

O l i v i e r M e s s i a e n

*Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*

*A lecture-recital by pianist*

**David Rogosin**

1. *Regard de l'étoile* (II)

2. *Noël* (XIII)

3. *Première communion de la Vierge* (XI)

4. *Regard du temps* (IX)

5. *Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* (XV)



Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) was one of the most significant and influential composers of the twentieth century, along with Schoenberg, Bartók and Stravinsky. His highly idiosyncratic musical language is typified in his 1944 masterwork, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, a work in twenty movements and requiring some two hours of performance time.

Messiaen had an eclectic approach to composition, and many of the characteristic features of his style are heard here: birdsong, Hindu rhythms, sound-colour synesthesia, numerology, extremes of tempo (particularly the very slow), and most importantly, the embodiment of his Catholic faith in symbol and in spirit.

My comments tonight will outline two aspects of the work: the idiosyncratic and symbolic elements that are encoded in the music, and the form of the musical structures themselves.

A number of themes and motivic fragments are found repeatedly throughout the work, and of these, Messiaen identifies three as central to the *Vingt Regards*:


1. *Thème de Dieu* (God Theme)
2. *Thème de l'Étoile et de la Croix* (Theme of the Star and Cross)
3. *Thème d'accords* (Chord Theme)

Other thematic elements include the "Boris" theme and the Noël motif, as well as such fundamental structures as his six Modes of Limited Transposition, non-retrogradable rhythms, rhythmic canons, and series of progressively larger or smaller values. But rather than focus on a catalogue of technical elements, the listener is invited to sit back and simply enjoy the sometimes hypnotic, sometimes electrifying experience of Messiaen's music.

**David Rogosin** is Associate Professor of Music at Mount Allison University, teaching piano, keyboard literature, keyboard harmony, accompaniment, and analytical techniques since September 2001. He previously taught at Knox College (Galesburg, Illinois), Brandon University, the Université de Montréal, and the David Thompson University Centre (Nelson, B.C.), and holds a doctorate in performance from UBC (Vancouver). A native of Brandon, Manitoba, he has performed across Canada, in the American Midwest, and in the Caribbean. In April 2005, Dr. Rogosin released his first solo CD, entitled *Incandescence*, featuring works by Brahms, Bartók, Messiaen and Dallapiccola. Rogosin also serves frequently as an adjudicator for music festivals throughout the maritime region. Outside of music, he enjoys cooking, woodworking, reading, kayaking and Aikido.

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