

Humanities W1123 · Masterpieces of Western Music · Prof. Michael Thaddeus

Questionnaire for April 16

Name: _____

Last time, Bartók's "night music" was described as "eerie dissonances providing a backdrop to sounds of nature and lonely melodies." To what extent is this true of Messiaen's Movement I?

In Movement II, Messiaen describes the unison melody of the central section (0'54–4'33) as "quasi plain-chantesque." How does this melody resemble plainchant?

In Movement III, how do the three long crescendos on a single note (at 2'43, 3'25, and 7'41) function musically and dramatically?

In what (perhaps obvious) ways is Movement IV different from the earlier movements?

How does the ending of Movement V differ from the others? What technical terms from our glossary apply?

In Movement VI, how do the rhythms of the fast passages and the slow passages differ?

In the program, Messiaen draws attention to the climactic passage 4'59–5'48 of Movement VI, which is marked "Almost slow, terrible and powerful." How would you describe the musical texture here (dynamics, rhythm, instrumentation, register...)?

What specific previous movements does Movement VII recapitulate and how?

What do you make of Messiaen's choice to use only two of the four instruments in the concluding Movement VIII?
