



The *Harawi* project is made possible
by the generous support of
Stephen Block, Raulee Marcus,
and **Don Pattison**

There is no intermission
during the concert.

Friday, June 10, 2022 | 8:00pm

Libbey Bowl

Harawi

Julia Bullock *soprano* | **Conor Hanick** *piano* | **Bobbi Jene Smith** *dancer/choreography*

Or Schraiber *dancer/choreography* | **Carlos Soto** *costume design*

John Torres *lighting design* | **Mark Grey** *sound design* | **Zack Winokur** *director*

Olivier MESSIAEN

Harawi: Song of Love and Death World Premiere of semi-staged production

1. La ville qui dormait, toi ("The City That Slept, You")
2. Bonjour toi, colombe verte ("Hello There, You Green Dove")
3. Montagnes ("Mountains")
4. Doundou tchil
5. L'amour de Piroutcha ("Piroutcha's Love")
6. Répétition planétaire ("Planetary Repetition")
7. Adieu ("Farewell")
8. Syllabes ("Syllables")
9. L'escalier redit, gestes du soleil ("Staircase Retold, Gestures of the Sun")
10. Amour oiseau d'étoile ("Love Star-bird")
11. Katchikatchi les étoiles ("Katchikatchi the Stars")
12. Dans le noir ("In the Dark")

Olivier MESSIAEN (1908-92)
Harawi: Song of Love and Death (1945)

Living archives expressed in the body — Repetition utilized in order to better understand — Improvisation encouraged — Complex rhythms articulated — Movement and sound become extensions of each other — Broken words are uttered — To voice one's surroundings is a way to be immersed in and expanded by them.*

These are some values intrinsic to the traditions of Harawi (Qarawi) — Andean music which is still expressed across the diverse cultures and peoples in Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador and beyond.

Olivier Messiaen's life circumstances and relationships often seemed to infuse his compositions with explicit references and associations. He began to write his song cycle, *Harawi* after being a prisoner of war during World War II. The mind and body of Claire Delbos (a fellow musician, source of inspiration, and his wife) had begun to degenerate slowly, and a new love partner was entering his life. Messiaen only became aware of Andean Harawi traditions through an ethnographic anthology written by Marguerite and Raoul d'Harcourt. The melodies and themes seemed to provide a means through which Messiaen could process why love, loss, absence and presence are human preoccupations and how shattered realities give way to expansiveness.

Our desire to perform this work originated from an intuitive interest in Messiaen's poetic and musical expressions. Since then, our discussions with artists Luz Zenaida Hualpa García and Karen Michelsen Castañón have informed our explorations and revealed deep threads of resonance. We look forward to sharing where they have led us.

* These are fragments and impressions from conversations with Luz Zenaida Hualpa García, dancer and choreographer, and Karen Michelsen Castañón, visual artist.

—JULIA BULLOCK

Falling Upward: Messiaen's Love Star-Bird

"I suffer from a distant music that I do not know," wrote the poet Cécile Sauvage in her collection *L'âme en bourgeon* ("The Budding Soul"), which she produced while pregnant with Olivier Messiaen. The composer was fond of remarking that with this line his mother foretold his vocation. But it might even be viewed more particularly as a premonition of the ecstatic, otherworldly conjurings of Messiaen's musical language — a language that seeks to reach "from the canyons to the stars" or even to the "lightning flashes

over the beyond," to borrow two titles from his catalogue.

Yet these mystical yearnings are grounded in a profound gratitude for the sublunary world, for the glories of nature and the passions of lovers who "share a shadow." All of these aspects converge in *Harawi*, a relatively early work by the 37-year-old Messiaen. *Harawi* is the last of his three large-scale song cycles — all for voice and piano — which also include *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936) and *Chants de terre et de*

ciel (1938). He orchestrated only one of these (*Poèmes pour Mi*), but the cosmic range of Messiaen's poetic and musical vision in *Harawi* suggests a work of far vaster dimensions — a work that belies the score's modest forces of a singer and pianist.

Messiaen's fascination with non-European cultures, which can be found across his oeuvre, here takes the form of inspiration from the ancient Andean tradition of *Harawi* (known as *yaravi* to Spanish

CONTINUED ►►

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

FALLING UPWARD: MESSIAEN'S LOVE STAR-BIRD

speakers and today particularly associated with Peru). This genre linking Quechuan poetry, music, and ritual centers around songs often dealing with lost love and its pangs, but also other kinds of sorrow. Messiaen's knowledge of this Andean tradition was limited to a collection of Andean folk songs published in 1925 by a French ethnomusicologist and her husband. What seized his attention was the implicit analogy between these love songs depicting the obstacles of the world and ending in death and the Celtic myth of Tristan and Isolde (hence his subtitle).

Messiaen wrote his own texts for the 12 poems of the cycle, imbuing them with his colorful, dreamlike, spiritually tinged brand of surrealism. He borrowed some of his imagery from the Andean source, as well as the overall concept of songs of love and death but amalgamated these with his own interpretation of the Tristan myth to trace a narrative of love so intense

that it can find fulfillment only in death. Yet Tristan and Isolde make no explicit appearance here. Messiaen calls his Isolde figure Piroutcha, while her lover is never named. Nor do they figure in the two later works Messiaen singled out as likewise referring to this legend: the *Turangalila* Symphony (1948) and *Cinq rechants* for a cappella choir (also 1948). "I've preserved only the idea of a fatal and irresistible love, which, as a rule, leads to death and which, to some extent, invokes death," the composer said, "for it is a love that transcends the body, transcends even the limitations of the mind, and grows to a cosmic scale."

The specter of Europe in ruins — Messiaen composed *Harawi* in the summer of 1945, in the months immediately following the end of the war — must have left its mark on the apocalyptic intensity of what he imagined. At the same time, the composer was coming to terms with a personal

tragedy involving his wife, Claire Delbos, also a composer (and violinist). In fact, she set to music *L'âme en bourgeon*, the book of poems by Messiaen's mother. Following an operation, Delbos began suffering severe memory loss and had to be institutionalized for the rest of her life.

There has been much speculation around the extent to which *Harawi* might reflect not only the anguish Messiaen experienced as he was losing his beloved first wife — did it mark his artistic "farewell" to her? — but his conflicting joy over the new love who had recently entered his life, the pianist Yvonne Loriod, whom he married following the death of Delbos in 1961. The composer remained circumspect in commenting on *Harawi*.

Messiaen wrote *Harawi* and his two other song cycles for the dramatic soprano Marcelle Bunlet, whose "flexible voice and extended tessitura" he admired, and he

acknowledged the cycle's extraordinary demands on the singer. For the piano part, Messiaen's signature bird evocations have developed well beyond his practice in *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941), and he balances complexity and simplicity in mesmerizing and strikingly original ways.

The prelude "La ville qui dort, toi" sets the stage for the cycle's implied narrative, which begins with the second song and with the introduction of one of Messiaen's key symbols, the youthful, hope-inspiring green dove ("colombe verte"), as Piroutcha is called by her lover, complemented by the endearment "limpid pearl." Although each of the dozen songs establishes a self-contained atmosphere, the cycle is linked through recurrent poetic and musical images. Messiaen introduces a unifying love theme in the second song that recurs in "Adieu" (the seventh song), which is the fulcrum and the longest of the cycle, and in the final "Dans le noir."

After the funereal intimations of "Adieu" and the sorrow of Piroutcha's departure that conclude the first part — this is the one song with an actual reference to the Tristan myth (specifically, to the love potion, with "philtre à deus voix") — *Harawi* moves on to a new plane of love's ecstatic bliss, calling for the highest note of the vocal part in "L'escalier redit" ("The Stair Repeats") at full force. One of Messiaen's otherworldly slow movements follows in "Amour oiseau d'étoile" ("Love Star-Bird"). Here, he found inspiration in the British Surrealist Roland Penrose's 1937 painting *Seeing Is Believing*, which depicts a woman's head upside-down as she falls upward into the sky. He called it "the symbol of the whole of *Harawi*."

Other examples of how Messiaen adapted the Quechuan source material he had at hand occur in "Doundou tchil" and "Syllabes," where he uses Quechuan syllables for onomatopoeic signification,

evoking an image of Piroutcha in a traditional Andean dance with bells around her ankles. The earthy dance becomes conflated with the cosmic "dance of the stars" toward which the lovers hurtle in their transcendent journey.

Apart from the archetypal, mythic layers of *Harawi*, director Zack Winokur points out that an important consideration for AMOC*'s world premiere production has been "to find where the piece is most on the ground, so that it stays human. What is it to maintain connection with someone who is losing their memory and, as they're moving through time with you, to realize all of the things that you've created with them are going away?"

—THOMAS MAY

This concert is approximately 65 minutes.