

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Music Since 1945

edited by
Mervyn Cooke
University of Nottingham

OLIVIER MESSIAEN'S *TURANGALÎLA-SYMPHONIE*

Andrew Shenton
Boston University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-16573-0 — Olivier Messiaen's Turangalila-symphonie
Andrew Shenton
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009165730

DOI: 10.1017/9781009165723

© Andrew Shenton 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-16573-0 Paperback

ISSN 2632-7791 (online)

ISSN 2632-7783 (print)

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/Shenton

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalîla-symphonie*

Elements in Music Since 1945

DOI: 10.1017/9781009165723
First published online: September 2023

Andrew Shenton
Boston University

Author for correspondence: Andrew Shenton, shenton@bu.edu

Abstract: As one of only a few pieces not primarily inspired by Messiaen's Catholic faith, but by human love as described in the romance of Tristan and Isolde and elsewhere, the *Turangalîla-symphonie* is contextualized in Messiaen's oeuvre and as a genre piece. Using previously untranslated information from Messiaen's own description of the work in his *Traité*, close analysis of the music seeks to demystify some of the complex innovations he made to his musical language, especially in the areas of rhythm and orchestration. This Element pays special attention to the fragmentary and elusive program, which is explained with reference to Messiaen's fascination with surrealism at this time. Information is included on the commission and composition of the piece, its premiere by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein, its revision by Messiaen in 1990, and its reception history in both live and recorded performances.

Keywords: Messiaen, *Turangalîla-symphonie*, Tristan, Boston Symphony Orchestra, surrealism

© Andrew Shenton 2023

ISBNs: 9781009165730 (PB), 9781009165723 (OC)
ISSNs: 2632-7791 (online), 2632-7783 (print)

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Context, Commission, Composition, and Premiere	3
3	Messiaen's Musical Style	11
4	The Tristan Trilogy and the Extramusical Program	17
5	Analysis and Explanation of the <i>Turangalîla-symphonie</i>	35
6	1990 Revisions to the Score	71
7	Reception History and Interpretation	74
8	Concluding Remarks	79
	References	81