

Tonskald

Aldor

<https://www.youngcomposers.com/t38724/aldor-song-cycle-for-cello-piano-poor-form-entry/>

<https://soundcloud.com/brazealnut/sets/aldor-song-cycle-for-cello>

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|----------------------------------|----|
| Clear/inventive material / 20 | 20 |
| Creative final movement / 10 | 10 |
| Score and audio / 10 | 9 |
| Realistic instrum/ orchestr / 10 | 9 |
| <i>Total</i> | 48 |

Clear and inventive deviation from the shared material between movements, all with an obviously repeated introduction. /20

The initial (and shared) material is homophonic, an expressive melody built upon Mode 2 (starting in C). The Mode is correctly drawn, as all the notes of it sound in the phrase, which is an important feature for the characterization. In the first part it seems to revolve around C as center (pitch present in every measure), changing to a part with sequences more open.

I Waccan

This material transforms itself (m. 11), in Mode 2 transposed to C#, allowing the piano to complete the pitches. From here to m. 33 there is an interesting dialogue between the two instruments echoing motives and with beautiful harmonic support.

In m. 34, back to Mode 2 (C) we notice a new transformation where the harmonic ostinato in the piano masters the section. Good cadence in 45-46 by acceleration of the chords.

The final part (m. 47) seems less defined. It takes some of the motives previously heard, leading to a final C#maj7 final chord (it seems Mode 1 wants to be present, but the chord is C# D#, E#, F#, G#, A#, B#).

II Astignes

The shared material is presented in the piano in Mode 2, harmonized. The change to Mode 3, when the cello comes in, is soft and further development takes as back to rhythmic ostinatos in the piano, which provides a fresh,

excellent contrast to the lyrical part of the cello (m. 33...), or resembles the one we heard in part I (m. 53...).

The piano takes the lead part in some spots, which is perfect putting the cello at rest.

Motive development is well worked, it acts as a glue so far.

Good construction of the final cadence, although the indications seem contradictory:



3 Hréð

The common material is seen here in a new form, combining the two instruments and giving the piano a percussive role.

Again, moving to the new Mode seems natural. This part is more dramatic. Some important present of chords by fourths. Although motivic resemblances are there, we can hear original patterns as the cello in m. 57... Always aware of multiple stops in the strings as in m. 68 (here, as a non-expert at all, I don't say anything)

4 Sweðrung

The initial pattern continues making the material easily recognizable and shifting smoothly to the new Mode 5.

This is also a more vivid part with motivic reminders (as the melodic ascending notes, the rhythmic ostinatos), but bringing new developments (descending chromatic scales in octaves). The changing meter gives strong personality.

A conclusive and satisfying, yet creatively combined final movement. /10

5 Ellorsíp

The last movement meet all the requirements. It starts with the shared material and goes into a quasi-symphonic part in which all the material and development techniques are present, but with new faces.

A good, semi-professional score and audio rendition of the work. /10

The audio rendition is magnificent. The piano is rich, particularly in high tessitura. It's a plus being played by the composer himself.

The score is finely engraved, I have observed some issues I'd like to point out:

In my opinion, it makes little sense to use key signatures in this environment. In fact, it's easier to get lost when we see seven sharps (final part of mov. I) but many notes must be "corrected". I think the best notation is the one of the Second Viennese School (no key signature, all the notes are preceded by an accidental, even natural ones), as Messiaen (random excerpt) wrote here:



At times, some enharmonic pitches seem unnecessary, as this Fb in part II. However they are justified to keep the intervallic relationship of the parallel chords.

Meno mosso.

mp

p

m.d.

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In some parts, I think it would have been better to split the hands in the piano in each staff:



Sound and realistic instrumentation and orchestration. /10

The piano is totally idiomatic, specifically for this modern impressionistic language. I think the cello is nicely treated, too. The dialogue is balanced, although the leading melody is in the cello.

Observations or suggestions:

It's very interesting the way Messiaen's Modes are approached here. Messiaen seldom used his Modes as a source of melodic material. sometimes use the modes in a strictly melodic (i.e., monophonic, or unharmonized) manner, but only rarely after his early works. He almost always presented his modes chordally, presumably to take advantage of their particular colorations (let's remember he had the condition of synesthesia).

I think it's interesting to remark the use of these Modes. In some posts about whit work *Aldor*, the author says (quote):

- not all these scales lend themselves well to warm, upbeat chords. (The warm passages you're referring to were largely produced by going back to the diatonic scales we all know and love.)
- For modes 4 and 6, the only major/minor triads one can create from a given scale are complements: for example, A major and Eb major. Modes 1 and 5 contain *no* major/minor triads. Mode 2 (octatonics) has a little more flexibility in that it has two pairs of complement triads, so one can generate a little more warmth. Mode 3 is super flexible—each scale has 6 major/minor triads and *no* complements—which is why the 2nd movement sounds more upbeat than the others.

I understand the difficulty entailed in working with Messiaen's modes for the first time Despite the enormous tendency by listeners to "stay in a safe tonal world", we as composers should not look for traditional triads to rely on. Let's have a look to Messiaen's words:

"People have often referred to my modes of limited transposition as scales. They are not scales, but harmonic colors."

According to Messiaen, these modes are at once in the atmosphere of several tonalities, without polytonality, the composer being free to give predominance to one of the tonalities or to leave the tonal impression unsettled. He stated that, with them, the composer can choose to emphasize any harmonic structures within the mode; you can be as consonant or as dissonant, as tonal or as non-tonal as you like.

Anyway, I believe in eclecticism and in using any resource the way we like or need, so the work here is totally fine.