

André Jolivet: The Poetics of Cello

Alfia NAKIPBEKOVA¹

Abstract: *My paper pertains to the works for cello by the French composer André Jolivet (1905-1974) – an important artistic figure of the twentieth century whose musical thinking represents the complexity of transformation within Western music and the culture of his time. Strongly influenced by creative ideas of the French pioneer of sound Edgard Varèse, he continued to develop his musical style and aesthetics throughout his life – as a composer, writer, critic, conductor, visual artist, musical theatre director and pedagogue. Jolivet’s fertile sources for artistic inspiration and spiritual quest extend from the philosophy of Bergson and Tarkovsky’s cinematography to the mythology of Africa, Oceania and ancient incantations and rituals. In this article I will explore Jolivet’s cello music – from the perspective of multi-interdisciplinary influences – focusing on *Suite en concert pour violoncello seul* (1965), as an example of his compositional style and as an expression of the artist’s awareness of the universal mystery and ‘magical’ voice embodied in the sound of the cello.*

Key-words: *André Jolivet, violoncello, musical magic, multi-disciplinary perspective*

1. Introduction

First part outlines Jolivet’s artistic, political and spiritual milieu that profoundly influenced and animated his work in the 1930s: Edgard Varèse’s ground-breaking exploration of sound, exoticism, magic and rituals of non-Western cultures, as well as his activities on the musical scene at the time of France’s cultural and political transformations.

The second part concerns Jolivet’s compositions for cello with focus on the *Suite en concert* (1965), discussing how the work’s interpretative space (the compositional concept, technique and sound) relates to the development of his compositional philosophy and spiritual intent.

¹ Leeds Conservatoire, United Kingdom, alfiabekova@gmail.com

2. Influences and compositional philosophy

La puissance du son m'apparaît presque tangible; c'est pourquoi nous devons rendre à la musique la place glorieuse qui lui fut assignée dès que le monde fut monde, et même avant que le monde fut
(de Callias 1938, 92)

This statement in the final paragraph of the book *Magie sonore* (1938) written by his colleague and friend Hélène de Callias (1884-1963), encapsulates André Jolivet's understanding of his artistic mission². Jolivet's enduring creative search in the course of his life reflects the momentous changes in the perception of reality and the aesthetics of his time, and a sense of urgency in experimentations with new modes of expression in literature, visual art and music. Equally, the influences of non-Western spirituality and art enriched the composer's artistic energies. Jolivet was a prolific writer and a well-known critic; in his articles, interviews and his correspondence with Varèse he articulates his thoughts on a variety of subjects in the domains of music and French society and culture³.

2.1. Jolivet and Varèse

Among the rich gamut of influences, it is Jolivet's teacher and mentor Edgard Varèse who was the most significant figure in his creative development. Jolivet affirms the magnitude of his mentor's artistry:

Varèse possède l'esprit de renouvellement, la volonté tenace, l'énergie indomptable et le courage indéfectible du pionnier et dans son art [...]. C'est une musique géométrique avec une forme architecturale basée directement sur la logique des vibrations sonores et l'équilibre des formes euclidiennes. Cependant elle est la musique de l'imagination et non de la machine⁴.

² Jolivet developed a friendship and spiritual affinity with the French composer, organist and musicologist Hélène de Callias, who he met in 1936. The two thinkers exchanged their ideas regarding non-European music and the notion of „incantation as a mode of musical expression”, symbolism of numbers and other esoteric subjects. See Kelly 2008, p. 176-177, and Rae 2019, p. 203-204.

³ See André Jolivet, *Écrits*, éd. Christine Jolivet-Erlh (Paris: Éditions Delatour France, 2006) in 2 volumes that includes the text *Ludwig van Beethoven*, which was also published as a book in 1955 (Paris: Richard Masse) and *Edgard Varèse, André Jolivet. Correspondance, 1931-1965* (Geneva: Contrechamps, 2003).

⁴ „Edgard Varèse par André Jolivet”, 15 janvier, 1945 (Jolivet 2006, Vol. II, 551). Asserting his teacher's importance in the development of the twentieth-century music, he proclaims: „Beethoven est un prototype. Depuis un siècle, il est, pour les foules, le prototype du musicien [...]. Guidé en cela pour la connaissance profonde que j'ai d'un musicien qui, lui aussi, est un prototype, le prototype des compositeurs du XX siècle: mon maître et ami Edgard Varèse” (*Le Monde* 22 April, 1979, *Écrits*, Vol. II, p. 642-643).

As a dedicated student of Varèse, Jolivet received a thorough mentoring in avant-garde compositional techniques and principles. Moreover, the influence of this pioneer of new musical expression profoundly affected Jolivet's spiritual development and understanding of the power of music to change human consciousness. In 1936 the composer writes: „These are not new times in which we are living – but times of renewal: revision and, especially, the reappropriation of values [...] and its goal is the restoration (rétablissement) of authentic relationships between man and art” (Lazzaro 2022, 116). His views on the necessity of renewal of values are founded on his faith in the capacity of musical composition and performance to radically change the listener's perception of existence.

The potency of Varèse's music in affecting the listener in this way can be discerned from the critical response of his contemporaries; for example, regarding the first performance of *Déserts* on 2 December 1954 in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, a musical critic Jean Roy, who, 'still in the state of shock brought on by the performance, comments: „The work roughs us up, in fact, annihilates us. We have no power over it: it is the work that takes possession of us” (Ouellette 1973, 188)⁵.

The critic Jean Vallerand responds to the performance of Varèse's *Poème électronique* as “an immense masterpiece” that addresses “man in his totality”, who is becoming “part of the life-force in which [...] he can allow himself to be swept up into the maelstrom of telluric energies... It is music that one experiences even on the non-conscious level of cellular life” (Ouellette 1973, 188). The efflux of these primordial forces and „telluric energies” conjured by Varèse, imbues Jolivet's musical language. The composer's partner Hilda Jolivet states: „He always said he was very sensitive to „l'atmosphère tellurique” – the fierceness of energy that emanates from the depths of the earth [...]. There were some places on the planet where he felt these „energies” more intensely than others” (Rae 2006, 17).

Furthermore, by introducing to his circle of artists and intellectual, Varèse connected the young composer to the vibrant community in Montparnasse; meeting the pioneers from diverse artistic disciplines such as Antonin Artaud, Le Corbusier, Ferdinand Léger, Alejo Carpentier, Heitor Villa-lobos, among other musicians, poets and writers, invigorated Jolivet's natural proclivity for a multi-disciplinary outlook in his own creative experiments.

⁵ The concert was attended by many artists and intellectuals, including André Malraux and the Dadaist poet and painter Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes.

2.2. Music and magic

*Magic is a mode of behavior that uses language, music, physical objects, and/or symbols, to explore existence and change its destination*⁶.

In Jolivet's singular compositional style, Varèsian intensity of sonorities that carries the intent and power to transform the listener's consciousness interplay with multiple layers of intuitive and intellectual forces. Jolivet acknowledges the influence of Varèse's personality and musical philosophy in shaping his artistic direction: „He helped me to discover one of music's most significant aspects; music as a magical and ritual expression of human society. I have learnt to attach great importance to the balance between man and the cosmos" (Cadieu and Jolivet 1961, 3).

In the 1930s the composer becomes involved in his personal research of philosophical and artistic concepts of „otherness" and musical expression of the „other" – non-Western spirituality, mysticism, magic rituals and incantations – as a path for accessing „reality" outside intellectual reason. In his compositions he turns to the expression of the „primitive" world of magic incantations, which he considers the actual sources of music (Potter 2024, 40-41)⁷. Jolivet's instrumental works convey the beauty, mystery and manifold connotations of magic in the intensity of their timbral and harmonic complexities, colours and structure. In his annotations to his copy of *Magic sonore* the composer elucidates his belief in rediscovering „the formulas of „sound magic" that are stimulated by three powerful principles: symbolism of numbers, repetitions, reference to the cosmos" (Rae 2019, 203)⁸.

Jolivet was born in Monmartre – his mother was a pianist and his father an accomplished painter. From the beginning of his creative life, his approach to composing was nourished by various fields of expressions – music, literature, theatre and visual art. Jolivet's travels throughout the world visiting the US, Mexico, Japan, Middle East, Western and Eastern Europe broadened his outlook on diverse cultures and ways of thinking. The composer's interest in Eastern culture and traditions

⁶ Charles Boilès, „Man, Magic and Musical Occasion" (VII) and Michael Taussig, „The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America", cited in Olsen 2013, XVI.

⁷ Helene de Callias cites Jules Combarieu (*La musique et la magie*, Paris, 1909) to emphasise the source of musical expression: „Le chant profane vient du chant religieux; le chant religieux vient du chant magique". „Les chants de magie contiennent, a l'état embryonnaire, tout ce qui, plus tard, constituera l'art proprement dit" (De Callias 1938, 56).

⁸ Through his music Jolivet strives to reach the heart of the mystical reality of life – as asserted by Dinorah B. Méndez: „in the most general sense, one might define mysticism as an effort to understand reality apart from the intellect, or reaching the limits of reason. In addition, mysticism implies a possible intimate direct union of the human spirit with the Fundamental Principle or Supernatural Being. This may be accomplished through diverse modes of communication" (Méndez 2011, 209).

extends beyond superficial attraction to the „exotic“ – in his conversation with Martine Cadieu he states: “Before having been there I understood the East intuitively. I studied its technical principles and particularly that lyricism which is so precious to me; for me, a true work of art must achieve the mythical” (Cadie and Jolivet 1961, 3).

In his essay “Music et exotisme” Jolivet highlights an important principle of his approach to the exotic, stating that “the true value of the exotic is not in works whose musical substance is merely decorated by elements of the superficially pittoresque but where composers have internalised the deeper power of the sources to which they have been drawn to become part of a larger collective consciousness” (Rae 2019, 112). Jolivet affirms that the transformation of music began with this understanding of the value and magical power of non-Western art and music and approaching this force from within, stating that “from the day when [...] composers felt the magical power of these oriental musics, they returned to the great ancient tradition in which magic and music were intimately connected” (Rae 2019, 112)⁹.

The composer’s encounter with Mexican culture had particularly strong impact on his musical philosophy and expression. Drawn to the numinousness of its immense deserts and ancient artefacts he develops profound ties with Mexico’s spiritual traditions¹⁰. Mawer analyses Jolivet’s multi-faceted exploration of the “other” that interconnects with the composer’s resolve „to forge a new French identity in part through the “foreign” and the “old”¹¹. Through this intent to merge non-Western spirituality and ancient traditions with French nineteenth-century philosophy (such as Henry Bergson’s concepts of temporality) and the aesthetics of the French Baroque music, Jolivet’s musical thought inhabits simultaneously the “temporal and geographical spaces”, epitomising the interminable dynamism of living cosmic processes (Kelly 2008, 188).

⁹ In Christer Lindberg’s assertion, „what has been labeled as primitive art belongs to a magical worldview in which objects, designs, songs, and even words possess a soul or spirit with protective power or the ability to cause harm to another person” (Lindberg 2016, 602).

¹⁰ Christine Jolivet-Erlieh recalls: „Mexico made a great impression on my father. I knew he was affected by it because he hardly spoke - he was in a state of total absorption. [...] He listened to the silence of the Mexican countryside, he listened to the earth itself - he could hear the presence of the past” (Rae 2006, 17).

¹¹ Mawer affirms that Jolivet’s music ‘still exists within French cultural tradition. As Keely has noted: „By drawing on musical elements from Africa, East Asia and Polynesia, Jolivet was continuing the tradition of French exoticism”. Mawer, „Jolivet’s Search for a New French Voice” (Kelly 2008, 187-188).

2.3. Jolivet's spiritual path

Another facet in Jolivet's creative development was his affinity with the philosophy and expression of Surrealism. The composer met Artaud in 1932 through Varèse and began exchanging ideas; as recounted by his daughter Christine Jolivet-Elrih, „Jolivet was fascinated by Artaud 's theories, especially those expressed in “Le Théâtre et son double”; the necessity of the cry, the therapy of the cry and the absolute necessity that sound should emanate from that which is most profound in an individual” (Rae 2006, 16). They shared a belief that art must be rooted in the domain of magic and esoteric rituals in order to raise the state of consciousness and catch a glimpse of the „secret of things”. In his lecture „Surrealism and Revolution” given in Mexico in 1936, Artaud asserted that “Surrealism opened a way to get back to the secret of things”. In another statement he declared: “The rationalist culture of Europe has failed, and I came to the land of Mexico in search of the foundations of a magical culture that could still spring forth from Indian soil” (Lepetit 2014, 35 and 168).

In the course of his spiritual search, Jolivet became deeply interested in the religious and philosophical concepts of the French Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1995), who held controversial views on the rational order of the cosmos, asserting that „its evolution centred around human development through the guidance of the divine hand in the form of God”. The most significant ideas of the „unity between spirit and matter, spirit being present in all things” and the „inanimate objects endowed with a soul”, have already been expressed in Jolivet's composition *Mana* (1935) inspired by the six objects left by Varèse on his departure to the United States in 1933, which he viewed as „endowed with special sacred meaning in the manner of the totems of ancient societies” (Rae 2019, 208)¹². This way of relating to the life and environment resonates with the Buddhist concept of Buddha-nature pervading both sentient and non-sentient beings as entities with multiple frequencies of vibration.

From the performer perspective, the instrument comes to life in the hands of a skillful musician and manifests its „soul” through the sound. The cello is commonly associated with human voice. The sound of “cry” – a sorrowful lament and an expression of heightened states of exaltation and the state of the ecstatic – permeates Jolivet's works for cello as if emerging from the depth of the unconsciousness, as “absolute necessity” in Artaud's theory of theatre. The composer communicates with the interpreter through the score as an external manifestation of his spiritual state, provoking the cellist to “perform” the magic ritual of revealing “the secret of things” by way of sound and physicality of playing.

¹² See Rae, „Sourcing Jolivet's compositional aesthetic”, p. 206-209 for the detailed exposition concerning this important aspect of Jolivet's compositional development.

Open to new impressions and knowledge, Jolivet researched incessantly on his travels. On his many tours to the Soviet Union he met various composers and writers, and visited arts galleries and cinemas. In 1966, on his tour to Moscow, Jolivet discovered the Soviet avant-garde cinematographer Andrei Tarkovsky's landmark film *Andrei Rublev*, which he watched several times (Rae 2019, 220), perhaps experiencing a deep affinity with its themes and the magic of the imagery realised by a juxtaposition of the base human condition of violence and cruelty with man's ecstatic surge towards the sky – the home of the spirit and artistic vision. The monk and icon painter Andrei Rublev wandering through the wild terrains of the fifteenth-century Russia is presented by Tarkovsky as "a metaphor for the Artist", his physical journey symbolising a spiritual search (Alexander 2007, 37 and 51). Tarkovsky conveys his understanding of the spiritual as the universal condition that permeates and unifies all spectra of various religions and rituals. As noted by Robert Bird, in the epic story of the icon painter, "there are few outward signs of piety; most provocatively, only the jester and the pagans make the sign of the cross, something Russian Orthodox believers do with a great frequency" (Bird 2004, 66).

Another significant aspect of Tarkovsky's method is his use of colour – the way he transforms the flow of the narrative shot in black and white into the images of the icons infused with vibrant colours – as a manifestation of the multi-dimensionality of the world and the invincible spirit of creative force. The belief in the power of art that can transcend the times and cultures resonates with Jolivet's personal search for meaning.

Jolivet was an accomplished painter who studied with the Cubist artist Georges Valmier, and from his early years made strong connections with the artistic world of his time. His own drawings for *Mana* and the vocal cycle (based on his own poems) *Les Trois Complaintes du Soldat* (1940) were published in the scores – the latter work "representing an intensely personal statement on the tragedy and suffering of war, and brings together three of the composer's self-declared creative pillars: poetry, music and painting" (Rae 2019, 125). From my perspective of a performer, the associative links between sound, word and the drawings, lines, shapes and colour activate interpretational ideas, musical expression and poetic ambience, animating an instrumental approach and physicality of performance.

2.4. La Jeune France

In 1936, together with the younger generation composers Olivier Messiaen, Daniel-Lesur and Yves Baudrier, Jolivet founded La Jeune France – a group of creative artists that aimed for a spiritual renewal of music¹³. In their Manifesto the composers declare:

Les conditions de la vie devenant de plus en plus dures, mécaniques et impersonnelles, la Musique se doit d'apporter sans répit à ceux qui l'aiment sa violence spirituelle et ses réactions généreuses [...] la Jeune France reprend le titre qu'illustra autrefois Berlioz and se propose la diffusion d'œuvres jeunes, aussi éloignées d'un poncif révolutionnaire. Les tendances de ce groupement seront diverses; elles s'uniront pour susciter et propager une musique vivante dans un même élan de sincérité, de générosité, de conscience artistique (Gut 1977, 16-17)¹⁴.

Serge Gut highlights Jolivet's and other La Jeune France founders' desire „to break with both the spirit of entertainment and the attention paid to the structural aspects of music at the expense of its effect on the listener” (Gut 1977, 111). As a member of this new group, Jolivet was also involved in administration and organising concerts – these activities brought him closer to the performers¹⁵.

Jolivet's deep interest in performers and performing and his knowledge of all groups of conventional classical instruments undoubtedly stimulated his compositional ideas. The composer expanded his knowledge of the instruments while working as the music director in Comédie-Française from 1945 to 1959. His

¹³Lazzaro asserts: „Jolivet was convinced that every era had its calls for renewal. Jeune France borrowed its name from one of these phases of renewal situated in the past, one whose protagonists were Berlioz, Hugo and Delacroix” (Lazzaro 2022, 121).

¹⁴The political context and ties between Jeune France and non-conformism is analysed by Jane Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (Fulcher 2005, 285-310).

¹⁵His experience was gained through his previous involvement in organising the series of chamber concerts for La Spirale as the platform's founding member (in 1935-1937). In 1937, after the victory on the Front Populaire in the general election, Jolivet became an active supporter of musicians' rights – their security when professionally engaged and the care for those who were unemployed, „joining a critic and record producer Serge Moreux in arguing for musicians to be treated in the same way as other workers”. Jolivet, the composer and activist declares: „It takes ten or twelve years of study to train a competent instrumentalist. How would you reclassify them if they are prevented from practising their profession?”. In 1964 he organised a demonstration protesting against dismantling regional radio orchestras (Rae xxxvi), and in 1968, as a President of the performers' union, Jolivet led a trade-union delegation to André Malraux „to plead the cause of performing artists and their right to strike”. Jean-Claire Vançon, „Jolivet and the Function of Performance” (Rae 2019, 290).

twelve concertos for a full range of instruments, including Ondes Martenot¹⁶, exemplify his compositional mastery and a deep understanding of the expressive capacities of strings, woodwinds, brass, piano and percussion.

2.5. Incantatory style and views on performance

It is not by the ear that we should grab the listener, but by the guts
(Lazzaro 2022, 120)

Jolivet's conceived music as a powerful means to revive the human spirit and connect humanity with cosmic life, proclaiming a „seemingly naive” desire to affect the listeners through the incantatory mode of expression. He believed that this mode of expression will „grab” them by the power of sound so they are able to rise above their daily reality and move closer to a „state of spiritual communion with the cosmos” (Lazzaro 2022, 120). In his analysis of the *style incantatoire*, Julian Anderson asserts the difficulty in defining this style suggesting that the development of this type of music is linked to an interest in non-European cultures, which, for the composers of the time (including Jolivet and Messiaen), was aroused by exotic sounds from the regions of Asia and Africa presented at the Exposition Coloniale, 1931, held in Paris. The melody, rhythm, harmony and textures are among the aspects that define the *style incantatoire*. These elements enrich musical expression that was aimed towards the idea of spiritual renewal by stylistic devices such as „avoidance of regular phrase structures”, „obsessive” repetitions of motifs and rhythmical figures, a „preference for quasi-improvisatory/ambiguous forms” and „use of figurations, rhythms, tunings and timbres evoking distant, even prehistoric cultures”¹⁷.

The sound of the authentic non-Western instruments presented at the Exhibition also made a strong impression on the composers who were looking for new possibilities of sound and expression. Jolivet was deeply curious about the „primitive” instruments, their „soul” and ritualistic function believing that the raw quality of their sound expresses the mystical bond with the life-giving energies of the environment. Among these instruments, flutes, with their great expressive capacity, are traditionally considered magical tools that possess the power to transform

¹⁶ Invented in 1928, Ondes Martenot has attracted many composers of the time for its „other-worldly” sound – among them are such major musicians as Varèse, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Jacques Ibert. Olivier Messiaen used Ondes Martenot in some of his landmark compositions: *La Fête des belles eaux* (1937), *Trois petites liturgies de la Présence divine* (1943-44), *Turangalila symphony* (1946-48).

¹⁷ See Julian Anderson, „Jolivet and the *style incantatoire*. Aspects of a hybrid tradition”, in Rae 2019, p. 15-40.

consciousness by charming the listener with the beauty of their sound¹⁸. The cello attracted Jolivet from his youth – as a voice in an ensemble and a solo instrument that possesses the universally loved sound with its power to enchant the listeners. In his late period he composed his three important works for cello, which, to a large extent were inspired by his meeting with the acclaimed interpreter and instrumental virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich (1927-2007).

Jolivet encapsulates his views on the subject of composition and performance of the instrumental solo works in his comments on *Cinq églogues* (1967) for solo viola:

„Une œuvre pour un instrument seul est une ascèse.

Pour celui qui l'écrit:

Qui se doit de pénétrer la nature profonde de l'instrument, de dégager ses possibilités expressives les plus caractéristiques et d'en maîtriser la technique, afin de mettre en évidence l'ensemble de ses qualités.

Pour celui qui l'interprète:

Qui doit, par son jeu et sa musicalité, magnifier les vertus de son instrument et, seul avec lui et partant de lui, donner l'impression qu'il recrée la Musique de la façon la plus complète, la plus intense – et la plus naturelle.

L'œuvre ainsi transmise à l'auditoire doit donner à celui-ci le sentiment qu'elle jaillit pour lui – et grâce à lui” (Jolivet 2006, vol II, 532)¹⁹.

These comments reaffirm Jolivet's approach to writing for the string instruments family in a way that communicates their „profound nature” and their expressive power to the full. In contrast to some composers of the time who were attracted to the cello as a powerful medium for their new compositional ideas expanding these possibilities beyond traditional sonorities and techniques – such as his younger contemporary Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001), for example – Jolivet remained firmly

¹⁸This „magic” is produced by converting „inaudible breath into audible sound which becomes the sonic manifestation of breath itself”. The high-pitched tones – „whistles” – that are often associated with the birds' cries and as such, „function as vehicles for theurgy or supernatural communication” (Olsen 2013, 22-23). Jolivet employed the flute for developing his compositional ideas influenced by the instrument's „magical” ambience; among the important pieces are his earlier chamber work *Chant de Linos* (1944) and *Cinq incantations*, for solo flute (1936), and the two Concertos (1949 and 1965).

¹⁹In her Chapter „Jolivet and the function of performance”, Vançon highlights Jolivet's attitude to the composer-performer relationship articulated in his writings, stating that the performer must connect to the work by feeling „a sense of kinship and even pleasure [...] in order to present the most faithful, engaged and musical interpretation”. Jolivet also developed the notion of a collaborative relationship between the performer and composer (Rae 2019, 292-293). Later in the twentieth century and particularly, at present, this area became an important subject of academic study and performance practice.

within the parameters of the established „identity” of the cello²⁰. Furthermore, he intensified this identity by infusing the instrument’s recognisable sound with the singular power of his musical thinking.

In his concertos for varied instruments he challenges the soloists to employ their traditional virtuosity to the full, appropriate to the classical genre of a concerto. These works composed in the period of the 1960s-1970s, embody the distinct characteristics of the composer’s style: the exuberant „magic” of sonorities, idiomatic harmonic language, incantatory phrasing and luminosity of textures. In live performance, the physical gestures of a soloist-virtuoso add another dimension to the power of impact in the listener’s experience.

3. Compositions for Cello

3.1. Overview

Jolivet’s compositions for cello convey his affinity with the instrument and a comprehensive knowledge of its technical and expressive potential²¹. In his late period, he directed much of his creative energies to writing for strings; the compositions include the Violin Concerto, two Cello concertos, Cello Suite, *Cinq églogues* for viola, *Suite rhapsodique* for violin, and several works for string ensembles²².

²⁰With regard to the composer’s ability and desire to embrace and integrate the seemingly opposing modes of expressions, Christine Jolivet-Erich comments: „This is what fascinates me in Jolivet’s music; there’s a kind of duality between [a mode of] expression which one might call avant-garde and another more traditional, more conformist [mode of] expression”. He had both, as one might say in French, „le Diable et le bon Dieu”! He really had an absolute duality” (Rae 2006, 18).

²¹The composer recounts his cello study in his youth: „A quinze ans, j’entrepris de mettre sur pied un ballet pour notre théâtre d’appartement; j’en écrivis la musique. Cela, m’encouragea à travailler le violoncelle et à faire partie de la chorale les Ménétriers de Clignancourt [...]. On improvisait sur un thème ou on chantait du Bach, du Victoria, du Palestrina” (Jolivet 2006, vol I, 256). Some details in Jolivet’s biography point to his interest in mastering cello: „Il entre à l’École supérieure Colbert où son oncle enseigne les mathématiques. Entre temps il avait abandonné le piano – auquel je n’avais jamais mordu – et s’achetant un violoncelle sur ses économies, étudie cet instrument qu’il travaillera plus tard avec Louis Feuillard” (Jolivet 2006, vol I, 33).

²²The chamber works that involve cello include: *Suite* pour trio à cordes (1935) provenant du Trio à cordes de 1930, *Pastorales de Noël* (1943) pour flûte (ou violon), basson (ou alto, ou violoncelle) et harpe, *Quatuor à cordes* (1934), *Chant de Linos* (1944) pour flûte, violon, alto, violoncelle et harpe, *Petite Suite* (1947) pour 2 violons, alto, violoncelle, contrebasse, piano et batterie (ad libitum), *Douze Inventions* pour douze instruments (1966) pour flûte, hautbois, clarinette, basson, cor en fa, trompette, trombone, 1er violon, 2e violon, alto, violoncelle, contrebasse, *La Flèche du temps* for 12 solo strings (1973), *La Flèche du temps* for 12 solo strings, *Yin-Yang* for 11 solo strings), *Adagio pour cordes* (1960), *Symphonie pour cordes*, *La Flèche du temps* for 12 solo strings (1973), *Yin-Yang* for 11 solo strings (1973).

Jolivet's compositions for cello in this period reflects the status of the instrument on the concert scene in the second half of the twentieth century, when the cello blossomed into one of the most popular and powerful medium with expanded expressive capacity attracting major composers in the 1960s and 1970s²³. A number of significant compositions for cello were commissioned by the one of the most important cellist of the second half of the twentieth century, Mstislav Rostropovich, or dedicated to him. It is evident that the Second Cello Concerto (1966) and the Solo Suite were composed for the particular performing style of the one of the most influential cellist of the time. The level of technical, expressive and intellectual complexity of the Second Concerto, the expansiveness of the work's soundscape and communicative power match Rostropovich's artistic presence and technical finesse.

Since their meeting in Paris in February 1956, the artists developed a close personal and creative relationship meeting on many occasions on Jolivet's visits to the USSR²⁴. Rostropovich premiered the Suite and the Second Concerto in 1966. The soloist of the First Cello Concerto (that was originally scheduled to be performed in November 1962 by Rostropovich) was the eminent French interpreter André Navarra (1911-1988), who subsequently recorded both the Suite and Concerto. Navarra's lyrical interpretation illuminates mysterious dimension of Jolivet's music – the performer's idiosyncratic tone and phrasing entices the listener into a darker, magical sound world of the liminal spaces within the materiality of the tonal depth and ethereal reverberations of the sound. Navarra's instrumental approach and poetic style of phrasing combined with emotional subtlety and elegant precision might be characterised as the exemplar of "Frenchness" – a particular nuanced quality of style and artistry in interpreting and communicating compositional ideas, images and sound. Navarra's dark, sensual, „earthy" tone „sings" the song of mystery

²³The compositions for the cello of that period comprise a broad variety of styles and approaches – from traditional to avant-garde and experimental. The abundant „crop" of the compositions for cello include: György Ligeti, Cello Concerto (1966); Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Concerto for Cello and Orchestra *en forme de pas de trois* (1966); *Intercomunicazione* for cello and piano (1967) and *Vier kurze Studien* for solo cello (1970); Henri Dutilleux, *Tout un monde lointain...*(1970); Witold Lutoslawski, Cello Concerto (1970); Krzysztof Penderecki, Sonata for Cello and Orchestra (1964) and Cello Concerto No.1 (1972); Edison Denisov, Cello Concerto (1972); Sofia Gubaidulina, *Detto II* for cello and ensemble (1972); Benjamin Britten, Cello Symphony (1963) and three Solo Cello Suites (1964, 1967 and 1972); Dmitry Shostakovich, Concerto No. 2 (1966). The Soviet-Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978), who was an accomplished cellist himself, wrote in a traditional contemporary style employing the established cello technique in his *Concerto-Rhapsody* for cello and orchestra (1963) and *Sonata-Fantasia* for unaccompanied cello (1974).

²⁴ For the details of their collaboration and other important material regarding the composer relationship with the Soviet cultural figures on his visits to the country between 1954 and 1974, and his strong link to the Russian musical and spiritual traditions, see Christine Jolivet-Elrich, „Jolivet and the USSR", in Rae 2019, 217-244.

emerging form within the combined sonorities of the cello and orchestra, while Rostropovich's intellectual grasp of the global score in the Second Concerto – clarity of form enlivened by the rich tonal permutations and a strong sense of musical direction within the composition – take the listener into the broader spheres of perceiving the totality of the work from the „eagle's eye" perspective.

3.2. "Suite en concert" – the interpretative space

In my research on the subject of interpretative space, I depict this term as a domain of dynamic interplay of multifarious elements in performance practice: awareness of the historical context of the work, „physicality of playing, instrumental technique, intellectual rigour, imagination and intuitive insight" (Nakipbekova 2020, 13).

3.2.1. Jolivet, Xenakis and Debussy

For the performer, the context of the work – its relation to the musical and conceptual environment – is central to shaping a convincing interpretation. This environment comprises two planes: horizontal (music of the same period), and vertical (historical perspective and developing practices). In this regard, comparing the radically different compositional concepts, expressive styles and instrumental techniques will benefit the cellist on her journey to mastering complex works by integrating disparate modes of thinking and playing.

For example, juxtaposing the sonic world and instrumental approach in Jolivet's *Suite* and *Nomos alpha* for solo cello by the Greek-French avant-garde composer and architect Iannis Xenakis (composed in the same year, 1965), manifests the process of „cross-pollination" within the developmental stages of the cello's singularity. As a radically new writing for cello, the piece occupies a distinct place among the masterpieces of the twenty-century cello repertoire. Dedicated to the German cellist, a pioneer of new music Siegfried Palm (1927-2005), it was premiered in May 1966 and recorded soon after.

The work's mathematical concepts are embodied in the two-leveled structure comprising the contrasting states of stasis (or relatively free six sections that become „pivots of the composition as a whole") and are activity expressed through the flux of kaleidoscopic patterns (Matossian 2005, 236)²⁵. *Nomos alpha* plays with fragmentation and (re) configurations through the repetitions and variations of these abstract patterns.

²⁵ For a detailed analysis of the concept and structure of *Nomos alpha*, see Chapter Nine, „Symmetry under Cover" (Matossian 2005, 228-243).

While the extreme dynamic and timbral fluctuations in Xenakis's work could be subjectively interpreted in terms of changing perspective in space that extends from the „pointed“ sound event in a close space towards and into the strata of cosmic infinitude, the process of shaping the sound in Jolivet's Suite evoke associations with the domain of the visual – the “violent” clusters of colours in their interplay and configurations on the canvas of an abstract painting. Working on Xenakis's compositions for cello, I discovered new levels of intensity/release in the physicality of playing and the pathways to intuitive understanding of the mycelial network of events within the strict musical parameters.

In my view as a performer, interpretation is formed by the manner the interpreter connects or disjoins the sound events. The way of shaping patterns within the structure and the particularity of the individual tone reveal the inner intent – a personal relationship with the singular world of the composition, its spirit, and the physical instrument as an expressive medium. In the process of researching and working on Jolivet's Concertos and Solo Suite, the new knowledge nourished and expanded the interpretative space, enriching associate inter-disciplinary links and technical framework.

The *Suite* consists of five movements: I. Improvisation II. Ballade III. Aria IV. Serenade, V. Sonata. In the first three movements, the composer provides the tempi, but in two movements the character is also indicated – *Fantastique et désinvolte* (Serenade) and *Véhément* (Sonata). Although the piece is not programmatic, the music “speaks” as if unfolding a story through the fluctuating patterns that return in a circular motion – these incantatory motifs link all movements contrasting in their moods and ambience. The „story“ develops from the first four bars played *pp* and reaching the *E-flat* (a minor 10th above middle *c*) in an upward sweep as if posing a question, setting the mystical atmosphere of the opening movement. The title indicates improvisatory exploration (similar to the function of a Prelude in a Baroque suite), based on a particular set of compositional devices comprising the incantatory motifs and recurring rhythmical figures. The frequent changes of meter, slight tempo fluctuations and pause indicated in the score, import a sense of natural *rubato* appropriate for the improvisatory mode. In Sonata (the final movement with an abstract title), the returning lyrical motifs and “incantations” are interrupted by violent bursts of the „obsessive“ toccata-like patterns. The final „toccata“ section concludes the movement and the entire *Suite*, thus completing the cycles of the repetitions and variations of the shapes, colours and abstract figurations in Jolivet's “Cubist” score.

Jolivet had a strong sense of belonging to his national heritage and was „proud to be French“. As commented by Mawer (2008, 174), his most frequent source of reference is, unsurprisingly, Debussy. In the *Suite*, I sense this musical presence that

is gently „breathing” through Jolivet’s own musical poetics. Some features in *Improvisation*, for example, the first incantatory motif, are subjectively associated with the *arpeggiato* chord at the beginning of *Prologue*, the First Movement of Debussy Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915). *Improvisation* continues with a melodic line in *lamentoso* mode developing through the repeated incantatory figures towards the short dramatic cadenza that ends abruptly with the fifth interval in the double harmonics A and E (played *ppp morendo*), reminiscent of the ending of Debussy’s *Prologue*. The Suite final movement’s concluding chord contains the fourth interval E and A *ff* (as an inverted interval with contrasting dynamics and expression).

The ambience of Serenade (The Suite’s Fourth Movement) also echoes Debussy’s Serenade (the Second Movement of his Cello Sonata) in its ironic mood and kaleidoscopic changes of the „scenes”. Both composers employ an array of techniques – *pizzicato*, *glissandi*, *saltando*, trills – combined with dynamic fluctuations. Jolivet’s Serenade, however, imparts a darker, violently fragmented scene by the ferocious „whips” of sudden *pizzicato* chords and „wailing” *glissandi* in trills sliding in downward motion.

The fast pulse in successions of extreme registers – the large intervallic „leaps” from the low to the very high (although within the traditional instrumental range) – is one of the recognisable feature in Jolivet’s works for cello. The surging upwards melodic line, for example, at the beginning of the Second Cello Concerto and in *Improvisation* (from bar 5) as an expression of pulsating energy in the mystical realm between Heaven and Earth, create a sense of exaltation. This expressive device expresses the composer’s intent of communion with the world of universal spirit through his music – the notion, which he repeatedly elucidates in his writings. As asserted by Mawer, Jolivet was deeply interested in „the nature of a rapport that can be established by the artwork between „Earth and Heaven”, „Visible and Invisible” and its power to link these two fundamental domains”²⁶.

3.2.2. Elements of technique

The technical dimension of the Suite involves large intervallic shifts, use of *glissando*, trills, a broad range of dynamics – that, at times, are extreme in their rate of changing – and tonal colours. For the large intervallic shifts characteristic for this piece (as well as for both concertos), which are mostly dissonant intervals of sevenths and ninths, the choice of timing and fingerings – as a technical issue and as an expressive device

²⁶ This notion resonates with the ideas of the philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (who himself was influenced by Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* (1907), whose writings deeply influenced the composer. Mawer, „Jolivet’s Search for a New French Voice. Spiritual “Otherness” in Mana (1935)” (Kelly 2008, 176).

– must be carefully judged. Linked to this element of the score is Jolivet's important expressive device *glissando*. The *glissandi* differ in their textures, speeds, dynamic levels, densities and directions (downwards and upwards).

As an example, in *Improvisation*, three downward *glissandi* are short, marked *p* or *pp*; in *Ballade* there are six downward slides, with two *glissandi* as fast violent outbursts. Most downward *glissandi* in *Improvisation* and, particularly, in *Ballade* are indicated *f* or *ff* – as if the sound is drawn violently towards the ground by the earth's energy. From a technical perspective, it is important to differentiate between *glissandi* as part of the structure and texture and positions changes (shifting), which are either expressive (slides) or silent, played on the same string.

In the course of the twentieth century, the use of *glissando* as a conceptual device has been rigorously explored by a number of prominent composers. The pieces from *Studies for Playing Contemporary Music* compiled by Siegfried Palm and other works for cello, illustrate this point from various angles²⁷. The string instruments provide a vast range of timbral possibilities. Following indications of dynamics provide an opportunity to reveal the variety of densities and sonorities of the open strings that add a resonant effect and richness to the textures and linear patterns; in my performance I aim to activate the open strings by giving a strong impulse by the bow in the passages and chordal figures, so they reverberate freely creating „halos“ of tonal vibrations. Another facet in performing this movement is awareness of the timbres: for example, in *Improvisation* (Tempo I, b. 26-29), I associate the melodic line with the sound of Ondes Martenot.

3.2.3. Summary of approaches to the interpretative space

1. Connections between the pitches within phrases and between phrases.

²⁷The German cellist Siegfried Palm (1927-2005) was a prominent performer of the 20th - century music. He is the editor a volume of cello pieces by the twelve composers (written in the 1960s-1970s), for the pedagogical purpose of teaching contemporary extended techniques. For example, Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Four Short Studies*, no. 4 explores the relation between the pitches and the spaces on the fingerboard. In the Introduction to the piece, Palm comments: „Perform the large intervallic skip if possible without *glissando* (but also without the rest, absolutely legato), [...] the distances between the notes which are not connected by a slur signify a rest whose duration is suggested by the distance between the notes“. This is a suggestive idea of the space embodied in the fingerboard – the distant and close points within the audial and abstract spaces and their relations (Palm 1985). Other example of the *glissando*-shift expressive techniques is illustrated in Sofia Gubaidulina's (b. 1931) *Prelude 9 Pizzicato-Arco* from *Ten Preludes* for solo cello (1974) and Isang Yun's (1917-1995) *Studie aus Glissées* (1970), who integrated the traditional expressive elements from the Korean musical tradition with the Western-style avant-garde techniques.

The character of these connections: linked by sliding or disjointed, variations in timbres – a choice of fingerings – in one position using particular strings for a particular colouring (horizontal) or using shifts of various length on one string (vertical); this consideration is also a part of interpretation as a dimension of physicality in performance, as an embodiment of sound on aural and visual planes. Using imaginative fingerings – example on one string (*glissando* in *Improvisation* on the open C-string).

In my playing, my attention is directed towards „in-between spaces”, as both a technical issue (connecting the notes, position changes and *portamenti*) and as an expressive tool in shaping musical shapes (a sense of temporality in the „fluid” architecture of performance (Nakipbekova 2020, 21).

2. Awareness of the recurring motifs, which is expressed by a subtle enhancement of the moment and their place within the micro- and macro- structures.
3. Tonal palette: a choice of the expressive devices such as *vibrato* (the variety of shades between fast *vibrato* and *senza vibrato*), the bow placements – there are some moments of *sul ponticello*, and in addition, to this particular instruction from the composer, the sound can be enriched by variations of fuller and a light transparent tone.
4. Exploring extra-musical associations: the composer’s interest in plastic arts, Eastern spirituality and imagery, and experimentations with sound as an agent of meaning.

Jolivet grew up in the vibrant atmosphere of 1920s Paris absorbing new impressions and experimentations of the *époque*. Being an accomplished artist himself it was natural that his music is nourished by visual art. Although indirectly, this dimension is felt in the *Suite*, in the form of timbral contrasts, tonal densities and certain textures that create impression of „splashes” of colour.

5. Additionally, a valid interpretation may evolve naturally from a singular experience of the totality of a pure aesthetic and sensual enjoyment of playing cello as an authentic manifestation of the integral relationship with the sound – the performer’s technical finesse and her refined musical instincts.

4. Conclusion

Jolivet had an extensive knowledge and deep affinity with various groups of instruments – “his choice of instrumentation in many cases reflects the desire to return to the source of primitive music. He often wrote for a small number of

instruments and gave special prominence in his orchestration to the flute and to drums, at once the most basic and sacred of primitive instruments" (Martin and McNerney 1984, 495).

The cello, as an instrument developed within Western art music tradition into a refined and powerful expressive media, has stimulated imagination of the composers for over three centuries. Traditionally, the sound of cello carries association with human voice; it is also the one of the most versatile instruments that has a capacity to express a vast range of emotions and intellectual concepts through an array of timbres, textures, dynamic contrasts, and an almost athletic physicality. Beyond the technical virtuosity and a potential for emotional power, Jolivet's writing for cello manifests intention to reveal the state of completeness of being and expressive force to link the mythical realms of Earth and Heaven by employing the possibilities of the instrument's extreme registers. In order to make the performance a "captivating and transformative spiritual experience" (Lazzaro 2022, 111), however, the interpreter must rise to the spiritual challenge of Jolivet's "magical" world.

Messiaen described Jolivet's music as „ecstatic lyricism”, asserting the composer's sense of sacred: "Sacred in incantatory repetitions, sacred in his explorations of time and space in sound"²⁸. In his works for cello, this kind of ecstatic lyricism unfolds in time evoking an impression of a painting appearing on the surface of the multihued sound „canvas”.

In Jolivet's compositional philosophy, musical performance must strive to affect and totally engage the listener with the „sacred” explorations of the cosmos – this notion draws parallels with Tarkovsky's artistic objective to raise the spiritual state of the viewer; in Nigel D'Sa's words, „while Andrei Rublev relates an individual's experience of religious epiphany, it simultaneously aspires to induce in the viewer a likewise experience, or at least an apprehension of it" (D'Sa 1999, 2).

The cello is the instrument closely related to the shape and resonance of the human body and soul, the humanness – the emotional depth and sensual rapture, the state of vulnerability and the conflicting impulses within the heart, where the violent forces are juxtaposed with tenderness. Jolivet created a singular universe of these sacred sonorities-states to reveal the poetics of the cello – a „magical” object and a potent tool from the rich resources of his immense artistry.

²⁸Cited in Rae 2019, p. 195.

5. References

- Alexander, Lily. 2007. "Storytelling in Time and Space: Studies in the Chronotope and Narrative Logic on Screen". *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37 (1): 27–64.
- Bird, Robert. 2004. *Andrei Rublev*. London: BFI.
- Cadiou, Martine and Jolivet, André. 1961. „A Conversation with André Jolivet". *Tempo* 59:2–4.
- de Callias, Hélène. 1938. *Magie sonore*. Paris: Librairie Véga.
- D'Sa, Nigel S. 1999. "Andrei Rublev: Religious Epiphany in Art". *Journal of Religion & Film* 3(2). Article 4.
- Fulcher, Jane. 2005. *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940*. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gut, Serge. 1977. *La Jeune France*. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Jolivet, André. 2006. *Écrits*. Christine Jolivet-Erlih (ed). Vols. I and II. Paris: Éditions Delatour France.
- Kelly, Barbara L. (ed.). 2008. *French Music, Culture and National Identity, 1870–1939*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Lazzaro, Federico. 2022. "Grab the Listener by the Guts". *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 53 (1): 109–138.
- Lepetit, Patrick. 2014. *The Esoteric Secrets of Surrealism: Origins, Magic and Secret Societies*. (Jon E. Graham trans). Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions.
- Lindberg, Christer. 2016. „Magical Art – Art as Magic". *Anthropos, Bd. 111, H. 2*: 601-607.
- Martin, John and Kathleen McNerney. 1984. "Carpentier and Jolivet: Magic Music in Los pasos perdidos". *Hispanic Review* 52 (4): 491–498.
- Matossian, Nouritza. 2005. *Xenakis*. Lefkosia: Moufflon Publication.
- Méndez, Dinorah B. 2011. "Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality". *Transformation* 28 (3): 206-223.
- Nakipbekova, Alfia. 2020. "Performing Contemporary Cello Music: Defining the Interpretative Space". PhD Dissertation, University of Leeds. White Rose, eTheses. Online, <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/28256/>.
- Olsen, Dale A. 2013. *World Flutelore: Folktales, Myths, and Other Stories of Magical Flute Power*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Ouellette, Fernand. 1973. *Edgard Varèse*. Coltman D. (trans). London: Calder & Boyars.

-
- Potter, Caroline. 2024. *Pierre Boulez. Organised Delirium*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
- Rae, Caroline. (ed.). 2019. *André Jolivet: Music, Art and Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rae, Caroline. 2006. "Jolivet on Jolivet: An Interview with the Composer's Daughter". *The Musical Times* 147 (1894).
- Palm, Siegfried. 1985. *Pro Musica Nova, Studies for Playing Contemporary Music for Violoncello*. Wiesbaden: Edition Breitkopf 8334.