Olivier Messiaen

Should you know his music?

intro
3 things to know about OM

(other than technical innovations)

- interest in bird song
- religious faith
- synesthesia
4 pieces

- Oiseaux Exotiques (1956)
- Vingt Regards sur l’enfant-Jésus (1944)
- Turangalila-Symphonie (1948)
- Quartet for the End of Time (1941)
Oiseaux Exotiques

performance about birdsong
Vingt Regards sur l’enfant-Jésus

- Wow
- Faith “not a single moment of doubt” in his life
Turangalila Symphonie

- National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, 5th movement “Joy of the Blood of the Stars” performance clip
- what is that crazy instrument?
- Title – from Sanskrit/Hindu ideas
- A “love song”
- Esa-Pekka Salonen comments
- Boston history
his harmony: “true, unique, voluptuously pretty by essence, willed by melody, issued from it, pre-existent in it, having always been enclosed in it, awaiting manifestation.”
Quartet for the End of Time

- composed in a German prison camp in WWII
- an early example of his synesthetic approach to harmony
  - A “stained-glass window” and then blue and orange chords shimmering back and forth (2nd movement)
Amazing range of taste in the context of other 20th-century composers

- Schoenberg