

L'Orgue Mystique, the Chants and the Mass

It is a well-established fact that each of the 51 booklets in *L'Orgue Mystique* refers to a Sunday or feast day in the church year. Each of the five pieces in a booklet is based on the prescribed Gregorian chant for the respective liturgical occasion (see below for details). From this, it has been concluded that knowledge of the chants is an indispensable prerequisite for understanding *L'Orgue Mystique*. I would like to critically examine this postulate below.

My thesis is that *L'Orgue Mystique* is an autonomous work of art of the highest order, which should be received as such. The cycle has emancipated itself from its liturgical purpose without denying its liturgical origins. Not only should the title of the work, *L'Orgue Mystique*, be taken literally, but also the subtitle *inspirés du chant grégorien et librement paraphrasés*, which is handwritten in the autograph and printed in the score of each individual *office*. "Mystical", "inspired" and "free" are the key concepts that are essential for understanding the work.

I will describe in detail how Tournemire uses the chants as musical material for *L'Orgue Mystique*, before going on to consider liturgical, theological and philosophical aspects in the second part. But first, a simple observation: Tournemire himself never names the chants..

This is particularly striking when one considers that Tournemire does not hesitate to add extensive religious commentary to pieces that would not normally be considered religious. By contrast, the titles of the individual pieces in *L'Orgue Mystique* are either purely musical, such as *Prélude*, *Fugue*, *Fantaisie* and *Paraphrase*, or neutral, such as *Choral* Nos. 1 to 5, *Alleluia* Nos. 1 to 5 or: „*Toccata sur un Choral*" - but Tournemire doesn't indicate which choral, as would actually be usual.

The only exception to this is the reference to the 'Te Deum' in the *Pièce terminale* of *Office* No. 51. However, it is important to note that this is the only instance in which the choice of chant is not liturgical or theological, but personal. It is Tournemire's private expression of veneration directed towards the Almighty at the conclusion of his oeuvre, bearing resemblance to Johann Sebastian Bach's „*Soli Deo Gloria*".

At least Tournemire gives **the name of the Sunday**, so that **anyone can look up** which texts and which chants are due:

<https://extraordinaryform.org/masses.html>

<https://www.sanctamissa.pl>

The chants on which the *Prélude à l'Introïte*, the *Offertoire* and the *Communion* are based are the relevant chants for the respective Sunday. They should be easy to identify. This is somewhat more challenging in the case of the *Élévation*, as Tournemire is free in his choice of chants here. He often refers to the Gradual or the Alleluia of the day. However, the situation becomes more complex with the *Pièce terminale*, as Tournemire uses multiple chants in this section (with the exception of the simple Sundays after Pentecost), that are not usually taken from the Mass of the day.

Moreover, Tournemire seems to have deliberately obscured the chants at times: behind the expression „*librement paraphrasé*" lies a whole continuum of techniques designed to influence the possibility of recognizing the chants, ranging from strikingly presented to carefully hidden.

The chants as musical material

Let's start by asking ourselves: what the opposite of „librement paraphrasé“ would be. This would probably be an exact transposition of the square notation into the usual notation according to the guidelines worked out by the monks of Solesmes and explained in the Liber Usualis (cf. Liber Usualis, Prooemium, p. vii ff):

Tournemire only does this in the rarest of cases, for example here:

The image displays a musical score for 'Nomen Jesu' by Tournemire. It features square notation at the top and modern notation below. Annotations in green and blue highlight specific musical features:

- Phrasing respected**: Indicated by a green line connecting notes across measures.
- Upper note pes + following punctum = 2 notes**: A green circle around a note and its following punctum.
- 3 syllables → one long note**: A green circle around a group of three notes.
- The grouping of the neumes is preserved**: A green circle around a group of notes.
- Dotted punctum = long note**: A green circle around a dotted punctum.
- Word accent: long vowel = long note**: A green circle around a note.
- Quilisma = passing note**: A green circle around a note.
- dotted Clivis: slow**: A green circle around a note.
- In — no — mi — ne Je — su**: Blue text indicating syllable placement.
- om — ne**: Blue text indicating syllable placement.
- genu flect — ta — tur**: Blue text indicating syllable placement.
- Boîte 3/4 ouverte**: Label for the first system of modern notation.
- Boîte mi-ouverte**: Label for the second system of modern notation.
- Boîte fermée**: Label for the third system of modern notation.
- Boîte 1/4 ouverte**: Label for the fourth system of modern notation.

The score includes three systems of modern notation, each with a different 'Boîte' (box) setting. The first system is 'Boîte 3/4 ouverte', the second is 'Boîte mi-ouverte', and the third is 'Boîte fermée'. The fourth system is 'Boîte 1/4 ouverte'. The score is for 'Office No. 6 - Nomen Jesu, Prélude à l'Introïte'.

Office No. 6 - Nomen Jesu, Prélude à l'Introïte — <https://youtu.be/OcWofRU2FY4>

Chant: <https://www.sanctamissa.pl/en/liturgical-chant/tempus-nativitatis-christmas/sanctissimi-nominis-jesu-holy-name-of-jesus/>

Now let's take a closer look at the situation with 'terrestrial'.

The syllable '-stri-' begins with the same note with which the syllable '-re-' ended. This creates an iambic tone repetition on *a*.

Similarly, the clivis on '-um' begins with the final note of the neume group on '-stri'. Here, the iamb occurs on the note *b*.

Tournemire carefully transposes this into modern notation, with one neume or group of neumes corresponding exactly to one beat. He softens the iamb at the neume boundaries to some extent using the tie, but the pulsating swing of the melody, which is so typical of the Gregorian Chant, is faithfully reproduced.

Totally different here:

Intr. 3.
G AUDENS gaudé- bo * in Dó- mi-no et ex-
 Gau — dens — gau- de- — — — X bo
 III. Gambe 8
 II. Flûte douce 8

Office No. 2 - Immaculata Conceptio B.M.V., *Prélude à l'Introïte* — <https://youtu.be/kPE3S6y0Eq4>

Chant: <https://www.sanctamissa.pl/en/liturgical-chant/proprium-sanctorum/in-conceptione-immaculata-beatae-mariae-virginis-immaculate-conception-of-the-blessed-virgin-mary/>

In the Introit of *Immaculata*, Tournemire does not adhere to the sequence of neumes (torculus – pes – torculus – pes) or the iambic tone repetition between two neumes. Tournemire also replaces the double note on the syllable 'gau-' with one single note. Consequently, a divergence occurs between word meter and musical meter, resulting in a complete realignment of the metric-melodic flow that is independent of textual reference.

A special case of this iambic tone doubling, the echo of which can still be heard centuries later - but which Tournemire rarely takes into account - is the anticipation of the ultimate note.

Intr. 3.
I N nomine Jésu *
 In — no — mi — ne Je — su
 Boîte mi-ouverte
 Intr. 3.
G AUDENS gaudé- bo *
 Gau — dens — gau- de- — — — X bo

It is important to note that the transcription of the chant described in the first example is a rare exception, while the interventions in the integrity of the chant as seen in example 2 can almost be regarded as Tournemire's standard procedure.

The reduction of repeated notes to a single one can be taken so far as to represent up to four syllables in a single quaver. Furthermore, Tournemire frequently omits not only the repeated notes, but also the pause for breath in between, so that the original phrase structure is completely destroyed, as is evident here:

Office No. 17 - Dominica Resurrectionis, *Paraphrase et Double Choral* — https://youtu.be/L_sGXZYaVqI
Chant: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfVmA-P_Emg

Ant.
8 c.

E -go dormi- vi * et somnum ce-pi et exsurre-
xi, quoni- am Dóminus suscepit me, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia.

II. III.

[E-] -go dor-mi—

vi— et som—num coe— pi et ex-sur— re— xi
am— Do-mi - nus sus-ce-pit me al - le - lu

However, this creates - purely musically, without regard to the chant - a new motif structure in the sense of a developing variation:

vi— et som—num coe— pi et ex-sur— re— xi
am— Do-mi - nus sus-ce-pit me al - le - lu

irrases II. III.

et — ex — sur — re —

Due to the rapid tempo, all of this is hardly comprehensible. But it is precisely the tempo, which so completely contradicts the dignity and the unworldly calm of Gregorian Chant, which together with the articulation (staccato) and the registration (mixtures in all manuals) creates this nervous excitement that characterizes the piece.

<https://youtu.be/KmbuVqzf7ak>

Not only tone repetitions are omitted, but also the repetition of entire phrases. On the other hand, groups of notes can be repeated at will, here, for example, to create a delicate, floating mood together with the registration based on soft foundation stops:

The image displays a musical score for a liturgical service. The top section features a vocal line with the lyrics: "bunt é- um omnes ré- ges tér- rae, ó- mnes gén- tes sér- vi- ent é- i." Red circles highlight specific melodic groups in the vocal line, and red lines connect these to corresponding groups in the instrumental accompaniment below. The instrumental part includes a section marked "III" with the instruction "Cor de nuit. Nazard + Voix céleste" and a tempo marking "♩ = 88". The accompaniment consists of two staves, with the right hand playing a melodic line and the left hand providing harmonic support. The score is annotated with various musical symbols, including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings, as well as the names of the instruments and the choir.

Office No. 7 - Epiphania Domini, *Offertoire* — <https://youtu.be/MnXWeNZu6Wc>
 Chant: 'Reges Tharsis' — <https://youtu.be/Qh74sdgEqOw>
 (Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, Dom Joseph Gajard)

3

3

3

3

3

3

3

- 3

3

Contrary to our initial supposition, however, it is evident that the phrases (a), (c), (d) and (e) are interconnected, as they are associated with each other in the manner of developing variations in Schoenberg's sense (β).

- All four phrases share the *e flat* as the initial accented note, followed by a rising quaver motion.
- In phrase (c), the *b flat* is attained at an earlier point in time than in phrase (a). In the latter, the *b flat* represents the end point; in the former, the phrase continues.
- (d) is a repetition of (c) intensified by the polyphony
- finally, in several respects (e) represents an intensification of everything that has gone before
 - The highest note is reached with the sustained c.
 - The tempo slows down (poco allargando)
 - and almost comes to a halt in the two half notes.
 - In addition, the dynamics increase (for the first time a crescendo fork is introduced)
 - and the upbeat quaver is dispensed with.

The quaver motion already mentioned is similar in all phrases, but it is identical in (a) and (e) as well as in (c) and (d). This means: Alongside the simple paratactic grouping (α) and the developing variations (β), a reflexive circular structure can also be observed: a-b-b-a (γ).

Together, phrases (a) and (b) form a simple question-and-answer period (δ), an arc, ascending from the fundamental *d* to the climax *b flat* and back again. However, the melody's intended conclusive effect is undermined by the lingering *b flat* in the soprano and the questioning step from *g* to *a* in the lower voice, keeping the music in limbo. Only the next phrase, (c), reaches the finalis undisturbed, albeit monophonically. This creates a tripartite structure, a bar form, consisting of *Stollen + Stollen + Abgesang*, which Tournemire offers as a fifth possible relational structure between the phrases (ϵ).

In (d), the choir takes up the soloist's somewhat shy statement literally and develops it further, ascending and pointing beyond itself. This integrates the bar form (a)(b)(c) as well as the period (a)(b) against the backdrop of the simple 2+2+2 grouping and the developing variations (a)(c)(d)(e) into a larger unit (ζ).

But that's not all: (b) and (f) also behave like developing variations. Not only is (f) a clear extension of (b) — the upbeat has now been dropped (see above) — but (f) also continues the upward movement of the highest notes described before, from *b flat* via *c* to *d*. This combines the two initially independent but interlocking series of developing variations.

Moreover, (f) relates to the entire A-part like (b) to (a)+(b) (fractal similarity) and thus forms the final integration of the entire first part (η).

In the **B section**, too, Tournemire achieves a perfect synthesis of three apparently contradictory phrase structures:

1. Once more, two intertwined developing variation series play a pivotal role:
 - (i) is a developing variation of (g) :
 - The length increases from two to three and a half bars
 - As was the case in the first section, the climax *b-flat* is surpassed by the leap from *g* to *c*.
 - And of course (i) is considerably more complex than (g).
 - Similarly (k) is a developing variation of (h).
(I would count the *f* as both to (i) and to (k))
2. Both (g) and (h) as well as (i) and (k) relate to each other like question and answer.

3. The B section as a whole can be regarded as a classical period, consisting of an antecedent with phrase and counter-phrase and a consequent with (intensified) phrase repetition and conclusion.

Once again it is the note at the end of the second phrase which is of crucial importance: in the A section it was a *b flat*, now it is a *c*, which has the delicate task of closing (a) (b) as a question-answer bow and at the same time opening it as the antecedent of a period. Tournemire accomplishes this feat through the utilization of a tension-filled, vividly progressing alternating-note chord in the upper voices.

With this *Prélude*, which comes across as completely unpretentious, Tournemire has created a true masterpiece, a highly complex work of art and a prime example of the *ars celare artem*, for: "The art of creating the appearance of the natural is the real merit ...". (Kleist).

But this was only possible at the expense of the chant:

- We have already explained above how the first phrase was reshaped by omitting the repeated notes. Now it becomes clear with what stringency and brilliance this was done with regard to its role as the opening statement of this powerful double period.
- In the first section, several notes had to be omitted ('exultabit' becomes 'ex:bit'), and in the second part a whole, large passage is missing.
- The intervention on the syllable 'mea' is even more serious: Tournemire leads this phrase back to the finalis *d* (3rd ecclesial mode = Phrygian, transposed a whole tone lower), whereas in the original it only briefly pauses on the mediant, before moving on to the next phrase, 'in Deo meo'.
- Tournemire had to compose the following section from scratch. It now leads powerfully upwards, while the chorale comes to rest at this point with a dotted clavis ritardizing on the finalis. Tournemire was obviously not bothered by the fact that the decisive term 'in Deo meo' was omitted as a result of this reworking ...

How little Tournemire cares about the lyrics of the chants is even more evident in this example: In the middle section of the *Paraphrase* of Assumption, Tournemire does not shy away from tearing apart the most important term of the entire Office in order to preserve the phrase structure: 'Vir-go'.

→ <https://youtu.be/H2LgOU1U-4c>

Chant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2R0W52x4EU>

As we have seen in examples 1 and 2, Tournemire likes to change the registration and setting line by line. This imitates the antiphonal or responsorial style of singing. In the finale of Trinity Sunday, he implements these changes mid-word.

Hymn. 8.

AM sol re-cé-dit igne-us : Tu lux per-énis Uni-

TRIPTYQUE

(V)

(4)
III *fff*
II *fff*
I *fff*

Péd: *fff*

♩ = 54

I. II. III. *fff*

Jam sol — re ...

Hymnus des 2. Vespers

Tirasses I. II. III.

... re — cé — dit ig —

Tu — lux — per —

— ne — us

Office No. 26 - In Festo Sanctissimae Trinitatis, *Triptyque* — https://youtu.be/ct_-y5BCTKo
Choral: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-tr04l2-OA>

That might just be acceptable. But what happens in the *Prélude* to Joseph's Day is downright adventurous: Tournemire jumps up three octaves within a single syllable, from the pedal to the right hand ('Adju-tor'). Later on, a single word is spread over three manuals ('laetabitur').

Intr. 7.

A D-jú-tor * et pro-té-ctor noster est Dó-minus :

①

III Dulciana 8
II Gambe 8
Flûte harm. 8

III Boîte 3/4 ouverte

Ped: Soubasse 16
Bourdon 8

1 $\text{♩} = 80$

Ad- ju- —

Do- mi- nus

6 in e-o lae-tá-bi-tur cor no- strum,

bi tur cor no

Office No. 20 - St. Joseph, *Prélude à l'Introite* — <https://youtu.be/Cg21XJslwcM>
Chant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP508fKi2K4>

The impression of listening is quite different, namely a successive exposition of the compositional elements of this prelude:

- first, as an introduction, a lying note - six bars long - from which the chordal background of the piece gradually develops
- then, as the first active element, a staccato eighth-note line in the pedal, which is sustained throughout the piece
- then a secondary voice
- and finally, the main melody emerges, clearly recognizable as such.

No one realizes that the first notes of the chorale have already passed over at this moment.

A very similar process occurs in the second line (bar 6), here even more intensified:

- The melody of the chant seamlessly continues the staccato line in the pedal, which has now been running for four bars. There is no discernible change in the movement structure that would indicate this event.
- Then the tenor voice draws attention to itself, picking up on the dialogue between the soprano and alto in the preceding bars and leading into the next entry of the main melody.
- This then occurs—with a variation on the opening motif.
- This reference, in turn, was only made possible by the fact that, as we already know, four notes of the chant are represented by a single semiquaver and another note is omitted.

Here, too, no one will notice what has happened to the chant: a single word is split across three octaves and three manuals, and the melody's climax (e) is concealed in the most inconspicuous location, within the second voice of the accompaniment.

Once again, one must admire Tournemire's compositional mastery – at the expense of the chant !

After all, as with all the other pieces mentioned so far, the *Prélude* just analyzed commences with the beginning of the chant. However, this is not invariably the case.

Ant.
7.
T
E glo-ri-ó-sus * Aposto-ló-rum cho-rus, te Pro-
phe-tá-rum lau-dá-bi-lis nú-me-rus: te Márti-rum candi-dá-

III
Lento
1
II. Oct. gr. sur III.
III. Gambe 8
Féd: Soubasse 16 Solo
Ant der Laudes
Te gloriosus
... [Profe-] ta rum lau da bi lis nu-mer-um

a Tempo
3
+ Céleste
a piacere

senza rigore
7
Te glo ri o sus
Ad libitum.

Office No. 48 - Festum Omnium Sanctorum, *Élévation* — https://youtu.be/_GGNlk4-R4A

L'Élévation from All Saints' Day starts in the middle of a word: (['Profe-] **tarum**). The beginning of the chant is submitted later – very coy in the alto – and disguised as much as possible as an unspectacular section of a melody line extending from measure 6 to the *c sharp* in measure 9. In addition it's a fairly unknown chant: the *Antiphon ad Benedictione* from Lauds on All Saints' Day. More hide-and-seek is almost impossible.

The next piece goes one or two steps further: the *Communion* of All Saints also begins in the middle of a word. In addition, the first note *g* directs attention in the wrong direction. The phrase boundary between "...tur" and 'beati' is obscured, whereas in "per|secutionem," again in the middle of a word, a phrasing is introduced. The resulting half-phrase is seamlessly fused with the end of the chant. This creates a completely new melodic structure, which in turn is further fragmented and fused with other melodic fragments, regardless of its origin.

Office No. 48 - Festum Omnium Sanctorum, *Communion* — https://youtu.be/_GGNlk4-R4A
Choral: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U81UXrH4Q5g>

Comm. 1.

B E-á-ti mundo corde, * quó-ni-am i-psi De- um

vi-dé- bunt : be-á- ti pa-cí-fi- ci, quó-ni- am fí-li- i

De- i vo-ca-bún- tur : be- á- ti qui perse-cu-ti- ónem pa-

ti- úntur propter justí-ti- am, quó-ni- am ipsó- rum

est re- gnum cae-ló- rum.

IV $\text{♩} = 42$ **senza rigore**
infiniment calme

III. Voix céleste
Gambe

II. Flûte douce 8

Péd. acc. au III.

pp

...ca- bun- tur: be- a- ti

...se- cu- ti...
[...tur:] be- a- ti qui per-se-

qui per-se-cu- ti- o- nem

cae- lo rum

cu- ti- o- nem cae- lo- rum

... cu- ti- o- nem cae- lo- rum

Tournemire thus uses the chant merely as musical material from which he blithely constructs his own composition. In doing so, he pays no attention whatsoever to the text of the chorale in the sense of lyrics. The semantic content of the text, however – the bliss of those who are pure in heart – is expressed by the music with a truly “pure heart”. The means to this end are:

- the extremely slow tempo, ‘*infiniment calme*’
- the calm, even note values
- the complete absence of chromaticism
- and, of course, the registration: the *voix céleste* as a solo voice, i.e. a ‘heavenly voice’ that hides very quietly behind the ‘delicate flute’ of the positive.

Here, Tournemire once again proves himself to be a musician who has mastered the tools of composition with great sophistication and knows how to evoke the desired atmosphere with subtlety and precision.

Whereas in the previous example it was a single note that contributed significantly to obscuring the chant used (the non-derivable G at the beginning of the solo by the *voix céleste*), in the *élévation* from the 19th Sunday after Pentecost one must assume that this was a deliberate attempt to mislead::

Office No. 46 - Dominica XIX post Pentecosten Élévation — <https://youtu.be/YH19l7jZeyg>

The *Cor de basset* intones a melody that obviously defines the 4th Gregorian mode.

- It begins with the *subtonium modi*.
- The first stressed beat marks the finalis *e*.
- The note *g*, crucial for defining the mode, is emphasized through elongation.
- Then the *repercussa* is played around with
- and finally sustained over two bars - just as you would expect from the 4th mode.

This is answered by a contrapuntal line, which also leads from the finalis to the *repercussa* but in the opposite direction.

Now, however, both Robert Sutherland Lord¹ and Richard Christopher Spotts² claim that this piece is based on the chant 'Dicite invitis', the *Antiphon ad Benedictione* of the Lauds of the 19th Sunday after Pentecost - an antiphon so unknown that not a single sung recording can be found anywhere on the Internet. Moreover, this chant is in the 8th mode, not the 4th - How can that be?

¹ Robert Sutherland Lord, *Liturgy and Gregorian Chant in L'Orgue Mystique* of Charles Tournemire, in: Jennifer Donelson and Stephen Schloesser (Eds.), *Mystic Modern*, Richmond, 2014, p. 67

² Richard Christopher Spotts, *Charles Tournemire's L'Orgue Mystique*: La Haute Mission, Colfax 2024, p. 551

Here is the solution to the riddle: Tournemire has decapitated the melody and woven it into the hypophrygian *initium*:

Ant.
8 G.
D
I-ci-te invi-tá-tis: * Ecce prándi-um me-um pa-
rá- vi: ve-ní-te ad núpti-as, alle-lú-ia. E u o u a e.

III
III Cor de Basset 8
II Bourdon 8
Boîte ouverte
♩ = 52 senza rigore
[Dici —] — te — in — vi-ta-tis Ecce
Tirasse III
pran-di-um me-um pa ra
lu-ia — rall.
Boîte 1/4 ouverte
pp

But what is this melody in the 4th mode all about? Neither Robert Sutherland Lord nor Richard Christopher Spotts say a word about it.

So I asked an online artificial intelligence "Which chants begin with d-e-g-b-a ?" The answer was: "Domine, non sum dignus", the Offertory for *Dominica in Albis*. That fits perfectly!

Unfortunately, the Liber Usualis does not mention such an Offertory (at least not the 1956 edition in my possession). The Mass of *Dominica in Albis* refers to the Offertory for *Feria secunda post Pascha*, 'Angelus Domini'. Even the website <https://gregobase.selapa.net/> can't find such an Offertory — riddles upon riddles ...

Moving seamlessly from one chant to another is not so far-fetched for Tournemire. In the *Postlude* of *Immaculata*, four chants form a colorful round dance in a common garland of semiquavers. Often, the first note of a chant is linked with a tie to the last note of the preceding one.:

Office No. 2 - Immaculata Conceptio B.M.V., *Postlude* — <https://youtu.be/kPE3S6yoEq4>

Ave Maris stella: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2RoW52x4EU&>

Ego dormivi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfVmA-P_Emg

Alma redemptoris mater (solemnior): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm3kulyF6Zk>

O gloriosa Virginum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2QurT3ZMtk>

I

A - ve ma-ris stel-la, De- i Ma-ter alma, Atque

semper Virgo, Fe-lix cæ-li porta.

Ant. 8 c.

E - go dormi- vi * et somnum ce-pi et exsurre-

xi, quoni- am Dóminus suscé-pit me, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia.

V

A L- ma * Redemptóris Ma- ter,

Hymn. 2.

O glo- ri- ó- sa Vír- ginum Sublímis in- ter sí- de- ra :

(V)

III " " " Les Bourdons
II " " " Les Flûtes de 8
I " " " (Boîtes ouvertes)

Ave - ma-ris- stel-la - - - De- i Ma- ter al- ma atque semper Virgo - - - fe-lix

III. II. I.

cæ-li por-ta et ex-sur-re - xi

Al - - -

ma - - -

III. II. I.

et exsur-re - xi. et exsur-re - xi

Al - - -

ma - - -

ma - - - De- i Ma - - x ter al- ma

et ex-sur-re - xi et ex-sur-re - xi

a piacere

et exsurre - xi et exsurre - xi

O glo- ri - o- sa - Vir- gi-num Sub- li-mis in- ter sí- de- ra

In the *Postlude* of Holy Saturday, the interweaving of chants is subject to even greater refinement:

(V)

$\text{♩} = 63$ Boîte ouverte

I [Salicional 8
Flûte 8
Bourdon 8
Bourdon 16]

II [Flûte 8
Bourdon 8]

III [Cor de nuit 8
Dulciana 8]

Lu - men Chri - sti, lu - men Chri - sti, lu - men Chri - sti, lu - men Chri -

Boîte ouverte

Tirasses II. III. Ite missa

sti, lumen Chri-sti, lumen Chri-sti, lumen Chri-sti, lumen Chri - sti, lumen Christi, lumen Christi, lumen Christi, lumen Chri -

est, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - — — — lu — — ia —

8. I - te, missa est, alle-lú-ia, alle- lú- ia.

16.5 - Sabbato Sancto, *Postlude* — <https://youtu.be/Wlc8LPLqMqk>
Ite missa est: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xetWJjhOeDE>

The listening impression is delineated as such: initially, a pulsating sound is established for a period of seconds, then the solo part begins, which is immediately recognized as the main melody. The majority of individuals will not discern it as the renowned Easter 'Ite missa est'. However, this is evident in the score. This phenomenon can be attributed to Tournemire's refined technique of disguising which involves the combination of repeated notes into a single one, even across phrase boundaries, as previously discussed. Most importantly, however, the melody is subjected to the already established 4/4 metre by elongating individual notes..

What you intuitively perceive, however, is how well the pattern of the first measure prepares the main theme. The reasons for this are likely to be as follows:

- The upbeat *b* consolidates the previously undefined floating third as B major
- while the melody develops from the pulsing in crotchets a swinging in half notes and finally an arch form of $1 + 1 = 2$ whole bars.

The theme itself is (once again) a small masterpiece of skillful phrasing: no sooner has the upbeat *b* confirmed the key than it is challenged by the full-measure *c sharp*. This mini-event is repeated in an intensified manner as the simple upbeat quaver unfolds into a swinging garland of semiquavers. Finally, everything that has gone before is summarized, heightened and intensified:

- The upbeat quaver *b* reappears, but this time as leap of a fourth rather than a step of a second.
- This marks not only the melodic but also the harmonic climax: Following the consonant introduction and the slightly dissonant first measure of the theme, we encounter here the sharper dissonance of the minor second *d sharp/e*.
- This requires an extended swing-out (five sixteenths instead of three)
- until finally, upon its fourth occurrence, the free ninth suspension can calmly dissolve into the fundamental *b*.

Beyond this comprehensible development, the main melody is also intertwined with the pattern in a subliminal way. In bar 2, the pattern is repeated in a new version of the pattern, shifted.

In order to identify the *f sharp-d sharp* pattern with the invocation 'Lumen Christi', it is necessary to acknowledge that throughout the accent is wrong: 'Lumén Christi'. Only in the augmentation (which actually depicts the 'Ite missa est') is the emphasis correct.

In bar 4, the repetition of notes is abandoned and a new, rhythmically swinging garland develops from the pattern, also in two bars, in which the chant 'Ego dormivi' can be recognized.

Ant.
8 c.
E -go dormí- vi * et somnum ce-pi

Ego dormivi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfVmA-P_Emg

From a purely analytical and descriptive point of view, the pattern can be seen as the nucleus of the entire piece. Those who love symbolic interpretations will see an image of the Light of Christ as the world's original source. However, it is only through Tournemire's masterful composition that this connection is established, which necessarily affects the integrity of the chants. A simple juxtaposition of chants could not convey this symbolic fusion.

Another means of targeted irritation is what I would like to call *chromatic variance*: the arbitrary chromatic alteration of individual notes, smaller or larger sections, in one or more voices.

This technique causes a transformation of the mode from Dorian to Phrygian in the second appearance of the hymn 'O gloriosa Virginum' in the *Postlude* of Immaculata (bar 43 f):

Hymn. 2.
O glo- ri- ó- sa Vir- ginum Sublimis in- ter si- de- ra :

Office No. 2 - Immaculata, *Postlude*, m. 12 — <https://youtu.be/kPE3S6y0Eq4>

Office No. 2 - Immaculata, *Postlude*, m. 43 — <https://youtu.be/kPE3S6y0Eq4>

Chant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2QurT3ZMtk>

Here, at the beginning of the reprise, a single note is changed ...

IV

III [Dulciana
Voix céleste
Gambe 8
Bourdon 8
II Flûte harm. 8
Péd: Flûte 4

Offertoire

♩ = 54 *senza rigore*

III Boîte fermée

19

III Boîte mi-ouverte

Flûte 4
Bourdon 8
Flûte harm.
+ Voix céleste
+ Gambe 8

Tempo 1?

22

Boîte fermée

Office No. 5 - Circumcisio, *Communion*, beginning — <https://youtu.be/U-STNMPfif4>

Office No. 5 - Circumcisio, *Communion*, reprise — <https://youtu.be/U-STNMPfif4>

... and here three whole bars - without any compositional necessity: The tonic has already been reached in both cases :

10

POSTLUDE ALLELUIATIQUE

(V)

III [Bourdon 8
Flûte 8
II [Bourdon 8
Flûte 8
I [Bourdon 8
Flûte 8
Ped: Basse 8

$\text{♩} = 92$

Tirasse II

Boîte ouverte

II

I

Reprise

(Boîte du II ouverte)
au III, - Voix humaine, Voix céleste, Gambe.
+ Flûte 4.

+ Tirasse II

Boîte ouverte

au III, + Flûte 8
au II, + Flûte 8

I

II

Office No. 50 - Dominica XXII post Pentecosten, *Postlude*, beginning — <https://youtu.be/LdmUcuc-eEE>

Office No. 50 - Dominica XXII post Pentecosten, *Postlude*, reprise — <https://youtu.be/LdmUcuc-eEE>

Such strange liberties appear again and again in *L'Orgue Mystique* - without preparation and without having any consequences. They seem more like artifacts in AI-generated images, like errors in data output (,glitches') than like deliberate compositional choices with a harmonic, melodic or formal effect. — Or are they even reflections of the simulation hypothesis ?

The following example illustrates a highly sophisticated form of deception through *chromatic variance*:

Hymn. 4.

ci-pi.

Hymn. 8.

ci-pi.

TOCCATA SUR UN CHORAL

♩ = 100

Fragment du CHORAL

Office No. 18 - Quasimodo, Toccata sur un Choral — https://youtu.be/uy_-gyunjbk

Ad regias, 4th mode: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oPm9ghs7SY>

Ad regias, 8th mode: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f4dFLgO7zM>

Similar to the finale of Holy Saturday, the *Toccata* of White Sunday again features a pulsating four-four time signature that very convincingly prepares for the entrance of the main theme. The feeling of compelling logical consistency here is based on the fact that the lower voice of the introductory figuration builds a canon to the main voice and together they create a dominant field leading to the provisional tonic *f sharp* Phrygian in measure 6.

The movement is titled „*Toccata sur un Choral*“. At the beginning of the main melody, there is an additional note that reads, „*Fragment du CHORAL*“. Is the master trying to fool us? Anyone who has even the slightest familiarity with Tournemire's work will realise that this melody must be a chant or a fragment of a chant. However, Tournemire does not tell us which chant he means. Both Sutherland Lord and Richard Christopher Spotts refer to the two hymns 'Ad regias', but neither of them really fits. If we take the hymn in the fourth mode as our starting point, the mode or the interval structure is incorrect: some notes are transposed upwards a fourth, others a tritone. Furthermore, we would have to assume that the fragment begins in the middle of a word. If we take the hymn in the eighth mode as a basis, then Tournemire's freedom in dealing with repeated notes and phrase boundaries must be interpreted very broadly.

The repetition of the first section of the *Toccata* seems to offer a solution to the problem:

Hymn.

4.

A D ré-gi- as Agni dapes, Sto-lis a-mícti cándi-

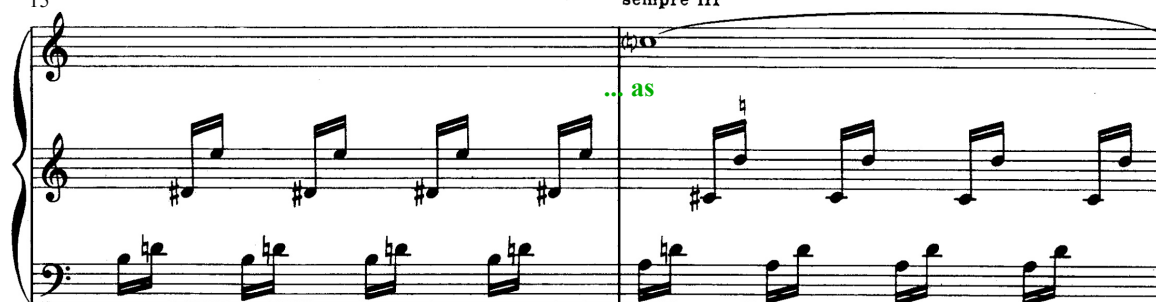
dis, Post tránsi-tum ma- ris Rubri, Christo ca-námus Prín-

ci-pi.



15

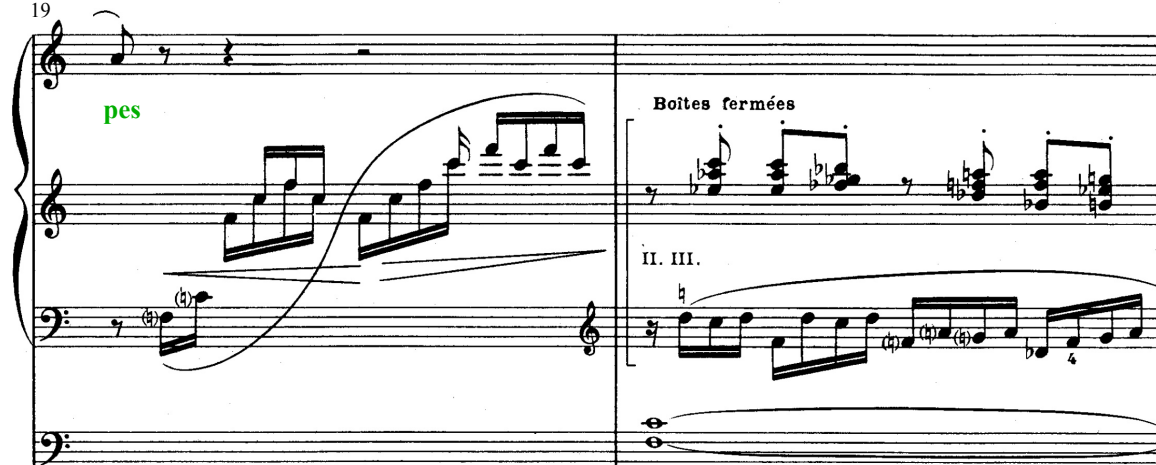
sempre III



17



19



Now it becomes clear that the hymn in the fourth mode is meant, transposed a fourth upward. On the other hand, there is this strange diastematic freedom of the swirling counter-voice—dreamlike, removed from the causal-logical necessity of musical reality:

- In measures 14/15, the right hand is a whole tone higher than in the parallel passage, but the left hand remains at the original pitch.
- In measures 16/17, both hands of the sixteenth note voice are loco, but the melody is a semitone lower.
- In measure 18, almost everything is identical to measure 5, except that the upper voice has *f* instead of *f sharp*.
- Yet in measure 19, we end up a semitone lower than above.

As with every dream, this iridescent musical situation has an inherent message: in order to bring out the hymn clearly, the musical logic of the first bars had to be sacrificed. Obviously, hymn and musical logic are not possible at the same time. As in a film, the focus was shifted from the overall panorama to the object in the foreground.

An even more apt analogy is provided by Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which states that two complementary properties of a quantum system cannot have sharply defined values at the same time. As a central tenet of quantum mechanics, this postulate has shaken the natural sciences to their foundations and ultimately dealt the death blow to materialism as the only scientifically accepted paradigm.

Nota bene: Heisenberg published his thesis in 1927, the very year Tournemire began composing *L'Orgue Mystique*.

One could even go one step further interpreting the hymn as a symbol of mysticism, while the musical logic of the first few bars could be seen as a symbol of rationality. Both ways of perceiving the world are valid. However, they appear to be mutually exclusive. It is only by considering both together that the full picture emerges.

So, after the fragment of a chant has been introduced in a 13-bar exposition and, in a further 13 bars, it has been worked out at great cost that the chant in the fourth mode is meant, the actual chant begins, as expected, in bar 27 with large note values, in the pedal, with *Basson 16*, *Trompette 8* and all pedal couplers. And for those who still don't get it, Tournemire writes „*CHORAL*“ in capital letters!

That should make everything clear.

But wait! - It's the wrong chant! So everything up to now has been a deliberate deception of the audience! Is that punishable by law ?

Hymn.
8.
A D ré-gi- as Agni dapes, Sto-lis amicti cándi-
dis, Post tránsi- tum ma-ris Rubri, Christo ca-námus Prín-
ci-pi.

$\text{♩} = 84$
27. I. II. III. Boîtes ouvertes
Ad
CHORAL
re-

Tirasses I. II. III.
+ Basson 16. Trompette 8

29. gi- as Ag-

31. **Sto- lis** — **Sto- lis** —
Tempo 1^o
1 2 3 5
ni da- pes — Basson 16
— Trompette

Office No. 18 - Quasimodo, Toccata sur un Choral — https://youtu.be/uy_gyunjbk
Ad regias, 8th mode: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f4dFLgO7zM>

Tournemire's ability to keep us guessing can be so effective that even the experts are at a loss. For example: Robert Sutherland Lord³ and Richard Christopher Spotts⁴ both cite four chants as the basis for the *Pièce terminale* of Trinity Sunday. Three of these can be clearly assigned.

'Iam sol recedit' → A section (see above)

'Benedicta sit sancta creatrix' → C section

(→ <https://moosmann.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Tournemire-26-S17.pdf>)

'Te Deum laudamus' → Coda

(→ <https://moosmann.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Tournemire-26-S20.pdf>)

But no matter how hard I try, I can't find the fourth one, 'Te Deum Patrem', anywhere. On the other hand several pages of the score remain unidentified. Richard Christopher Spotts writes succinctly: "We hear a chorale" (Spotts, op. cit., p. 331).

Of course, some chants are very easy to recognize as they are quoted correctly note for note (→ <https://youtu.be/VXV4JNtUfa4>). Here, it is the mood that is rewritten: The atmosphere is no longer Gregorian chant-like, but entirely subject to Tournemire's expressive intentions.

And even in the case of unaccompanied lines, where it would be easy to follow the Gregorian model meticulously, Tournemire clearly does not bother to do so (→ <https://youtu.be/OjD2QzVfQgA>).

³ Lord, op cit. p. 65

⁴ Spotts, op cit., p. 494f

Conclusio - and one step further

Imagine if a mediocre organist had responded to Bonnet's call (cf. Spotts, op. cit., p. 108) to compose short organ pieces for each Sunday based on the prescribed chants. Imagine further that a friend well versed in liturgy had suggested that he quote several chants in the final piece, coincidentally the very ones used by Tournemire. The result would have been a banal piece of functional church music, light years away from the artistic level and spiritual power of *L'Orgue Mystique*. Therefore, what is decisive is not so much that Tournemire uses chants, nor which ones he uses, but what he does with them.

The chants are the source material for *L'Orgue Mystique*. Tournemire uses them like spolia, sometimes merely as building material to construct his own edifice. In order to do this, he necessarily has to intervene deeply in the inner structure of the chants, destroying their original integrity.

However, such assimilation processes are completely natural. Since animals, including humans, cannot perform photosynthesis, they depend on eating other organisms — plants or animals — thereby destroying their original integrity, *vulgo* killing them.

The fact that this disintegration of complex structures does not lead to an increase in entropy, as required by the second law of thermodynamics, which is so important in the materialist world view, but, on the contrary, that this destruction is necessary for the emergence of equally or even more complex hierarchical structures, is an omnipresent indication of transcendent activity.

It is therefore easy to understand that this natural process, inducing transcendence, has been spiritually elevated in sacrifice.. Hereby objects or animals are removed from everyday use by being destroyed, killed, burnt or eaten, and handed over to the transcendent in a ritual. From prehistoric burnt offerings to the Passover lamb of the Jews and the host in the Christian Eucharist, a process of increasing dematerialization can be observed, accompanied by an increase in spiritual effectiveness. In the Mass, this spiritualization is further intensified by transubstantiation and expanded into the cosmic realm.

L'Orgue Mystique does not merely imitate a natural process that refers to transcendence – that would be art as mimesis on a meta-level – but rather: *L'Orgue Mystique* is, in a sense, a second-degree sacrifice, since the object being sacrificed (Gregorian chant) is itself of a spiritual nature.

And yet another analogy: when preparing a homeopathic remedy, the original substance is ground up and potentiated (a materialist would say diluted) until hardly a molecule of the original material is left. Only when the spiritual potency of the substance is thus released from its material bonds can the remedy become effective. The same is true of *L'Orgue Mystique*: only when one leaves out chants, texts and images and surrenders oneself in self-forgetful devotion to a kind of super-sensual listening does the work unfold its effect.

Tournemire describes two different methods of producing a homeopathic remedy, or rather two alchemical processes, in his *Paraphrase of Nativitas Domini*, as if in a dream: 'Ego dormivi' is ground in a mortar, while the substance of 'A solis ortus cardine' is extracted in an alembic.

→ <https://moosmann.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Tournemire-3.5-analysiert-2.pdf>
Office No. 3 - Nativitas Domini, *Paraphrase* — https://youtu.be/o_z8YoYe-HE

At the beginning, the first strand of 'Ego dormivi', which serves as the source material, can still be found almost intact in various transpositions, but is then quickly split into larger and smaller sections (bar 8 onwards). Increasingly, small and tiny fragments appear, some of which are deformed in their interval structure, some of which are barely identifiable. This process repeats from bar 23 onwards. The proportion of microparticles is now significantly greater (cf. bars 35–45 vs. bars 12–16). By the third round (bar 53 onwards), only a few strands remain. However, this is accompanied by an enormous release of energy: the White Elixir.

'A solis ortus cardine' has a different texture to 'Ego dormivi' and therefore requires a different method of fractionation. The chant is being immersed in a four- to five-part solvent which, from the beginning (bar 16 onwards), but increasingly from bar 45 onwards, absorbs the melodic essence of the chant, namely ascending and descending scale movements.

From bar 68 onwards, a different technique is employed which gradually makes the cantus firmus more mobile (eighth notes). At the same time, more and more of its melodic essence is transferred to the solvent, which grows in power and substance and becomes hotter. The ascending and descending scale movements now take place in quarter and half notes, partly in parallel thirds in a movement of up to six voices in *fortissimo possibile*: the Red Stone.

Then: bar 95, after a long catapaxis: the Great Work. The rising of the sun. Pure gold!

Measure 108 temporarily resumes the process of bars 45 to 53. Large parts of the cantus firmus have dissolved in the meantime. By bars 124 and 128, they have disappeared completely. Instead, the entire movement undulates in powerful parallel and opposing convection currents. It is as if we are inside the sun, with hot plasma streams rising and falling.

From the excited semiquaver triplets in the highest register in an intoxicating 5/8 metre with mixtures in all manuals to the never-ending, deafening noise at the end - can an ecstatic solstice celebration be portrayed any more vividly? This finale *In Nativitate Domini* is diametrically opposed to everything that is associated with Christmas in Christian European culture: There is nothing to be heard of the little child in the manger, no ox, no donkey and no shepherds, no 'Silent Night' and no french Noël and no Bach Christmas oratorio either! Is that still Christian at all? Is it still Catholic at all?

Yes, of course it is! - Let me elaborate a little:

With the fall of man and his expulsion from paradise, man lost his original, unconscious unity with nature and the cosmos. But not completely: From the very beginnings of mankind, through antiquity and Christianity and well into the 20th century, there were numerous bridges connecting man's lifeworld with transcendence via nature and the cosmos: Pilgrimages were made to holy sites, many of which were sacred places long before the arrival of Christianity. There were also communal celebrations on holy days, which have been marked by special constellations since the formation of our solar system.

There were rituals and blessings. Consider holy water, for example, which embodies the concept of sacred waters found in many religions and cultures. Reduced materially to a few drops, it has become an integral part of a complex religious system, alongside genuflection and the sign of the cross.

In particular, major symbols had a significant impact on society and culture as a whole. For instance:

- Christmas is celebrated on the day of the winter solstice, while the Feast of St John the Baptist is celebrated on the day of the summer solstice.
- Easter falls on the Sunday after the first full moon in spring.
- The Christian cult takes place on Sun-Day.
- Christian churches are generally oriented towards the east, *ad orientem*, towards the rising sun.

And, very important:

- During the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest faces the rising sun, just as his predecessors at Stonehenge and Akhenaten in Egypt did.

But there's more: the sunflower also turns towards the sun. This means that the perception of the sun precedes the development and differentiation of the senses and even more so the development of language. Sunrise was an integral experience; hearing and seeing were not yet separate. „The sun sounds in the old way“, as Goethe has the archangel Raphael proclaim in the prologue to 'Faust I'. Astronomy, astrology, feeling, meaning, religion and the experience of being — everything was still one.

This made the Holy Mass - until recently - the only institution in the history of mankind that reflected, integrated, and made tangible in presentational symbols the entire development not only of humankind, but of life itself, from its beginnings through archaic, magical, and mythical times and across the diverse cultural epochs of Europe.

But just as God expelled man from paradise, Luther expelled God from nature. All of the aforementioned connections to transcendence were suddenly deemed pagan. God was robbed of his immanence and reduced to a word in an abstract system of signs (*sola scriptura*). The small experiences of transcendence in day to day life, as well as the key experience of transcendence in the sacred ritual of the Holy Mass, were to give way to mere faith (*sola fide*). This effectively abolished religion in the true sense of the word⁵, paving the way from the immanence of God via theism and deism to atheism.

Thank God, the Catholic Church resisted this for 450 years. But since the destruction of the liturgy and particularly since the ritual turning away of the priest from the symbol of life — from Christ, from the true, the good and the beautiful — and his „disorderly turning towards the creature“ (Thomas Aquinas), carried out millions of times in the *Ordo novus*, there is no stopping any more. Western culture has reached its end.

Tournemire seems to have anticipated this. His *Paraphrase* does not quote a chant, it is not the setting of a linguistically coded image, no, this music is the sensual representation, *i.e.* the actualization of a sensual-supersensual, cosmic-transcendent event. Thus *L'Orgue Mystique* is not subordinate to the Mass — actually *L'Orgue Mystique* preserves the essence of the Mass after its destruction, in the hope that one day it can be handed over to a new culture.

⁵ The earliest documented use of the term 'religion' is found in Cicero's 'De Natura Deorum' (2.72). In this passage, Cicero derives the concept of religion from the term 're-legere', meaning 'to read again'. In this context, the term refers to the repeated reading of liturgical regulations to ensure their conscientious observance.

Part 2

In the first part, we established that identifying the chants cannot be the intention, nor does it provide a sufficient basis for understanding the work. In order to achieve this objective, the compositional processes that led from the chants to this musical masterpiece would need to be studied in detail.

Furthermore there are certain musical features or traits of the Gregorian chant in general which in the same way are crucial for *L'Orgue Mystique*. These may include modal harmony instead of the major-minor system, the absence of a simple meter, the absence of form schemes and so on. To pin down these characteristics, which are certainly essential to *L'Orgue Mystique*, a thorough musical analysis of *L'Orgue Mystique* would be necessary.

Last but not least, to comprehend how the mysticism of Gregorian chant could be transferred to *L'Orgue Mystique* it is most important to consider this kind of mystique or meditative atmosphere which sets in when monks with beautiful voices sing the chants in a beautiful church with a beautiful acoustic. For many lovers of Gregorian chant this is the real reason why they listen to chant.

As with Gregorian chant itself, *L'Orgue Mystique* must be performed in a beautiful church with cathedral-like acoustics. Rather than the beautiful voices of monks, the exact organ envisioned by Tournemire is required, and it is essential to examine and understand how the compositional structure, registration and church acoustics work together to create this overwhelming impression that transports you from the mundane world to transcendence.

The quest for transcendence.

In order to explore the significance of the lyrics of the chants for *L'Orgue Mystique* as well as the meaning and hermeneutic of the liturgical texts, a different approach is needed, taking a broader perspective: What do music, theology, liturgy, mysticism and metaphysics have in common ? It is the quest for transcendence.

Yes, music is a way of its own to approach transcendence. This was quite clear right from the beginning, starting with the Pythagorean concept of the harmony of the spheres, further developed by Boethius in his three types of music: *musica mundana*, *musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis*. Throughout the Middle Ages music belonged to the quadrivium, together with astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, dedicated to the eternal things and not to the trivium consisting of rhetoric, grammar and logic, dealing with the worldly things. But when Luther tried to reduce God to a word in an abstract system of signs (*sola scriptura*) (c.f. p.29 in this essay), not only nature lost its spiritual significance, but music too. Just as a surrogate for this loss the doctrine of musical figures was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries.

After a period of a bourgeois musical culture, transcendence had its triumphant comeback to music in E.T.A. Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's 5th symphony in 1810. Shortly afterwards, Arthur Schopenhauer set out the philosophical foundations for the spiritual importance of music in his major work, „*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*“.

Let's dive deep into it - and even beyond:

The most fundamental metaphysical insight, expressed in classical terms, is this: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος (Joh 1:1). The term Λόγος should be conceived as void as possible. I would prefer Plotin's expression τὸ ἓν: the one (neuter, not masculine) beyond all concepts, beyond time and space, even beyond being and non-being. Call it ‚die Gottheit‘, ‚einfaltiges Eins‘ (Meister Eckart), אֵין סוֹף (en sof), शून्यता (shunyata), 道 (dao), ‚das Ding an sich‘, ‚Weltgeist‘, ‚Wille‘ or however you want to name it, the one that not can be named. The mystics of all times in East and West are unanimous: no word can ever touch it.

"The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name." „Si enim comprehendis, non est Deus“⁶ (Augustinus) and finally Kant: The thing-in-itself cannot be known by the mind.

But: πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (Joh 1:3): All things of the phenomenal world are fathered by and born out of the Λόγος, emanating in the four-dimensional space-time. Space and time are not properties of the thing-in-itself but „Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Wahrnehmung“ (Kant), the coordinate system, so to speak, that our mind needs to perceive anything. This is to be understood not only epistemologically but ontologically, so that Scottus Eriugena can say: „Nulla enim creatura est, a summo usque deorsum, quae in homine non reperiatur. Ideoque officina omnium jure nominatur“⁷. That means: the material world is just a construction of our mind. What sounds absurd to classical science has been made possible by quantum mechanics and is now largely acknowledged in recent years.

If this is true for the material universe, it is even more plausible for the different realms of human spirit such as arts, music, science, theology, religion and so on. They owe their emergence in the real world to the human mind, but their transcendent origin is ὁ Λόγος. This means, that they can all be used as vehicles in the quest for transcendence, albeit not to the same extent and not in the same way.

Music occupies a unique position among the arts because, unlike painting, sculpture or poetry, it is not forced to refer to the material world. As the least material of the arts, music has direct access to the eternal ideas and even to the Λόγος itself.

All these realms of manifested spirit have a continuum of different levels of perfection (*gradatio entis*). As to music for example, there is a considerable difference between banal entertainment music on one side and the masterpieces of classical music on the other. Smetana's Moldau will never reach the level of Wagner's Tristan Prelude. (Program music is, in any case, a betrayal of the metaphysical essence of music.) Anton Bruckner's symphonies, however, are among the highest achievements of mankind. This music embodies truth - eternal truth, and reminds us that, despite life's trials and tribulations, there is a higher power to be found. When I listen to Bruckner, I know that God exists. Nota bene: Not a single chant is needed for this realization.

A similar *gradatio* can be found in religion and in theology. Even the Bible is a multilayered book of different theological levels. On one hand, there is the more simple, accessible language of narrative passages, which are understandable to a broad population. On the other hand, there are deeply profound and complex theological ideas which require a deeper engagement with God's nature, Christology, and eschatology.

Not many theologians could reach the intellectual level of a Thomas Aquinas. At the end of his life, however, in a moment of enlightenment, he exclaimed „All that I have written seems to be nothing but straw“. This was the moment when the master theologian became a mystic.

Mysticism indeed represents the highest level of both, theology and religion. Theology speaks of God, but mysticism reaches out to the Godhead. Godhead and God, however, are, as Meister Eckart claims, as different from each other as heaven and earth.

⁶ „Wenn Du's verstehst, dann ist es nicht Gott“ - Augustinus, sermones 117,5

⁷ Johannes Scottus Eriugena (ca. 800 - ca. 877), Peri Physeon 2.530D: „There is no creation, from the highest to the lowest, that can not be found in man. Therefore [the human mind] can indeed be called the workshop of everything.“

L'Orgue Mystique is indeed, as the title claims, **an outcome of mysticism**. It is in the nature of things that this cannot be proven intellectually - but: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

L'Orgue Mystique is on an equal level as Bruckner's Symphonies. The spiritual connotation — indeed, the religious experience — is equally immediate. Although *L'Orgue Mystique* begins with chants and liturgical texts, this is irrelevant for this realization — in a work of such mystical and spiritual depth, it is even counterproductive.

Anton Bruckner was no less devout, pious and Catholic than Charles Tournemire. As cathedral organist in Linz, he had a similar position to Tournemire. But when he became aware of his vocation he resigned from his position — unlike Tournemire — in order to devote himself entirely to composing his symphonies. To him, this was a higher form of worship than playing for Mass, so it was only logical that he dedicated his last symphony „*dem lieben Gott*“.

Bruckner intuitively sensed that his music reached heights inaccessible to words. Unlike Tournemire, he did not attempt to engage with his music intellectually. His comments are downright childish.

For Tournemire, however, the dilemma between the spiritual heights of his music and his rigid religiousness became an increasingly problematic issue. Although, or perhaps precisely because, he was so well educated, his thinking remained trapped within a conventional framework. This was the real cause for his depression which ultimately broke him.

The liturgy of the Holy Mass and *L'Orgue Mystique*

The classical Latin Mass liturgy is a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, spanning centuries.⁸ Augustine calls it a 'holy spectacle'. While the liturgical texts are part of it, they are not the most important component.

Imagine the gospel:

- sung
- in Latin
- by a priest facing north, rather than the congregation,
- dressed in gold brocade robes
- surrounded by clouds of incense
- accompanied by two acolytes holding lighted candles,
- and a subdeacon serving as a human lectern ...

This is indeed an impressive staging, but it does not foster speech intelligibility.

The most important text of all, the Roman Canon — especially the words of consecration — is even more hidden from a direct understanding, being spoken *submissa voce* behind the Choir Screen.

The fact that these texts are hidden does not mean that they are unimportant. Rather, it reveals an alternative approach to these texts — one that is not intellectual, but pre-modern, mystical and even magical.

Luther's idea of reading the Mass texts in vernacular language is evidence of a fundamental misunderstanding of the Mass. The Mass is a ritual representation of a transcendent event, not a Bible lesson. The so-called liturgical reform perpetuated this misconception and ultimately destroyed the liturgy and, in the end, religion itself.

Tournemire treats the chorales in much the same way as the Mass treats the texts. He does not attach importance to recognising or understanding the chants, but rather, as described above, he takes up the fundamental principles of the Mass and transfers them congenially into the medium of music.

⁸ c.f. <https://moosmann.com/tournemire-lorgue-mystique-2/> → The Birth of *L'Orgue Mystique* out of the Spirit of Liturgy

Should *L'Orgue Mystique* be played during Mass?

In principle, that would be possible.

- *Prélude à l'introïte*, *Offertoire*, *Élévation* and *Communion* capture the mood of the respective liturgical situations very well.
- *Prélude à l'introïte*, *Offertoire* and *Élévation* also fit seamlessly into the liturgy thanks to their precisely calculated duration. Since, unlike in the past, it is now customary for most Mass attendees to receive Communion during High Mass, the *Communion* may be too short.
- In the *Prélude à l'introïte* and the *Communion*, the cantus firmus is set to a singable pitch so that the chant can follow immediately. This is not the case with the *Offertoire*. It is unclear whether the *Offertoire* should be played after the chorale or replace it.

Was *L'Orgue Mystique* played during Mass in Tournemire's time?

As far as I know, Tournemire himself didn't, and he was angry with Bonnet for not doing so either. Langlais only played part of it ...

And today ?

It is a futile endeavour to hope that the official Church will ever convert back to Catholicism. However, the brotherhoods that have taken up the cause of preserving the liturgy often lack the churches, the organs, and the mental openness, that would be needed for this music.

As mentioned above, the sensory aspect of sound is of the utmost importance to *L'Orgue Mystique* for purely musical reasons. To this, we can now add the ecclesiastical, cultic and liturgical dimension. The staging of the Gospel, the magnificent Gothic cathedrals and splendid Baroque churches of southern Germany, as well as the rich treasure of ecclesiastical art and music make it clear that the Catholic Church has always placed great importance on the sensory aspect of the liturgy. Performing *L'Orgue Mystique* on an organ that doesn't meet Tournemire's expectations - even if it was within the Mass - and distributing texts instead would perpetuate the misconception of music and liturgy held by Calvin and the ordo novus.

For the time being my proposal is this: listen to my recordings in Dolby Atmos quality⁹ and read Richard Christopher Spotts' book.

In an ideal world, my position would probably be different ...

Music, theology and mysticism

As we have seen, music and theology are two different realms of manifested spirit, each with a continuum of different levels of perfection. Believing that a piece of music is more valuable the more it refers to religious texts and chants, rather than considering the level within the respective field, is what Ken Wilber would call a level/line fallacy.

Nevertheless, there are overlaps and points of contact. Consider, for instance, the opening of the *Offertoire* for the 19th Sunday after Pentecost. When you listen to the music and then read the text, it immediately becomes clear that the psalm verse describes what the music expresses: 'Si ambulavero in medio tribulationis'. Walking through hardship and distress is one of the most fundamental experiences of human life. Everyone will have experienced such situations. Therefore, it is just as obvious that Tournemire was inspired by the Offertory text to compose his piece as it is absurd to suggest that one must have read the text to "understand" the music. The meaning of the piece is revealed not through intellectual understanding, but through intuitive recognition.

⁹ <https://youtu.be/QQwygR-WFBI>

Such concordances are legion in *L'Orgue Mystique*, sometimes more, sometimes less obvious. However, this does not mean that the music is dependent on the text; rather, it is ideas – thoughts, feelings, states of mind – that originate in the sphere of the mind (Nous) and emerge in the world of phenomena, both as text and as music. Beyond that, however, there is still an abundance of meaning that can only manifest itself in music, not in text.

Tournemire's approach differs fundamentally from that of Johann Sebastian Bach. If we examine, for example, the Prelude in B minor, BWV 544, in terms of Baroque figuration, we can identify the following symbolic references:

- the accidentals at the very beginning — the cross of Jesus and those of the two thieves
- the thirty-second note figure followed by syncopation — the crown of thorns
- the octave leap B-B (7 times): — the vertical beam of the cross
- the flat F (bar 7) — the horizontal beam of the cross
- the motif of eighth notes in the left hand (bars 4–7), staccato, also 7 times — the hammer blows with which Jesus is nailed to the cross
- lots of suspirationes

From this, one can conclude that this piece is Passion music.



This means that the interpretation of this work and the meaning attributed to it is based on a multi-stage intellectual process, which in turn requires extensive cultural knowledge. Bach's compositional style has language-like features: signs (the musical motifs) refer to something signified (crown of thorns, hammer blows): signifier and signified in the language-like sign system of music figures. However, the signified is itself a sign, or more precisely, a symbol for a complex context of meaning (the incarnation of Christ, death, resurrection, redemption). The musical motifs are therefore indirect symbols that can only be understood against the background of Christian theology.

Tournemire takes a completely different approach: he does not use symbols, i.e., signs that refer more or less unambiguously to a designated object, be it concrete or complex and transcendent. Tournemire evokes atmospheres. One senses meaning. The texts of the chants on which the composition is based trigger, at most, a Platonic anamnesis, a recollection of ideas that the soul saw before its incarnation, but which lie far beyond the reach of language.

Taken on their own, the images described in the texts are often quite banal. The more one expands these images into little stories, narratives or even theological mini-tracts, the further one moves away from the transcendent content that shines through in the music and can only manifest itself in and as music. In this way, one robs *L'Orgue Mystique* of its mysticism.

Tournemire does not need to take the detour via language. **Bach is a theologian – Tournemire is a mystic.**

Conclusion:

For a comprehensive intellectual understanding of *L'Orgue Mystique*, not only a detailed analysis of the music itself is a necessary prerequisite (work-immanent interpretation) but also a in depth study of the context and background.

For believers within the conventional framework, references to chants, texts, and theological backgrounds are certainly helpful.

For a mystically gifted listener, however, seeking transcendental experience, the parables, images, narratives and theological concepts are more of a hindrance than a help.

Finally, a listener without a religious background but fascinated by the music might perceive the presentation of religious texts as an illegitimate influence that puts him off rather than encouraging him to engage with *L'Orgue Mystique*.

Knowing about the chants, the texts, parables and images, about Tournemire's biography and his background, knowing about his organ — all this can help (perhaps) to achieve a certain understanding of the music. However, these are external perspectives that will never touch the core of the music. In fact, there is a great danger that they will obscure an unclouded view of the music itself.

My approach is different: It is all about to immerse myself in the music, diving deeper and deeper to its innermost core, from where to get in contact with this unique perspective on transcendence of which this music is a valid emanation.

