

Stylistic Transitions in Vivier's Emergent Musical Style¹

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Le style n'est rien, mais rien n'est sans le style (Rivarol)
Style is nothing, but nothing is without style

Le style est la volonté de s'extérioriser par des moyens choisis. (Max Jacob)
Style is the willingness to exteriorise oneself by chosen means.

Quite often, an aphorism might generate as much sense as a thorough theoretic text. This is so because of the simplicity of the formula; its succinct aspect makes each term more important and fruitful for reflection and imagination. The definitions of "style" as a notion, be they generic or specifically related to art and music, are not too far from the aphorisms of Rivarol and Max Jacob: style can be the object of a value judgment, since "nothing is without style"; style is a form of personal expression through recurring choices. However, when one wants to understand a specific style, declaring it impalpable cannot be an option; too much research would end right where it started: "style is nothing". Thus, by observing the *means* by which a composer *chooses* to create a work or a corpus of works, it may become possible to understand what it is that is being exteriorised.

How does Canadian composer Claude Vivier² proceed from one work to another? What are the choices he makes in each work and that he modifies from one to the next, over a given period of time? What are the compositional processes that he uses, keeps and transforms from one work to another? This is what I aim to understand in analyzing the melodic parameter in the music of Claude Vivier in a wider ranging research goal that includes the results discussed in the article that follows. In this project I shall attempt to reconstitute the stylistic evolution of Claude Vivier's musical language in an *endogenetic* view, based on the assumption that music can generate music³, and that style evolves through an internal dynamic process that can be identified and explained. I observe changes of style matter that can be noticed from one work to the next and compile them chronologically, thus trying to reconstitute the logic of compositional choices that allowed Vivier's style to evolve. The internal dynamic process of Vivier's early melodic style is analyzed here through five vocal works composed between 1973 and 1975: *Chants*, *O! Kosmos*, *Jesus erbarme dich*, *Lettura di Dante* and *Hymnen an die Nacht*.

Following a brief summary of the paradigmatic analysis of the five works, which highlights the similarities and differences between them, I will describe the evolutionary path of a simple yet very significant musical formula among those works. By observing the transformation of this specific formula in each work and from one to another, it shall be possible to witness a microcosm of the evolution of Vivier's melodic style.

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² Born in Montreal in 1948 to unknown parents and stabbed to death in Paris in 1983.

³ This assumption is linked to Leonard B. Meyer's theory of internal dynamic process of a style, in which it is implied that the music a composer wrote influences his choices when writing new music or, in short, music generates music.

Internal development and external influences: reconcilable views

In an interview published more than fifteen years ago in the music journal *Circuit*, the late György Ligeti spoke of Vivier in these words: “what strikes me most in Claude Vivier’s music is his completely original musical genius. *He was alone despite various influences*, and he was able to bring to life his multicoloured sonic imagination better than anybody (ever) could.”⁴ By trying to understand the endogenetic aspect of Vivier’s musical style I do not aim to deny the musical influences present in his music, but rather to understand how, in the words of Ligeti, he was *alone*.

Accounts of influences on Vivier’s music are numerous, namely in an article by Jacques Tremblay (*Circuit*, 2000), who spots traces of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Balinese gamelan, Montreal composer and Messiaen’s pupil Gilles Tremblay, as well as Messiaen himself; in an article by Ross Braes (*Discourses on Music*, 2001) who unveils links between Stockhausen’s *Mantra* and Vivier’s *Orion*; in a recent one by Jean Lesage (*Circuit*, 2008), linking *Siddhartha* both to Herman Hesse and Stockhausen; and in an article by Bob Gilmore (*Tempo*, 2007) accounting for the influence of spectral music on Vivier’s *Lonely Child*. In light of this well-supported evidence, it would be reckless to state that Vivier’s style is solely the product of internal development. Moreover, musicological literature on musical style is very clear about the fact that no style whatsoever is hermetic to its socio-cultural environment. The analysis of Vivier’s style through its internal process simply offers an alternate view for its understanding.

Five works, eleven formulae

When applied to an appropriate corpus of works, paradigmatic analysis is a tool very revealing of compositional process. This analysis method is based on anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’ myths analysis. It has been applied to music by French linguist and musicologist Nicolas Ruwet (1972) for the analysis of monody, and then further developed by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (2003). Without going too much into details that are thoroughly explained elsewhere, the paradigmatic analysis of a work is made by locating repetitions of signifying musical elements – be it motifs, cells or ideas – and by laying them out in columns (one column for each melodic element including one or more repetitions and/or transformations between related melodic segments). The score remains legible from left to right, with blank spaces used as a simple graphic spacing element rather than a representation of temporal value. These analyses are visually instructive since they allow to grasp a work’s form at a single glance while maintaining the linear temporal evolution inherent to music. However, they take up a lot of space, since a score is present integrally, and quite spaced. This is why no paradigmatic analysis of a complete work is given in this article, although large excerpts will be given later on. By connecting paradigmatic analysis of *Chants*, *Jesus erbarme dich*, *O! Kosmos*, *Lettura di Dante* and *Hymnen an die Nacht*, I have identified something fascinating: eleven paradigmatic formulae – that is, eleven columns of a paradigmatic table – are sufficient to account for the melodic repetitions that can be found in these five works. In other words, the melodic elements that are subject to repetition and transformation in these five works can be described with the same formulae. Thus, the works share, in some way, the same musical material. After a brief overview of their individual structures, this discussion follows the path of one of these formulae from

⁴ ‘Ce qui m’a le plus frappé dans la musique de Claude Vivier est son génie musical tout à fait original. *Il était seul malgré les différentes influences* et il a su mieux que quiconque réaliser son imagination sonore multicolore’. (1991, p. 15, italics and translation are mine).

one work to the next. This is an example of the approach I intend to apply to the whole body of Vivier's works.

Chants

(Seven female voices and percussion)

This work of little more than twenty minutes in length was composed in Cologne in 1973, while Vivier was studying with Karlheinz Stockhausen. According to Vivier himself, "this work represents the very first moment of my existence as a composer"⁵. It is the first of his works in which one can find most of the themes that are to become central to his artistic sensibility. Even though these themes are not the focus in this discussion, it is still important to acknowledge their presence in the text of the piece. Even more so because they manifest themselves at the same moment as do the foundations of his personal musical style. Let us recall that the French word "chant" does not translate into "chant" in English, but rather "song" or "singing". In Vivier's mind, *Chants* is a requiem, or at the very least a ritual; the text is his and speaks of childhood, death, and the maternal figure, with passages in a "language" of his own invention (from now on referred to as "invented language") and excerpts of the Roman Catholic Funeral Liturgy. In this piece Vivier exploits various ways of creating static melodic outlines, meaning melodic formulae that imply nothing but themselves or their own continuation and don't create significant musical implications for the listener. Here I am referring to Leonard Meyer's theories based on the implicative relationships between musical events that can be perceived by listeners acquainted with or acculturated to a musical syntax, and the impression of either closure or surprise following musical events that can be created, depending on whether they are concordant with the implication or not. In order to allow better understanding of the implications that can be generated by which types of musical events, Meyer gives in *Explaining Music* a taxonomy of melodic structures. In his definition of what constitutes an axial melody, he writes: "Implication is absent because, since axial melodies are essentially prolongations of a single tone, no high-level processive relationships are possible." (1973, p. 183). Yet, Vivier uses melodies prolonging a single note, or two notes, in a structural manner, thus justifying the specific taxonomy of static melodic structures that follows.

Among static melodic structures in these five works, one finds: axial melodies (turning around a central tone), oscillating melodies (alternating between two tones) and constant melodies, discrete or sustained (i.e. on a single tone, repeated or held)⁶. In *Chants*, oscillating and constant melodies are the most important. Indeed, the work starts with a minor third, B flat – G, that will be found as is or transposed throughout the piece with special emphasis on B flat, that Vivier brings back like a recitation tone. The minor third has been assigned to the A-formula of the paradigmatic analysis. Oscillating seconds, major and minor, are common enough throughout the piece to become the B-formula of the analysis. Finally, constant melodies, discrete or sustained, have the most prominent role in the work; it is the D-formula. The two latter formulae are, among the eleven that can be found in *Chants*, nothing less than the very structure of the piece, from beginning to end. Figures 1 to 3 show samples of these three formulae.

Figure 1. A-formula. *Chants*, b. 81, soprano 1.



⁵ 'Cette œuvre représente pour moi le moment premier de mon existence de compositeur'. (1991, p. 55, my translation).

⁶ This vocabulary will be explained later on.

Figure 2. B-formula. *Chants*, b. 83, soprano 1.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff is a single line with a treble clef and a 5-measure melodic phrase. The second staff is a single line with a treble clef, a 4-measure melodic phrase, and lyrics 'f mé mf vi pp ant mf tris' below it.

Figure 3. D-formula. *Chants*, b. 71-74, soprano 1.

Paradigmatic analysis of *Chants* shows a block structure, with sections of the work being often dominated by the presence, multiple repetitions, and transformations of a single formula. It is the case for the B-formula in bars 167 to 173, followed by a section centred on the D-formula, bars 178 to 191. A section can also be structured “by interblock”, meaning that it is centred on two alternating formulae, for example between bars 119 and 135. However, despite these block structures constituted by static melodic outlines—that successfully create the ritual effect intended by Vivier—some recognizable melodic contours further attract the listener's attention. Among these, the initial melody of the second section of the work is worth noting (figure 4).

Figure 4. *Chants*, b. 27-28, soprano 1.

The image shows a single staff of musical notation with a treble clef. The lyrics 'p a-ve ma-ri - a gra - ti - a ple - na' are written below the staff. The text "plain chant" is written above the staff.

Jesus erbarme dich

(SATB choir and solo soprano)

This three minutes long work is like a *kyrie* in German, and a tangible example of the importance of the Catholic faith in Vivier's life. Vivier uses a single phrase “Jesus erbarme dich” “*Jesus have pity*” as the only text of the piece (excepting the syllables “tu-ta-ti”), in a ternary structure, with a first section based on the semitone (first an oscillation between A and B flat, soon transposed to F–G flat). The second section of the work starts with a quite rhythmic semitone oscillation in the bass that introduces an exchange between the choir and the soloist. The choir sings a discrete constant motif on the syllable “Je”, to which the soprano answers by the syllable “sus” a minor third above. Note in figure 5 that the time signatures of the bars sung by the choir tutti present the series 8/4, 5/4, 3/4, 2/4, 1/4, – the numerators being the first five values of the Fibonacci series backwards – while the soloist responds in bars in the same time signatures in regular order. The Fibonacci series has close links to the golden number (or golden ratio), considered of divine proportions, found both in art and nature. Combined with the subject of the work and the ternary form, Catholic symbol of a perfect whole (the Holy Trinity), it is a good example Vivier's mysticism. The work ends like it began, with an oscillating minor second for the soprano soloist.

Figure 5. *Jesus erbarme dich*, b. 20-29, soprani and soprano solo.

The musical score for Figure 5 consists of two staves. The top staff is for the soprani, and the bottom staff is for the soprano solo. The tempo is marked 'rall.' and 'Langsam'. The soprani part features a series of notes with a 'p' dynamic and 'sus' (sustained) markings. The soprano solo part features a series of repeated notes with dynamics ranging from 'ff' to 'pppp'.

In the description above, paradigmatic formulae appear clearly: the B-formula “oscillating minor second”, the A-formula “oscillating minor third”, and the D-formula, “repeated notes” (discrete constant) are present. Yet, it is fascinating to see that, in analyzing this work, the paradigmatic formulae are the same as eight of the eleven formulae found in *Chants*. However they are treated in a much simpler manner: the oscillations of minor seconds are longer, in more regular rhythms, and the repeated notes are presented in equal rhythmic values. We must resist the temptation to insinuate – which could seem legitimate since both works were finished in 1973 and we don’t know the exact composition dates – that this work *should*, by its simplicity, have been composed *before Chants*, chronologically. It would be a misunderstanding of both Vivier’s style and this article’s aim to grasp the evolution of a musical language and style. A misunderstanding of Vivier because he had already composed very complex works before *Chants*, often mathematically predetermined. A misunderstanding of the evolution because it is not an evolution from a simple to a complex state, from a primitive to an ideal state, but rather change from an existing state to another.

O! Kosmos
(SATB choir)

The cosmos also has a fundamental place in the list of Vivier’s themes. The term can be found in his vocal works as well as in his writings; he often said he wanted to melt into it, to become one with it. The lyrics of this 7-minute work composed in Cologne in 1973 are Vivier’s own and appeal to the forthcoming of an apocalyptic non-linear time. The block structure is less important here than in preceding works, which leaves space for the presence of the B-formula “oscillating seconds” and the D-formula “constant melody”, discrete and sustained. Its melodic material can be placed under nine of the eleven formulae presented in *Chants*.

Lettura di Dante
(soprano, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, viola and percussion)

With quite a different instrumentation, *Lettura di Dante* is a first attempt on Vivier’s part at taking the unbeaten path of timbre juxtaposition. His use of still limited melodic formulae is very much similar to the preceding works, but the ensemble offers more possibilities, in terms of *Klangfarbenmelodie*, for example. This 26 minute long work would be a lot like the preceding works—with the oscillating intervals, the long held notes, the block structures—if it were not for its principal melody that is gradually stated. It consists, unsurprisingly, of long held notes united by intervals (see Figure 6) that are elsewhere repeated and oscillated.

Figure 6. Principal melody, *Lettura di Dante*, b. 31-34, soprano.



Hymnen an die Nacht
(soprano and piano)

This work composed in Montreal for a competition of the Canada Music Competition in 1975 brings into music the first rhymes of Novalis' fifth *Hymn to the Night*. Even though he didn't speak before age six, Vivier was eager to learn languages—he spoke French, English, German, and Balinese—but was not so keen on grammar, which is probably why he didn't change the word “Hymnen” to its singular form. This work shows a block structure, underlined by a somewhat ternary form. The first section is made of static formulae, alternating between the long sustained tones of the D-formula and grand pauses. Those long silences have their own paradigmatic formula, in this work as well as the others treated here, mainly because they are very present. The importance of silence as a communicative part of musical language has been discussed in relation to the music of Debussy, Webern or Stravinsky, but it doesn't always have the same function. It depends on what comes before and after. In the first part of *Hymnen an die Nacht*, the alternation between long silence and long sustained tones prolongs their static effect (see Figure 7), while creating implications of repetition of a pattern in the central section (see Figure 8). These two functions of silence are shared by the kind of melodic structures present in these sections: static melodies of the D-formula alternating with long silences, opposed in blocks, structure the first section. More implicative melodies, with characteristic outlines, form the blocks of the central section.

Figure 7. *Hymnen an die Nacht*, b. 1-4, soprano.



Figure 8. *Hymnen an die Nacht*, b. 36-39, soprano.



The Path of a Formula

In the general description of the works and paradigmatic analyses above, some formulae are discussed more than others, which is not an un-meditated choice. The process in establishing paradigmatic formulae is the following: one finds the meaningful elements of a work that are repeated and/or transformed. For practical reasons, those formulae are given letter names, according to their order of appearance in the work. Hence, there is no hierarchical superiority between formulae A and B, for example. In fact, the experience of analysis shows the statistical importance of the D-formula, constituted, as seen above, by

long single notes or by successive repetitions of a single note, which I name “sustained constant melody” and “discrete constant melody”⁷. They are grouped under the same formula since a discrete constant melody often comes from a process that in French is called “monnayage” applied to a previously heard sustained constant melody. “Monnayage” simply means the act of changing a bill into coins, changing a whole note into eighth notes, for example.

This “D-formula” is transformed within works and from one to another, representing in this group of works a primary stylistic element whose path is interesting to follow. With the very first bars of *Chants*, a first analytical problem is already presented (see Figure 9). Into which formula it fits is ambiguous. Is it a first minor third starting on B flat (oscillating minor third is the A-formula, an important one in *Chants*) or a first occurrence of repeated notes, related to the D-formula? By trying to solve this practical problem, one understands an essential notion of Vivier’s style: these two first bars are the kernel—in terms of melodic formulae—of the imposing work that is just beginning, to be considered as a precursor to both A and D-formulae. There are few repeated notes, yet they are present. This first bar does not imply solely that the work will be structured by constant melodies, but the listener is at the very least prepared to expect it. The D-formula is foreshadowed here before its clearer occurrence a few bars later.

Figure 9. *Chants*, b. 1-3, soprano 1.



The formula is heard later as well, whether as a discrete constant repeated on the same rhythmic value (Figure 10), or by combining sustained and discrete constant melodies (Figure 11). While being subject to internal transformations, the formula is used to put forward the significant tones of *Chants*, be it the B flat pole (Figures 9 and 10), or the melodic summits (Figure 12). By strengthening the pole tones and melodic summit with long rhythmic values, Vivier combines two melodic structural elements; the importance of the formula and that of the pole tone amplify one another.

⁷ These terms come from the notion of "constant" in mathematics. They are used in this text to specify this type of static melodies that are so important in Vivier's music: literally, a "monotone" music, on a single tone. Since the word "monotone" connotes boredom and value judgment, it is necessary to look for another term. In an essay of practical epistemology, Gardin addresses the question of language in scientific writings. While in pure science, like chemistry, they have their own specific language, he asks "Is it true, is it good that the language of social sciences can be so easily said as 'natural'?" (1987, p. 38). He notices "the necessarily metalinguistic character of any expression borrowed from a natural language... The word *stress*, in a French text about psychology, isn't part of the natural French language" (*op. cit.*, p. 41). He brings forth examples in which the natural language is lacking an appropriate vocabulary (the shades of a colour), and in which the natural language is too connotative for a specific use in a scientific context. In this research, the word "monotone" is precisely a case of the latter, as it would hamper the precise meaning necessary to understand this analysis. This is an instance where words usually found in pure sciences can foster the accuracy of an analysis.

Figure 10. *Chants*, b. 45-46, mezzo-soprano.

ront ma chair à païtr' à la mer mon sang tour ne ra li mon des mers mau di tes mesyeux de viendront bi joux du cou des monstres des o cé ans
in fernaux le temps en glou ti ra tout mes pensées non j'ai peur j'ai peur ar rê tez

Figure 11. *Chants*, b. 138-139, soprano.

son son in *f*

Figure 12. *Chants*, b. 141-147, soprano.

[a] (en changeant la couleur des voyelles)
pp [klangfarbe langsam wechseln]

The formula comes to its fullest bloom in very long rhythmic values. In Figure 13, the formula comes to a temporal melodic importance it didn't have before, with notes held for a little more than 11 beats, 13 beats, and 11 beats again, with a tempo marking of 75.5 at the quarter note.

Figure 13. *Chants*, b. 181-188, soprano.

p *pp*

The block structure of the pieces have come up a few times in this article, and now is the time to demonstrate, by use of an excerpt of paradigmatic analysis, how those blocks are structured. In figure 14, the D-formula predominates in the entire section, before alternating with the B-formula (b. 205).

Figure 14. Extract from paradigmatic analysis, *Chants*, b. 197-214

The image shows a musical score extract with five sections labeled A, B, C, D, and E. The score is written on multiple staves. Section A is marked with a dynamic of *pp*. Section B is marked with a dynamic of *pp*. Section C is marked with a dynamic of *pp* and a crescendo leading to *ff* and then *mf*. Section D is marked with a dynamic of *pp*. Section E is marked with a dynamic of *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as trills (*Tr*), slurs, and dynamic markings.

Finally, in an outstanding synthesis on Vivier's part, all morphologies of the D-formula are heard at the end of the piece (Figure 15): the final occurrence of the melodic summit (fig. 14, ∂ symbol) and of the lower melodic tone (β symbol), in a block structured by the D-formula (Δ symbol), in very long rhythmic values (\square symbol), and in diminution in equal ($*$ symbol) and unequal (μ symbol) rhythmic values. This synthesis of the formula will be discussed again in the conclusion.

Figure 15. Extract from paradigmatic analysis, *Chants*, b. 215-229.

The image shows a musical score extract from a paradigmatic analysis of *Chants*, bars 215-229. The score is organized into sections labeled A, B, C, D, E, and F. It consists of multiple staves of musical notation. Key features include:

- Section A:** Contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of p and a rhythmic marking of $s2$.
- Section B:** Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of pp and a rhythmic marking of $s2$.
- Section C:** Includes a melodic line with a dynamic marking of pp and a rhythmic marking of $s2$.
- Section D:** This section is highlighted with a large black bracket and a delta symbol (Δ). It contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of p and a rhythmic marking of $s1$. Below this line, there are three staves of rhythmic notation, with a dynamic marking of pp and a rhythmic marking of $s1$.
- Section E:** Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of p and a rhythmic marking of $s1$.
- Section F:** Includes a melodic line with a dynamic marking of pp and a rhythmic marking of $s1$.

While heard through the few long notes at the beginning of *Jesus erbarme dich*, the D-formula takes an important place with the exchange between the choir and the soloist discussed above (see Figure 5). In this figure, we see a discrete constant melody in equal rhythmic values fading in with a sustained constant melody. This constitutes, as mentioned earlier, a simple type of use of this formula. However, the way Vivier opposes the two states of the formula—discrete and sustained—in *fade in* is a new way to handle this formula. In *O! Kosmos*, the use of the D-formula retains its relationship to the previous works, through a diminution process in unequal rhythmic values, either on new syllables or on the same vowel, as we can also see in *Jesus erbarme dich*. It is just the same for melodic summit, also presented in the shape of the D-formula. A new way of treating this formula comes up in bars 19 and 20 (Figure 16). A relevant analysis of melody can't be

made in total abstraction of other parameters, and it would be unfair here to consider figure 16 as a simple line A–A flat–A; the fullness of the choir’s timbre and its larger dynamic possibilities, as well as the harmonic progression whose friction is resolved on a 7th major chord, have a lot to do with the impression of movement this static melodic structure suddenly takes.

Figure 16. *O! Kosmos*, b. 19-20.

The musical score for Figure 16 consists of four staves labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 120. The dynamics are marked as *p*, *ff*, *ppsub*, *ff*, and *ppp*. The melody is characterized by a triplet of eighth notes followed by a dotted quarter note, with various accents and slurs. The bass line includes a triplet of eighth notes.

The principal melody of *Lettura di Dante* appears 14 times throughout the work in its complete form. Not only it is used as a classic theme, but also as a formal mark: a section of the work usually starts and ends with the principal melody. In this specific work, Vivier applies his tendency to repeat a specific interval as some kind of *faux départ* of the principal melody. Then, the intervals that form it (see Figure 6) are present and oscillated throughout the work, as is the D-formula that permeates it.

As for *Hymnen an die Nacht*, the most recent work analyzed here, the D-formula is again quite important; it dominates the first section up to bar 32, reappears through the piece, and comes back to end it from bar 49 on. The very first occurrence of the formula (see Figure 7, above) stays on the same note, which at this point in the discussion should not be surprising. However, at the third occurrence, already, the note at the very end of the formula is a semitone higher than the held note (Figure 17). At the fourth occurrence (Figure 18), the repeated notes are followed by two notes, a diminished fourth lower. These somewhat plodding examples nevertheless illustrate the gradual propensity of the D-formula – in *Hymnen*, going from a constant melody considered as a kernel, and then slowly moving away from it, first by conjunct, then by more and more disjunct intervals. The possible process of a constant melody, through slight variations from one occurrence to another, seems to reach a final state here, yet it is another stepping stone. Remember that in Vivier's music, a final state doesn't equal an ideal state; *Hymnen* shows other morphologies of the D-formula as well, from the "monnayage" to the block structure.

Figure 17. *Hymnen an die Nacht*, b. 8-9, soprano.

The musical score for Figure 17 shows the soprano part in 8/4 time. The melody consists of a half note followed by a dotted half note, with a slur over the entire phrase. The dynamics are marked as *p* and *pp*. The lyrics "Ü - - - - ber" are written below the staff.

Figure 18. *Hymnen an die Nacht*, b. 13-14, soprano.



Internal dynamics of a static melodic formula

What this analysis teaches us about Claude Vivier's style is not merely that the composer sometimes uses long, sustained tones. The very first bars of *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Figure 6) would suffice to demonstrate this observation. It teaches us above all that Vivier structures a considerable number of works on only a few melodic formulae, and that they are transformed, made complex, *and simplified again*. In the chapter "Variety of Style Change", the late Leonard Meyer (1994) states the hypothesis of internal dynamics of a musical style transformation. While he addresses mostly styles shared by numerous composers—for example, the baroque style—, this view of stylistic development can be judiciously applied to the understanding of a personal style. According to Meyer, a style gradually emerges, and is not the result of a single decision; he thinks a style is *learned*, even by the composers who invented it (*op. cit.*, p. 116) and the listener learns it as well. Then, it is not rare, in an emergent style, that a musical language would be constituted by the redundancy of a single process. As the style slowly establishes itself, the composer *tends* to reduce the degree of redundancy to introduce new information, meaning elements that can surprise the listener already acquainted with the style (*op. cit.*, p. 114 and 116). The redundancy will tend to decrease while the amount of information will tend to increase, until the style becomes barely unidentifiable. Meyer considers these three phases of a style as a pre-classicism (redundancy), classicism (equilibrium between redundancy and information) and mannerism (high level of information). It would be imprudent to transpose this entire theory onto Vivier's style, since Meyer writes about a style that declines on its own, not abruptly interrupted. However, the internal dynamics of an emerging style provide a very enlightening point of view here, since this part of the composer's style cannot be affected by his tragic death.

Yet, with Vivier, an emerging style is precisely what we witness⁸. He says so himself about *Chants*, and the change is palpable between this work and those that were composed right before it. By repeating a few formulae in numerous works – in other words through similar recurring compositional choices from one work to another – Vivier *teaches himself* while *teaching us* his own style. This would appear to be just what he does at the beginning of each piece. I gave the example of the first bars of *Chants* and *Hymnen an die Nacht* that show evidence of such style teaching. I chose to discuss them because their beginning is filled with the D-formula. But had I only chosen to follow the path of a formula made by oscillating minor seconds, I could have given the same example with *Jesus erbarme dich*. By following the very simple D-formula, we witnessed a microcosm of the evolution of Vivier's emerging style. The formula consisting of one tone, held or repeated over a large number of beats, is transformed in the most subtle, meticulous ways. These transformations are heard, however, alongside primitive or simpler states of the formula. What Vivier teaches himself and us is that, in his musical language, the complexity of process of a melodic formula is not an ideal state, but merely a possible state. He wrote something that resonates with this idea, about his work *Chants*: "At first sight, the work

⁸ Vivier graduates from the Montreal Conservatory in 1970 and studies in Europe between 1971 and 1974. Since the works analyzed here were composed between 1973 and 1975, there are at the very beginning of his career as a composer.

may seem simple, but it is more precisely on the level of a subtle organization of music, of proportions, that the issue of a new sensibility is given"⁹ (1991, p. 56, translation mine). It seems that, just like in the case of sayings and aphorisms, the emerging style of Vivier between 1973 and 1975 resides in the simplicity of the formula.

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⁹ 'À première vue, l'œuvre peut paraître simple[,] mais justement c'est au niveau d'une organisation subtile de la musique, des proportions[,] que l'enjeu d'une nouvelle sensibilité se pose'.

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