registers, providing juicier verticalities. In the opening theme of the Piano Sonata (Ex. 1.5) he does just that. Both the melodic A-natural occurring in the melody and the A-sharp a diminished octave below, occur with near-omnipresence in the key of F-sharp; and, although one might make logical arguments in either direction in terms of major or minor (although the melodic importance of A-natural seems to point, as do other moments in the piece, toward F-sharp minor as the
key of the movement), it seems that, at this moment, firmly establishing the mode is nowhere near the aim of the music.

By this point, in 1948, he has become more overt in isolating specific harmonic elements, and ex. 1.6 displays the degree to which he has begun to focus on one idea in presentation. In this case, beginning in m. 22, it is the interval of the major seventh, which separates the parallel-motion dyads that formulate a simultaneously harmonic and melodic element.

Ex. 1.6 - Piano Sonata, mm. 22 (with pick-up) to 26.

At the marked tempo, the likelihood of musical material saturation is rather high, and the traditional boundaries between musical domains like harmony and melody, gesture and thematic material, are blurred. Due to the nearly
constant presence of the major-seventh interval, however, the resulting sound is somehow distinguishable, but only by the presence of the interval itself. In the bass, another interval of certain significance, the tritone, predominates. Perhaps following the practices of Béla Bartók, an acknowledged influence, he uses the limited transpositional capabilities of the B—F leaps to provide a kind harmonic constancy to support the melodic elements in the treble clef. Taking Lendvai’s Tonal Axis System approach to describe a passage such as this could be useful; Dutilleux’s tritone usage mimics Bartók’s replacement of I-V tonal polarity with the equidistant axes of tritonal polarity. Regardless, the harmonic stability provided by the repeated tritone motion in the bass is certain.

After the Sonata, these procedures of isolation and highlighting take on ever-greater formal significance in a process, to be discussed further, that Dutilleux calls “croissance progressive” (progressive growth). When taking these localized techniques and spreading them over large formal spans, even across movements, within a work such as his Second Symphony, his materials gain definition (even as they grow more complex) by necessity. Dutilleux, influenced by the works of Marcel Proust (see chapter 2, pp. 71-2

13 see Caroline Potter, Dutilleux: Life and Works, 101-2. Also, Dutilleux mentions Bartók frequently in his conversations with Glayman.

for further discussion), Dutilleux engages with the concepts of memory and of musical recall in introducing and returning to materials in various ways over the course of the piece. He expands on his prior encounters with the building blocks of harmony, using these tools in creating elements that are readily contrasted as well as easily remembered. If the blocks themselves are different, so too will be the result. Consider two examples from the Second Symphony, both built from simple materials:

a.

b.

Exs. 1.7a, b - Second Symphony. I. Fig. 3, and II. Fig. 3.
The first, which appears in the second measure of fig. 3 in the first movement, in the harpsichord, is the first appearance of what might be called a secondary theme (if such a traditional symphonic-overlay analysis were to fully describe the formal processes in the piece), an octatonic collection contained within one octave. Its shape, which narrows from the wide B—C major seventh and circles in from above and below on the final pitch, F, provides intervallic variety and a memorable profile. There are ample integral opportunities for variation and malleable expansion, which Dutilleux does relentlessly over the course of the first movement, essentially using the material as a kind of Petri dish, generating a lot of interrelated music from this brief moment. In contrast, the second excerpt (from fig. 3 in the second movement), a verticality composed nearly exclusively of pairs of stacked fifths (save some carefully-placed A-sharps), acts as a kind of pillar, standing firm with little variation. Dutilleux takes advantage of this sound’s properties as a recognizable object in itself, and in each successive return over the course of the piece, its profile is dutifully maintained. By equal and opposite measure, each element (along with many others) was designed to stoke the role of memory, conscious or otherwise, as a factor, in musical perception in the Symphonie. In this case, Dutilleux’s control of harmony serves his formal and conceptual purposes.

The music of this period also shows evidence of Dutilleux’s considerable interest in modal constructions, encouraged when he was still a student by the
composer and historian Maurice Emmanuel, who “insisted on the importance of Greek rhythms and ancient modes, as did Messiaen, who was one of his pupils. His aim was rediscover what he called the ‘sleeping treasures’.”15 Dutilleux claims that it was from the “Sonata onwards” that modality gradually infiltrated his style16 (further exploration is pursued in chapter 2), but earlier works contain music that is clearly wrought from basic church modes, including the opening phrases of the Sarabande et Cortège, which, as mentioned, sits rather surely in Dorian mode on D. In his 1947 Sonata for Oboe and Piano, the most ambitious and sophisticated of his test pieces for the Conservatoire, the first movement, Aria, is similarly clear (despite a walking-

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Ex. 1.8a - Sarabande et Cortège, mm. 1-9.

15 Glayman, trans. Nichols, Mystery and Memory, 12.

16 Ibid., 31.
bass line with chromatic inflections) as a modal object; this time, it is in Locrian mode starting on E. In both the Sarabande and the Aria, Dutilleux combines linear, stepwise melodic writing for the solo instrument with another ubiquitous element of this music, and one in which he continues to find a great deal of relevance: imitative counterpoint. Both instruments enter the piece as the second voice of a canon: in the Sarabande, the bassoon at the fifth; in the Aria, the oboe at the octave. Although its canon is short-lived, merely lasting half the first phrase, the Sarabande example is not without elegance—the bassoon enters a four-measure phrase at the end of the third bar, breaking an overly-regular design early on. The Aria takes on both modality and imitation—at a more structural level. Once the oboe enters in m. 3, it

![Ex. 1.8b - Sonata for Oboe and Piano, I. Aria, mm. 1-8.](image)
follows the piano right hand, an octave above and two measures behind, for nearly all of the movement. While the two movements have different narrative outlines, one notes a greater emphasis on organic generational processes (prefiguring his future cell-based methods for developing material) in the later Sonata, and notes a new, subtle audacity in Dutilleux’s approach to the purely compositional challenges of writing a strict canon. To incorporate it without foregrounding it, texturally or structurally (i.e., writing a canon that doesn’t obviously sound like a canon) required the composer’s musical sleight of hand, for which he showed constant fascination.

In the Aria, the canon continues, accumulating energy and eventually leading to a powerful moment of catharsis in the movement, on the upbeat to fig. 2: a piercing high F in oboe, the first note that breaks out of the imitational ritual. This important moment, and the cadenza-like, unmeasured passage that follows, is a critical early example in highlighting two complementary significant technical issues: as a so-called son obsessionnel (obsessional sound)\textsuperscript{17}, and as a pivot note\textsuperscript{18} (note-pivot).

\textsuperscript{17} Pierrette Mari, \textit{Henri Dutilleux} (Paris: Éditions Aug. Zurfluh), 100. Mari quotes Dutilleux; he uses the term, but does not define it.

\textsuperscript{18} Claude Glayman, \textit{Mystère et mémoire des sons} (Paris: Belfond, 1993), 103. (See also Chapter II, page 52)
Ex. 1.9 - Sonata for Oboe and Piano, I. Aria, Fig. 2. Reduction.

Before discussing these further, it is possible to note the significance of this pitch in several contexts. First, the registral extremity of that F for this instrument plays easily into the composer’s textural and narrative plan for the piece. As usual, he exploits qualities unique to the instrument, and in this context, capitalizes on the oboe’s special altissimo color, even employing a sense of difficulty in performance to dramatic effect. Secondly, in pitting the F against the pedal E on the downbeat of fig. 2 (and again in the last beats leading to the second movement), Dutilleux foregrounds the special tensions inherent in the Locrian mode: especially in the $\hat{1} - \hat{5}$ clash, which plays out vertically as mentioned, but also in a horizontal, structural domain. The arrival of the F signals an immediate shift, and for the duration of the movement, the pitch center is no longer stable on E.
Dutilleux describes his use of the pivot note in a program note for the Second Symphony as “a single, insinuating note [that] acts as a pivot, a central point, and is ‘illuminated’ in an infinite variety of ways.”\(^{19}\) He does not mention centricity when talking about pivot notes in the *Symphonie*, but one gathers from his use—through repetition, changing vertical harmonies with the note in common (hence, pivoting), and the significance of the pitch in structural contexts—that it is the pivot note itself that emerges as the local pitch center. Whether or not that is true in this early usage in the *Aria*, once F arrives, it functions similarly to later incarnations, such as those in the symphony. In the *Aria*, the dramatic tension emanates from the argument of the oft-present E in the piano “illuminations,” and the *son obsessionnel* of the repeating F in the oboe, the pivot note. As is usual in later examples, the *son obsessionnel* eventually wins out, and the F carries on, serving as the glue to which the next *Scherzo* movement bonds. If the term pivot note describes a harmonic device (a point of reference in otherwise unstable harmonic terrain), then *son obsessionnel* is a structural term: repetition, immediate or not, is intended to heighten the significance of a pitch or motive. Once Dutilleux establishes a certain obsessional importance in any musical element, harmonic or otherwise, he utilizes it to drive the narrative, through contrast or continuity, in forming the shape of the piece.

\(^{19}\) Quoted in Potter, *Dutilleux: Life and Works*, 106.
One definitive example of his use of the *son obsessionnel* concept is in the second movement of the Second Symphony. As in the *Aria*, the *son obsessionnel* works closely in cahoots with tonal centers, and at times the central pitch is treated as a pivot note, but in this broad, complex expression, Dutilleux relies more on the adhesive power of the *son obsessionnel* as the connective tissue of the movement when moving from one tonal center to another. In this case, the *son obsessionnel* is more than one pitch, and is better described as a motive or a cell, subject to manipulation but always returning intact, and as in the Sonata for Oboe and Piano, connects the second and third movements in a fashion intended to be obvious. In the first few measures of the third movement (ex. 1.10), we see the *croissance progressive* culmination of the *son obsessionnel* in a clear and broad orchestral tutti version. At its simplest, the components of the *son obsessionnel* are three ordered pitches from the first two full measures of the movement: C-sharp—D-sharp—E. Whether represented in a tonal context: #6 - #7 - Ė, or as an ordered {023} or unordered [013] set, the three pitches always return separated by intervals of a whole tone and a semitone, with the final pitch (E in this case) maintained as the local tonal center.

In returning to an early presentation of the motive, from fig. 4 (*sans lenteur*) in the second movement, one observes a typical habitat for it in ex. 1.11. In a chromatic setting (although with the central pitch, F# / Gb, continuously present), Dutilleux uses the powerful, almost archetypal nature of the raised
Ex. 1.10 - Second Symphony, III. Mm. 1-5.
Ex. 1.11 - Second Symphony, II. Fig. 4.

F#/Gb-centric melodic figure

son obsessionnel: "#6-#7-Î"
sixth and seventh to provide closure to the phrase, demonstrating a common use for the motive. In this and several of the following examples, the sinewy, meandering, often intertwined melodic figures that make up the texture are countered by a stable harmonic element, such a pedal figure in the bass or, as in the previous example, the permanence of the tonal center pitch. Four
Ex. 1.12 - Second Symphony, II. Figs. 5-7.

fading F#-centricity

A-centricity
measures later, at fig. 5 (Ex. 1.12), he introduces a larger counterpoint by superimposing two layers of similar melodic material, one centered, as before, on F-sharp, (in the violas, solo cello, bassoon, oboe and celesta), and other on A (in the tutti violins), in a transitional section from which the A prevails. Starting two measures before fig. 8, the motive features heavily in a dense contrapuntal texture in the tutti strings, now serving brief moments in a turbulent harmonic setting over an F-sharp pedal. The thickening atmosphere is enhanced with ever wider, faster ascending gestures, nearly always finishing with the whole-step—half-step (sometimes varied as half-step—half-step) motive.

As the variations and repetitions of the motivic son obsessionnel continue to build, Dutilleux’s croissance progressive methods begin to shape and guide the direction of the work, veering down paths and around bends in which the motive is nearly always present, but its prominence is in flux. As he states:

> When I talk about memory, I’m thinking rather of some sound event, sometimes very short and not instantly identifiable, which will lodge in the listener’s unconscious and play its role retrospectively. That’s an even less obvious function than with the pivot chord—the idea is the same and is really rather obvious, namely that a work come to life not only through fleeting elements, however startling they may be, but through its incorporation into a trajectory, a trajectory which the listener cannot totally grasp at first hearing.

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Ex. 1.13 - Second Symphony, II. Two m. before Fig. 8.
As employed in later works, the omnipresent motive fulfills different roles, subverting one traditional notion of “development,” where a thematic or other prominent element undergoes a process of variation in service of formal goals in a way that is meant to be discerned. Here, Dutilleux may attain a certain level of cohesion in his material (aided simply by heavily utilizing the motive), but he avoids variation for variation’s sake. Thus, the second movement takes on a quasi-fantasia flavor, despite clear tonal and formal signposts.

After several deployments of the son obsessionnel toward greater complexity and gravity, Dutilleux returns to a thinly scored atmosphere and a varied rendition of the first melodic figure (ex. 1.11), starting the measure after fig. 11.

Ex. 1.14 - Second Symphony, II. Fig. 11.

At fig. 14, a slow version of the son obsessionnel motive in the cello appears simultaneously with an especially circuitous cousin at the same pitch level in
Ex. 1.15 - Second Symphony, II. One m. before Fig. 14.

Ex. 1.16 - Second Symphony, II. Three mm. after Fig. 18.
Final measures of II.
diminution (moving at four times the speed) in the celesta (doubled by the clarinet, not shown) in Ex. 1.15. The *son obsessionnel* is then further dissected and varied into smaller and shorter pieces, eventually converging, with force, on a unison A below middle C. A final transition in the divided strings employs the motive in inching upwards diatonically, and the clouds clear for one final iteration (ex. 1.16), both final and in preparation for the next movement (see ex. 1.10), having finally migrated to a new pitch center (after nearly five minutes firmly in A), via the last whispers of the *son obsessionnel* motive: C-sharp—D-sharp—E. In re-examining the opening of the third movement, one finds a new significance to the confident clarity of this comparatively blunt statement, and begins to see his weaving of material across movements as the next level of *croissance progressive*. Instead of treating the three movements of the symphony as autonomous blocks, he employs the mnemonic techniques found within a movement with equal sophistication across movements, while maintaining a separate set of musical objectives for each. One also observes a clever early way of dealing with what he considers the problem of the pause between movements, saying such breaks “seem, in some cases, to spoil music’s power to captivate us.”

the symphony), he emphasizes his concept of the symphony and establishes a pattern for his later orchestral work. Ultimately, he views a large work, though capable (through careful design) of bearing the load of a complicated array of expressions, as being a unified object.

One area in which Dutilleux’s transformative progression toward a personal language was further delayed (in comparison to evidence of his harmonic curiosity) is rhythm. Yet, it is in the domains of gestural and metric rhythm and rhythmic notation that his explorations take him the farthest in distancing himself from his predecessors. In each work leading up to the Piano Sonata, one finds a rhythmic system largely metric in structure, with all things relating to the all-important barline. Most efforts toward greater flexibility are relegated to recitativo- or cadenza-like sections, where one performer clearly takes a leading role and others support with interjections. In 1948 in Paris, his rhythmic language was indistinguishable from much music of the previous twenty years, including that of Les Six and the neo-classical Stravinsky, and closer colleagues such as Jolivet and Ohana. While not unaware of the staggering rhythmic accomplishments of early Stravinsky and Debussy some forty years earlier, Dutilleux’s rhythmic expression was far-flung in terms of usage, facility and impact.
Although he considers the Piano Sonata his Op. 1, Dutilleux admits, “It comes from a period when I was busy trying to find my own voice...it’s still a transitional work, a link to what follows.”\textsuperscript{22} Although he discusses the purely instructional limits of its notation (pedaling, etc.), he admits that his efforts toward greater scale and depth bear fruit, finding in this piece “more strength and density.”\textsuperscript{23} While we’ve seen evidence of his personal innovations in harmony in the piece (see exx. 1.5 and 1.6), one can point to the sonata as the

Ex. 1.17 - Piano Sonata, mm. 111-22.

\textsuperscript{22}Glayman, trans. Nichols, \textit{Mystery and Memory}, 29.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 28-29.
last vestige of Dutilleux as the traditional rhythmicist, perhaps marking the most striking break between two pieces of this period. Ex. 1.17, from m. 111 in the first movement, marked Reprenez le mouvement, un poco rubato, shows an instance of Dutilleux’s dependence on clichéd rhythmic tools and the prominence of metric regularity in his music of this time. The syncopated motor-rhythm in an inner voice appearing in m. 111 also appears in several of the wind solo pieces (eg. the second movement of the Sonatine and the third movement of the Sonata for Oboe), as well as in the Sonnets de Jean Cassou for baritone and piano from 1944. Beyond this syncopation, the long melody in the soprano voice and the harmonic bass operate exclusively at the beat and bar levels; the motoric device drives the motion throughout the metrically unchanging section, even as ornaments are added. Such stratification can be typically found going back to the music of the early Classical Period. In Dutilleux’s music after the Sonata, a pulse-oriented atmosphere in which a beat-centric melody is further regularized with motor rhythms and accompagnando bass does not appear again. In short, rhythms cease to line up quite as squarely.

As Dutilleux sees it, his attempts to “achieve a greater rhythmic mobility”\(^{24}\) begin in his First Symphony (from 1951; his next large work after the Piano Sonata), and his work in this direction carries far beyond the 1950s: he points

\(^{24}\)Glayman, trans. Nichols, Mystery and Memory, 35.
to works as late as the violin concerto *L’Arbre des songes*, finished in 1985, as signposts of progress. In the opening measures of the *Symphonie*’s third movement, one can find, in the strings, an early example of a new paradigm. The metric displacement and intentional irregularity of the jolting contrabass contrasts the very regular (although complicated by a seemingly 3/4 existence in 6/8 time) rhythmic and phrase motion of the three solo celli. This relatively tame endeavor marks perhaps the first time (following two more straight-

Ex. 1.18 - First Symphony, III. Mm. 1-12.
laced movements, rhythmically speaking) that Dutilleux employs rhythmic “smudging” applications to accompanying materials. The conflict between musical layers of metric regularity and layers apparently written to subvert that regularity is palpable, and Dutilleux puts it to good use. The smudging techniques prevail: the movement is, in part, defined by this lack of metric stability, and he has begun his long process of defining a new rhythmic language. In the Second Symphony, he expands these concepts while adding fluidity to individual gestures (see chapter 3), and by Métaboles, twelve years later, one observes a rhythmic technique that puts the priorities of mobility and flexibility far above any metric or pulse constraints. Note that while Dutilleux may try obscure the beat and barline, he continues to use them for practical purposes in maintaining an important sense of reference in conducted orchestral contexts. In example 1.19, every gesture in the intricate woodwind flourishes is written to convey the significance of the reference by leading toward or away from the now-silent beat of the baton.

Broadly conveyed, the developments in his rhythmic language mirror those in other realms of his compositional personality, such as harmony. With greater complexity came greater distillation and focus. His rhythmic evolution also contributed as much as any musical element toward attaining the finesse and sensuality he sought, and it is not until he begins this work that we observe a path of genuine distancing from his forebears. The next chapters of this
Pages 43-45:

landmark ensemble
event

motoric,
beat-indifferent
gestures

fluid, soloistic,
beat-oriented
gestures
Ex. 1.19 (continued)

- offbeat entrances
- beat-oriented gestures
- pulse-indifferent gestures
- subdivisions variety
- weak-beat rhythmic ensemble event
Ex. 1.19 (continued)

- Accelerated entrances:

- Offbeat entrances

- Gesture leading toward beat

- Pulse displacement of repeated figure
study focus on Dutilleux’s music after this period, using pieces composed
over a roughly ten-year period, from the late 1960s through the late ‘70s,
as case studies for describing a larger, more stylistically consistent body of
work, leading up to and including his recent music. The so-called “mature”
characteristics, techniques and ethos of the music of that period are readily
found in nearly every piece, and just as with the music discussed in this
chapter, one can often find evidence of a composer continuously refining,
distilling and concentrating his materials and processes. Never satisfied, he
treats his favorite discoveries with a specific respect by reinvesting in them;
with each return, he makes a good idea better. In viewing his work from the
1940s and ’50s as a kind of survey of discovered working habits and points of
approach, one finds roots of his late work in, among other places, the fallow
ground of his early work.
The years 1973-76 saw Dutilleux working to complete *Ainsi la nuit* for string quartet, his largest piece of chamber music by scope and, for many commentators, a work of central significance in his catalogue. Each major work of the twenty preceding years (*Deuxième Symphonie, Métaboles, Tout un monde lointain…*) had been rendered for orchestral forces, and health problems with his eyes in the late 1960s and early ‘70s had forced him to retreat from work. Following recovery from ocular surgery in 1972, he began work on the piece at Paul Sacher’s estate near Basel, beginning with an intention “to tackle the medium by writing strict studies…altogether an experimental stage with no poetic impulse behind it.”¹ The commission from Mme Koussevitzky for the Juilliard Quartet was well timed; he was eager to “work on a more intimate scale”² following the orchestral works and furlough, but mindful of the challenges of the medium: “…it’s true that a quartet exists in a more interiorized world. Because of the restricted scale and the corresponding greater economy of means it demands perhaps a greater concentration.”³


² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 77.
As it turns out, these studies were more than abstract, as research into the body of sketches has shown—preliminary versions of whole movements of the piece, loosely bundled with early titles such as *Cinq etudes* and *Nuits*, were sent to the players for study and rehearsal at various stages, often in forms which varied little from their final appearance in the work. Over the years of the work’s gestation, Dutilleux’s descriptions of its form in correspondence evolved and grew from the original five studies mentioned in 1974, eventually arriving at the completed work of 1976: a more complex and self-referential seven movements conjoined by four “parentheses” into a seamless 17-minute statement, “poetic impulse” now included. In a later letter, he describes a process of “modifying and completing the work,” in which one can imagine the task of stitching together patches of a musical quilt. His later characterization of the piece reveals his satisfaction with the process, as well as the result: “This form is firmly structured. [...] The problem of understanding may be felt by the audience, and a work they find hard initially can gain later in attraction and interest. I’ve often said that the works over which I have the fewest regrets are those in which I took the most risks…it’s one of the works that have allowed me to progress a little further.”

4 Caroline Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 162-8. Potter discusses the manuscript of the first version of the quartet, which Dutilleux sent to Nichols in 1993 along with relevant correspondence at the time of composition, and contains the only extant “studies 2, 3, and 4” of the *Cinq Etudes*.

5 Ibid., 163.

In 1973, before beginning work on *Ainsi la nuit*, Dutilleux wrote two brief works for solo piano, as part of a set of three planned preludes, now known as *D’ombre et de silence* and *Sur un même accord*. In 1970, he had returned to writing for piano after a long hiatus following his *Sonata* from 1948 with the first two (of four) *Figures de resonances* for two pianos. With an ascetic purpose “to avoid all development, to set down an idea within a strictly limited time-frame and to treat it in a purely acoustic manner,” he retreated from the argument-minded genre of the concerto in his first pieces after *Tout un monde lontain*... by writing etudes, using his burgeoning fascination with sound resonance as a catalyst. The *Préludes* follow in a similar vein: as studies with regard to a specific element, although the exploratory focus is returned to the notes themselves; if the *Figures* are etudes in sound properties, then the *Préludes* are principally *etudes en la musique*. Also, if it is significant that he chose the piano as the locus for these experiments (a pianist himself, he would also have had an interested party in his wife, pianist Geneviève Joy), he remains in character by making the piece as much about the instrument as

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7 The story of these preludes and titles doesn’t end until 1994, with their publication as a combined set, along with a third, composed in 1988: *Le jeu des contraires*, under the title *3 Préludes* (Paris: Leduc). In 1974, Geneviève Joy premiered them under the titles *D’ombre* for the first and *De silence* for the second; the title *Sur un même accord* doesn’t appear until 1977 (interestingly, after the quartet’s completion) in a revision of that work alone, presumably resulting in the renamed version of the first piece. As such, commentators of the 1980s either make no mention of their existence, or refer to the works only in passing, such as Pierrette Mari’s listing of the unfinished third prelude of 1973, *De lumiere* in the works list of her 1988 survey.

the material, as he does with the later *Trois Strophes* for cello. His formidable knowledge of the instrument’s capabilities (and sensibilities) consistently informs an organic, focused approach to the virtuoso essay.

*Sur un même accord*

As a study, the second of these pieces, *Sur un même accord*, states it plainly, as does the title. One could classify it as a kind of rarity for Dutilleux, as his titles for pieces and movements tend toward the referential or are shrouded in a gossamer sheen (*Regard, D’ombre et de silence, Dominante Bleue*, et cetera), even if the music so described might make its aims and foci direct and clear. While the music is possible to describe variously in terms such as free fantasia, set of variations, or sound exploration piece, it seems notable (or even somehow typical) that he stops short of illuminating the prelude beyond the material itself, letting organizational concerns ambiguously settle between pre-existing categories. Though now part of a published collection of three pieces, it appears to stand firmly on its own, as do its neighbors, with its own date of completion (after final revisions, 1977) and dedicatee, Claude Helffer, and even its own copyright in the 1994 published edition. By using a single musical event as a topic of intense and varied focus over a specified time span, the piece reveals itself in a useful way: as a rare and elucidated proving ground for a variety of compositional techniques that Dutilleux would
continue to develop.

Among the benefits of a close inspection of this prelude is to reveal in distilled form Dutilleux’s developing practice in the realm of harmony and harmonic recall, first appearing in works of this period and then observed in his work which followed. Preliminary questions arise: did a compositional etude, devoted to highlighting the qualities of an isolated harmony, reveal to Dutilleux a method of organization later displayed in large forms? Conversely, are practices from earlier work merely codified and clarified by necessity in this focused study? Yet (setting these questions aside), the detailed discussion that follows is framed for two purposes. First, in scrutiny of his treatment of a musical question, it seeks to highlight certain functions in the work as a microcosm of Dutilleux’s wider philosophies on organic musical structure. Second, by looking forward to aspects of *Sur la même accord* as reflected in the string quartet (begun directly after the prelude was finished), the discussion moves toward the topic of creative development. It seems salient that following a period of relative compositional reductionism for the composer—a period of abstract sketches and studies—he began a large-scale work by composing sketches and studies, with the abstract notion of connecting them later. In need of musical glue, perhaps Dutilleux composed *Sur la même accord* with a specific future purpose in mind.
Even in a cursory examination of the prelude, one finds evidence of Dutilleux’s hallmark compositional traits. The piece looks and sounds like what one could reasonably expect to see and hear—a potentially useful notion in moving toward a conversation of larger issues reflecting the composer’s habits and musical concerns. For example, the conflict between the rigorous and the rhapsodic begins to play itself out at all levels of musical organization. This conflict is a primary (even primal) concern for Dutilleux, reflected throughout his oeuvre, and it mirrors his oft-stated wider views on the presence of the mysterious or the unexplainable in art as a principal and necessary condition of its existence. Although he is far from an enemy of control, admitting in 1993 that a systematic, even serial “orientation of thinking…chimed quite well with my temperament… I enjoyed that kind of mechanistic thinking,” he chooses rather to discuss the issue on different terms. “What music has to have, in my view, above everything else is justification. With Messiaen, for example, there is always justification. He uses the modes so logically that you never find a ‘wrong note,’” he states, although he also renders his attitudes on the priority of any system with clarity: “[Music is] often a science in the service of art or employed in the search for art. For a work to stand up, science counts for nothing.”


10 Ibid., 37.

11 Ibid., 96.
General observations can similarly be made about other issues (such as harmonic rhythm, gesture, and the musical language’s interrelations with intentions of sentiment) in service of an argument to posit this piece of three-and-a-half minutes’ duration as representative with regard to wider topics regarding Dutilleux’s music. But, viewing the prelude on its own, internal terms may be more useful toward emphasizing the composer’s generative (or organic) concepts in treating each sound-world he creates as unique and sui generis, while noting that assumed shared similarities are to be expected. Symmetry, as viewed from the chord in question through the composed manifestation of the prelude, can be found as one such unifying concept in this movement. Dutilleux’s juxtaposition of perfect and near-perfect symmetries in virtually all parameters of the prelude reflects his constant awareness of the conflict he has chosen to address. By placing an inherent element of the main chord of *Sur un même accord* as a principal object of attention in the piece’s structure, his organic concepts, and his notions of a correlation between the parts of an object and its whole, begin to emerge as multivalent, even contradictory.

The chord as it first appears, G—B—F-sharp—B-flat, which vertically consists of two major thirds (IC 4 in figure 2.1), spaced a perfect fifth apart, is elegantly symmetrical: one is reminded that the fifth, being a perfect interval less than an octave, cannot be divided by another interval, as its exact center exists
between the major and minor third. As one could expect in that the outer intervals are both major thirds (importantly, divisible by major second), the major third is the predominant interval throughout much of the movement (although he spells the top interval as a vertical diminished fourth each time the chord returns, largely for reasons of voice-leading, as discussed below). Similarly, the resulting non-adjacent interval of the major seventh also appears twice, as two interlocking dyads around the invisible axis, G—F-sharp and B—B-flat. And finally, the distance of the minor tenth between the outermost pitches of the chord, G—B-flat, could be viewed through the lens of octave equivalence as a potentially productive minor-third foil to a major-third saturation (and limited powers of successive repetition). While possessing a sufficiently complex sound (as viewed either traditionally in terms of consonant versus dissonant elements, or by dissecting the chord into segmented components) for Dutilleux to use as a compositional springboard, its relation to invisible harmonic magnets, like the all-powerful octave (always nearby) is potent. The nearness of the searching major seventh to the stable octave, and of major and minor thirds to each other, are among the first examples of an inherent tension between the perfectly symmetrical and the nearly symmetrical that plays out over the course of the piece. It can be said that this tension is never resolved with conviction, and that in this self-contained conflict of stability and volatility, of the pitfalls of a dull harmonic palette versus a complexity or irrationality sufficient enough to prevent
harmonic recall, lies therein the prime organizational principle of *Sur un même accord*. To take a magnet metaphor further, one speculates that the savvy composer, once aware of the struggle, intentionally pushed opposing poles as close to each other as possible, exploiting the palpable, omnipresent forces as his purposes demanded.

Ex. 2.1 - *Sur un même accord*, m. 1.

The chord, $x$, voiced in what might be termed an open spacing (the narrowest interval being the major third), can be expressed as pitch-class set [0145], which further illustrates the symmetries discussed by mapping onto itself in basic inversion and retrograde operations. Because of Dutilleux’s preoccupations with issues of vertical spacing, and because of his extensive variation using segmented elements of the whole set, discussing the chord in terms of its interval classes can be more efficient in rendering meaningful information, both in this prelude and for his music in general. This
tetrachord’s interval-class vector, <201210>, elucidates the prominence of interval classes 1 and 4 just as it indicates the absence of interval class 6, the tritone. These intervallic facts will remain valid and pertinent in describing Dutilleux’s processes of variation. (To remain consistent, interval class, and where relevant, pitch-class nomenclature is maintained in the musical figures.).

The functional role of the $x$ chord varies, but among its duties is to act as harbinger of the arrival of new material, effectively dividing the piece into four sections. Each section is longer than its predecessor by roughly a factor of two. The first section presents an arch-like shape, essentially one phrase of about six measures, followed by increasingly elongated divisions toward the final, expanded, hushed bass-register whirlwind before the final return of $x$ at the conclusion. As noted in Ex. 2, the chord appears in other guises and

![Diagram of musical notation]

Ex. 2.2--*Sur un même accord.*
functions in other roles (some repetitions, e.g. in mm. 2 and 3, have little structural role). It undergoes modification to elements such as register (although the vertical order of pitches and interval classes remains unchanged in each variation) and is also subject to coloration by the addition of other pitches, which obscure and diminish certain elements of its construction but leave the aural and functional character of the original, recognizable sound arguably intact. Each section consists of a similar departure from and subsequent return to the opening; no musical material beyond the chord carries from section to section, yet each presents its own fantasy or development of the material. Scholars such as Caroline Potter, Pierrette Mari, and even Dutilleux himself refer to his use of *accords pivots*; in this context, where the chord serves as the connective tissue of the work, when the only thing $A$ and $B$ have in common is a relation to $x$, the term of pivot chord is apt. But in *Sur un même accord*, the multiple functions performed by the materials built from the opening sound are not fully identified and contextualized by this term, especially given that the specific functions of a pivot chord in tonal music involve common tones and key areas (in that sense, Dutilleux’s use is understood as having certain representative correlations). In this prelude, material $x$ would be better described as the focal chord of the

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12 Potter, *Dutilleux: Life and Works*, 97-120.


piece, to highlight both its foundational, organic role and its largely stable reiterations in pitch and sound space.

After its first appearance in m. 1, Dutilleux quickly begins varying the chord, first with the addition of pitches B and C-sharp to color the sound in m. 2, then in an open spacing in m. 3, the bass dropping an octave in each measure. In m. 4, marked *libre et flexible*, he slices the chord into two successive major thirds (IC 4) and begins transposing them. The registers are quickly opened up, and in a quick, upwardly arpeggiated gesture, *x* (down two octaves, in eighths on beat one) and three transposed versions, each up a successive octave plus a fourth (*T₃*) (C—E—B—D-sharp on beat 2, and F—A—E—G—
sharp and B-flat—D—A—C-sharp on the quintuplet in beat 3), lead into the top of the arc of the first section, a pseudo-return to m. 1, on the last eighth of the measure. The original thirds (G—B and F-sharp—B-flat), now separated by 5 octaves, are colored with the previous iteration (the resulting $T_3$ transposition) from the beat before in the grace note figure. The resultant septachord, F-sharp—G—A—B—B-flat—C-sharp—D, [0134578], is perhaps the most elaborate reharmonization of $x$ in the piece, yet it still serves to reference the focal chord at the peak of the musical phrase and it contains the first adjacent vertical IC 3 (B-flat—C-sharp, possibly a tonally derived expansion of the original F-sharp—B-flat in $x$) in the piece. In m. 5, as the wide registral gap narrows and the hands once again join each other (symmetry again at play as distant elements converge in the middle), all movement is

Ex. 2.4 - *Sur un même accord*, m. 5.
intervallically ushered. On beats 1 and 2, both lines leap toward each other by tritone (G—C-sharp in bass, C—F-sharp, F—B in treble), and on the third beat, the major third returns, with simultaneous vertical thirds in both hands, in T₆ and T₁₁ variants of x. Also, as the gestures converge in the rapid swirl on the last beats of m. 5, IC 4 remains the dominant interval (the DNA of the focal chord is now sliced to bits and merely gestural). All is aimed on the bullseye G-sharp, still sounding the downbeat of m. 6. In the tremolo on beat 3 of m. 6, the vertical symmetry in this gesture becomes audible as Dutilleux colors the soprano motion to the return of B-flat at the start of the next section. The minor seconds of the tremolo cluster (E-sharp—F-sharp—F-double-sharp—G-sharp, [0123]) widen to major seconds (E—F-sharp—G—A, [0235]) in contrary motion as the soprano rises to A on beat 4. The rising treble voice motion G-sharp—A—B-flat over the whole measure is the primary voice-leading element in signaling the first return of the structurally placed focal chord, x,
(as modified, see ex. 2.5) on the downbeat of m. 7.

The second variation, *B*, starting with varied *pp* occurrences of *x* at the rate of one harmony per measure, begins much the same as the first. In m. 8, an *A* is included with the *B* and *C-sharp* from the variant of *x* in m. 2, to color the sound in the second repetition of the original chord, and a *D* below the *G* in the bass extends the range, which is continued in the next measure. A *G-major triad* below the staff grounds the thickly-scored chord in m. 9, which leads into a scherzando section, in which each hand plays a separate cell, each its own hexachord. The left hand plays a staccato figure in which the minor second features as the predominant constructive element. The pitches, *G—G-sharp—C-sharp—D—E-flat—E*, interact with the figure in the right hand, also minor-second-focused (*C—C-sharp—F—F-sharp—G—B-flat*) to form a ten-note set, with *C-sharp* and *G* (symmetrically separated by a tritone) occurring in both cells, and the *A* and *B* missing. However, since they are ever-present as an interspersed drone (held in the fermata in m. 9, and continuing intermittently) with the top *B-flat*, this section is dodecaphonic. The hexachords, [012367] in the left hand and the slightly expanded [012578] in the right, are similar although not identical or complementary, suggesting instinct over system: observing Dutilleux’s contrapuntal and imitative techniques and rhapsodic flair may reveal more coherence in this music than discussing combinatoriality (or lack thereof). A buildup of velocity and dynamic intensity heralds the
return, in m. 15, of the opening in a gesture similar to m. 5—an arpeggiation of both $x$ and a transposed ($T_{10}$) version ($F\rightarrow A\rightarrow E\rightarrow G$-sharp)—in one sweep,

leaving the “memory” of the original behind in a ghosted chord, missing only the G. After two measures of an accelerated buildup involving trichordal treatment (with heavy occurrences of incidental ICs 2 and 5) of the minor second motive in free canon at the octave, the climax of the second section occurs in m. 18, with another variation on the original focal chord $x$, this time in inversion. The original G–B dyad is preserved, above the treble clef, and in place of building the tetrachord from the usual F-sharp above, he inverts eleven semitones down and places an IC 4 dyad on A-flat, which maintains the interval content of the original chord built on G. Similarly, the chord’s arpeggiations (built vertically: A-flat–C–G–B) are downward, crashing to a $ff$ iteration of $x$, subject to a $T_{10}$ operation ($F\rightarrow A\rightarrow E\rightarrow G$-sharp) in m. 19, before
Ex. 2.7 - *Sur un même accord*, m. 18.

an immediate diminuendo and chromatic glide into $x$, unmodified since its first appearance in m. 1, in m. 20 at the start of the third section, C. The texture of this third, aria section is immediately thinner, and it is marked by the appearance of a melodic, even song-like, theme in the soprano register. For the first time, the background is harmonically static—distant, echoed versions of the original chord fade in and out—while the melody, which is built on an [016] cell and contained within a perfect fifth (an important interval in the focal chord), F—E—B-flat, is developed and shaped. The perfect fifth interval is instrumental in outlining the melodic direction of the motive. In m. 21, it extends downward from F to Bb to D-sharp (a respelled E-flat), and in the next measure it extends upward to C.
The appearance of D-sharp in m. 21 marks a critical moment in the piece. If the first chord of the piece can be called a pivot chord, or a continual point of reference, this D-sharp remains for the duration of the movement the pivot pitch: the central axis on which the piece, and even the chord, turns. The melodic line returns to it, in its given register, consistently throughout the central aria section.

In mm. 25 through 27 (m. 26 is marked *chaleureux*—animatedly), subtle nods to earlier music are noted, such as a mirror of the major-third convergent swirl
figure in m. 6 (in A) as reprised in the last beats of m. 25—now with IC 1 as the primary pitch generator of both minor seconds and major sevenths in place of the thirds. The minor-second-saturated hexachords from B (mm. 9-14) return in m. 27, significantly both expanded from the same [0167] tetrachord figure, which appears on beat 1 in the bass voice and beat 2 in the baritone voice. In their new semblance as quick, directional gestures in contrary motion, they are now retooled to provide momentum to the whirlwind push to the confident, assertive apogee of the piece. The [012367] chord, which originally appeared as a staccato leaping figure in the left hand in m. 9, is recast in mm. 27 through
29 as an upward, linear gust toward the focal D-sharp. The other chord again serves as gestural foil, modified from its original [012578] arrangement in the right hand to a [012347] figure in the left, but it retains the characteristic perfect fourth at the end. The upward F—B-flat from m. 10 appears, now inverted downward, first from G-sharp to D-sharp in m. 27, then twice: G-sharp—D-sharp—B-flat in m. 28. Beginning in m. 28, a leaping triplet figure marked staccato, with all motion occurring as ICs 1 and 6, follows each upward thrust to D-sharp. From mm. 28 to 37, in a large upward sweep, pitch material from three sources—the upward hexachord rush, the downward septachord foil, and the leaping figure—is melded and divided into racing, agitated fragments, interrupted with sf punctuations of what has emerged as a son obsessionel,15 the D-sharp. In m. 38, the climactic moment of the piece occurs not via an arrival or recapitulation, as one could reasonably expect given the limited generative discourse and the nearly constant presence of the original x chord in some form thus far; instead, it occurs as confirmation, by extension, of the centricity of D-sharp. It sits prominently on top of the éclatant (ringing) chords in m. 38 before finally descending to its original register, where it sounds alone for two full measures before the fourth return to the original x chord to mark the final section of the piece in m. 48.

The return of the focal chord marking the beginning of the final section, D, is

15 Pierrette Mari, Dutilleux, 100.
not a literal restatement of the chord as it appears in m. 1 (and later, e.g., m. 20). Both versions that occur in m. 48, before the extended rippling patterns begin in the bass, contain hints of coloration seen from before: the G triad in the depths below the bass clef in the first version, and the addition of inner voices, C-sharp and D, in the second. Of greatest significance, however, is the now ever-present D-sharp together with the existent focal chord and the emergent focal pitch. If one considers it to be sounding through both variants of the chord in m. 48, which finally brings the pitch D-sharp to be an axis, its place on the symmetrical original chord is nearly (if not exactly) in the middle (remembering that the perfect fifth is impossible to divide equally). Following m. 48 is an unmeasured quiet rumble in the low octaves of the instrument, *comme une rumeur* (like a murmur), with the D-sharp sounding throughout as a result of the third pedal. Perhaps significantly, the predominant interval

Ex. 2.10 - *Sur un même accord*, m. 48.
classes engaged are ICs 5 and 6 (as in the first four pitches of the figure: two tritones separated by a perfect fifth), in the form of widely-spaced ripples, which eventually come to repeat themselves in overlapping patterns and palindromes. A final nod to the minor-second figure, in the form of a final dodecaphonic pp collapse to the bottom reaches of the keyboard, ushers in the final, haunting incantation. When the original chord $x$, unvaried, perhaps complete for the first time, finally appears lointain in its original state in the palindromic motion.

Ex. 2.11 - *Sur un même accord*, mm. 49-58.

last system of the piece, the D-sharp is still sounding throughout the fourth section, as it has been all along, and it continues faintly beyond the sound of
the chord. It is now finally—and begging the retrospective rhetorical question: was it always? —a member of the chord.

With addition of the D-sharp, the chord would go from symmetrical to nearly-symmetrical, and from a four-note to a five-note chord. The five repetitions of the original source material, when one includes the haunting final intonation, would correspond structurally to the architecture of the now fully realized five-note chord in a subtle yet profound way. One supposes the interest for Dutilleux does not involve the maintenance of the symmetrical architectures per se, but lies, rather, in the way he can manipulate the materials. He may find greater satisfaction in exploiting the non-symmetrical, the non-linear, the non-rigorous aspects of music (in this case, dramatizing the tension between the perfect and less-than-perfect on several levels of organization), of “science in the service of art or employed in the search for art.” At the heart of it all may be a desire to manipulate and thwart, over time, the expectations of the listener about what the crux of the story truly is, an objective any good playwright would strive to accomplish. If one expects the first sound one hears to be the même accord, the composer doesn’t give reason to doubt it until the obsessively present pitch makes clear that the piece may have more than one focus. By introducing the second element, Dutilleux turns the circular, self-satisfied statement of the theme and variations into a rhetorical argument, with all inherent contention sufficiently intact. Then, by loosely integrating
the two elements at the end, he evades a conclusive resolution and forces the listener to question not only the primacy and construction of the *même accord*, but even the very argument’s existence.

*Ainsi la nuit*

In *Ainsi la nuit*, Dutilleux takes the concept of referential harmony as seen in *Sur un même accord* and, over the seven-movement work, explodes it. First, he maintains the presence of a focal chord (again a recognizable element, however modified) and of certain important pitches, often manipulating structural functions, just as in the prelude. As in the prelude, he also regards his materials with great care, using the basic ingredients of the material to guide his compositional decision-making from the micro- through the macro-levels, in order to extract basic truths about those materials. The previous discussion sought to illuminate the composer’s organizational concerns in the context of individual events’ occurrences in time, on a relatively small compositional canvas. Moving to discuss a large, complex, even more self-reflective object will require a certain detailed investigation in a similar vein in order to thoroughly reveal the composer’s constantly shifting point of view. It can be said that the quartet mirrors the prelude’s attention to detail in gesture, nuance, and sense of timbral and theatrical contrast. However, to view the quartet as a longer version of the prelude would be to mischaracterize
this form of growth. In Dutilleux’s practice, it is the concept of referential harmony as an organizational principle, as opposed to the music or formal structure of the prelude itself, upon which the actual elaboration occurs.

Additionally, in viewing Ainsi la nuit through the prism of this discussion, one aims to avoid an oversimplified comparison or a search for direct correlations between it and the prelude. Beyond discussions of these works’ proximity to each other and speculative causal scrutiny—was the prelude, for Dutilleux, a small-scale working-canvas in preparation for the quartet, or was it viewed retroactively, after its composition, as a study possessing a useful referential device whose potential benefits and challenges could be further explored in a larger, more complex work? —a side-by-side comparison would unnecessarily limit analysis of the quartet. Dutilleux’s comments from 1971 (before writing the prelude in 1973) about his crystallized plan for the quartet are illuminating:

It will not be a true Quartet in the Beethovenian tradition, or even in that of Bartók, which, as elsewhere, extends that tradition. I wish it to be concise: 13 to 15 minutes. There will be several movements, but they will be melted into only one whole part. I will use all timbral possibilities of the string quartet.¹⁶

By keeping with this plan in the piece’s composition, Dutilleux indirectly offers a bit of insight into the lengthy gestation of the work, whose premise

was surely already in place during the writing of the preludes. Any cross-pollination from *Sur un même accord* would have occurred not in concept, but at a more constructive level.

A primary concern for Dutilleux, not to be forgotten in any effort to compare and contrast the prelude with the quartet, is instrumentation and the timbral capabilities of the forces at hand. This issue, which another composer might regard as secondary or incidental, is of elemental, foundational concern for Dutilleux, as revealed in a four-sentence overview of a future work and in the mentioned series of sketches, which use string techniques as objects of study in preparation for the quartet. In his treatment of materials in the prelude, he consistently highlights the piano’s properties of resonance—even aware of the instrument’s strike-and-decay mode of sounding—even using extended techniques with pedals and ghost-tones to emphasize structural objects, such as the focal pitch D-sharp in the final section of the piece. In writing a piece for string quartet—which, in terms of sound production, techniques and capabilities in a collaborative setting, is fundamentally different from that of the piano—he is bound to write an essentially different kind of music. While certain ideas translate easily from one medium to the other, Dutilleux seems never to forget that drawing bow against string brings forth a different result than a hammer action. His representational treatment of sounds such as bells, which appear metaphorically in both pieces (*éclatant*, m. 37 in the prelude;
in the quartet’s movement VII: *Temps suspendu* from figure 28), reflects his commitment to using each instrument as effectively as possible, as he sees fit. His awareness of these ensemble traditions and forms is also significant. By placing his piece outside the tradition of the String Quartet, he joins by expanding it.

Conveniently for the purposes of these arguments, the quartet begins in hushed sentiments just as the prelude: with the appearance of a focal chord, whose role Daniel Humbert has aptly called “architectonic.”\(^{17}\) Though not symmetrical (a concept confined to the prelude), this six-note chord is also built by focusing on limited interval classes and a consideration of useful capacities of the string instruments. Scored nearly as low as possible for each instrument to play a double-stop, the chord is most simply described as three superimposed dyads, each a perfect fifth: C-sharp—G-sharp; F—C; and G—D.

Ex. 2.12 - *Ainsi la nuit*, Introduction. m. 1.

\(^{17}\) Humbert, *Dutilleux, L’œuvre et le style*, 145.
Analysis of the resultant hexachord, [012578], reveals (as most six-note chords do) several of each type of interval class (vector $<322242>$). In noting a preponderance of minor seconds, perfect fourths and fifths, and without taking note of the scoring of the chord, one might imagine a dissonant or hollow sound. There is an evident elegance in the correlation between the cello and second violin, who both play an interval of a fifth, with that of the viola and first violin, who both play major seconds, which, as one might deduce following the example of $x$, emerge along with the minor seconds and fifths as fundamental in the work. The all-important scoring highlights the warmer qualities of the chord, emphasizing the presence of the major seconds and the interlocked fifths F—C and G—D, while registrally separating the minor seconds from each other. The sound, while interrogative in nature, is suitably malleable and chameleonic, providing needed stability at times of arrival or structural significance, but sufficiently enigmatic in terms of directional tendency.

To illustrate the first example of Dutilleux’s expansion of the focal harmony concept, one refers to the first measures after the chord, labeled $y$. In mm. 2 and 3, following a repetition of $y$, four new harmonies, each a tetrachord, unfold in an ascending pattern. Their content is highly consistent: from the original [012578] hexachord $y$ follows a [0167] tetrachord, then three [0137] chords, the last being the top of the phrase, spelled D—G—B—C-sharp, in m.
3. Significantly, since both tetrachords are found as subsets of the hexachord, they can be viewed as a kind of extension of the original y harmony, although through chromatic motion and interlocking scoring, as well as the various inversions and transpositions of the subsets, an adequately sophisticated progression materializes. Noting the difference in range of each instrument’s gesture, from the octave + minor-ninth C-sharp—D in the cello to the second violin’s G—G octave, one finds that each successive chord occupies a narrower vertical spacing than the previous, with narrowing intervals resulting in a heightened internal tension. In m. 3, Dutilleux quickly melts the tension in a somewhat flippant (or even defeatist) pizzicato gesture at the end of the measure by reversing the order of the chords and returning to y in m. 4. Thus, in addition to creating a harmonically palindromic progression, he has created

Ex. 2.13 - Ainsi la nuit, Introduction. mm 2-3.
a new thematic object, by framing (as yet) new, developmental material with the central focal harmony of the piece, as well as moving beyond the focal chord concept of *Sur un même accord* (which was never directly developed into a referential entity beyond $x$). Over the course of the piece, the *palindromic figure* emerges as a statement separate from $y$, subject to its own variation and expansion, although since $y$ is the generator of the material, it is always present when the *palindromic figure* reappears. Equally apparent is the ceaseless presence, through the entire statement and into m. 4 and beyond, of a focal pitch, D. As the top member of the chord in $y$, this focal pitch is not at odds with the focal harmony, as in the piano prelude, but is in fact conceptually the opposite of the D-sharp--it functions as the only constant element in the progression; it appears intended to provide stability, not (as in the prelude) to question it.

The music in mm. 1 through 4 illustrates on a small scale the type of seed-like germination that defines the extension of the focal chord concept from *Sur un même accord*. Three distinct elements coexist: the referential harmony $y$, the thematically oriented *palindromic figure*, and the temporary focal pitch, D. Each is bound to return, is likely to be modified, and might yield yet a new musical object during the course of the work. This form of germination, or even branch-like growth, extends far beyond the introduction, and over the course of the piece, many musical objects are introduced and very often
reappear in several guises and characters. Including the seven-measure introduction, there are twelve defined sections of varied lengths and widely varied purposes and characters:

Introduction - “Ainsi la nuit”
I. NOCTURNE
   Parenthèse 1
II. MIROIR D’ESPACE
   Parenthèse 2
III. LITANIES
   Parenthèse 3
IV. LITANIES 2
   Parenthèse 4
V. CONSTELLATIONS
VI. NOCTURNE 2
VII. TEMPS SUSPENDU

Dutilleux does not list the introduction or the parenthèses on the title page of the score, but refers to them in the piece’s program note as “often short but important brackets” that connect the majority of the movements via “the organic role that is reserved for them.” The organization of the seven principal sections is strikingly and unevenly complicated by the inclusion of the five secondary sections, especially when the titles of movements refer directly to each other. While noting a framework in the order of the movements, in characterizing a lack of formal symmetry and another example of departure from the prelude, one finds (likely intentionally) loose ends, such

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18 Henri Dutilleux, Ainsi la nuit (Paris: Huegel, 1980), program notes; quoted in Humbert, L’œuvre et le style, 144.
as the disappearance of the bracketing *parenthèses* toward the end of the piece, and an unmentioned introduction. However, it may be relevant to note that, in looking forward, Dutilleux appears to use the organization of movements in *Ainsi la nuit* as a sort of model; many works following the quartet contain connective material between movements, and organizational idiosyncrasies on paper are surely countered and ramified, in the quartet and elsewhere, in the music itself.

Yet, while germane in contributing to a holistic understanding of its structure, scrutiny of the quartet at this level of organization—the division of the whole work into primary and secondary movements—may be less beneficial, both in describing both a deeper level of ordering as well as a listener’s experience of the piece, than delving into an alternative method of analysis. By extracting the organic roots of the piece, the musical objects like the $y$ chord, and observing the musical metamorphosis (or lack thereof) in each, one finds a complex, weblike structure, where musical materials reappear veiled or are even subtly “prefigured”\(^\text{19}\) during the entire span of the piece, a structure that belies the clean divisions of the movements. Perhaps nowhere more than in *Ainsi la nuit*, the central principle at work is the role of memory in musical perception (which arguably gives rise to his concepts of referential harmony: the focal chord and pitch). He seems to regard the temporal aspect

\(^{19}\) The composer’s own descriptive term. In Dutilleux, *Ainsi la nuit*; quoted in Humbert, *L’œuvre et le style*, 144.
of music as a possible wellspring from which to devise a set of organizational
precepts, and, in the case of the quartet, he stitches together a complex, self-
reliant musical fabric whose cogency is dependent on its realization in time.
Commentators\textsuperscript{20} have observed the composer’s special regard for the work
of Marcel Proust, and the possible influence on his work of Proust’s semi-
autobiographical novel, \textit{Remembrance of Things Past}, and its constructs on
the concept of involuntary memory, a term Proust coined. Dutilleux admits
to Claude Glayman that “It’s true that I often think of the link between his
manner of construction and my objectives in organizing musical time, if it’s
not too risky to compare two different domains, the literary and the musical”\textsuperscript{21}
as a way of distancing his processes from the Wagnerian techniques of
leitmotif. He also tends to agree with those who make the link between his
and Proust’s integration of memory and time as a viable approach to structure
in art.

The musical objects, which in actuality are present in nearly every measure
of the piece, can be divided most basically into three categories: primary,
secondary, and coloristic. The primary musical objects, like y and a figure
the composer refers to in the program notes as a \textit{modal song}, each adhere

\textsuperscript{20} Potter, \textit{Dutilleux: Life and Works}, 59. Potter devotes a chapter of her
volume, entitled “The influence of literature on Dutilleux’s music”, focusing
largely on Proust.

\textsuperscript{21} Glayman, trans. Nichols, \textit{Mystery and Memory}, 53.
to a different internal set of musical criteria, and as one might expect, are
divergent in musical and sentimental character. They are similar in that
they each give rise to other musical objects, the secondary objects, such as
the *palindromic figure* of mm. 2-3, which are then treated to a new series of
repetition, and possibly alteration, separate from their respective generative
primary object. Coloristic musical objects, which evolve from one or more
aspects of the instruments’ technique on which Dutilleux based his original
sketches, exist outside the primary/secondary dialectic as self-contained
objects. The existence of “prefigurations,” hints and wisps of things to come,
when coupled with the variations of each object over the course of the piece,
cloud any search of the definitive or “real” version of the object. However,
in some cases, such as the *modal song’s* appearance in IV. LITANIES 2, where
the object is prominently featured or presented in an extended setting, one
might rightly argue for their existence. Such hints may reveal an application
of the Proustian involuntary memory ideal in deployment. Perhaps Dutilleux
endeavors to heighten a listener’s impression of a charged element by
accessing connections with earlier music in retrospect. If the appearance of
a primary musical element is also a return, however coded, one may make a
salient (perhaps even sub-conscious) leap toward perceiving its significance in
a more robust and elemental way.

A look at the *modal song* ("chant modal") as an example of a primary music
object in *Ainsi la nuit* and its transformations over the course of the piece reveals several of Dutilleux’s traits in assembling and forming a piece that contains many such objects. As noted, the appearance of the modal song in LITANIES 2, though not the first, provides a representative example.

Dutilleux succinctly characterizes the modal song as “based on 4 and soon 5 sounds, always similar but stated in a variable order.” In viewing the

Ex. 2.14 - *Ainsi la nuit*, IV. LITANIES 2. mm. 1-6.

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melodic line described beginning in m. 1 of the movement, we find the muted cello and viola playing a sensuous, very narrow and totally chromatic line in unison, starting with the pitches A—G-sharp—B-flat—A, and soon an F-sharp on the last beat of the measure. Those four sounds, an [0124] set, are joined in the last note of the phrase by the G-natural, which fills in the chromatic gap. As he describes, the melody continues, soon with the first violin and cello in octaves, with the same pitches in use and in varied order, existing in a kind of hovering, circular space without any sharply focused pitch centricity, although each two-measure phrase begins on A. Note, too, that within a narrow ambitus (perhaps itself a nod to the focused and narrow melodies of Bartók, an acknowledged influence), continuous chromatic motion in a single direction is avoided and leaps are countered. Dutilleux’s nod to modes, while easily translatable to tendency tones and harmonic gravity in the ancient church modes to which he refers, could also reflect the delicate melodic balances found in the restricted yet noble cantus firmi he imitates. Eventually, the range extends upward to B-natural and C, before sailing smoothly back down to the F-sharp in m. 7 (figure 2), which then acts as a focal pitch against the pungently chromatic rising figures in the next section leading into figure 5. While looking at the rapid pizzicato figures in the violins from the beginning of the movement, one finds plenty of imitation of the modal song figure (for example, diminution and transposition of the first four notes in the first violin: D-sharp—D-natural—E—D-sharp, and then in m. 3, a transposed [0124] set on
beat 2). But in further discussion of the secondary objects relating to the modal song, these fragments will be more appropriately considered.

The first premonition of the modal song’s existence appears far earlier, in m. 11 of the first movement, NOCTURNE 1. A slight, brief breeze of the modal song floats subtly but unmistakably by in a transitional section, directly preceding a more confident statement of another primary music object, the converge-descent theme (See Figure 2.1), in m. 12. The first violin’s figure, E—D-sharp—F—E, is a transposition of the cello and viola melody’s first segment in LITANIES 2, in this case with a chordal underpinning based largely on fourths in a descending pattern. This instance is brief enough to miss as significant, and may not be readily distinguishable in the context of the first nocturne as something new, but it is an example of the composer’s “prefiguration.” This music is elaborated upon, again in a transitional environment, in the first
parenthèse, with the first violin’s elongated E—D-sharp—F—E—F-sharp—G figure sounding an octave higher from the end of m. 3, leading *attacca subito* into the second movement. Now more firmly related to the 5-note fully chromatic object of the *modal song* in LITANIES 2, with the maintained quartal harmonies from the NOCTURNE fragment underneath, the object is shown to be subject to an incremental metamorphosis, which results in a subtle though discernable narrative, in segments, throughout the piece. The third arrival of the *modal song* musical

Ex. 2.16 - *Ainsi la nuit, Parenthèse 1*. mm. 3-6.

object occurs as the predominant musical material of *Parenthèse 2* in yet a new setting, although the first violin again acts as conduit of the narrow, circling chromatic line, now transposed into a soprano register. After the familiar four-note figure, now C-sharp—B-sharp—D-natural—C-sharp, the next two pitches of the sequence, D-sharp and B, are part of a new segment, which includes B-flat and A down the chromatic scale, in the octave below.
The fast tempo, dynamic contrasts, and active, energetic gestures in the other instruments contribute to the generally agitated atmosphere leading into the aggressive third movement, LITANIES. This atmosphere, coupled with the extreme range and wide leaps of the violin line, infuse in this version of the modal song a teetering, unstable sensation. The material, which appears again in the first violin in m. 13 combined with other musical objects, seems meant to generate tension in transition from the focal, pianissimo C-sharp in the highest registers of each instrument at the end of MIROIR to the crashing re-arrival of what Dutilleux calls the “low, hot sonorities”\textsuperscript{23} of \textit{y} and the palindromic figure at the start of LITANIES. It also stands in marked contrast to the second appearance of the object (the, as yet, other parenthèse setting of the modal song) which leads into MIROIR D’ESPACE with a referentially prayer-like cadence. With each new appearance of the modal song object, a larger formal responsibility is accrued—from subtle interjection in NOCTURNE, to

\textsuperscript{22}Dutilleux, \textit{Ainsi la nuit}; quoted in Humbert, \textit{L’œuvre et le style}, 145.
brief foil in the first *parenthèse*, to bearer of transitions in register and character over time in multiple appearances in the second *parenthèse*.

The following occurrence of the *modal song*—the first that may be deemed an arrival—occurs in the next *parenthèse*, number 3. The constricted melody appears in the guise of the five-note [01234] figure right away, wending its way around for the entirety of the *parenthèse*, in what is surely some of the most austere music of the quartet. The quartet acts in unison, *p*, until m. 5, sounding each pitch with a *pizzicato* pluck and a false harmonic ringing hazily in its memory, sometimes resulting in a dull, haunting clash when two adjacent chromatic pitches occur in order. The material is now foregrounded in such a dramatic way as to seem vulnerable, delicate and strange. Of course, when one notes that this reiteration leads directly into LITANIES 2, the movement in which the *modal song*, sounding one octave below, is the predominant musical force (as discussed on page…) and subjected to repetition and modification again in the course of the movement (one of the weightier of the piece), this appearance is even more striking. The music of *Parenthèse 3* acts a signal, shining brilliantly but very softly, to refocus and reassert itself in the face of the previous “animated and whirling” music of the previous movement, LITANIES. The music of *Parenthèse 3* also serves to heighten the definitive and extended statement, in the lush, muted,

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Ex. 2.18 - Ainsi la nuit, Parenthèse 3, complete.

tenor-register viola and cello, of the modal song, whose powerful role in the argument of the quartet is now assured upon this fifth appearance. In several variants of texture, timbre and pitch centricity, the modal song maintains a near-omnipresence in the fourth movement of the quartet, with the exception of mm. 18 through 21, and fleeting appearances from there until m. 29, where other recurrent musical objects (the fan-shaped theme [see Figure 2.1], after Dutilleux’s own appellation écriture en éventail, in 18-21, and the converge-descent theme from 25-28) appear as contrast. In m. 32, the final modal song object appears in canon in each voice; in the final voice, the first violin’s
chromatic line is modified to a directional octatonic scale (as also used in the
converge-descent theme), landing gently to end the movement on a focal pitch, E,
before another surprise burst of y in Parenthèse 4.

It appears that after this definitive culmination, towards which a thread was
carefully woven through the music leading to it, the modal song’s story is
relegated to one of memory. Appearing in fleeting, camouflaged fragments at
the end of V. CONSTELLATIONS, following one last powerful, cathartic chant
in m. 37, in the final pealing climax of tension that precedes the sixth and
seventh movements, which function as final musical echoes. The fragments
bleed into the sixth movement, NOCTURNE 2, intended as a negative-image
version of the first nocturne. In mm. 48 and 49 of V. and mm. 4 and 5 of VI.,
the chromatic outline of the modal song is used as a harmonic scaffolding
for intricate, quasi-tremolo and spiccato passages, where a rapid mirroring
method occurs between pairs of players. For example, in m. 4, the B—C-
sharp—C, A-sharp—G-sharp—G figure in the first violin appears, bisected
and flipped, in the viola: A-sharp—G-sharp—G, then B—C-sharp—C. An
identical shift occurs between the second violin and the cello, which operate
a major second below their respective partners. While lacking any trace of
the previous versions of the modal song’s lush, sensuous flavor, the augenblick
speed of this final appearance of the material in the piece is as dependent on
the concept of musical memory as any before it. One now recognizes that, in
following LITANIES 2, any reiteration of the modal song is hereby looking not forward in anticipation, but behind in retrospection (in this case, fragmented, distant and crystalline).

Ex. 2.19 - Ainsi la nuit, V. CONSTELLATIONS and VI. NOCTURNE 2. mm 48-50, 1-5.

The question of whether the flutters of m. 6 in NOCTURNE 2 are truly the final appearance of an element of substantial importance of the piece is debatable, and it points to another aspect of the ingenious methods of generative construction that Dutilleux uses. Again using the example of the
modal song to illustrate the outgrowth of new and subsequently independent material (just as the palindromic figure emerges from y), it is possible to find aspects of the modal song in other areas of the piece, including the last movements, NOCTURNE 2 and TEMPS SUSPENDU, as well as to separate those aspects from their source. Further, by extracting the secondary objects of the modal song and analyzing their developments, independent of the primary object, one begins to appreciate the narrative subtleties and formal complexities of Ainsi la nuit in a comprehensive way. And finally, in remembering that the modal song is but one of several primary objects, each generating other independent objects, one appreciates the vast number of possibilities guiding Dutilleux’s compositional choices.

Let us return to the agitated atmosphere of Parenthèse 2 to illustrate such a divergence of similar musical material. In m. 15, following the second appearance of the modal song as described above, the first violin continues with rapid quintuplets, circling around between F-sharp and C in a less-than-total chromatic saturation, but, with motion such as A—B—C—B-flat—A, related to the original four- and five-note versions of the modal song in LITANIES 2. This short first morsel, true to form, appears more developed soon after, in the third movement at m. 28. Now totally saturated, the thirty-second-note figure in the first violin weaves and folds back in on itself, more closely resembling a version of the modal song in diminution. In m. 31, the meandering ripples
appear in the second violin, the range extended, from the first violin’s C—F, to C—A-flat, and now, through variation and development, fully emerged as a new musical object. Appearing again in mm. 37-39 and in m. 44 (altered to a unidirectional role and harmonized in four voices), the figure possesses its own raison d’etre, far removed from the modal song in narrative purpose, although an intervallic similarity, the essence of each object, is maintained. The meandering ripples appear in NOCTURNE 2 with major prominence, in close proximity to the final breaths of the modal song, after appearing in a significant role, simultaneously along with several other musical objects, in the quasi-aleatoric “measure” near the start of movement V. In the nocturne, Dutilleux treats the figure, first (re)appearing (flanked by the mentioned versions of the modal song) in m. 2, as a theme: subjecting it to various treatments and contrapuntal exercises, taking advantage of its directional
capabilities and flexibility as a musical figure to shape the movement, both in leading toward to its climax, an appearance of the *converge-descent theme* (the primary musical object which first appears in the first movement, NOCTURNE 1) and away from it, by joining the *converge-descent theme* in the final transitional slide toward the final movement.

![Ex. 2.21 - Ainsi la nuit, VI. NOCTURNE 2. mm 9-17.](image)

The other significant secondary musical object springing off (at least partially) from the *modal song* is found as early as the first movement, and it is among
the most complicated elements of the piece in its own right, whether viewed from a generative, referential, narrative, or even metaphorical point of view. While the object certainly has roots in the modal song, it can also be traced to another primary object that anchors the piece, appearing in the first and last movements, a series of undulating major seconds. The intervallic mobility provided by both major and minor seconds informs an awareness of the object, whose principal intent, by using standard string techniques including natural and false harmonics, pizzicato, or bowing sul ponticello, is one of

Ex. 2.22 - Ainsi la nuit, VI. LITANIES 2. mm 10-16.
evocation. The fragmented shards or bursts serve to punctuate and agitate, always sounding with and commenting on other elements, including the modal song itself. Dutilleux makes reference to these “echoes of the sounds of nature,” immediately reminiscent of the string quartets of Bartók (a significant musical figure for Dutilleux) such as the Fourth, in which insect-inspired “night music” permeates the third movement. A rare direct homage, this nature fragments object appears in a variety of guises, such as the opening of LITANIES 2, in conversation with its parent object, in mm. 1 and 3 in the violins, with the biting left-hand pizzicato figure framing a chromatic collection in the first violin and major-second collection in the second violin (See Ex. 2.14, page 31). In m. 11, several adaptations of the object are integrated, outlining both its major- and minor-second components (for example, the first violin’s G—F-sharp and C—D glissandi and the narrow [0123] pizzicato figure in the cello), in a pizzicato and sul ponticello texture, which gathers intensity in the intricate ascending passage in mm. 14 through 16. A similar accrual of energy occurs in mm. 29 through 31, although this incarnation of the nature fragments object is more closely related to the five-note modal song, with each instrument operating within a range of a minor third (the familiar [01234]): the cello between D-sharp and F-sharp, the other three from F-sharp to B-flat.

\[24\] Dutilleux, Ainsi la nuit; quoted in Humbert, L’œuvre et le style, 145.
In looking at the opening measures of the first movement, NOCTURNE 1, one easily witnesses the organic outgrowth of the first instances of this nature fragments object from its other source, the undulating major-second primary object. Although it acts as a primary object, in that its narrative argument, generative qualities and framing role are central (as are all the primary objects) to the structure of the quartet, one may relate its limited material to another object, the y chord, whose first statement served as introduction to this movement. Reminded that the y chord contained both major and minor seconds but that its voicing emphases in proximity the major second, the listener’s ability to connect the material is audibly aided when one of the major seconds from y appears, in the viola, on the first beat of the nocturne: C—D. Aided by the major second in each other voice—a through-sounding D—E joining the viola in the second violin, and the repeating cells in the first violin (B-flat—C) and cello (C-sharp—D-sharp)—the major-second-saturated
sound may itself be evocative. One dares go so far as to imagine a physical, three-dimensional parallel in nature: a few feathers sitting on top of the water of a small lake, gently bobbing in ebb and flow, never touching. By m. 7, the activity of the symbolic water is mightily increased, our *nature fragments* secondary object having first appeared—as a logical development in an increasingly energized atmosphere—in m. 4 in the first violin and m. 6 in the viola and cello, *pizzicato*, as commentary and interjection. By m. 7, the *nature fragments* M2-centric

Ex. 2.24 - *Ainsi la nuit*, I. NOCTURNE. mm. 4-7.
fragments, using the DNA of the undulating major-second object in extended and intricate variation, have overtaken it in a rapid process of musical Darwinism. After subsiding, the nature fragments return, following the first appearance of the modal song in m. 11, now tinted with minor seconds in circular, chromatic patterns that emphasize both the major and minor second, in the violins in mm. 14, 15 and 16. In m. 27, nature returns, softly arriving to drown out the converge-descent theme, one instrument at a time, starting with the first violin,

Ex. 2.25 - Ainsi la nuit, I. NOCTURNE. final “measure”.

into the first example of quasi-aleatory in the final “measure” to end the movement. While the differences between this “fully formed” example of the nature fragments object and the music of m. 7 are distinct, especially when considering aspects of the pitch material on the individual gesture, viewing this object’s multiple roles, as coloristic, symbolistic, and reflective aids a reading that interprets the fluctuating degree of pitch coherence and limitation as merely one criterion of a multi-functional force in the piece.
After again appearing, along with the *meandering ripples* as discussed, in the other quasi-aleatoric section at the beginning of CONstellations, the *nature fragments* music colors and comments extensively on the music in the final movement, TEMPS SUSPENDU. In this final movement, an environment of retrospection, several of the primary and secondary objects that have been placed in contrast to each other over the course of the piece are combined and fused. In a setting similar to LITANIES 2, the *nature fragments* exist as commentary: fits and starts and segmented bursts, such as the quintuplets in m. 6 in the viola and first violin, occur with a certain regularity until figure 25, the grand return of the *undulating major-second* object. From the beginning of the movement until this return, the music on which the *nature fragments* comments, is an extended elongation of yet another secondary object, a *progressive fourths* idea (See Figure 2.1). This object, a harmonic

Ex. 2.26 - *Ainsi la nuit, V. CONstellations.* “measure” 2.
event involving pairs of instruments (usually the violins against the others) relaying double-stopped stacked fourths to and fro in a progression meant to build anticipation, recurs as an outgrowth of the \( y \) chord, which happens to
begin this movement. Here, the pitch material of the *nature fragments* is more closely related to previous iterations such as the end of the first nocturne and LITANIES 2: narrow, chromatic cells doubling back on themselves. From figure 25 onward, and into the final halting evocation of “distant bells,” however, the *nature fragments* look and sound like their first rendering, that of the major-second figure in m. 7 of NOCTURNE 1. With wide, sweeping gestures consisting of connected major-second-centric cells—in harmonics, bowed *sul tasto, sul ponticello* and *pizzicato*—effects now firmly associated with

![Musical notation](image)

Ex. 2.28 - *Ainsi la nuit*, VII. TEMPS SUSPENDU figure 30-end.

this object, the major-second *nature fragments* make no further reference to
their other semblance. This progress-regress narrative of the *nature fragments*
object works in tandem with the bookend appearances of the *undulating major-
second* object as a framing device; indeed, with each new occasion of the bell-
ringing ritual (figures 27, 28, 29, and 30), the major-second element emerges in
greater distillation and clarity. Finally, two m.s after figure 30, an interlocking
E—F-sharp—G-sharp, C-sharp—D-sharp—E-sharp ricochet-bowed figure
echoes, with clarity, the certainty of the major second in these final gestures.

In discussing one primary musical object, the *modal song*, and its secondary
objects, the *meandering ripples* and *nature fragments* objects, one observes a
delicate degree of correlation and interdependence, as well as a discrete
autonomy, between these constituent elements. While each object possesses
a thoroughly argued if intermittent narrative over the course of *Ainsi la nuit*,
each reveals itself to be distinctly self-sustained, driven by internal concerns.
Regarding each separate entity, folded back into the fragmented fray, as
part of a larger group of narrative and structural directives leads one to note
another type of narrative argument taking place over the progression of the
piece: that of the interaction of the primary musical objects, and each primary
musical object’s associated secondary objects, with each other. With each
primary object added, the possibilities of formal complexity are multiplied,
as are the challenges in creating a cohesive, compelling structure. Dutilleux’s
achievement in maintaining several layers of perspective, from a focus on the event/gesture-centric level, moving to larger planes of reference—organization within, then among, movements—and finally through to the sustained primacy of the overall structure over each individual object, aids comprehension of the work as a single, complex event.

While noting each musical object’s unique musical path, one also observes a tangible interaction with its neighbors as a guiding principle in the character of each episode; a necessary give-and-take to ensure that the larger theater plays out. Dutilleux intentionally manipulates and bends the material to the priority of the whole shape—a resultant ebb and flow complicates the basic statement-argument-epilogue outline. Using the basic musical elements contained in objects like $y$ and the modal song, each variation becomes a focused compositional etude, not unlike Sur un même accord, in which a familiar, self-generated conflict—that between the rigorous and the rhapsodic—comes into play. Within the specific limitations he has set—through structure, pitch, duration, character, or narrative—the composer engages his compositional and creative prowess to make each moment of the piece relevant, and even necessary, to the discourse of the piece. In viewing Figure 2.1, a catalogue of each of the thirteen musical objects (five primary, five secondary, and three coloristic) in Ainsi la nuit, one surveys thirteen unique stories. Some objects, such as the modal song, have a high degree of presence
and variation throughout the piece, while others, like the marcato ascensions, a secondary object (essentially an inversional foil) of the converge-descent theme, occurs with limited modification and regularity. But to a significant degree, each element occurs with a certain consistency over the course of the piece, with the final entrance of an object—the marcato ascensions—in LITANIES, the sixth part of a twelve-part entity. One also notes the organizational role of individual objects, such as the aforementioned framing function of the undulating major second, which occurs only in the first and final movements, or the modal song’s high relevance in the middle of the work but absence at the beginning and end. Additionally, some objects, like the pointillistic music first seen in the introduction, reappear with a regular consistency in every few movements, while several, like the nature fragments and the octave glissandi, disappear for four or more sections, stretching the listener’s powers of memory, the concept on which the piece’s cohesion relies, more strenuously.

Fig. 2.1 highlights other powerful interactions between the musical objects, including forces that are apparently magnetic in nature. For instance, the focal chord $y$ and the modal song, both major elements throughout the piece, seem to repel each other. Together they occur in eleven of the twelve sections of the piece, and never (save one, CONSTELLATIONS, with a $y$ beginning and modal song ending) in the same movement. Further, the most dramatic occurrences of each are often prefaced by an appearance of the other, such as the important
second appearance of $y$ in LITANIES, which follows the modal song-saturated Parenthèse 2, and vice-versa from the end of LITANIES to the third parenthèse, an important moment for the modal song. This dialogue emerges as another narrative of salience in the piece, and gives rise to questions of inter-elemental priorities in the narrative development of the primary objects. Is the tension between these objects the cause for their organization, or is it merely a result of their diverging plots as heightened by proximity in time? Conversely, certain objects—often a secondary object to its primary parent—seem to hover near others, acting to complement or color an argument. The appearance of the progressive fourths and the palindromic figure accompanying focal chord $y$ in Parenthèse 4 are illustrative of their supportive developmental functions toward $y$ in this case, but also denote a further story line. Parenthèse 4 marks the swansong of the palindromic figure—its last appearance in the piece—in addition to marking, in its most extended iteration thus far, the increased importance of the progressive fourths object, which then appears prominently in movements V. and VII. Since $y$ never appears without one object or the other (except in the final measures of the piece, in a varied harmonic veil, the final question mark gesture), one can view the decreasing presence of the palindromic figure and the increase in prevalence of the progressive fourths late in the piece as yet a new kind of evolution, one of many at play in the work.
Pages 106-109: Figure 2.1 - Musical objects in *Ainsi la nuit*
occurrences over progression of *Ainsi la nuit*

**PRIMARY MUSICAL OBJECTS**

- **focal chord y:**
  - mm: [chart]
  - 1, 4  
  - 1, 18, 50, 68, 91  
  - 2  
  - 1  
  - 1-4 final 5 bars

- **undulating major-seCONDS:**
  - [chart]
  - 1-6, 15-16, 29  
  - 14-fig. 30

- **modal song:**
  - [chart]
  - 11 3-6  
  - 13-15  
  - all  
  - nearly 37-40  
  - 48  
  - 4-6
Fig. 2.1 (continued)

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- Converge-Descend Theme:
  - mm: 12-21, 14-17, 20-24, 23-37

- Fan-Shaped Music:
  - mm: 2-14, 7-25, 18-21

- Secondary Musical Objects:
  - Palindromic Figure:
    - mm: 2-3, 8-11, 3-13, 68-78, 86-8
  - Progressive Fourths:
    - mm: 5-6, 10, 80-5, 2-8, 4-19, 1-13
Fig. 2.1 (continued)

from undulating M2:

nature fragments:

mm:

from modal song:

meandering ripples:

mm:

from converge-descent theme:

marcato ascensions:

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COLORISTIC MUSICAL OBJECTS

**pointillistic music:**

| mm:  | 6 | 1-3 | 17-19 | 54-66 | 9-10 |

**octave glissandi:**

| 9 | 2-3 | 11-13 | (17), 33 | (8) | 28-43 |

**tremolo alarms:**

| all | 3, 7-8, 12-13, 24-30, 54-62 | 10, 12, 12-15, 16, 50, 23-36 |
If the thirteen recurring objects in the piece act and interact in ways that reveal a composer who relishes working out musical problems in methods both meticulous and intuitive, the resultant document is, by the simple rules of multiplication, complex and multi-faceted, and owing to his musical interests (artistic standards?) delicately integrated and cohesive. In arranging the progress of the piece as if on the face of clock and gradually adding focal pitches, musical objects and other influences, Fig. 2.2a-d illustrate the weblike construction of *Ainsi la nuit* in a complete view. By overlaying the organization of movements with the organization of objects, one observes the two systems working both in tandem and at odds, giving rise to the philosophical questions of art and science in music that Dutilleux himself has pondered. While the addition of new elements results in a thicker, more interlocked web, these figures further illustrate the generative, self-referential construction of the piece—the addition of secondary elements displaces nothing closer to the central core: the DNA of the piece, the primary objects, and most of all *γ*, the focal chord, from which all material can be intervallically derived. The explosion of the concepts of referential harmony and organic expansion from *Sur un même accord* to *Ainsi la nuit* is not a simple or direct one. After deciding the expanded scope and weight of the quartet, and perhaps realizing that he might have expounded on the ideas of the prelude in myriad ways, Dutilleux chose an avenue of ontogeny suitable for his ideals and his conception of the piece. In using harmony, both as reference and as generator of material, to engage the properties of memory (and of musical recall) toward...
Pages 112-16: Figures 2.2a-d. The weblike structure of *Ainsi la nuit* is increasingly complicated with the addition of more elements.
Figure 2.2a. The movements (and important focal pitches) of *Ainsi la nuit* organized on the face of a clock.
Figure 2.2b. Overlay of primary musical objects over the clockface.
Figure 2.2c. Appearances of primary objects in each movement. Secondary objects are connected to the primary objects.
Figure 2.2d. All appearances and connections in *Ainsi la nuit.*
maintaining cohesion, Dutilleux further elevated its prominent role in his music in *Ainsi la nuit*, a singularly unfeigned product of a complex musical mind.
CHAPTER 3
TWO PILLARS, ONE BRIDGE: A RIPENING ORCHESTRAL VOICE IN TOUT UN MONDE LOINTAIN... AND TIMBRES, ESPACE, MOUVEMENT

Henri Dutilleux’s music for orchestra occupies a healthy majority in the catalogue of his complete works. Since completing his First Symphony in 1951, writing large-scale pieces for large forces has occupied most of his time and attention, and in certain decades, such as the 1960s and the ‘90s, orchestral works were virtually his only focus. He offered a clear rationale while discussing the broad topic of musical style with Claude Glayman in 1996: “In my own case, instrumental color is very important and that is perhaps why I’m always happy to write for orchestra.”¹ As such, the topic of the orchestra looms large: not only for Dutilleux himself, but also in any assessment of his work or discussion of its influence on others. Pieces function both as localized laboratory (where innovations are tested and worked out) and carrier of complex, layered sentiment.

Yet, instead of treating the orchestra as an empty vessel, he guides his experiments and expressions via channels that make the best use of the strengths of the medium; just as his piano music might be called appropriately

“pianistic,” his music for large orchestra is highly informed. While one easily encounters virtuoso instrumental and ensemble writing and clever nods to his contemporaries (especially in the genre-stretching years of the 1960s and ’70s), much of this music is firmly grounded in tradition. Use of standard orchestral choirs, scoring techniques, and registral constraints permeates the entire body of his output, and along with his storied sensitivity to color and timbre, forms the backbone of his work. After decades of putting orchestral composition at the center of his attention, his point of view gradually shifted: one notes an expanded sense of temporal space in his more recent chamber music, in pieces like Ainsi la nuit, and especially Les citations for mixed quartet (1991). He emerges as one of the relatively rare Orchestral Composers of the late 20th century, with nearly all of his mature music somehow refracted through an orchestral lens, and as he mentions, he relishes the work. His attention to detail, clarity and structure are never better on display than in works from Métaboles (1965) through Shadows of Time (1997). Although he didn’t write his first piece for orchestra until age 35, its dimensions and scope truly fit his musical and intellectual temperament: for Dutilleux, composing for orchestra became a virtuoso act in itself.

Without disregarding Dutilleux’s efforts to make each piece a singular statement, one finds devices and methods that evince an evolving approach in his orchestral work as a whole. Tout un monde lointain…, for cello and
orchestra (1967-70), and *Timbres, espace, mouvement, ou La Nuit étoilée* (1977-8), the major pieces that flank *Ainsi la nuit*, define the concerns of his work in the late 1960s and ‘70s and his post-*Métaboles* “maturity” (see discussion in Chapter 1): a fruitful period for him, without doubt. They are also two works that exemplify specific traits that appear in a more globally in Dutilleux’s orchestral music. In addition to certain obvious links—both works were commissioned (one as soloist, one as conductor) by Mstislav Rostropovich—they are similar in sharing a explicitly-stated point of departure (rare for Dutilleux): each piece makes certain reference to a work by a nineteenth-century titan of art.

*Tout un monde lointain…* grew from the composer’s thorough rereading of the work of Baudelaire in preparation for a proposed ballet based on *Les Fleurs du mal* that never came to pass; *Timbres, espace, mouvement* was a response to van Gogh’s masterpiece *The Starry Night*, first spurred by a gift from the soprano Irène Joachim of the collected correspondence of van Gogh.2 3 Dutilleux goes so far as to literally refer to each work in the scores of the pieces. The van


3 This is a source of inspiration to which he would return, setting words van Gogh wrote to his brother in the fifth movement, *De Vincent à Théo...,* of his work for soprano and orchestra, *Correspondances* (2003). He quotes, at fig. 4 in that movement, the hazy falling gesture from the opening measures at fig. 1 of *Timbres, espace, mouvement* in a subtler, almost dream-like setting, following the words “...and all the same to feel the stars and the infinite high and clear above you. Then life is almost enchanted after all.”
Gogh appears as the subtitle of *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, and each of the five movements of *Tout un monde lointain*… are preceded with a brief quote of Baudelaire, each serving as epigraph, in the score. But as Dutilleux states, any connection to Baudelaire need not be literal:

> Strictly speaking, he was the stimulus, the initial impulse, and it’s more than possible that many people don’t think of Baudelaire at all when they’re listening to this music. In the same way, audiences for *Timbres, espace, mouvement* may perhaps decline to make the link with van Gogh’s *La Nuit étoilée*, seeing which gave me an emotional shock.\(^4\)

Due to their relative proximity in his catalogue, these pieces share similarities of language and construction with each other and with *Ainsi la nuit*, as can probably be said of all of Dutilleux’s adjacent and later works. For example, both the concerto and the quartet illuminate the composer’s interest in symmetrical harmonic constructions, and both *Ainsi la nuit* and *Timbres, espace, mouvement* are extended, ruminatory nocturnes. Nevertheless, for all their similarities, they are fundamentally different statements, and along with the quartet, they can be viewed as a central bridge in Dutilleux’s work. Whereas *Tout un monde lointain*... sums up the advances in Dutilleux’s orchestral technique and language from the symphonies and *Métaboles, Timbres, espace, mouvement* prefaces a subtly new direction, on display in works like the violin concerto *L’Arbre des songes* and *The Shadows of Time*, in which poised yet cooler harmonies and textures, executed with ever-greater finesse, prevail. Dutilleux

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remains committed to the universe-in-a-piece concept of large-scale form, and yet his innovations and experiments on the formal and structural fronts never cease from his early to his later work. Ultimately, *Tout un monde lointain…* and *Timbres, espace, mouvement* are contrasting models of a composer working to find different ways of getting to a similar answer.

*Tout un monde lointain…* (“A whole distant world…”) approaches the ideal of a complete and closed form as engagedly as any he has written, and aptly parallels its title in this regard. One of Dutilleux’s major statements (nearly thirty minutes, roughly the same length as both symphonies), and aided by Rostropovich’s championing of the piece after its premiere at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 1970, the piece has entered the instrument’s concerto repertoire, becoming one of the few late twentieth-century staples and Dutilleux’s most-performed orchestra piece. Each of its five movements unfolds individually, occupying a harmonic and textural sphere constructed to remain in and of itself only, similar to the formal plan in *Métaboles*. However, some connective tissue, a “thème d’accords,” meant to tie movements together, appears (with variation) as an early genesis of the techniques which govern the complex structure of *Ainsi la nuit* (see chapter 2). The broad formal plan has elements of a balanced arch-form: among three fast movements are inserted a slow second and fourth movement of differing characters. The introductory first movement, *Énigme*, which opens with a
lengthy solo episode, and the extroverted final movement, Hymne, which quickly fades from a blazing orchestral tutti to an enigmatic cluster and the soloist’s final murmurs, form the bookends of a musical silhouette with arguably multiple highs and lows. The work’s middle movements—Regard, Houles, and Miroirs—form the episodic and generally more intimate, thinly-scored heart of the piece, even with the only formal pause in the half-hour span coming between the third and fourth movements. Formally, one could point to traditional symphonic and concerto models and call this structure an expansion. Each movement is largely autonomous; yet, to remove one would cause an arguably imbalanced or incomplete whole.

*Timbres, espace, mouvement* marks Dutilleux’s approach to large-scale form from a new, post-*Ainsi la nuit* perspective: notable are a high degree of self-reference and interconnectivity within and between movements, combined with blurred structural lines and a more pronounced distancing from traditional or symphonic formal expectations. Conceived and premiered as a diptych, *Timbres, espace, mouvement* might be Dutilleux’s most labyrinthine creation for large ensemble. He further complicated the matter in 1991, thirteen years after Rostropovich premiered it in his first year as National Symphony Orchestra music director, by adding a 4-minute interlude for the twelve cellos of the group and naming the two movements (I. Nébuleuse, II. Constellations). The
piece is scored for an orchestra with no violins or violas and a large wind and percussion contingent, a response by the composer to the painting itself, as he explains:

I felt I could use this van Gogh painting...as the basis for an attempt at reproducing in sound the strange impression of vertigo and cosmic space this picture gives you, for which I should need to find something quite new in the way of form but particularly of instrumental texture... Everything is happening in the sky, and the only links with the earth are the little church and a cypress in the foreground, which share the vertiginous impression of space, which immediately made me think of an instrumental grouping without any violins or violas.5

Issues of musical illustration, and of Dutilleux’s work relating to that of another artist, arise even more tangibly than in the concerto, permeating basic realms of instrumentation and certainly guiding his formal decisions. Caroline Potter provides evidence of Dutilleux’s linking of certain sections with elements in the painting, including the opening measures with the backdrop on the canvas.6 But beyond the germinating impetus the painting may have provided to the composer, a close inspection of such correlations does little to explain the formal and structural sophistication of the score on its own merits. Each movement, in broad contrast to the concerto, consists of an array of tempi, characters, densities and intentions. Where the concerto builds tension within the constraints of the musical parameters of the movement,


the response to van Gogh weaves in and out of scenarios, generating and relieving musical gravity and momentum more nimbly. Such matters seem to affect one's impression of the piece's temporal dimensions. *Timbres, espace, mouvement*'s two movements, plus interlude, clock in at about 18 minutes, ten less than the concerto's five movements. Yet, one can claim a similarity in breadth and volume of statement, attained through differing treatments of both musical and clock time.

While noting these differences in construction and formal design (as well as their proximity to other developments in Dutilleux's œuvre) with interest, one seeks rather to highlight techniques found in both of these works (and others) as means to a different end. By identifying recurring and evolving elements in the composer's processes, idioms, and habits of this period, this study aspires to describe the facets and layers of a complex topic: Dutilleux's orchestral style. As discussed in previous chapters, the story of his musical preoccupations isn't about employing the orchestra in avant-garde acts of inspired revolution, as one might say about works such as Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, Stockhausen's *Gruppen*, or Carter's Double Concerto, but can be characterized more as a long process of tempered yet focused refinement. This is certainly true when examining the prevailing topic of his orchestral technique, but in making a case for "maturity" in a piece like *Timbres, espace,"
mouvement, one can enumerate traits that may be useful in approaching the larger question, his orchestral style.

Broadly speaking, two issues concerning his entire output arise, and are especially central to framing his use of large forces. Although these sides of his compositional personality might appear separate or divergent, they eventually intersect in complicated and perhaps indirect ways. While putting him in perspective with regard to his peers and to historical trends, a parsing of these matters begs the simple questions of the composer’s attraction and response to the medium itself. Why was the orchestra the natural and preferred environment for this composer? And conversely, why is it that his work for these forces has become the way he is most often appreciated?

The first issue is one of musical narrative. In this regard, he may fairly be considered to come from a traditional point of view, and he continued to occupy it, in certain regards, throughout his output. His rejection of systems, such as the “aesthetic terrorism” of serialism, and his lifelong affinity for predecessors like Bartók informed an attitude about what notes were put on the page to do. As described in detail in previous chapters, he often subjected his materials to processes of varying rigor, but, as a rule, stopped short of foregrounding those processes, in contrast to those like Messiaen,

Boulez, and so many others, particularly in the 1950s and ‘60s. Any process or development involving pitch or rhythm can be said (and surely demonstrated) to be in the service of another musical element or parameter, be it a phrase or gesture, to drive what could be described as a classically bound definition of musical drama – “a science in the service of art,”8 as he describes. In myriad ways, the narrative is driven, furthered or clarified—its effect heightened—by the deliberate choices Dutilleux makes involving the instrumental forces at hand. (Given, that’s an observation one could make about composers like Berlioz, Wagner, or Strauss, but it applies more readily to them than to many of his contemporaries.9) In exploiting the natural contrasts inherent in a large ensemble—differences of attack, resonance and decay of various instruments; differences of blend, both within and between instrumental families; and extremes of presence and volume with regard to the individual, the small group and the large group—he weaves the messenger directly into the message. His informed understanding of established orchestral behavior, to aid in providing shape and structure to his musical story, is highly defined. One argues for that understanding becoming an ingrained component of the compositional act, and perhaps even further, that the materials themselves


9 Glayman confronts Dutilleux with this question, saying “when people regard you as avant-garde, your classical tradition gets in the way, and when they regard you as classical, in reality you’re avant-garde! You’re impossible to pin down and that’s why I see your position as being unique.” see Music - Mystery and Memory, 91.
were often imagined and shaped by the constraints and opportunities provided by the vessel through which they are delivered.

The second issue has to do with Dutilleux’s preoccupations with sound itself: timbre, color, resonance—all on purely abstract terms. Returning to his quote in the first paragraph of this chapter: “In my own case, instrumental color is very important…,” he makes reference to “color(s) both harmonic, orchestral and modal,” which belies his specifically French training and perspective in marrying the realms of pitch and timbre (an idea continued by Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail and others, progenitors of the spectralist movement in France, who cite Dutilleux as an influence). Although this is an aspect of his compositional skill that can be shown to have been developed and refined over time (with works such as The Shadows of Time displaying arguably greater clarity and brilliance of orchestration than the First Symphony, completed a half-century earlier), his fascination with color spills into every realm of his work. The topic, however difficult to define, is an especially prominent one for those who describe his work, for it sits at the heart of the matter for this composer as it does for few others – Takemitsu and Druckman perhaps. To briefly sum up his music without discussing the role of color, or of his focus on sound itself, is to miss the point of this music.

One could easily point to examples in which these elements are what the music is about: Dutilleux himself describes his *Figures de resonances*, for two pianos, finished in 1970 just after *Tout un monde lointain*… as being “short pieces[,] each of which would demonstrate a particular aspect of acoustic phenomena. My conception of them was deliberately experimental.”¹¹ One finds sharpening evidence the deployment of these and other “experiments” on the orchestral front, and of a craftsman using his honed, uncanny sensibilities regarding timbre and color to make the orchestration a driver of musical drama, possibly even to a point that where the orchestration itself is what is foregrounded.

One result of Dutilleux’s sensitivity to color, and one which parallels his practices in other realms of his craft, is a tight control over dimensions like register. From the thinnest and most static passages to the busiest, most fluid orchestral tuttis, he clarifies his narrative intent through registral isolation of specific elements and layers in pieces as early as the Second Symphony. Whether discussing a specific passage or a whole movement, to emphasize the importance or prevalence of a certain pitch—for example, F#—is generally half an answer; for purposes of describing both sound properties and the musical narrative in Dutilleux’s music for orchestra, a better question is:

exactly which F#? It’s a simple notion, but one that goes far in reminding us why we hear what we hear. As described in chamber pieces like *Ainsi la nuit*, focal chords and pitches and key concepts like progressive growth are attached to their vertical position in the score, as well as their instrumentation. Octave equivalence, a concept associated with tonality, cannot be assumed to apply in this music, especially from *Métaboles* onward.

Once an element and its behavior is introduced, it can be subjected to any number of variations, but one must regard any change of register in subsequent iterations to be deliberate, and possibly part of a larger architectural process. Most often, the register of an element (and very often, the instruments playing it) can be considered an ingredient of its character. In cases such as Exx. 3.1 and 3.2, once the musical materials are introduced, they are subjected to textural variation or development, by degree, to varied ends. The music of both examples is similar in that, as the primary thematic material, each begins the movement in which it serves to anchor; secondary materials arrive later, and are usually subject to greater variation. In the opening measures of *Miroirs*, the fourth movement of *Tout un monde lointain*..., Ex. 3.1, the rolled harp, the tick-tock marimba, and the *tremolandi* in violas and cellos each form one layer of an orchestral texture that serves as a kind of lento *moto perpetuo*: the backdrop to the high-soaring soloist for the duration of the movement. In these three measures, all the essentials that define the texture—
Ex. 3.1a - *Tout un monde lointain...*, IV. Miroirs. Opening measures.

harmonic, motivic, coloristic—are immediately on display. Over the duration of the movement the backdrop is subject to shifts in harmony, and each element weaves in and out of prominence at its own pace (shared with the soloist and a soft chorale in the muted brass), but a consistency of atmosphere is maintained. Once the parameters, including register, of each element are set, Dutilleux’s developments are modest: the marimba’s walking quarter notes are briefly handed off to the harp at rehearsal fig. 62 and the celesta after fig. 63; more significantly, the coloristic tremolo swells in the strings grow more intense by increments, with all strings leading in the brief climax of the movement three measures before fig. 67—the only example in which the range
of the original idea is manipulated.

Ex. 3.1b - Tout un monde lointain... IV. Miroirs. Fig. 62.

Ex. 3.1c - Tout un monde lointain... IV. Miroirs. Figs. 66 - 67.

It could be argued that the intention behind this consistency by limited means (other than the bass clarinet, the woodwinds are tacet for this movement, and the roles for each instrument, once set, do not change) falls in line with
his larger philosophies about the role of memory. These few layers, made deliberately recognizable, circle around each other like pieces of a mobile sculpture, no component ever far away.

The music in Ex. 3.2, from the opening measures of *Métaboles*, is treated with similar limits, but its variation can be said to be more deliberate with regard to color and register. The scoring itself, widely-spaced, with the piccolo, 1st oboe and Eb clarinet all sharing the top E (E6) in the first chord, contributes to introducing the exotic, playful character of *Incantatoire*, the first movement. This declamatory music returns in a nearly-identical guise at the very end of the movement, and in between these pillars, it runs through it as basic DNA, with E serving as the focal pitch and point of return after each of several rhapsodic and colorful interludes. After the first, brief return of this

3.2a - *Métaboles*, I. Incantatoire. Mm. 1-5.
material, just before rehearsal fig. 3, the E is taken up, now down an octave (in a case where Dutilleux’s non-tonal utility of octave equivalence can be considered to be at issue) and given extended melodic treatment in the trumpet (to which the second and third are eventually added). This leads directly into the third version of this material, which begins at fig. 5. The E has been lowered another octave, now in the first violins in a \( pp \) chordal texture in the strings. The melodic scope and direction of the line is maintained in each version: the E-Bb tritone polarity is highlighted in each, and despite the differences of character and register, the motive, or melody, is immediately recognizable from one to another. This is a case of Dutilleux using register, along with other changes of texture and color through varied instrumentation and nuance, specifically as a tool for variation and his \textit{croissance progressive} procedures (see chapter 1), as he set out to do in \textit{Métaboles}:

I took a long time to find a title that would really fit the form I’d chosen. As in nature – in the world of insects, for example – a given element undergoes a succession of transformations. At a certain stage of development the metamorphosis is so far-reaching, it leads to a fundamental change in the element’s nature.\textsuperscript{12}

After the second pillar, the repeated opening woodwind declamation, at the end of the movement, the first “métabole”, or moment of adaptation, occurs. Lineaire, the second movement, begins subito attaca with the string version of the material, from fig. 5, which forms the basis for the new movement, for strings alone. With the woodwinds now disappeared, the music is then subject to development and variation on its own terms, with “fundamental change” set in motion in an extended chorale-study. In opposite ways, Exx.
3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate how Dutilleux’s conscientious control over the range and register of a musical object can affect both an audience’s perception and its role in driving the narrative direction in his large works for orchestra. In both cases, they mirror the larger formal action. Whereas in Tout un monde lointain…, a mode of restrained stasis prevails as a dramatic foil to the action of both the surrounding movements and the acrobatic motions of the soloist, the formal and narrative intent of constant change and variation of Métaboles is driven, in part, by deliberate changes in register.

Deliberate changes in register play a yet greater role in Timbres, espace, mouvement, where Dutilleux’s prior focus on what one might call the abstract elements of music, if presented without context—timbre, color, resonance—move to the structural level. In calling this piece “first and foremost, a study for orchestra,”13 he provides a context for his personal response to extramusical elements in other works of art (in this case, the van Gogh). In addition to the aforementioned distancing from the work itself, he often overlays a system of proxies, where a specifically musical element stands in to mirror or symbolize an element of importance to him in the original piece into his work. The vertigo he describes via the visual is the starting point for his reproduction via the aural. In the opening minutes of Timbres, espace, mouvement, his tight control over many purely musical parameters and

processes at once is on display, where a busy and colorful surface is reinforced with a broad, even simple background. Processes of pitch, instrumentation and timbre quickly mix with a multi-voiced counterpoint and swirls of contrary motion in an ever-thickening broth, culminating in a full-throated tutti howl. Soon, an extended solo for the oboe d’amore begins, and one may retroactively view the preceding pages as a kind of expansive introduction. It is a correct assumption is certain regards, but the picture is made more complex by Dutilleux’s expanded use of focal chords, and in this case, focal pitches. The G# first heard in the oboe d’amore at fig. 10 is not an arrival, but an extension. The first note of the piece, and the lasting focal pitch throughout the introduction, is also G#.

We may view his procedures in this music in two contexts: as both a reflection, in musical terms, of the spatial nature of the painting, and as a concentrated exercise in register—a further development of his earlier manipulations in this relatively narrow realm. With a single pitch (or in this case, pitch class) used as principal point of referential return and presented in the highest and lowest reaches of the orchestra and all points in between, Dutilleux translates the vertical motion from the canvas to the orchestra.

From the first pitch we hear, a soft but piercing bowed crotale far above the grand staff (G#7), all the way down to a bass trombone’s flutter-tongued
Ex. 3.3 - *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, I. Prevalence of G# from beginning to Fig. 10.

growl well below it (G#1) and all points in between, the story is less about the grounding influence of this pitch class, but more about its variations in register, and by extension: color, resonance and timbre. In this context, the focal pitch as a compositional device serves two contradictory purposes: in the realm of harmony it acts a stabilizer, while in the context of the vertical and textural palette of the orchestra, it is the driver of new activity.

From the high seventh-octave crotale in m. 3 and low first-octave contrabass pizzicato and bass trombone in the two measures before fig. 5, which set up the outer frames, significant arrivals of G# occur with increasing frequency. In the measure before fig. 6, the orchestra clears away as the celli make a smeared glide up to G#4—the point exactly halfway between the outer frames, and tellingly the oboe d’amore briefly foreshadows its appearance in coloring the
pitch, along with the bassoon and flutes. The long, sinewy lines of contrary motion and counterpoint build and grow thicker with added harmonies, from fig. 6 until fig. 9, and G# marks the start or end of each large phrase. In the flute and first basses on the downbeat of fig. 7, at each entrance of downward motion in the treble voices, and after fig. 8 at the end of each upward line, G# is the ever-present axis of rotation. In the two measures before fig. 9, the many lines of motion begin to converge and crescendo into a singular voice. The howling full orchestra plays all together for the first time at 9, yet is fully reduced to a single pitch class - G#, in a broad middle-high-low gesture that covers all seven octaves of the pitch in a massive swoop and crash. Without harmony or melody, there is only register, instrumental color and texture, as well as a lot of vertigo. As the Métaboles and Tout un monde lointain… examples show, Dutilleux controls these aspects of his work for orchestra to corroborate the musical narrative. In Timbres, espace, mouvement, these aspects are elevated in status, from clarifying mechanisms of support to carrier of message or sentiment in their own right.

Dutilleux’s traits and techniques in instrumental scoring are also an obvious topic as regarding the facets of his orchestral sound. Here too is an area greatly influenced by his training at the Paris Conservatoire (where orchestration is still considered a principal subject of study for young composers), as well as one in which his personal signatures inform the larger
questions about his style and personality. Such a blend has given rise to sentiments such as those of Grisey, his onetime student, who noted, with guarded respect, the subtle path between convention and experimentation that Dutilleux chose to follow: “He’s a fake traditionalist. If you listen to his music, it sounds like something you know or you have already heard, and yet, there’s always something that is not trivial.”\textsuperscript{14} As practices in scoring a specific chord for several or many instruments have been closely tied to matters of harmony and voice leading since the existence of the orchestra, it is worth remembering that his habits are also guided by his idiosyncratic solutions to traditional problems in those domains. As discussed in other contexts, Dutilleux tended not to work by acts of creative destruction or revolution, nor did he seek to reinvent the wheel. In ways, his scoring practices may be among his more conservative, both in context of the daring experiments on this front by his peers like Xenakis, and of his own concurrent revelations in other musical spheres, such as form and structure. But on the other hand, his scoring habits are vital viewing for a composer always so conscious about choices involving sound, and parsing the old from the new helps to define his version—hand-polished, not reinvented—of the wheel.

The topic of scoring begins with Dutilleux’s concepts of resonance, both

gleaned and honed, and on the acoustic properties of orchestral instruments, whether plucked, bowed, hammered or blown. In the long tradition of the French concern and flair for instrumental color, Dutilleux is but one of many a major player before and after, as Julian Anderson claims in suggesting “although they were not aware of it,” Dutilleux’s work with resonance and space as a direct influence on younger generations like Grisey and Murail. Where the members of Les Six chose not to, he and contemporaries like Messiaen followed in the path deeply forged most obviously by Debussy and Ravel, themselves guided by those in the 19th century as disparate as Berlioz, Wagner and Fauré. (It may not need repeating that fascination with sound and resonance itself is by no means a particularly French dominion; Dutilleux himself points to another national stereotype. “Harmonic sensuality has been claimed as a characteristic of French music. True enough, but what about Chopin, Schumann, Wagner, Mussorgsky, or Berg?” What Messiaen and Dutilleux share, from their early work onward, is a special sensitivity to the aspects of sound that are naturally inherent in the instruments they use. Properties of attack, decay, vibration, and reverberation informed the music they wrote, and guided by intuition and trial-and-error research, both composers exploited those characteristics unique to each instrument while

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cultivating their own vocabulary and craft over decades. (Further scientific research into the properties of sound in this vein at IRCAM affected the work of a huge cohort, from the spectralists to those like Dusapin, Hurel and Dalbavie, and international figures including Benjamin and Anderson, Lindberg, Saariaho, Pintscher and eventually Boulez himself.) Simply put, a passage written for the violin is not likely to appear for the trumpet or the piano. Even if material might be shared between these instruments (for Messiaen, his use of large highly-defined musical blocks makes even this situation unlikely), since the way these instruments produce sound is different, the music as conceived in the realm of sound is recast and reimagined for that instrument. Recalling the material from example 3.2a-c., in which a melodic line in Métaboles centered on E appears high in the mixed woodwinds, then for solo muted trumpet, and finally for first violins, one can make the easy connection between changing instrumentation and shifts of character and color—the notes are similar, but they neither look nor sound exactly the same.

One way that Dutilleux expands on these basic differences in the context of large forces is through his frequent use of instrumental choirs. Hardly novel, the practice of dividing the principal sections of the orchestra and making the best of the similarities within the string, wind, brass and percussion families, while pitting them against each other for contrast, is as old as the notion
of the orchestra itself. Nevertheless, in Dutilleux’s hands the orchestra’s homophonic capabilities are continually utilized, perhaps due either to his original training as a pianist or his attraction to their relative purity of color. All string instruments behave similarly, for example, and large sections can be assumed to strive for uniform blend as a course of habit (qualities which his contemporaries with heavily-divided scores, from Ligeti to Boulez to Xenakis, sought to minimize in many passages). Notable also is the purity of instrumentational control with these passages. From Métaboles, the point at which many of his habits crystalize, through to his final works, a mixing of families in a homophonic texture or setting is a rarity, even in the densest of passages. Even the tried-and-true doublings of flute and violins in the treble or of horns, clarinets, bassoons and violas or celli in the middle register appear with remarkable infrequency. Since instruments behave differently, they are doing different things, and those dense passages are the precise product of more layers and dimensions of activity, not more doubling; similarly, groups of familiar behavior, not range, dictate his orchestrational precepts—ideas that fly in the face of 19th century standards. If these original ideas might be traced to that “father of modernity,” Debussy, it was surely cemented by the generation of Messiaen and Dutilleux, and can be considered standard practice in the European mainstream today.

A highly specific example of this kind of homophonic writing comes through
his rather frequent use of chorales, such as the kind seen in the second movement of *Métaboles*, for strings alone (Ex. 3.4). The “concerto for orchestra”\(^\text{17}\) design as he conceived it led to extended isolation of each of the orchestral families, and *Lineaire*, an extended exploration of tutti string textures, is his first complete orchestral movement for a specific subset of the orchestra. In his article on the competing demands of organic and inorganic processes in *Métaboles*, Jeremy Thurlow states that in Dutilleux’s music from this piece forward, a chord’s “sonorous quality (comprising both harmony and timbre) is now the essential aspect, rather than merely a medium of motivic or rhythmic ideas. It is as *sonority* that it acts as the main carrier of

musical significance.” 18 It seems as though his choice to isolate and highlight instrumental families as a structural concern brought about a clarity in orchestration, one that mirrors the new clarity and sparseness in pitch material that Thurlow notes as changed from the end of the Second Symphony to the opening of Métaboles. 19 From this moment in his music, one can see evidence of Dutilleux’s evolving orchestral discourse: the interest of the musical story lies, partially at least, in who is telling it. These acts of orchestrational paint-stripping result in both new and rescrubbed sets of techniques, such as instrumental chorales, which appear in both earlier and later work, to varied ends.

In Tout un monde lointain…, a brass chorale appears in a different context altogether, as a series of faint, incomplete interjections in the mobile-sculpture form of Miroirs, the fourth movement. This is one of many examples of a specific use he finds for the device: that of intermittent foil—in a role of

Ex. 3.5 - Tout un monde lointain…, IV. Miroirs. 1 m. before Fig. 63.


support, contrast, or a mix of the two—with another element, in this case with the soloist. As opposed to serving as the germinating seed for the development of new material as in Métaboles, this chorale remains a secondary object, and any growth or development over the course of the movement is circular and self-contained. Dutilleux returns to a concept of the soloist-chorus conversation in his later concerto for violin and orchestra, L’Arbre des songes. In the opening first movement, the soloist’s long, discursive line slowly blossoms as hazy, coloristic harmonies appear as brief interjections in the high and low strings. Two measures before fig. 2, a simple chorale appears in the oboes and clarinets; at fig. 3, the bassoons join, followed by the horns, trumpets and flutes. This music is no mere harmonic backdrop, but rather both a contrapuntal partner with the soloist (a single homophonic unit interacting with a single monophonic unit) and a defined object on its own. Why this passage can be called a chorale (with roots in and nods to traditional definitions), and not a more general homophony, lies at the core of Dutilleux’s so-called traditionalism. In addition to the lyrical setting and long, slurred lines, the spacing and motion of the component voices themselves point toward his embrace of earlier models, going back to figures like J. S. Bach and before, to the basic contrapuntal procedures of the 16th century. From its first appearance, a clear premise of contrary, or opposite-magnetic, motion between upper and lower voices (the three oboes versus the three clarinets at fig. 2) is a primary attribute of this music. This contrary motion is maintained through
its ebbs and flows—changes of density, instrumentation and pacing—as a point of order, and even in a setting that is not tonal, leans toward familiarity in voice leading and phrasing. When looking at the lines individually, one notes the basic maxims of traditional melodic motion as transposed onto his own harmonic language; leaps often followed by steps, avoidance of parallel motion in neighboring voices, and directional gestures in each part all make for elegant lines in themselves. But for some, that elegance may be judged

Ex. 3.6 - L’Arbre des songes, I. 3 m. before Fig. 2 - 3 m. after Fig. 4. (cont.)
Ex. 3.6 (continued) - *L’Arbre des songes*, I.

on a tradition-minded curve, one where merely following the rules of good counterpoint makes for a tasteful chorale. Dutilleux obviously did not stop there, whether in terms of aesthetics or in the composition itself, but that we
may trace these relatively direct homages as a powerful grounding influence. Remembering that the concurrent aesthetic imperative in many circles encouraged homophonic settings in which all tonic practices are abandoned with intent, one can view these types of decisions (directly or not) to remain allied with the past as choices of certain significance.
Homophony comes into play in less direct ways as well. Dutilleux’s growing fastidiousness regarding musical textures during the 1970s results in a kind of isolation of ideas, which are most clearly observed in his orchestral work. One such is that of elaborated unison, seen in a similar guise some fifty years earlier in the Second Viennese School as *klangfarbenmelodie*. The idea of shifting instrumental colors to a single melodic element applies, but as Dutilleux uses it in two examples from *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, it’s better described as an accumulation of melodic material (which is sustained) into a harmonic object—akin to the simple act of holding the pedal on the piano down. In Ex. 3.7a, the first three measures of fig. 1, the gradually descending melodic line is easily traced vertically down the score in the winds alone, as adjacent lower instruments take a portion of the line (often only one pitch) and hold it as the harmonic cloud thickens. In a case where the graphic quality on page matches aural perceptions (noting many similar examples from his contemporaries, Lutoslawski and Ligeti being first among them), one may easily apply this to his comments about the van Gogh and its “vertiginous impression in space” as a response in kind, as Caroline Potter and others have toward other sections of the piece. A somewhat subtler recapitulation of this concept occurs at fig. 17 (Ex. 3.7b), where a much faster tempo results in more pitches and more opportunity for coloristic variety. The hazy, *legatissimo* atmosphere of the opening is altered in tone for structural purposes, accentuated in this case by a layer of ringing punctuations in the
harp, marimba and celesta, all at the unison with the entering winds. The consistent pairing of both layers, the plucked or struck punctuation combined with the sustained pitch via air, results in a sonic fusing—the two layers become a single event, repeated on each new pitch. Now a quiet tension...
pervades as the melodic cell is expanded both upward and downward in chromatic increments in each successive repetition, propelling forward, machine-like, as the texture thickens. Making further use of the sustained winds, Dutilleux introduces coloristic devices, with fluttetonguing in flutes and tremolo figures in clarinets. The pitch material remains clearly and simply rendered via a constantly shifting orchestral palette. A slow chorale then enters in the cellos, bassoons and horns just before fig. 18, and the regular motion of the machine begins to gradually break down as individuals and groups divide off into greater heterophony.

Dutilleux further expands these techniques by inserting them into a larger musical dialogue, where they interact, both with each other and with other elements, in a kind of broad counterpoint. Sharply-defined sonorities (comprising both harmony and timbre, as defined by Thurlow) rise to the level of sonic ‘event’ in heterophonic contexts in works like Métaboles and Tout un monde lointain…, where their functions can change. In example 1.19 (pages 39-41), a few of these are highlighted as they appear in the first movement of Métaboles. On beat 1 of m. 13 and beat 3 of m. 15, a jolting staccato figure appears in the horns, harp, percussion and strings. Highlighted as a landmark ensemble event, the figure—part tutti interruption, part purely rhythmic interjection—appears fully intact, and operates as an alarm or signal, but
also as a continuation. It is a variant of a similar repeated figure found in the percussion and strings in the opening measures, which is further modified at fig. 3 in the flutes, brass, percussion and strings. Over time the figure takes on the role of a harmonic pedal, where each change of harmony and instrumentation signals a new section. While different in character to the gilded unisons in *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, Dutilleux imagines and treats both sounds as a single event, as if all instruments were acting as one. A similar figure appears in the first movement of *Tout un monde lointain*... at fig. 7 (Ex. 3.8), in the woodwinds, horns, trumpets and harp, and acts similarly as interrupter, but throughout the section, lasting until fig. 22, fails to take on the larger structural duties as described in *Métaboles*. Instead, quick successive

Ex. 3.8 - *Tout un monde lointain*..., I. Enigme. Mm. 2-4 after Fig. 7.
arrivals (as in the fourth measure of fig. 7) help the figure to act, rather than as an isolated event, more as a driver of pulse. A clear example of this composer using similar devices in different ways depending on the context, here is a reminder of the balancing act between reuse (worthy ideas and techniques) and innovation (whether expressive or technical) that must be achieved to produce, over time, a distinctive and personal body of work.

For all of his exploration of color by mixing and blending sounds, Dutilleux continued to place hefty value on instruments as individuals, and as characters and distinct voices, in textures thin and thick, busy and idle. First, the density of a passage grows as players are added not by greater doubling, but rather the contrary, in greater heterophony: strings are often divided within sections in full tuttis, and in the winds, brass, and percussion each player must balance roles of soloist and section member throughout. Very often, in a kaleidoscopic passage with action and movement, they may be the only one playing a crucial passage, from whichever chair they sit—a testament to the trust he has in players, and to the caliber of ensemble he has in mind when writing, going back to the First Symphony’s performances with Munch in Boston, to his inclusion of a concertino group of soloists that are seated in a ring around the conductor in his Second Symphony. Dutilleux also placed a good deal of worth in the notion of the instrumental soloist, most obviously in the two concertos (and the shorter violin concert piece from 1998, Sur le même
accord), but also from players within the orchestra (including, in *The Shadows of Time*, a long, nearly chromatic solo display from the timpanist), from brief moments of flourish or coloring to extended ruminations.

One example of an extended role for a solo instrument lies in the first movement of *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, just after the extended introduction described in example 3.3. The oboe d’amore, a relatively exotic member of the double reeds (one which continued to fascinate; it returns in similar fashion, as a foil to the violin soloist in the slow movement of *L’Arbre des songes* several years later) introduces material upon which it then builds in an additive, cumulative way—a kind of soliloquy. This moment, a typically florid, “incantational” melody in a single voice, can be interpreted as emblematic.
in a few regards: in both its presentation and in its consequence on later developments. This presentation, centered on the same G# focal pitch that has been in place from the beginning of the piece (“obsessively repeated,” says Potter of Dutilleux’s way of treating the pivot note, or focal pitch, in this

![Ex. 3.10 - Timbres, espace mouvement, I. Figs. 11-13. (continued)](image)

Ex. 3.10 - *Timbres, espace mouvement*, I. Figs. 11-13. (continued)

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“see-saw” gestures growing shorter, steeper

clamatory return of incantation
movement) unfolds in short phrases, each venturing vertically further away, always to return to G#4. A familiar gesture of melodically “framing” the central pitch occurs when A and F directly precede the G#, to make the [014] cell (further reduced to an [01] tension between A and G#) a characteristic motivic element of the oboe d’amore incantation, and of the music of those who soon join in. Each repetition is embellished further, with flourishes that venture further away but always to return, and when new instruments, like the trombones and low reeds, join in counterpoint at fig. 11, the third phrase of the oboe d’amore, they mirror the accordion-like action (both up and down) of the soloist away from and back toward G#4. By fig. 12, the fast-entering herd has overpowered the oboe d’more in dramatic sweeps to a snarling G# (+A trill in woodwinds), now spread out to five octaves.

The incantation is handed to the muted trumpet at three measures before fig. 13, and from here, presented afresh but as a familiar object, is no longer a soliloquy. Rather, it assumes an increasingly defensive position as the generative backbone for nearly all materials, which are both thrust at it in textural opposition and splintered off away from it in a kind of contrapuntal branching. The music from figs. 13 to 16 is among the most intricate he ever wrote, as the florid, fast-winding branches multiply and twist around each other in the winds, with the accordion motion in the strings and brass returning at fig. 14, see-sawing back to G# at 15. Even as the action increases,
the activities are generated via his tested methods of imitative counterpoint: canons, call and response, and mixing of similar and contrary melodic motion, with players of similar instruments working in competition on one beat, in tandem the next. In the second measure of fig. 15, the winds make a final, wild declamation of the incantation in three octaves (a rarity), and from here the final splintering commences; each repetition is cut further short by an interrupting crash (from one of those unchanging, sharply-defined sonorities discussed above) in the lowest depths of the orchestra, on (we might have guessed it) G#. In the measures before fig. 16, the melody is further reduced, boiled to swirling thirty-second notes spinning in midair across all woodwinds, only to crash down, but this time, the curse or cure of the omnipresent G# has been broken. When the pedal settles on C before fig. 17, five minutes of music have passed since the beginning of the piece, and G# was the relentless note-pivot.

This passage is ripe for discussion on many levels; a prime example of Dutilleux working at his greatest powers, where finesse in the details is matched by boldness of orchestral gesture and overall shape. It is also revealing of Dutilleux’s concepts on the nature of the orchestra— of the possibilities for musical intricacy and complexity on a level unattainable in solo or chamber settings, of the sense of drama and power brought naturally about by the contrasts that a group of this size can easily attain. But this
passage might also be seen as a kind of musical comment regarding the nature of groups themselves, and of the greater opportunities and dangers the crowd, the herd, or the multitude can bring along with them. An extended monologue in one voice, once turned conversational, becomes interactive and dynamic, then turns to confrontation and quickly spins out of control, crashing down somewhere else. Such a comment, coming from one who spent nearly 70 years of striving to innovate with the orchestra, nonetheless rendered exquisitely in this music (whether or not it was intentional or conscious) is itself valuable, and reaches to the heart of the value of this work in history.

From one perspective, it is **croissance progressive** musical development: using a single cell or motive to organically maintain coherence and focus in a large musical gesture of rise and fall. From another, it is crowd dynamics, as demonstrated with a trained, hierarchical, and sharply attuned crowd.

Not to be overlooked in this study on the roles of narrative and sonority in his orchestral constructions, Dutilleux’s twentieth-century influences make their presence felt. Appearing in subtle ways, as scattered evidence of a wide, deep subterranean river of significance for him, the music of composers like Bartók, Stravinsky and Berg cast a net (as do one or all over nearly every composer through the end of the century). As Caroline Rae notes in her 2010 study on Dutilleux’s foreign leavening (from André Gide’s expression *le levain de l’étranger* as a historical phenomenon in French art), he is happy to discuss
his Slavic roots and the importance of Bartók and Berg as influences.\textsuperscript{21} Having come to know them through close study at different times—Bartók in the late Forties in the postwar flood of the new from abroad while at Radio France, and Berg in the Sixties, possibly sparked by their mutual attraction to Les fleurs du mal (set by Berg in Der Wein)—he shares their affinities for elegances in harmonic construction and symmetry. Stravinsky is mentioned less, by him and by others, as his typically Parisian antipathy for Stravinsky’s neoclassical period (especially among members of his generation) seems to slightly mute his clearly stated reverence for the early ballets and Les Noces, “one of the summits of music,”\textsuperscript{22} and their presence in his consciousness from his childhood onward. It is a fair possibility that he holds Stravinsky closer to the plane of Ravel and Debussy in being so obviously influential as to be partially problematic; his efforts towards those composers, so patently elemental in his musical thinking, were more about escape than embrace. While quick to praise (as opposed to more strident cases of anxiety of influence: Debussy toward Wagner being one of the great examples) and even defend, as Dutilleux does against any attack on Stravinsky’s originality\textsuperscript{23}, he downplays any direct connection between his work and those whose work he admires,


\textsuperscript{23}“Apart from his so-called serial period, [he] took all his borrowings from the masters of centuries past, not from his contemporaries. He transfigured these external elements totally and always remained himself.” See Glayman, 95.
especially if they were closer to home.

These three composer’s imprints are useful in illustrating different aspects of Dutilleux’s varied musical and intellectual fascinations, but what they share as reflected in his work is a presence of aura or attitude, not necessarily of direct correlation. They also seems to make their presences felt in different parameters of his music, and his comments about Stravinsky could be telling of his own attitudes and efforts in transfiguring external elements and remaining himself, regardless of his borrowings. With Berg, Dutilleux seems to share an appreciation for the understated in terms of textures and gestures. Although Berg, an expressionist after all, shows an enormous range of approaches to gesture, Dutilleux highlights the “preoccupation with the transparency and refinement of timbres”24 as a favorite trait in the Second Viennese School, of whom Schoenberg is also admired. Rae notes the striking similarities between the endings of Tout un monde lointain… and the Lyric Suite: each is an inconclusive ending without a written double bar, in which an oscillating figure evaporates, morendo in the Berg, perdendosi in the Dutilleux25. Probably as close as Dutilleux gets to direct homage, with a notational novelty such as that being rare for both composers, the concerto still maintains its own stamp of “personality”—concept barrowed, notes his own. If they share


a taste occasionally for the ends of large works, the same can also apply to
delicate, hazy beginnings. *Tout un monde lointain*... opens with faint rustlings
in the percussion, with wire brushes on the snare drum and soft timpani
mallets on the sizzle cymbal prefacing and then interrupting the long opening
monologue in the cello. In this he begins similarly to the dreamy atmosphere

Ex. 3.11a - *Tout un monde lointain*... I. Enigme. Opening.


of another Berg work, the *Drei Orchesterstücke*, Op. 6, where a slightly larger
battery of cymbals and drums rustles as prelude to an especially rich and
sensuous scene of gently undulating violas, horns, low flutes and harps with a
gentle descant in the tenor register of the bassoon. In both cases, importantly,
there is sound before there is pitch, and in each, the atmosphere is most
certainly set via a process of revealing, as if a kind of haze were lifted, the curtain raised, into the piece itself. In Timbres, espace, mouvement, such an opening takes on more gestural (even functional) responsibility in a setting for three tam-tams and two cymbals; the five instruments are struck from largest to smallest, a van Gogh vertigo-inspired wash from low to very high, with the arrival of pitch in the crotale.

Ex. 3.11c - Timbres, espace, mouvement, I. Opening.

In other cases, likenesses are less pronounced in terms of technique, but a certain pathos can be felt between passages by Dutilleux and Berg, as well as Stravinsky. Between figs. 8 and 11 in the second movement of Timbres, espace, mouvement, a pervasive figure passes between the winds and strings—an undulating two- or four-note grouping in compound meters (6/16 or 9/16) that stands eerily stagnant, harmonically, while other elements and textures are in motion. If observed alongside the end of Berg’s major opera, Wozzeck,
Op. 7 (surely one of the most haunting in the repertoire) and the figure in the flutes and celesta, an eerie two-note undulation, marked *senza ritardando*

![Four-note undulating figure](image)

Ex. 3.12a - *Timbres, espace, mouvement*, I. Mm. 2-3 after Fig. 8.

emphasized with an underline, one notes the familiar duple/triple rhythmic tension as well as harmonic similarities in and among voices. Even though their functions and placement share little with each other in context, discovering these types of passing correspondences can reveal a composer’s depth of understanding of their own personal musical universe, whether any specific commemoration was intentional, or even consciously constructed. As for Stravinsky, a spirit of influence can be in larger, architectural ways, often at the level of the movement. Surely one aspect of Stravinsky’s manner that many composers adopted for their own uses is his set of techniques regarding
cumulative layering on the horizontal plane. Composers like Messiaen absorbed and further developed the notion of keeping several concurrent, often disparate activities (each operating independently and intrinsically) sufficiently separated in space and time and thus audible, while creating a cohesive and satisfying vertical and horizontal whole, and used it for their own purposes. Dutilleux was not indifferent to this method of construction, but it is not until *Métaboles* that an especially fine specimen can be found,
where the sharpest of Dutilleux’s instincts met with his developments toward
greater “rhythmic mobility” and sensitivity to texture and orchestration, in
the final movement, *V. Flamboyant*. Again, as in other cases, it was the formal
circumstances resulting from his large “concerto for orchestra” design that
led to a stylistic breakthrough, and the resulting product of accumulated
layers working in tandem is the confluence of each section’s participation. A
relentless moto perpetuo with a clear shape and insistent drive toward the very
last note of the piece, this movement shares a clear affinity (though is firmly
original, and the music Dutilleux’s own) with the final episode of the first part
of the *Sacre du Printemps*, the *Danse de la terre*. An expanded version of such
layering, the piece is eventually revealed to have a form circular in nature, in
which the opening motive (Ex. 3.1a) of the piece appears at fig. 59, where a
measure in the marked tempo is equal to a beat at the motivic level, all while
other activities continue as before.

Dutilleux’s special appreciation for the music of Bartók is not surprising,
given that it is his most prominently declared. A quotation of Bartók’s
*Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* appears in his *Trois Strophes sur le
nom du SACHER*, his pieces for solo cello, as double homage to both Bartók
and Sacher, for it was the latter who commissioned both works. Yet, as his
understanding runs deep, finding evidence of Bartók’s direct influence on
Dutilleux is not easily accomplished by observing similarities of rendering or
intent, or by inspections of musical palettes or surfaces. It is rather in Bartók’s ideas about musical organization and structures that one may find fruitful evidence of a link that goes beyond respect or adoration. Ernő Lendvai’s work on Bartók’s organizational practices, most notably with his concerns with harmonic and tonal substitution in a more chromatic language, resulted in a theory known as the axis system. By organizing the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale onto three “axes”: symmetrical, four-note sets (or the three diminished-seventh chords), each with a specific functional role (tonic, subdominant, and dominant), Lendvai mapped Bartók’s designs on the micro and macro levels in a way that showed functionality and clarity of purpose.\(^\text{26}\)

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Looking at the opening measures of Dutilleux’s *Tout un monde lointain…* and applying such a grid onto the music of the solo cello, which serves as a type of petri dish for generating material that appears in the rest of the piece, including the first appearance of the “thème d’accords”, an example of his *écriture en éventail* (fan-shaped writing: that which is symmetrical around the horizontal axis, another practice shared between the two), reveals an economy of musical means. If there were one interval that could be said to be especially prominent in this piece (itself unusual, as his harmonic habits tend not to foreground specific intervals), it would be the tritone, which appears throughout in matters great and small. In the first two rise-and-fall phrases,


several tritones are highlighted, from the pedal C-F♯ that starts each “sentence” of the passage, and the B-E♯ that follows in the first figure. In the second phrase, two more tritone pairs are added following the first two: A-D♯
and G#-D. The simple act of overlaying these onto the axis system unveils a restriction to the tonic and subdominant axes, and of an alternation between them (tonic-subdominant-tonic-subdominant) in each phrase, before gliding back to the pedal. These pitches and relationships hold their significance throughout the piece, as does an absence of the melodic tritones found in the dominant axis. Suggesting first a further reinforcement of Dutilleux’s preference for polarities in harmony (hence his rejection of serialism), his alternation of pitches on the other two axes could also suggest a fascination with the duality of those opposing axes of the tonic and subdominant (pitches that make up the third, or dominant, axis go unused). The G#-D, the final notes in the second phrase, remain especially vital, as they are added, in orchestra en masse, to the first five members of the oft-appearing thème d’accords, providing the final glue and dramatic introduction to both the third and fifth movements. It is true that the simple act of using tritones prominently doesn’t necessarily suggest that he used Bartók’s approach as a model any more than he would use Messaien’s (another composer whose self-limiting procedures had a discernible aural effect on his music), but applying an analytic tool like the axis system, an important tool for understanding Bartók’s musical language, reveals certain organizing principles for Dutilleux as well, and perhaps illuminates an aspect of the former’s influence on the latter.

Dutilleux was, ultimately speaking, an orchestral composer. Fascinated and spurred by the spatial and logistical complexities brought by large ensembles to ends that display him at his greatest depth and sensitivity, he was ever more at home with the orchestra. As his catalogue shows, the shift
from the salon to the large hall was gradual, but nearly total. At 35 years old, he had written only chamber music; in his last two decades, other than a new movement for *Les citations*, in 2010, he wrote only for the orchestra, and in fulfilling a long-held wish to write for voice, the two orchestral song cycles *Correspondances* (2003) and *Le temps l’horloge* (2007-9) were his final major works. The two works *Tout un monde lointain...*, and *Timbres, espace, mouvement, ou La Nuit étoilée*, show the strides of a mid-career artist for whom each new step remained carefully placed and hard-won. From the early symphonies and the minor revolution of *Métaboles*, the concerto was a chance for Dutilleux to solidify his new position and to consider the roles of virtuosity and balance (both acoustic and formal), always at issue for him, in a concentrated setting. Nearly a decade later, in the nocturne—both a deep exercise in referential expression and an outgrowth of his abstract experiments with sound and form for solo and chamber musicians—he staked yet new ground. Ever less symphonic, ever more fluid, rhapsodic and gesture-driven, the music of *Timbres, espace, mouvement* both prefaces and epitomizes his late style, where a sense of the poetic, unique to each piece, is often at the fore, and great rivers of melancholy flow discernably just beneath the surface. These two works, as important today in his oeuvre as the day they were premiered, form a bridge connecting the two disparate identities of Dutilleux: the young composer struggling in the too-traditional shadow of Ravel while others made waves; and the gentle, independent craftsman and wise old soothsayer-in-hindsight, who had stuck to his guns and created rare jewels. Like Bartók, he is one of the unusual figures in the twentieth century whose name conjures not just himself, but the notion of a greater musical movement, yet who never belonged (in any lasting way) to a larger school or association in his
lifetime. But just as Dutilleux’s works have permeated the repertory, his ideas, grounded in tradition and thoroughly modern, will continue to germinate, reverberating freshly for new generations of composers in the decades to come.
REFERENCES


TUOLUMNE FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA

Part II

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

by
Sean Benjamin Shepherd
May 2014
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Tuolumne ("two ALL um knee" or, as some California locals say it, "two ALL ‘o me"), from the Native American language of Miwok, is a word of unclear meaning, but is often thought to describe the small group of indigenous people who lived in what is now known as Yosemite National Park. A number of places in the area have taken the appellation on, but for those who know the region, the mighty Tuolumne Meadows spring first to mind. One of the principal natural features of Yosemite, this large subalpine meadow (remember the one Bambi got so excited about? I’ve long thought it could be the very same) is further east of the well-travelled and better-known Yosemite Valley – and much higher at nearly 9,000 feet, near the “top of the park” and Tioga Pass (one of the few roads that crosses the Sierra Nevada for hundreds of miles). One could fairly call this place (not far from my family home a few hours north) my favorite part of the world, and they wouldn’t be overstating it.

It was also a favorite of the American photographer Ansel Adams (1902-84), whose work has occupied my imagination from my first exposure to his landscapes as a child, in books my mother had from her studies in photography. In 1938, Adams took a pack trip into the high wilds of Yosemite with the painter Georgia O’Keeffe, and patrons and friends David McAlpin and Godfrey and Helen Rockefeller, and made 3 copies of an album of photographs intended
as a memento. I chose two images from that album, Plate 4 - Untitled (Water over Rock) and Plate 22 - Merced Lake Country, both of which were taken very near the Tuolumne Meadows, and paired them with one of his most iconic images, a view of the eastern Sierra Nevada not far away. The 25-minute piece I wrote is a kind of response to the set of three black-and-white photographs (with each of the three movements corresponding to one image), a meditation on and celebration of both the place and the images. Since good ideas are rarely new ideas (let’s leave bad ideas out of it for now, although I believe the same goes for those), it occurs that one could think of Tuolumne as being somewhere in the neighborhood of Ma Vlast, Smetana’s ode to his homeland, and Mussorgsky’ Pictures at an Exhibition (but with plenty of caveats – read on), at least in terms of scope. Each photo is described below:

Untitled (Water over Rock): Upon first glance, the spacing of the fanned-out rivulets of water which are cast over a rock in a mountain creek seems nearly perfect, as if each finespun stream had been rationally measured. The scale is difficult to discern. The rock could be inches or feet across, and the elegant shape could even resemble a leaf over which the water flows in all directions, splashing brightly onto the hard creekbed and into the deep blackness of the pool below.
Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, from Lone Pine, California, 1944: The brutal terrain of the Eastern Sierra escarpment and Mount Whitney (the highest point in the contiguous US) is in high contrast in this dawn shot. The snow-covered shards of rock appear both as sharp as teeth and as delicate as tissue paper, with the blinding white snow set in relief by the deep shadows of the range’s dramatic chutes and canyons. A few mists and thin clouds hover. A lower, gentler foothill in the middle ground just in front of the large mountains has not yet been exposed to the dawn light and lies dark and dormant. A patch of sun illuminates a meadow in the foreground of the image, where a single horse, made tiny in the grand scale of the view, grazes among a band of leaf-naked cottonwoods.

Merced Lake Country: The main object, a weather-battered pine tree, whose twisting trunk and figure seem to give the image a vertical thrust, occupies the foreground. Across a canyon the mountains behind consist of smooth, rounded granite features pocked by bands of hardy trees and other flora, a familiar sight in the high Sierra. Suggesting both a dancer’s grace and a desperate struggle against the punishing elements, the tree, with branches bare on one side, seems even to evoke a kind of humanity to me: intrepid, tragic, and utterly mysterious.
These photos move me, both as representational objects and abstract images. The rocks, trees, clouds and mountains; the precise, highly controlled play of light and dark. What we are shown, and how it is presented. Although the place is significant – and place has often held a special significance for me (in pieces like Wanderlust, premiered by The Cleveland Orchestra in 2009) – the three movements of Tuolumne are, in my view, best understood as emotional responses to these works of art. I intended neither to illuminate nor describe the photos in a deliberately programmatic or pictorial sense – not least due to the difficult translation from a spatial and visual medium to a temporal and aural one. Nor did I make an attempt at a companion set. The story of the music, with its twists and turns, peaks and valleys, and shifts of mood and character, may or may not mirror one’s experience of the images. That was by design from the very beginning. Tuolumne is built to stand on its own, but without these photos and without the work of Ansel Adams, it would not exist.

Musicians who know his work are quick to point out with pride that Adams trained seriously as a pianist while growing up in San Francisco, and was well into his twenties before he decided to pursue photography, then (in around 1930) still a relatively new medium, exclusively. It’s simple to imagine how he might have applied the rigors of his musical education to his processes and painstaking perfectionism with the camera and in the darkroom. Aides
have described their surprise upon finding not one, but many negatives for his iconic shots. His rendering techniques, focused as they were, were yet still in service of expression, a process he called visualization: “As with all art, the photograph is not the duplication of visual reality. … The visualization of a photograph involves the intuitive search for meaning, shape, form, texture and the projection of the image-format on the subject,” he said in his autobiography. “The creative artist is constantly roving the worlds without, and creating new worlds within.”

In his work, a broad boldness flows effortlessly with his crisp austerity of tone in a way that strikes me as, well, distinctly American. As a young artist who often finds himself confounded by questions of national identity in my own work, I’ve taken comfort in the work of those, like Adams and Charles Ives, who seem to find their answers close to home. Whether they are the rocks and clouds of California, or the town squares and brass bands of New England, their answers are equally American (as answers to such a question are a simple “yes or “no”) and, for me, equally correct. I’m often reminded that when the New York patron Alice Tully commissioned French composer Olivier Messiaen for a new work to celebrate the American bicentennial in the early 1970s, he looked not to Philadelphia or Valley Forge (or New York for that matter), but to the rocks and wildlife of southern Utah and wrote Des Canyons aux Étoiles, one of his seminal works. He found the America he most wanted
to describe, a license that (one who wrestles with such questions must often remind themselves) all artists are freely afforded.

The three movements of Tuolumne are ordered in a basic slow-fast-slow design, and much of the music is virtuosic, owing to the capacities of the magnificent ensemble for which it was written, which I have been privileged to know more intimately as Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow. Many of the musicians are deployed as soloists, starting with flute in the opening bars and the horn soon after. I wrote for a large orchestra partially to explore the coloristic possibilities presented both among and within sections. To one flute, three are soon added in the opening moments, for example, and some 20 minutes later, the solo cello meanders and floats ever higher while the rest of the strings flutter quietly in accompaniment. While there are many powerful tutti moments in between, the piece starts and ends softly, intimate by design in my largest, most personal piece to date. Tuolumne is dedicated to Franz Welser-Möst, and to the members of The Cleveland Orchestra.

S.S.
April, 2013
SEAN SHEPHERD

TUOLUMNE

for large orchestra

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HENDON MUSIC

BOOSEY & HAWKES
For Franz Welser-Möst, and for the members of The Cleveland Orchestra

Commissioned by The Cleveland Orchestra
Franz Welser-Möst, Music Director
With the generous support from the Young Composers Endowment Fund
established by Jan R. and Daniel R. Lewis
INSTRUMENTATION

4 Flutes (3rd doubling Alto Flute, 4th doubling Piccolo)
3 Oboes
English Horn
3 Clarinets in Bb (3rd doubles Clarinet in Eb)
Bass Clarinet
3 Bassoons
Contrabassoon

6 Horns in F
4 Trumpets in C (4th doubling Soprano Trumpet in Bb)
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba
Timpani

4 Percussion

Player 1: Vibraphone, Glockenspiel, 2 Triangles (small, medium), Suspended Cymbal, Temple Blocks, Tenor Drum, Snare Drum, Cowbell, Crash Cymbals, Bell Plate

Player 2: Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Metal Coil, Sleighbells, 3 Triangles (small, medium, large), Sandpaper Blocks, Bass Drum, Maracas Suspended, Cymbal, Brake Drum, 2 Congas

Player 3: Tubular Bells, Xylophone, Cabasa, Suspended Cymbal, 2 Triangles (medium, large), 2 Woodblocks, Ratchet, Splash Cymbal, Flexatone, 2 Bongos

Player 4: Marimba, Nipple gongs (F4, G4, G3, C#4), Antique Cymbal, Tambourine, Castanets, Anvil, Tam-tam, Slapstick, Claves, Crotales

Harp

Piano (doubling Celesta)

Strings

Duration: ca. 24 minutes
Water Over Rock
A little faster:

[Staff notation diagram]

Water Over Rock
<table>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Opened and talked about the instrument.</td>
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**Winter Sunrise**

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**Diagram:**

- Xylophone:
- Time:
- Notes:
- Performance:

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Merced Lake Country 63
Tuolumne for orchestra by Sean Shepherd
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