



Thursday, March 12, 2015, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Pierre-Laurent Aimard, *piano*
Tamara Stefanovich, *piano*

The Piano Music of Pierre Boulez

PROGRAM

Pierre Boulez (b. 1925) Notations (1945)

- I. Fantastique — Modéré
- II. Très vif
- III. Assez lent
- IV. Rythmique
- V. Doux et improvisé
- VI. Rapide
- VII. Hiératique
- VIII. Modéré jusqu'à très vif
- IX. Lointain — Calme
- X. Mécanique et très sec
- XI. Scintillant
- XII. Lent — Puissant et âpre

Boulez Sonata No. 1 (1946)

- I. Lent — Beaucoup plus allant
- II. Assez large — Rapide

Boulez Sonata No. 2 (1947–1948)

- I. Extrêmement rapide
- II. Lent
- III. Modéré, presque vif
- IV. Vif

INTERMISSION

- Boulez Sonata No. 3 (1955–1957; 1963)
- Formant 3 Constellation-Miroir
Formant 2 Trope
- Boulez Incises (1994; 2001)
- Boulez Une page d'éphéméride (2005)
- Boulez Structures, Deuxième livre (1961)
for two pianos, four hands
- Chapitre I
Chapitre II (Pièces 1–2, Encarts 1–4, Textes 1–6)

Funded, in part, by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2014–2015 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsor Françoise Stone.

Hamburg Steinway piano provided by Steinway & Sons, San Francisco.

Cal Performances' 2014–2015 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

THE PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Tonight's program includes the complete piano music of Pierre Boulez, as well as a performance of the second book of *Structures* for two pianos. The program opens with *Douze notations*, twelve miniatures that Boulez composed when he was 20.

All three of Boulez's piano sonatas are also included on the program. The early two-movement First Sonata was completed when the composer was 21 years old, but the foundation of Boulez's approach is already apparent from the textures and rhythms in this work. Inspired by Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, the four-movement Second Sonata is the most famous of the Boulez's piano sonatas and the most fiendishly difficult to play. Only two movements of the Third Sonata have been completed to the composer's satisfaction and published: *Constellation-Miroir* and *Trope*. These movements inhabit a more serene and rarified world from the Second Sonata with its violent Beethovenian expressivity. The order of the material in them is not entirely fixed, and the pianist can take different routes as desired.

In *Structures, Deuxième livre*, the freedoms embodied in the Third Sonata are shared by two pianists. In the second chapter in particular, the pianists play with considerable independence from one another, and the ordering of the material is not precisely fixed. *Incises* ("Interpolations") is a virtuoso showpiece written for the contestants in a piano competition. *Une page d'éphéméride* ("Page from an Almanac") is an album leaf Boulez contributed to an anthology of piano pieces written for young pianists.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Pierre Boulez (b. 1925) was a leading figure in the postwar European avant-garde, and there was a period in the early 1950s when he attempted to make *tabula rasa* of tradition, to liquidate his heritage and start afresh. Nevertheless, it's a mistake to overemphasize

the radical break with tradition that his music supposedly embodies. If Boulez belongs to an avant-garde, it is to a French avant-garde tradition dating back two centuries to Berlioz and Delacroix, and his attitudes are deeply rooted in the avant-garde of the later 19th century. As a young man, he had already discovered "a Debussy-Cézanne-Mallarmé reality at the root of all modernity," and his essays are dotted with references to Baudelaire and Rimbaud, Manet and Monet.

Like Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007), Boulez's comrade in arms throughout the 1950s, Boulez rejected certain elements of his heritage, but only while embracing others. Boulez and Stockhausen were immensely impressed by the works that Schoenberg and Stravinsky had written before World War I—works like *Erwartung* (1909) and *Le sacre du printemps* (1913) that dated from the period when these composers produced their most original and freewheeling work—but they were disappointed by the comparative conservatism of the music these same composers had written during the period between the wars. Boulez and Stockhausen hoped to revive the exhilaration characteristic of the original voyage of discovery that these composers had made in the period before World War I while exploiting and transcending their most radical innovations.

Stemming from the French tradition, Boulez was profoundly influenced by the textures, the sensitivity to sonority, and the reticence so characteristic of Debussy and Ravel. At the same time, he continued the explorations of a chromatic post-tonal harmony begun by Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg while benefiting from the approach to rhythm so characteristic of Stravinsky and Bartók.

THE EARLY WORKS FOR PIANO

Written when the composer was 20 or 21, the *Notations* for piano are the earliest works Boulez still acknowledges. A collection of twelve miniatures, they are filled with echoes of the music of earlier composers including

Stravinsky, Messiaen, Webern, and perhaps even Honegger. The relationship of No. 2, *Très vif*, to Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* is even more evident from the orchestral version that Boulez composed many years later (1978) than from the original piano piece, while No. 9, *Lointain—Calme*, recalls Webern's Five Movements for string quartet, Op. 5, and Four Pieces for violin and piano, Op. 7.

The first two sonatas (1946 and 1948) are early works, too, and the writing in them is less supple or assured, more awkward, even, than the smoother writing in his more mature works. Nevertheless, the foundation of Boulez's approach is already laid out in these sonatas, an approach that can be traced back to the developments in the period before World War I that so interested him. The approach to rhythm in the sonatas, for example, is ultimately derived from Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

A natural outgrowth of the *rubato* or flexibility in the projection of rhythm already characteristic of the music of Wagner and Mahler, the rhythms in Schoenberg's music are sometimes referred to as "prose rhythms" because they fail to coalesce into larger regular patterns comparable to the stanzas in traditional verse. In Boulez's **First Sonata** the use of such rhythms is carried to extremes: there is often a continuous written out *rubato* without any sense of a regular beat, and the seamless unfolding is not subject to any larger grouping. In Stravinsky's music there is generally a regular pattern of beats, but, rather than being grouped into regular patterns, they are grouped irregularly (e.g. 1-2-3 1-2-3-4-5 1-2-3-4). In parts of the **First Sonata** Boulez uses the same kinds of patterns.

A Mount Everest of the repertory, the **Second Sonata** is the most famous of the sonatas and a fiendishly difficult workout for the pianist. Nevertheless, the **Second Sonata** is a more traditional work than the **First**, an attempt "both to conquer and to transcend the academy," as Charles Rosen once put it. The four movements of the sonata more or less correspond to the movements of a traditional four-movement work, with an ambitious first

movement analogous to a traditional sonata form, a slow second movement, a scherzo third movement, and a finale. One of the models for the sonata was Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat major, Op. 106, the "Hammerklavier," and the affinities between the two sonatas are especially apparent from the first movement, where much of the counterpoint is constituted of the same kinds of large leaps into aggressive trills as are found in the fugue from Beethoven's sonata.

The **Second Sonata** was written during a period when Boulez was especially interested in the ideas of the post-surrealist playwright Antonin Artaud, architect of the "Theater of Cruelty." In the theater Artaud envisioned, the audience was to be confronted with hypnotic rituals alternately inducing ecstasy and terror. Writing under Artaud's influence, Boulez claimed that "music should be collective spells and hysteria," concluding that the composer must "seize the delirium and organize it." Exhibiting the violent Beethovenian expressivity so characteristic of the young Boulez, the **Second Sonata** is a classic instance of the "organized delirium" he had in mind.

THE THIRD SONATA AND SECOND BOOK OF *STRUCTURES*

The **Third Sonata** (1955-1957; 1963) was originally planned as a five-movement work, of which two movements, *Trope* and *Constellation/Miroir*, have been published. With these movements we enter a rarified world very different from the world of the **Second Sonata**, *Constellation/Miroir* in particular containing the most poetic and refined music Boulez has ever written for the piano.

Like Schumann's *Fantasia*, the **Third Sonata** is a kind of anti-sonata, an attempt to produce a large scale multimovement work as ambitious as a Beethoven sonata while escaping any reliance on traditional forms, and the sonata is devoid of anything resembling Beethovenian dynamism or forward drive. Nevertheless the approach to form in the sonata is not without precedent. Already in

Wagner's operas, we find developments that are intermittent and open ended, developments that follow the course of the drama. Similarly, the sonata form tied to Dr. Schön in Berg's *Lulu* only unfolds as Schön comes and goes, while the developments in Debussy's *La mer* and *Jeux* depend on sudden mercurial shifts. These examples are all precedents for the Third Sonata, where the order of the developments is not definitively fixed.

The Third Sonata was written under the influence of *Un coup de dès n'abolira le hasard* ["A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance"] by the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, whose *L'après midi d'un faune* inspired Debussy's *prélude*. As Stravinsky remarked, Mallarmé's description of the poem applies equally well to the Third Sonata, the poem, according to Mallarmé, consisting of "the fragmentary interruptions of a capital phrase...everything takes place by abridgement, hypothetically; one avoids narration." Stravinsky went on to say that "Mallarmé thought he was borrowing ideas from music and would no doubt be surprised to learn that 60 years later his poem had cross-pollinated the two arts." Like *Un coup de dès*, *Constellation/Miroir* is laid out on the page like a constellation, and the pianist can take various routes through a given section before moving on to the next.

Constellation/Miroir is the still center of the projected five-movement work: listening to it, we drift from one isolated burst of activity to the next. There are two kinds of fragments in the movement, "points"—attacks suspended over a continuously changing web of harmonics—and "blocks," "structures based on ever changing resonant aggregates," as Boulez described them. While playing these aggregates the pianist uses the sustaining pedal so

that each sonority continues to resonate through subsequent attacks. Silently depressing the keys as the "points" are attacked enables certain strings to vibrate sympathetically, creating the harmonics.

Trope has four sections—*Texte*, *Parenthèse*, *Glose*, and *Commentaire*—at least three of these titles (parenthesis, gloss, and commentary) suggesting not so much linear argument as digression. The performer may begin with any section before circling through the others, each performance representing only a cut from the total form. *Commentaire* may be played before or after *Glose*.

In the second book of *Structures* for two pianos (1956; 1961) the freedoms embodied in the Third Sonata are shared by two pianists. In the second *chapitre* ("chapter") in particular, the pianists play with considerable independence from one another, and the ordering is not precisely fixed, one of the two pianists playing various "inserts" where he or she chooses to introduce them.

THE LATER WORKS FOR PIANO

In 1994, Luciano Berio and Maurizio Pollini asked Boulez to write a piece for a piano competition, and the result was *Incises* (1994; expanded 2001), a virtuosic example of the more hedonistic writing characteristic of Boulez's later years. In *Incises*, an exhilarating toccata continually interrupts the development of the mysterious material exposed in the opening.

Une page d'éphéméride (2005) is an album leaf Boulez contributed to an anthology of piano pieces written for young pianists.

David Gable

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Marco Borggreve/DG

Widely acclaimed as a key figure in the music of our time and as a uniquely significant interpreter of piano repertoire from every age, **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** enjoys an internationally celebrated career.

Each season he performs worldwide with major orchestras under conductors such as Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Jurowski, Peter Eötvös, Sir Simon Rattle, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. He has created, directed and performed in a number of residencies, including projects at Carnegie Hall, New York's Lincoln Center, Berlin's Philharmonie, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Tanglewood Festival, and London's Southbank Centre. Currently, Mr. Aimard is Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival, where he has impressed audiences and critics alike with his innovative programming.

Current and future highlights include solo recitals in London, New York, Chicago, Paris, Tokyo, Vienna, Beijing, and Amsterdam. Concerto appearances include performances with the Boston Symphony, London Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and Chamber Orchestra of Europe. In autumn 2014, he joined the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks to give the world première of a Piano Concerto by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, with further performances in Porto, London, and Boston. In spring 2015, he

undertakes a recital tour with Tamara Stefanovich, playing all of Pierre Boulez's completed works for piano in celebration of the composer's 90th birthday.

Mr. Aimard has had close collaborations with many leading composers, including György Kurtág, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Elliott Carter, Boulez, and George Benjamin and had a long association with György Ligeti, recording his complete works for piano. Most recently, he performed Carter's last piece—*Epigrams* for piano, cello, and violin—which was written for him.

Through professorships at the Hochschule Köln and Paris Conservatory, as well as concert-lectures and workshops worldwide, he sheds an inspiring and very personal light on music of all periods. In 2005, he was the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist Award and was named "Instrumentalist of the Year" by *Musical America* in 2007. In 2015, he launches a major online resource in collaboration with Klavier-Festival Ruhr and Vincent Meyer, centered on the performance and teaching of Ligeti's piano music featuring masterclasses and performances of the *Études* and other works.

Mr. Aimard now records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon. His first DG release, Bach's *The Art of Fugue*, received both the Diapason d'Or and Choc du Monde de la Musique awards, debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard's* classical chart, and topped iTunes' classical album download chart. In recent years, Mr. Aimard's recordings have been honored with many prestigious awards. A new recording of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*, was released in summer 2014.

Born in Lyon in 1957, Mr. Aimard studied at the Paris Conservatory with Yvonne Loriod and in London with Maria Curcio. He was appointed Ensemble Intercontemporain's first solo pianist by Pierre Boulez.



Marco Borggreve 2014

Known for captivating interpretations of a wide variety of repertoire, **Tamara Stefanovich** performs at the world's major concert venues, including New York's Carnegie Hall, Berlin's Philharmonie, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, and London's Royal Albert

Hall, Barbican Centre, and Wigmore Hall. She features regularly in such international festivals as Lucerne, La Roque d'Anthéron, Aldeburgh, Salzburger Festspiele, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and Beethovenfest Bonn.

Highlights of the current season include an extensive U.S. recital tour marking the 90th birthday of Pierre Boulez, recitals at the Konzerthaus Berlin, London's Southbank Centre, and Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw, as well as performances with the Bochumer Symphonieorchester under the baton of Anu Tali. She also performs Ligeti's Piano Concerto with Stuttgarter Kammerorchester and Matthias Foremny.

Recent engagements have included performances with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and Susanna Mälkki, MDR Symphonieorchester Leipzig and Kristjan Järvi, WDR Symphonieorchester Köln, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Thomas Zehetmair, Asko|Schönberg, and Iceland Symphony. Ms. Stefanovich has also appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Bamberg Symphony, Britten Sinfonia, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and London Sinfonietta. In spring 2012, she toured Germany

with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, performing Messiaen's "Turangalila" Symphony to much critical acclaim.

Ms. Stefanovich has collaborated with such conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Osmo Vänskä, and Vladimir Jurowski as well as leading composers Pierre Boulez, Peter Eötvös, and György Kurtág. She teaches at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln, and regularly leads educational projects at the Barbican Centre and Kölner Philharmonie. Ms. Stefanovich has also recently launched an innovative online project with Klavier-Festival Ruh in which she performs an interactive pedagogical analysis of Boulez's *Douze notations*. Visit www.exploretthescore.org for more information.

Her discography includes the Grammy Award-nominated recording of Bartók's Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion, and Orchestra with Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Pierre Boulez, and the London Symphony for Deutsche Grammophon (which also received a MIDEM nomination and Gold Record Academy Award) and Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos with Mr. Aimard, Jonathan Nott, and Camerata Salzburg for the ARTE. Ms. Stefanovich has also recorded for the AVI and Harmonia Mundi labels, including her latest release featuring works by Thomas Larcher.

Taught by Lili Petrović, Ms. Stefanovich gave her first public recital at age seven and became the youngest student at the University of Belgrade at age 13. In addition to music, her broad university education encompassed several other disciplines—psychology, education, sociology—and she received her master's degree in piano at age 19. She also studied at the Curtis Institute with Claude Frank, and subsequently studied with Mr. Aimard at the Hochschule für Musik Köln.