

# Olivier Messiaen's Personal Expression of Faith in His Major Solo and Chamber Works with Piano from 1940 to 1944

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### Olivier Messiaen's Personal Expression of Faith in His Major Solo and Chamber Works with Piano from 1940 to 1944

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SHARE



#### Semester

Spring

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DMA

#### College

College of Creative Arts

#### Department

School of Music

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#### Abstract

Throughout the history of Western art music, a number of composers either have been supported financially by religious institutions to create sacred works or have been driven by their own spiritual beliefs to create faith-inspired pieces. With the decrease of Christianity's importance to individuals in Western society throughout time, however, compositions whose genesis arise solely from religious and spiritual inspiration have lessened substantially. This is particularly evident in the music of the Roman Catholic Church from the end of the nineteenth century to the early 1960s, as the Church's liturgical music consisted of a restored Gregorian chant. This eliminated the need for original church compositions, which in turn made composers less inclined to write Catholic religious music during this time.;Although many composers during the twentieth century chose not to write music as a reflection of their faith, one composer, Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) of France, certainly did not limit his output to secular works. Rather, the majority of Messiaen's oeuvre could be considered a projection of his profound faith, as individual elements within these works belong to larger compositional processes and theories he devised to represent his interpretation of the teachings of the Catholic Church. This paper explores the various beliefs Messiaen held and studies the various compositional techniques the composer used to express his personal theology. Three of the composer's works that featured piano will be studied: *Quatuor pour la fin de Temps* (1940-41) for piano, clarinet, violin, and cello; *Visions de l'Amen* (1943) for two pianos; and *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus* (1944) for solo piano.

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