

Synthesis of Divergent Early and Twentieth-Century Elements in Maurice Duruflé's *Messe "Cum jubilo"*

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Maurice Duruflé's *Messe "Cum jubilo"* features characteristics of both early and twentieth-century music.¹ This article identifies these early and new elements and discovers how they are synthesized into a twentieth-century idiom. Most significantly, this mass reveals a disparate harmonic language that includes modality, octatonicism, pentatonicism, and functional harmony. Further, Duruflé synthesizes these distinct harmonic areas by gradually modulating the harmonic and melodic material by employing the acoustic scale as a unifying element. In order to understand *Messe "Cum jubilo,"* this researcher will first identify the early and twentieth-century music characteristics and then discuss the techniques employed by Duruflé that draw these divergent characteristics into a twentieth-century idiom.

Early Music Characteristics

Duruflé bases *Messe "Cum jubilo"* on Gregorian chant, weaving the original Mass for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin I (*Cum Jubilo*) chant throughout his twentieth-century composition. Because the chant serves as the structural backbone of the mass, many ancient

¹ Though the *Messe "Cum jubilo"* was originally premiered in 1966 with a large orchestration, the forthcoming analysis is based upon the organ reduction, which was premiered one year later.

characteristics of plainchant are also present in Duruflé's setting.

The organ and voices work together to present the original chant material throughout the mass, which makes the chant melody itself the first, obvious early music characteristic. In the *Kyrie*, both the organ and the voices state '*Kyrie eleison*' three times in the opening measures. The voices sing '*Kyrie eleison*' with text, while the organ speaks by quoting the original chant melody. The organ begins an alternation of the chant melody with the voices, which Duruflé elides together to create fluid presentation. By starting the mass with a steady stream of chant, Duruflé underscores that chant plays a significant role in the structure and development of the melody itself.

(Example 1 on next page.)

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Example 1. *Kyrie*, mm. 1–4, antiphonal statement of “Kyrie” using original chant material in the R.H. of the organ and text in the chorus

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Baritone, the middle for Organ (treble and bass clefs), and the bottom for Organ (bass clef). The Baritone part has a dynamic marking *p* and a triplet of eighth notes. The Organ part has a dynamic marking *p* and a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics "Ky ri e e le i son." are written below the Baritone staff.

Additionally, the alternation of melodic material between the organ and the voices create an antiphonal atmosphere, another early music characteristic. In the work of Frescobaldi, the so called “organ masses” strategically replaced the voices with the organ in order create a more diverse texture. Duruflé adds this early music characteristic to the texture of his mass. In effect, the voices and the organ serve as two separate choirs working together to present the music. Of course, chant material does not appear exclusively in antiphony. To be sure, often times Duruflé superimposes the chorus and the organ upon each other in close counterpoint. Nevertheless, two distinct voices exist.

Duruflé also tries to replicate the rhythmic motion of chant. Common to Duruflé’s music, *Messe “Cum júbilo”* features a mixed meter designed to continually obscure the barline, avoiding the notion of “strong beat,” an uncharacteristic feature in plainchant. In accordance with the *Solesmes* method, which he was exposed to as a chorister in the Maîtrise Saint-Évode, Duruflé arranges the *neumes* into groups of two or three pitches. Further, he properly elongates the dotted punctum when

it appears. The resulting continuous rhythmic motion utilizes musical notation to reflect the rhythmic characteristics of plainchant.

The sonority of the mass creates another early characteristic. Whereas Duruflé’s *Quatres Motets* and *Requiem* are also based on Gregorian chant, they are scored for SATB. The unison baritone chorus in *Messe “Cum júbilo”* offers an archaic sonority that recalls Gregorian chant as clearly as the mirrored pitches.

The modal harmonic vocabulary Duruflé employs stands as the most overlooked ancient aspect of this music. Existing analyses view the harmonic language as though Duruflé consistently uses functional harmony. In truth, Duruflé often favors a modal harmonic vocabulary over a traditional, functional harmony.²

For instance, returning to the *Kyrie*, one could analyze the music in D Minor. To be sure, the key signature contains one flat and the opening chord contains the same pitches as a

² The use of functional harmony maintains a structural function in Duruflé’s idiom, as will be discussed later.

D Minor triad. Yet the music does not contain the harmonic functional aspect of D Minor, which makes labeling this music as D Minor as inappropriate as labeling the original chant in D Minor.

Kyrie features the Dorian mode in both the chant and Duruflé's mass. The D *tonus finalis* confirms that the chant mode as D Dorian. The B-flat *ficta* in the original chant does not place the chant in a mode other than Dorian, but is added to avoid the tritone, an early music practice.³ Duruflé simply moves the B-flat from its position in the original chant as an accidental to the key signature. As a result, the sporadic occurrences of B-natural do not imply a chord according the rules of functional harmony, but rather true Dorian.⁴

It cannot be denied that Duruflé continues to use chords that can be analyzed according to traditional harmonic function. In spite of a possible functional interpretation, this music has a more significant meaning beyond functionality. A careful hearing of the music reveals that traditional harmonic function does not predominate in Duruflé's use of harmony and harmonic progression. Rather, the harmonies are created by the counterpoint of modal pitch collections, evoking an early music atmosphere that distinguishes *Messe "Cum jubilo."*

The early music characteristics of *Messe "Cum jubilo"* are significant in this otherwise contemporary context. Duruflé highlights these

³ Jeffrey Warren Reynolds, "The Choral Music of Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)." D.M.A. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, United States—Illinois (1990), 142.

⁴ Regardless of function, it nevertheless does invoke the D Aeolian mode, which will be discussed below in terms of bimodality.

features so the effect of antiphonal choirs, along with the rhythm, sonority, and modal harmonic language of chant pervades the music. The early music characteristics, however, are not the only salient features present in Duruflé's mass. Duruflé also utilizes twentieth-century compositional elements in tandem with the early musical characteristics.

Twentieth-Century Characteristics

As mentioned earlier, modality plays a prominent role in Duruflé's harmonic language, though rarely presented in "pure" form. Returning to the *Kyrie*, we find an example of Duruflé's use of bimodality, which invokes a twentieth-century rather than early music idiom. The chant music from the *Mass for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin I* employs *ficta* in the *Kyrie*, using B-flat instead of B-natural in D Dorian, in order to avoid the tritone. Duruflé takes advantage of the *ficta* in the chant to create bimodal tension in the opening measures of the *Kyrie*. Changing B-natural to B-flat in D Dorian transforms the perceived mode into D Aeolian. While the overriding context remains as D Dorian, D Aeolian intrudes (bimodal coloring). Thus, bimodality stands as a significant source of chromatic tension in this mass.

While there are no transpositions of the chant in the original source, Duruflé frequently transposes the chant in an effort to increase the chromaticism of the pitch content. The regular transpositions create analytical problems for those who hear this music within the boundaries of functional harmony. The first thirty-three measures of the *Gloria* provide an example of how a modal analysis, rather than traditional functional harmonic analysis, can better clarify Duruflé's tonal language.

The original chant music for the *Gloria* is in G Mixolydian, with a *tonus finalis* on G. In Duruflé's setting, the chant begins in the voices

(m. 5). The voices sing a direct quote from the chant, transposed up a perfect fourth. The opening modality is C Mixolydian.

Example 2. *Gloria*, mm. 5–8, original chant transposed up a perfect fourth to C Mixolydian

The voices continue with the chant music (m. 9). The first six notes of the chant are transposed down a whole step, suggesting F Mixolydian. A chant derivative follows. The chant quote continues, but transposed up one perfect fourth from G to C Mixolydian.

Example 3. *Gloria*, mm. 9–14, original chant transposed down a whole step, followed by a chant derivative, followed by the chant transposed up a perfect fourth

The organ takes over the chant music and presents the material in rapid succession. All of the organ's chant statements are transposed up one minor third from the original chant into B-flat Mixolydian.

Example 4. *Gloria*, mm. 15–21, original chant transposed up one minor third to B-flat Mixolydian, centered around the tonic in the voices and around the fifth in the organ; both voices move towards G Mixolydian in m. 21

The chorus echoes each chant statement presented by the organ. Both the organ and the voices are in B-flat Mixolydian, but Duruflé splits the modal between two segments, one encircling the fifth degree, the other encircling the tonic. Eventually, the organ and the chorus move to G Mixolydian (mm. 21-23), ending the section.

Duruflé further obscures the perceived modality with the presence of an F pedal point. In a contemporary idiom, the F functions as a kind of psalm tone, though not according to the standard practice of early music. The frequent transpositions change the F's modal function. For example, in B-flat Mixolydian it is the 5th, whereas in G Mixolydian, it is the 7th.

By comparison, in an analysis employing functional harmony, Reynolds states:

Harmonically, this initial subsection (mm. 1-33) is relatively static; harmonic interest is produced largely by numerous passing tones and other briefly sounded non harmonic tones. Taking into account this low harmonic rhythm—about one chord per measure—there are 33 opportunities for harmonic changes. Of these 33, Duruflé uses F major, F minor, or a form thereof (F⁺⁶, F⁷, F^{6/4}, etc.) in 27 of these measures.⁵

Reynolds provides an accurate analysis in functional harmony. As music based on chant, however, interpreting triadic harmony in the context of modal pitch collections provides a more prudent approach. As has been shown above, the chant begins by vacillating between C and F Mixolydian. The full score then moves to B-flat Mixolydian (m. 15) and Duruflé presents the chant on two separate pitch levels. The organ begins the chant on F and the voices on B-flat,

⁵ Ibid., 158.

two pitch levels that allow the same intervallic content (i.e., direct transposition of the chant) in the B-flat Mixolydian mode. Afterwards, the chant returns to the original transposition, G Mixolydian (m. 20).

In traditional harmonic analysis, there are twenty-seven measures of F. In a modal analysis, harmonic motion abounds as modalities contend for transpositional dominance. The harmonies used throughout, then, are created out of modal transpositions in counterpoint towards the function of reinforcing (or breaking down) a

given mode, instead of the traditional concept of functional triads in the major-minor scale system.

Yet Duruflé does not employ modality as the only source for the harmonic vocabulary in the mass. He also uses an octatonic scale in *Messe "Cum jubilo."* The final two movements, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* prominently feature octatonicism. In both movements, the organ serves to introduce the voice. In *Benedictus*, it does so with descending triads exclusively belonging to the same octatonic collection: C, C-sharp, D-sharp, E, F-sharp, G, A, B-flat.

Example 5. *Benedictus*, mm. 1-5, descending triads are derived exclusively from the same octatonic collection

The musical score for Example 5 shows the beginning of the *Benedictus*. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Baritone, which is mostly silent. The middle staff is for the Organ, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The organ part features descending triads in the right hand and a single-note line in the left hand. The dynamics are marked as *mf*, *dim.*, and *senza rigore*. The key signature is C major with one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb).

Whereas in *Benedictus* Duruflé utilizes octatonicism primarily for harmonic purposes, he finds a melodic use for the octatonic scale in the *Agnus Dei*. Similar to the *Benedictus*, the organ opens with an octatonic vocabulary. However, now Duruflé presents the octatonic collection as melodic material. Further, the voices sing an octatonic collection for the first time in the mass. Duruflé continues to use the original Gregorian chant, though he has moved from a modal language to an octatonic language. The contour of the melody replicates

the original chant exactly, but the chant has been modulated into the octatonic collection C-C#-D#-E-F#-G-A-Bb, with an added F. Thus, in the final two movements of the mass, Duruflé employs octatonicism to create both harmonic and melodic musical material.

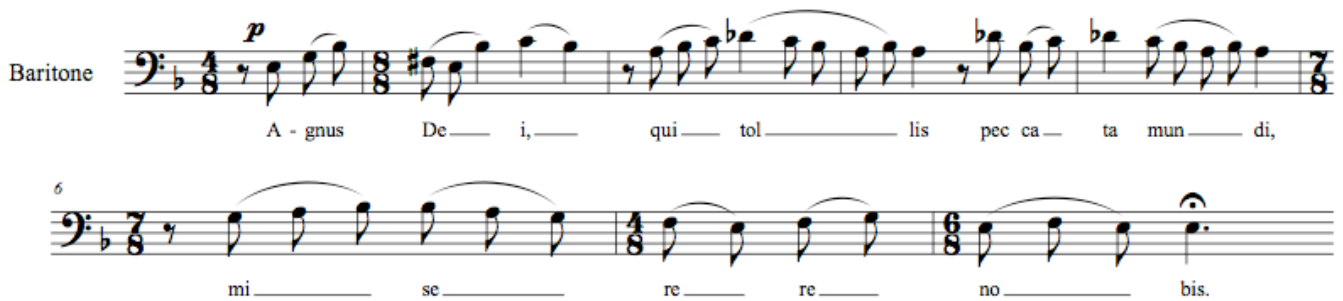
(Example 6-1 on next page.)

Example 6-1. *Angus Dei* from “*Cum Jubilo*,” original chant material

(X) XIII. s.

A 

Example 6-2. *Agnus Dei*, mm. 10-17, Duruflé’s modulation of original chant material into an octatonic collection

Baritone 

In addition, Duruflé shows glimpses of the whole tone scale, a twentieth-century characteristic. Though never presented in its entirety, whole-tone fragments are present. For instance, in the *Sanctus*, after the voices have presented the chant material, the organ echoes the material. During the organ statement, the voices continue to sing

the text, “*Sanctus*,” but to newly composed musical material. The newly composed material recalls the whole tone scale, as only the word “*Sabaoth*” contains a half step. Though Duruflé never uses the whole-tone scale outright, he makes composes many allusions to the whole-tone scale, such as the example from the *Sanctus*.

Example 7. *Sanctus*, mm. 15–24, newly composed melodic material alluding to the whole tone scale

Baritone

San ctus, San ctus, San ctus Do mi nus De us Sa ba oth.

Durufié’s language can also be understood in traditional harmonic language, for example at the final utterance of the mass. As the voices and the organ intone the final “Agnus Dei,” Durufié moves into D Major. While the chant in the chorus remains modally ambiguous, the addition of C-sharp to the organ’s melody creates an unmistakable presence of D Major. Besides the modal shift into D Major (and functional harmonies), the bVI – bVII – I movement in the organ provide most striking characteristic of the final measures. The bVI – bVII – I motion avoids the traditional semitone movement towards the tonic found in functional harmony, recalling the modality present in the opening movements, as well as alluding to the whole tone scale. The result liberates functional harmony from traditional usage.

Synthesis

Many of the early music characteristics are easily synthesized into a twentieth-century idiom. Durufié synthesizes the use of chant into a twentieth-century context by placing the chant into various modal interpretations—even modulating the chant into octatonicism. He synthesizes the antiphonal choir effect into a twentieth-century context by placing the chant in various textures and registrations within the organ. The rhythmic aspects translate easily into a twentieth-century context, as twentieth-century composers frequently strive to obscure the barline, thereby deemphasizing strong beats.

He couples the sonority of the unison voices, an early music characteristic, with twentieth-century organ registration and, in the original version, a large Romantic orchestra.

The more difficult synthesis lies in the harmonic vocabulary. Durufié has used early music modality along side octatonicism, functional harmony, and the whole-tone scale. How, then, does Durufié unify these disparate harmonic languages? Durufié achieves unity in his harmonic vocabulary by employing the acoustic scale, as a kind of nucleus for interactions among divergent pitch sets, in the *Sanctus*.

In the opening measures of the *Sanctus*, Durufié sets the chant against a seemingly foreign pentatonic scale as a quasi-ostinato in the pedal, obscuring modal stability. Indeed, Durufié transposes the chant from E Lydian to F Lydian almost immediately. Underneath the instability, however, remains the quasi-ostinato pedal.

The pentatonic pedal eventually makes way for added pitches, leading to the complete pitch collection C, D, E, F-sharp, G, A, B-flat, or the acoustic scale. Indeed, Durufié repeats the entire process in the coming measures, transposed down a major third. The acoustic scale returns, transposed to: A-flat, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat.

(Example 8 on next page.)

Example 8. *Sanctus*, mm. 1-10, quasi ostinato in pedal formed from a pentatonic collection and the octatonic insertion in measures 8-9, creating the complete acoustic scale pitch collection C, D, E, F-sharp, G, A, B-flat

The image displays a musical score for the beginning of the Sanctus. It consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 1-6, and the second system covers measures 7-10. The top staff in each system is for Baritone, and the bottom two staves are for Organ. The Baritone part has a melodic line with lyrics: 'San ctus, San ctus, Do mi nus De'. The Organ part features a complex accompaniment with a prominent pedal point. A bracket under the Organ part in measures 8 and 9 is labeled 'octatonic insertion', indicating a specific harmonic technique used in those measures.

In the *Sanctus*, the cradle of the entire mass, we find harmonic unity. The acoustic scale, in its seven rotations, reveals three modal extensions—octatonic, whole tone, and diatonic. Thus, at the center of the mass, the *Sanctus* seems to serve as a wellspring from which Duruflé draws all of his harmonic language. As the acoustic scale can be extended towards diatonicism, the *Sanctus* extends towards the modality found in the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*. In the same way, as the acoustic scale can be extended towards octatonicism, the *Sanctus* extends towards the octatonicism present in the *Benedictus* and the *Agnus Dei*. The resulting amalgam reconciles ancient with twentieth-century in a synthesis of harmonic language.

Duruflé’s ability to synthesize ancient texture, source material, and harmonic vocabulary into a twentieth-century idiom stands as the primary salient feature of this mass. With a thorough understanding of Duruflé’s union of early and twentieth-century music, one may fully appreciate the architecture of Duruflé *Messe “Cum júbilo”* and create an informed performance.

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