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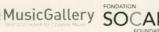
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Monday February 15, 2016

Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis Street, Toronto

New Music Concerts presents:

New Music Concerts Ensemble Robert Aitken direction

Programme:

Pierre Boulez (France 1925-2016)

Incises (1994)

Simon Docking solo piano

Pierre Boulez

sur Incises (1996-98/2006)

Stephen Clarke, Wesley Shen, Gregory Oh pianos Erica Goodman, Sanya Eng, Angela Schwarzkopf harps Rick Sacks, Ryan Scott, David Schotzko percussion Robert Aitken direction

— Intermission ——

Howard Bashaw (Canada 1957)

Postmodern Counterpoint -

Antiphonals and Canons with Gabrieli Remembered (2015) (World Premiere) Commissioned by New Music Concerts with the assistance of The Canada Council

Jim Gardiner trumpet Chris Gongos horn Ian Cowie trombone Mark Tetrault tuba Robert Venables trumpet Bardhyl Gjevori horn Jan Owens trombone Scott Irvine tuba Doug Stewart flute Dianne Aitken alto flute Max Christie clarinet Michele Verheul bass clarinet Stephen Sitarski violin Doug Perry viola David Hetherington cello Roberto Occhipinti contrabass Rick Sacks, Ryan Scott percussion Robert Aitken direction

This concert was made possible by the generous support of The Michael and Sonja Koerner Charitable Foundation Please join us in the lobby following the concert for a wine and cheese reception with the artists courtesy of New Music Concerts' Board of Directors.

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Pierre Boulez 1925-2016

by Paul Griffiths

Pierre Boulez was a dominant figure in classical music for well over six decades, and with his passing, on January 5, we lose the last of that extraordinary generation of European composers who came to the forefront during the few years after the Second World War, still in their twenties. They wanted to change music radically, and Boulez took a leading role among them. His *Le Marteau sans maître* (1952-5) was one of this avant-garde's first major achievements, and remains a key work of modern music.

Gradually, he came to give more attention to conducting, where his keen ear and rhythmic incisiveness would often produce a startling clarity. In the 1960s he began to appear regularly with some of the world's great orchestras, including the Concertgebouw, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the Cleveland Orchestra. In 1971 he became music director simultaneously of the New York Philharmonic and the B.B.C. Symphony in London.

As a young man he had matched intelligence with great force of mind: he had known what had to be done, according to his reading of history, and he had done it, in defiance of all the norms in French musical culture at the time. To be a conductor, though, meant working with the existing machinery. He tried to remake that machinery; he tried, especially when he held the principal posts in New York and London, to explore unconventional repertory, unconventional concert formats, and unconventional locations. But he also accepted that he had to rethink some of his own preconceptions, and as his musical outlook broadened, so his output as a composer dwindled.

It was his reputation as an avant-garde composer and as a crusader for new music that prompted his unexpected appointment as musical director of the New York Philharmonic, succeeding Leonard Bernstein. After the initial shock at his arrival, there was hope that he might "bring the orchestra into the twentieth century" and appeal to younger audiences. He left quietly six years later.

His destination was Paris. Dismissive of the French musical establishment, he had spent most of the last two decades abroad, but President Georges Pompidou, keen to reclaim this native son, agreed to found a contemporary-music facility for him in the capital: the Institute for the Research and Coordination of Acoustics and Music, known as IRCAM, having its own 31-piece orchestra, the Ensemble Intercontemporain. In the 1980s he gained further government support for his grandest project, the Cité de

la Musique complex in the Villette district of Paris, housing the Paris Conservatoire, a concert hall, and an instrument museum.

Boulez was born on March 26, 1925, in Montbrison, a town near Lyon, the son of an industrialist. He studied the piano, and in his teens began to compose. A defining moment came when he heard a broadcast of Stravinsky's *Chant du rossignol* conducted by Ernest Ansermet; it was a work to which he often returned throughout his conducting career. Against the wishes of his father, who wanted him to study engineering, he went to Paris in 1942 and enrolled at the Conservatoire.

In 1943-4 he was in the harmony class of Olivier Messiaen, whose impact on him was decisive. Messiaen's teaching went far beyond traditional harmony to embrace music that was outlawed both by the stagnant Conservatoire of that period and by the German occupying forces: the music of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, and Webern. Messiaen also introduced his students to medieval music and the music of Asia and Africa. Boulez felt his course was set; but he also knew he needed to go further into the twelve-note method that Schoenberg had introduced a generation before.

"I had to learn about that music, to find out how it was made," he once told Opera News. "It was a revelation — a music for our time, a language with unlimited possibilities. No other language was possible. It was the most radical revolution since Monteverdi. Suddenly, all out familiar notions were abolished. Music moved out of the world of Newton and into the world of Einstein."

To start on this route he took lessons in 1945-6 with a Schoenbergian who had settled in Paris, René Leibowitz. Soon, in works including his mighty Second Piano Sonata (1947-8), he was integrating what had been separate paths of development in the music of the previous forty years: Schoenberg's twelve-note serialism with Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations and Messiaen's enlarged notion of mode. As he saw it, all these composers had failed to pursue their most radical impulses, and it fell to a new generation—specifically, to him—to pick up the torch.

But though he was outspoken about his historical role, he was much warier of talking about expression. There was the odd reference to Antonin Artaud; there was also an admitted kinship with the abrupt-sensuous poetry of René Char, which he set in *Le Marteau* and other works. But he was also capable of ferocious abstraction, as in the first section of his *Structures* for two pianos (1951), a test case in applying serial principles to rhythm, volume, and color. About his private life he remained tightly guarded. His elder sister Jeanne was important to him; few others were able to break through his reserve.

To begin with, he earned his living as musical director of the theater company in Paris run by Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud, Barrault's wife. His ten-year appointment with them was crowned in 1955 by a production of the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, for which he wrote an ambitious score; they also helped him set up the Domaine Musical concerts in 1953.

The Domaine Musical, designed as a platform for new music, twentieth-century classics, and early music that was then little performed, proved his abilities as administrator and, later, conductor. It also provided a model of the contemporary ensemble that was widely imitated and has remained central to the propagation of new music.

He made his debut as a concert conductor on March 21, 1956, at a Domaine Musical concert (though the organization was still known then as the "Concerts du Petit Marigny," after the theater in Paris in which the concerts took place). The program included *Le Marteau*, which had received its first performance the previous summer in Baden-Baden. At once delectable and stringent, this work united traditions of Austro-German discipline and French finesse with the sounds of South America, Africa, and east Asia made available by its variegated ensemble (comprising alto flute, viola, guitar and percussion besides contralto voice). It was widely admired — not least by Stravinsky, who heard it when Boulez made his North American debut at the Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles on March 11, 1957.

Boulez's first concert in the Western hemisphere — also his first with a symphony orchestra — had come in June 1956, when he had conducted the Orquestra Sinfónica Venezuela on one of his last tours with the Renaud-Barrault company. During the 1957-8 season he appeared with the West German Radio Symphony in Cologne in his own *Le Visage nuptial* and Stockhausen's *Gruppen*. He then began a lasting connection with the South-West German Radio Symphony of Baden-Baden, where he made his home. In 1960 he conducted them in the first performance of his *Pli selon pli*, an hour-long setting of poems by Mallarmé for soprano with an orchestra rich in percussion.

This lustrous score allowed certain flexibilities to the conductor in assembling its fragments, and in other works of the same period — the Third Piano Sonata (1957) and the second book of *Structures* for two pianos (1956-61) — he took such openness further. The musical work should be, as he often said, a labyrinth, with no fixed route. It might also never gain a fixed ending. From this time onward, he went on starting more works than he ever brought to completion, while at the same time submitting older pieces to rounds of revision.

As a conductor, he showed much less hesitation. Where his first concerts had been devoted entirely to twentieth-century works, with the Concertgebouw and the South-West German Radio Symphony in the early 1960s he began to explore earlier repertory: Haydn, Bach, Schubert, Mozart, Beethoven. In March 1965 he made his debut with an American orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, in a typical program comprising Rameau, his own music (Figures-Doubles-Prismes), Debussy, and Stravinsky (Chant du rossignol).

The next year he conducted opera for the first time: Wozzeck in Frankfurt and Paris, and Parsifal at Bayreuth, both the Parsifal and the Frankfurt Wozzeck being with Wieland Wagner directing. Also in 1966 he started making records for Columbia, for whom his first releases included Wozzeck and albums of Debussy and Messiaen.

He reached his first peak as a conductor in the 1960s. He had learned his technique, he said, by observing two predecessors: Roger Désormière in Paris and Hans Rosbaud in Baden-Baden. But his style was unique. He never used the baton, but manipulated the orchestra by means of his two hands simultaneously, the left indicating phrasing or (in much contemporary music) counterrhythm.

His characteristic sound — unemotional on the surface but with undercurrents of intemperateness, at once brilliant in colour and rhythmically disciplined — suited his core repertory of Stravinsky (several of whose works he introduced to Europe), Debussy, Webern, Bartók and Messiaen, and was refreshing in many of the excursions he took into earlier music. It was a sound that depended on his famously acute ear: there are countless stories of him detecting faulty intonation from the third oboe in a complex orchestral texture.

As music director of the New York Philharmonic, he had to enlarge his repertory rapidly. Hitherto he had conducted very little Romantic music other than Berlioz's; now Schubert, Brahms, Dvořák, and Borodin joined his programs, not always convincingly. Though he refused to compromise on Tchaikovsky, he was becoming much more like a regular conductor, and part of his individuality was lost in the colossal task of maintaining important positions on both sides of the Atlantic — and, in 1976, preparing the Bayreuth centenary *Ring*.

He also had to contend in New York with hostility to his programming. He wanted to make the orchestra a more flexible institution, and a more modern one. Performances might begin with short programs of chamber music, played by members of the orchestra. More of the repertory would be explored: during his first

season as the Philharmonic's music director there was an emphasis on Liszt. Then, in order to present more contemporary music, concerts entirely of new and recent works were given at downtown venues. There were "informal evenings" of talk, rehearsal, and performance featuring twentieth-century composers. And there were summer seasons of "rug concerts," with a different program every night for a week, played to audiences seated on the floor of Philharmonic Hall.

The "rug concerts" lasted only two years, and none of his other innovations survived his departure. He had relinquished his post with the B.B.C. Symphony in 1975, leaving as parting gift his somber *Rituel*. His last concerts with the New York Philharmonic were in May 1977: on the program was Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*. He went back regularly to conduct in London, but he made no return to the New York Philharmonic podium until 1986.

His priority after the New York Philharmonic was IRCAM, and he drastically reduced his conducting commitments; among the few he retained was the first complete performance of Berg's *Lulu* in 1979, at the Paris Opera. Believing that music's development since 1945 had been frustrated by a lack of research into electronic possibilities, he set to work at IRCAM on *Répons*, for a small orchestra with six percussion soloists whose sounds are digitally transformed and regenerated. The work had its first performance in October 1981.

The irony was that the man who had such an extraordinary orchestral imagination — and such extraordinary powers to realize the fruits of that imagination in performance — should have been so convinced of his need for electronic resources. *Répons* is in most respects inferior to a work for a similar percussion-based orchestra he had begun and abandoned a decade before: *Eclat/Multiples*. Nor does it begin to rival the orchestral virtuosity displayed in the arrangements of his early piano cycle "Notations" that he began to make at the same time.

He continued to add to *Répons* during the early 1980s, though much of his creative energy was going into new versions of old scores. In the early 1990s he emerged from his tumult of rewriting to produce at IRCAM the greatest of his late works, a new version of ...explosante-fixe... — a composition kit that was his memorial to Stravinsky — for electronic flute and small orchestra.

Also in the early 1990s he began to appear more widely again as a conductor, with orchestras in the United States (Los Angeles, Cleveland, Chicago) and Europe, his concerts often associated with recording sessions for Deutsche Grammophon. He returned to what had always been his main repertory; he also developed his newer enthusiasm for Mahler, and made occasional

visits to territory he had not touched before: Richard Strauss, Bruckner, Scriabin, Janáček.

In 1995, his seventieth birthday year, he conducted his own and other twentieth-century music in London, Paris, Vienna, New York, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Chicago. In 2005 he spent his eightieth birthday in Berlin, which hosted a retrospective of his music. A few pieces were completed during this period, notably *Dérive 2*, a 45-minute score for eleven instruments that took almost two decades to reach its end point, in 2006. Many more projects remained unfinished, while others were never begun, like the opera on which he was to have collaborated first with Jean Genet and later with Heiner Muller.

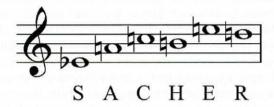
Even so, the achievements contained in his published works and recordings are formidable, and his influence was incalculable. The tasks he took on were heroic: to continue the great adventure of musical modernism, and to carry with him the great musical institutions and the widest possible audience. He left a powerful example to his successors.

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Pierre Boulez on Incises and sur Incises

I composed the piano piece Incises for the Umberto Micheli Piano Competition which is greatly supported by Maurizio Pollini, First I had in mind to transform this piece into a longer one for Pollini and a group of instrumentalists, a kind of piano concerto although without reference to the traditional form. And then when I began to really deal with the material - then I thought: no. that's not really the way to do it. I would like a piano, a piano with a first shadow and a second shadow. With the piano in the middle, giving his material to both sides. Symmetrical, although this symmetry was more complex than I'm indicating now. At the beginning, however, it wasn't complex at all. Now at the beginning I wanted to have a sonority to enrich the piano's sonority, really also to treble the sonority of the piano or repeat the sonority of the piano. So I added the harps, three harps. And then I started on the marimba, because the marimba begins to introduce the quick thematic material. Finally I said to myself that if I have a marimba, I also need a vibraphone for the high register. And then the second vibraphone came at the last minute, because I could not find another instrument in the percussion section capable of matching the vibraphone and the marimba. So I had the vibraphone there, and then I went on to add steel drums, timpani, chimes ... and that's how the percussion is set up: one player on instruments which are totally chromatic, and one on instruments which are, let's say, specialized. Consequently my starting point was three pianos, three harps, three percussionists; also three times three which is nine. And I composed this piece for the 90th birthday of Paul Sacher although this, you have to believe me, is pure coincidence. I did not choose nine instruments on purpose.

[The piece is based on a] series of six pitches that was given to me for an homage to Paul Sacher for his 70th birthday.



For this I wrote *Messagesquisse*, which was very short, because it was meant to be played in a concert for which a great many composers had written very short works. So it was a short occasional piece. And it was while working on this piece that I finally discovered all of this chord's possibilities. I noticed progressively, while I was working on it, that there were possibilities I'd never used before. I mean by this that the point was not to make reference to Paul Sacher each time – certainly not, although *sur Incises* is dedicated to him. But I did not really write *sur Incises* just to dedicate it to him – I wrote it because the material was there, and because I asked myself what I would do with this material.

[The solo piano piece] *Incises* begins with a very free and flexible introduction followed by a very, very quick part (which is at times abruptly interrupted). But the character of this terrific movement is kept throughout. In *sur Incises* I have expanded, stretched this introduction a lot in terms of its duration. And I have added various forms of multiplication to this very brilliant cadenza, from simple to sixfold and multiple reflections resulting in a cadenza which is no longer wild as in Incises, but calm and breathing regularly, due to these diverse figures appearing in simple to complex modifications. So I have composed a cadenza for everybody, which is to be played without interruption at a very rapid speed and which is very difficult to perform. And then there is another part with a transition. In this part the principles of the cadenza are mixed with the introduction, this very free introduction actually in a rather complete way so that it is very difficult to judge which

elements are taken from which area. This situation changes with a recollection of the initial cadenza focusing on the three pianos in order to demonstrate on which kind of periodicity the complete action is based. The first page [of *sur Incises*] provides half of the piece, as a matter of fact, because the material is very simple. You have resonant material and quick material. And the process is to mix both of them or not to mix them: at the beginning they are not mixed, and throughout the second half of the piece they are. And then the object is always finding a way to have the dialogue between quick and resonant, that being the material – it plays its novelty each time, and you recognize it, more or less.

The percussion and also the harps are at times completely integrated and sometimes only play a minor role, it depends. There is one section where the pianos play an elaborate ostinato passage, thus a very strict compositional structural form while the percussionists play very free figures at the same time. But you find also moments when this role play is divided up, such as that one piano and one percussionist play the free structures whereas the other pianos and percussionists have to follow the strict ostinato movement etc. Another attractive aspect is that at times you encounter very quick changes followed by sections of constant continuous instrumental combinations. As to the harps, [their] entries depend a lot on the different kinds of speed at which this instrument can be handled. I was very surprised by the powerful sound three harps can produce. At the beginning [they are] simply a kind of echo of the piano, [gradually] participating in the sonority and at the very end they are every bit as important as the piano. because the chords they have are very strong in the middle, and then you hear that middle register more strongly than even the extreme power of the piano. By the way, I have emphasized the different sound character of the instruments by positioning them in a characteristic way. Thus, you can see what you hear. I am really very happy with the sound combinations in this piece and also with the way the rather exotic instruments are integrated. I don't use steel drums for the sake of their exotic and folkloric colour but because of the fact that they exceed the usual bounds of the individual families of instruments. I like the sound of steel drums because of their innate possibilities: first in terms of the sound itself, but also because when you do a crescendo, or a very strong sforzato, you have a resonance which is very interesting in and of itself, because the sound is so modified that it ends up being practically another sound. The question is what does that mean? Because this sound belongs to all families and to none at the same time.

Canadian composer **Howard Bashaw** (b. 1957) is originally from White Rock, B.C. A graduate of the University of British Columbia (DMA, 1989), he joined the Department of Music at the University of Alberta in 1993. Prior to this he taught at the University of British Columbia and the Université Canadienne en France. Working almost exclusively in the acoustic medium, Bashaw's repertoire ranges from solo instruments to full orchestra. His musical language is perhaps best described as being broadly contemporary, and his scores exist in various conventional, aleatoric, graphic and hybrid formats. Forming a separate category, his signature works for solo piano are typically virtuosic and large in scope.

Bashaw has received commissions through the Canada Council for the Arts, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the CBC Radio Music Department, Premiering ensembles include: Vancouver New Music. New Music Concerts (Toronto). Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, The Hard Rubber Orchestra. The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, The Now Age Orchestra, the Hammerhead Consort, Standing Wave Ensemble, Duo Majoya, Duo Kovalis. The Eastwest Quartet, The Augustana Choir, and The Continuum Ensemble (London, UK). Works for solo piano were premiered by: Roger Admiral, Winston Choi, Marc Couroux, Douglas Finch, Corey Hamm, Kyoko Hashimoto, Barbara Pritchard and Haley Simons. Other premiering or featured performers include: Trevor Brandenburg, Kathleen Corcoran, Niek de Groot, David Harding, Tatiana Kukoc, Catherine Lewis, Giorgio Magnanensi, Dennis Miller, Ken Read, Yan Sallafrangue, Allen Stiles, William Street, Guillaume Tardif, Alain Trudel, Russell Whitehead and Cameron Wilson.

Compilation CD releases include: 15 for Piano (Centrediscs, 2015, Roger Admiral, piano), Hard Rubber, Hard Elastic (Arktos, 2008, various artists), Form Archimage (Arktos, 2004, various artists), and Bashaw (Arktos, 2000, various artists).

Howard Bashaw: Postmodern Counterpoint

Antiphonals and Canons with Gabrieli Remembered (2015)

- I. Badass Toccata for Conductor (2:40)
- II. mirrors warp and echoes clash, yet A runs and runs still (3:45)
- III. Paired and Re-Paired: Austere Levity in Fugitive, Time-Table Sprites (0:50)

IV. Two Double Homages (4:00)

Nº. 1 Gabrieli and Nancarrow

Circular Reasoning - Time, and Time Again

Nº. 2 Gabrieli and Escher

Endless Steps - Allusion and Illusion

V. Fraction and Refraction: Color Organ, Stained Glass, and Puzzling Aleatory (c. 4:00)

VI. Feat and Defeat:

Party Automatons Get A Round (4:15)

featuring the Rick Sacks percussion conveyor belt

VII. Hark and Hearken:
Reminiscence Round (2:15)

VIII. I dunno, retro-minimalism maybe (6:25)

IX. A Modern Dance Conspiracy (4:40)

Stylistically, a rather unlikely collection of colourfully contrasting movements is gathered under the title *Postmodern Counterpoint*. "Postmodern"? Sure. After all, diverging arguments could be made for an inclusive aesthetic position that is, at once, forward-looking, backward-looking, and at various, nebulous points in between. And should such debate ever occur (along with its varying opinions), all could agree nonetheless that the work has at least three referential characteristics: 1) imitative counterpoint is prevalent; 2) the 5-choir division of the ensemble features antiphonal brass and reflects changing contrapuntal textures; and 3) the *Rick Sacks percussion conveyor belt* is strikingly unconventional and memorable.

Antiphonal dialogues arise from contrapuntal textures; counterpoint arises from the compositional technique of canon; and the paradox of unifying contrast arises from canon manifesting in various and unusual forms over all 9 movements. Movement 2 (mirrors warp and echoes clash) includes displaced, reverberating echo canons. Movement 3 (Paired and Re-Paired) is the realization of a complex table canon (the peculiar, cryptic notation of a brief, single-voice theme that, when read forwards, backwards, upsidedown and in different clefs, simultaneously generates transposition, retrograde, and inversion - and here even multiple speeds are added). Movement 4 (Two Double Homages) contains a complex, 4-voice temporal canon (proportional, simultaneous speeds), and an interwoven, ascending-descending double-spiral canon. Movement 5 (Fraction and Refraction) is a puzzle canon, but here taking the unusual, even bizarre, twist of also being an

aleatoric canon (a short double-theme presented at all 12 transposition levels and at 3 speeds – but here notated in graphic format as a full-color, stained glass window). Movement 6 (Feat and Defeat) includes a linked, revolving canon (indeed, what else could accompany a conveyor belt?). Movement 7 (Hark and Hearken) contains a paired, 4-voice traditional canon. Both movements 8 and 9 (I dunno and Modern Dance Conspiracy) include what I refer to as textural canons (bearing certain similarities to aspects of minimalism). Leaving only the blazing Badass Toccata for Conductor; while this first movement also contains canonic writing, its focus is clearly distinct from the other movements, and its title, well, just plain says it all.

Now, admittedly, this apparent preoccupation with canon and counterpoint could easily give the impression that the music is much more concerned with rational strategies and controlling architectures than it is with immediate expressiveness and colourful atmospheres. Wrong. In fact, one could summarize effectively without even bothering to mention all that counterpoint: the music can be heard as having one foot in the classical and contemporary worlds, and the other - with its funky grooves and hard-driving orchestration - in that of the modern big-band.

Turning to the broader historical perspective, is it possible to compose for separate choirs and antiphonal brass without acknowledging, or at least remembering, the late Renaissance composer Giovanni Gabrieli? In this regard, *Postmodern Counterpoint* is homage to this composer - and to that remarkable, pivotal period he helped transform. *Postmodern Counterpoint* was commissioned through the Canada Council for the Arts by New Music Concerts, Toronto. — *Howard Bashaw*

Our next event:

Quasar Saxophone Quartet

and the presentation of the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music Sunday March 13, 2016 at the Music Gallery 197 John St.

The award-winning Montreal quartet performs works written especially for them by Jean-François Laporte (*Incantation*), Jimmie LeBlanc (*Fil Rouge*), Wolf Edwards (*Predator Drone MQ-1*), André Hamel (*Brumes matinales et textures urbaines*) and Pierre Alexandre Tremblay (the 2015 Jules Léger Prize winning *Les pâleurs de la lune*).

