

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

Tuesday, October 31, 2017, at 7:30 pm

Pre-concert talk with Steven Osborne and Steven Mackey at 6:15 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Gazing at the Divine

Steven Osborne, *Piano*

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus
(“Twenty Contemplations of the Child Jesus”)

This program is approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes long and will be performed without intermission.

Please join the artist for a White Light Lounge following the performance.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano
Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

WhiteLightFestival.org

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Artist Catering provided by Zabar's and Zabars.com

UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Wednesday–Thursday, November 1–2, at 7:30 pm in the Rose Theater

Stabat mater (New York premiere)

Jessica Lang Dance

Jessica Lang, director and choreographer
Orchestra of St. Luke's

Speranza Scappucci, conductor

Andriana Chuchman, soprano

Anthony Roth Costanzo, countertenor

MOZART: Divertimento in F major

PERGOLESI: Stabat mater

November 1–11

The Psalms Experience (U.S. premiere)

Choir of Trinity Wall Street

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Tallis Scholars

Norwegian Soloists' Choir

150 psalms. 150 composers. 4 choirs. 12 concerts.

Visit PsalmsExperience.org for full concert schedule.

Thursday, November 9 at 7:30 pm at Church of the Ascension

Darkness and Light (U.S. premiere)

Bernard Foccroulle, organ

Lynette Wallworth, video

Works by BACH, BUXTEHUDE, MESSIAEN, GRIGNY, ALAIN, TOSHIO HOSOKAWA, BERNARD FOCCROULLE, and SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit WhiteLightFestival.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

Visit WhiteLightFestival.org for full festival listings.

Join the conversation: [#WhiteLightFestival](https://twitter.com/WhiteLightFestival)

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

MESSIAEN *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus (1944)*

- I. **Regard du Père** ("Contemplation of the Father")
Extrêmement lent–mystérieux, avec amour
- II. **Regard de l'étoile** ("Contemplation of the star")
Modéré
- III. **L'échange** ("The exchange")
Bien modéré
- IV. **Regard de la Vierge** ("Contemplation of the Blessed Virgin")
Bien modéré
- V. **Regard du Fils sur le Fils** ("Contemplation of the Son on the Son")
Très lent
- VI. **Par Lui tout a été fait** ("Through Him everything was made")
Modéré, presque vif
- VII. **Regard de la Croix** ("Contemplation of the Cross")
Bien modéré
- VIII. **Regard des hauteurs** ("Contemplation of the heights")
Vif
- IX. **Regard du temps** ("Contemplation of time")
Modéré
- X. **Regard de l'Esprit de joie** ("Contemplation of the Spirit of joy")
Presque vif
- XI. **Première communion de la Vierge** ("First communion of the Blessed Virgin")
Très lent
- XII. **La parole toute puissante** ("The all-powerful Word")
Un peu vif
- XIII. **Noël** ("Christmas")
Très vif, joyeux
- XIV. **Regard des Anges** ("Contemplation of the Angels")
Très vif
- XV. **La baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus** ("The kiss of the Child Jesus")
Très lent, calme
- XVI. **Regard des prophètes, des bergers et des Mages** ("Contemplation of the prophets, the shepherds, and the Magi")
Modéré
- XVII. **Regard du silence** ("Contemplation of silence")
Très modéré
- XVIII. **Regard de l'Onction terrible** ("Contemplation of the awesome anointing")
Modéré
- XIX. **Je dors, mais mon coeur veille** ("I sleep, but my heart waketh")
Lent
- XX. **Regard de l'Eglise d'amour** ("Contemplation of the Church of love")
Presque vif

Snapshot

By Paul Schiavo

The music of Olivier Messiaen is unlike that of any composer of the last century or, for that matter, of any century. Blending non-Western rhythms with unusual scales and harmonies, it sounds at once ancient and modern, intimate and remote, ecstatic and serene. It expresses a visionary frame of mind, a mind in thrall to the “attraction of the marvelous,” as the composer described it. Messiaen’s concerns were almost always with the suprahuman. In a series of astonishing compositions created over the course of a long career, Messiaen gave us visions of the stupendous, the miraculous, the transcendent. *Quartet for the End of Time*, *Colors of the Celestial City*, *From the Canyons to the Stars*—merely the titles of his works indicate the rarified bent of his imagination and the sense of awe that engendered his music.

That sense of awe was inspired by the cosmos, by the most vast and violent manifestations of nature, and by the songs of birds,

which Messiaen studied assiduously and often incorporated in his music. Myth and numerology also fired his imagination. But above all, the composer’s susceptibility to the “attraction of the marvelous” accorded with his deeply held religious beliefs. Just as his music departed radically from both tradition and contemporary practice, Messiaen interpreted the teachings of the Catholic church in a highly individual manner. His faith combined the miraculous and mystical elements of Catholicism with his own cosmic visions, numerologic superstition, and ornithological passion.

Messiaen’s music conveys his religious beliefs far better than any written description could hope to do. *Vingt regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus* (“Twenty Contemplations of the Child Jesus”), composed of 20 contrasting pieces and spanning some two hours in performance, is one of the most expansive testaments of Messiaen’s faith and a monument of 20th-century piano music.

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Notes on the Program

By Paul Schiavo

Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus (1944)

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

*Born December 10, 1908, in Avignon,
France*

Died April 28, 1992, in Paris

Approximate length: 2 hours and 10 minutes

Olivier Messiaen was one of the most important musicians of the 20th century, the creator of an exceptionally original body of work and an important influence on several generations of colleagues. Yet his art, more than that of any composer of comparable stature, stands outside the main currents of development that shaped the music of his time. Embracing none of the modernist styles or movements in vogue during his lifetime, Messiaen consistently followed his own sensibilities and developed a unique musical idiom.

That idiom incorporates bird calls, synthetic scales of the composer's own invention, rhythms derived from ancient Greek and Hindu treatises, and a strongly felt affinity between sound and color. Its harmonies range from dense tone clusters to traditional chords, and are essentially static—that is, they give no sense of either tension or resolution but create a sound world that is beyond tension and resolution—serving a coloristic rather than dynamic purpose. Indeed, Messiaen claimed a visual-auditory synesthesia whereby he associated certain hues with particular harmonies.

Born in Avignon and schooled at the Paris Conservatoire, Messiaen worked as a church organist in the French capital while formulating his remarkable musical ideas. During World War II, he was taken prisoner and spent two years in a German stalag. There he wrote what was to become his

best-known composition, *Quartet for the End of Time*. Released in 1942, Messiaen returned to Paris and resumed composing with new assurance and authority.

Although he himself was a highly capable pianist, Messiaen had as yet written no significant piano music. But at this time, he made the acquaintance of the extraordinary French pianist Yvonne Loriod, who henceforth became a leading interpreter of his music and, eventually, his wife. Inspired by Loriod's artistry, Messiaen composed two large piano works: *Visions de l'Amen*, for two pianos, and, in 1944, *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, which we hear this evening in its entirety without intermission.

As its title suggests, this is a religiously inspired composition. Messiaen was devoted throughout his life to a visionary kind of Roman Catholicism. That devotion was unusual in its literal acceptance of the miracles and revelations set forth in scripture and other sources, and in its highly charged imagery and symbolism. For Messiaen, "the Truths of the Faith are startling...in turn mysterious, harrowing, glorious, and sometimes terrifying, always based on a luminous, unchanging reality." Much of Messiaen's music articulates these "startling truths," and this, the composer insisted, "is the first aspect of my work, the noblest and, doubtless, the most useful and valuable; perhaps the only one I won't regret at the hour of my death."

In light of the importance of religion in Messiaen's life and music, it is striking that the composer wrote no settings of the Mass or any other liturgical verses. Instead, his overtly religious music reflects his own idiosyncratic faith. In this, *Vingt regards* is typical. The music has little connection with the familiar nativity story; instead, it imagines stars, angels, the "Church of Joy," mystic communion, even God.

The work's title requires some discussion. Although the French word "regard" has a clear meaning when used as a verb (it translates unambiguously as "to look"), it is less precise and less easily rendered in English as a noun. It can mean a look, a stare, a glance, a gaze, but it can also imply visual contemplation. Messiaen's use of "regard" most convincingly combines these last two meanings, though "contemplation" is probably a more useful, if less literal, concept for listeners to *Vingt regards*.

While each of the 20 pieces the work comprises is whole and complete in itself, there is no question that Messiaen considered the composition a unified cycle. Its integral unity is manifested by, among other things, four musical themes that recur in different portions of *Vingt regards*. These themes are as meaningful in spiritual or emotional terms as for their structural significance. The first occurs in the opening piece. Identified by Messiaen as "the theme of God," it consists of a succession of widely spaced chords with high repeated notes, the latter almost a halo of sound. It occupies all of the first piece and recurs in six others, most notably the last, where it occasions a great apotheosis.

Messiaen called the second recurring theme "the theme of the Star and the Cross," explaining that these two symbols are inextricably linked as marking the beginning and end of Jesus's terrestrial life. It initially sounds in the second piece, "Contemplation of the star," and returns most prominently in the seventh, "Contemplation of the Cross."

In contrast to the hard angularity of the Star-Cross theme, the third thematic idea conveys passionate ardor. This is "the theme of mystical love," which we hear first in the sixth piece, "Through Him everything was made," and again in the last two pieces. Finally, there is a "theme of chords." It has no religious or other significance, but it runs through much of the work, imparting particular aural colors to the music.

Messiaen described much of *Vingt regards* in poetic terms, both original and derived from scripture or other sources. For example, he appended to the initial piece, "Contemplation of the Father," words from Matthew: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." The composer explained the fifth piece with a poetic fragment that reads in part: "Mystery, rays of light in the night—refraction of joy, birds of silence—the person of the Word in human form..." The creation of the cosmos depicted in the sixth piece, "Through Him everything was made," imagines, Messiaen wrote, "galaxies, photons, spirals in contrary motion, inverted lightning-flashes," and later, "the face of God behind the flame." The final moments of the cycle bring "the triumph of love and tears of joy—the passion of our arms around the Invisible."

Paul Schiavo serves as program annotator for the St. Louis and Seattle Symphonies, and writes frequently for concerts at Lincoln Center.

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The Divine Image

By William Blake

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

*For poetry comments and suggestions, please write
to programming@LincolnCenter.org.*

Meet the Artists

B. EALOVEGA



Steven Osborne

Steven Osborne is one of Britain's most notable musicians, whose insightful and idiomatic interpretations of diverse repertoire show immense musical depth. His numerous awards include the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year (2013) and two Gramophone Awards for recordings of Britten's works for piano and orchestra and of solo works by Prokofiev and Mussorgsky.

Concerto performances have included recent visits to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Salzburg Mozarteum, Oslo and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras, London Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio and Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestras, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, and Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has also appeared at the Aspen Music and Mostly Mozart Festivals. Mr. Osborne's critically acclaimed recitals of carefully crafted programs have taken him to such leading concert halls as Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Wiener Konzerthaus, Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Berlin Philharmonie, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

Highlights of his 2017–18 season include performances with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Edward Gardner; Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Gulbenkian Orchestra, both under the baton of Juanjo Mena; Radio Symphonie Orchester Wien under Cornelius Meister; Sydney Symphony Orchestra

under Ludovic Morlot; BBC Symphony Orchestra under Alexander Vedernikov; as well as with Ensemble Orchestral de Paris. In recital, Mr. Osborne takes Messiaen's *Vingts regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* to Rome, Mexico, Australia, and to both St. John's Smith Square and Wigmore Hall in London.

This season marks Mr. Osborne's 19th year as a Hyperion recording artist. His recordings span a wide range of repertoire including Beethoven, Schubert, Debussy, Ravel, Liszt, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Medtner, Messiaen, Britten, Tippett, George Crumb, and Morton Feldman.

White Light Festival

I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the listener. —Arvo Pärt. Now in its eighth year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors, complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer

Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus,

LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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