

If we omitted the top note from this scale, we'd have the alternating sixth and six-four chords we've already practiced. You can sound like Messiaen already by making an accompaniment of this in the left hand, and putting your octatonicized hymn tune in the right. Make life easy by playing a pedal point in the feet, or a simple ostinato figure.

But what about that F# major chord at the beginning of Messiaen's third measure? How striking, that juxtaposition of dissonance and consonance. What traditional chords are available to us in the scale above? C, E-flat, F#, and A, all in major and minor modes. We see them spelled out in various inversions just by omitting the top note of Messiaen's pattern.

When you think of Messiaen, what melodies come to mind? I would bet that the essence of whatever melody just popped into your head is characterized by its rhythm at least as much as its pitches. I think of the spunky *Les Bergers*, from *La Nativité*:



or the dreamy *Alléluias sereins* from *l'Ascension*:



You're not limited to these, of course. Practice creating octatonic melodies incorporating whatever rhythms occur to you when you think of Messiaen. Theft is good.

We've now identified a few Messiaenic characteristics to play with: a specific octatonic chord progression, some major triads for harmonic relief, and a plethora of rhythms from which to choose. Your piece might start something like this:



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