

1 Script for NYP 16-26: Boulez: In memoriam

2
3 (NATIONAL UNDERWRITING CREDIT #1)

4 (AMBIENCE UP AND UNDER)

5 AB: **...and THIS week:**

6 (STRAVINSKY PETRUSHKA AND BOULEZ SPEAKING)

7 AB: **We honor the memory of Pierre Boulez, who served as**
8 **Music Director of the New York Philharmonic from**
9 **1971 to 1977. During the course of our time**
10 **together, we'll hear musical highlights from**
11 **several noteworthy performances of Mr. Boulez as**
12 **both composer and conductor. I'm Alec Baldwin.**
13 **Please stay tuned now, as we remember Pierre Boulez**
14 **...on the New York Philharmonic This Week.**

15
16 AB: **On March 13th, 1969, Pierre Boulez came to conduct**
17 **the New York Philharmonic for the first time—just**
18 **13 days shy of his 44th birthday. He was already**
19 **considered to be one of the leading figures in**
20 **contemporary composition at the time, but his**
21 **reputation as a conductor was only just starting to**
22 **make strides.**

26 AB: From the beginning of his conducting career, Boulez
27 was known to be a fanatical perfectionist. His
28 performances were noted for their accuracy and
29 clarity—particularly in highly complex new and even
30 not-so-new music. He also impressed critics and
31 audiences alike with fresh interpretations of more
32 traditional repertoire—especially the works of his
33 countryman Debussy...and in particular *La Mer*, which
34 was not only featured on Mr. Boulez's first concert
35 with the Philharmonic, but also became one of his
36 signature works. Let's hear it now as performed at
37 Avery Fisher Hall on June 18, 1988. Pierre Boulez
38 conducts...The New York Philharmonic:

39 (LA MER)

40 AB: Three symphonic sketches by Claude Debussy--*La Mer*.
41 The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Pierre
42 Boulez in that performance from June, 1988. Boulez
43 had a special gift for making the works of Debussy
44 so clear and transparent...yet without losing their
45 impressionistic atmosphere.

46
47
48
49
50 Mr. Boulez brought a similar lucidity and precision

51 to music of the so-called 2nd Viennese School
52 composers: Schoenberg, Berg and Webern. (MUSIC)

53
54 Their music, along with other 20th century masters
55 such as Stravinsky and Bartok inspired Pierre
56 Boulez to take up composition himself. (MUSIC)

57
58 A student of Olivier Messiaen during the Second
59 World War, Mr. Boulez spoke on this subject with
60 producer Jon Tolansky:

61 (INTERVIEW 1) OUT CUE IS: "...reaction to this
62 provocation"

63 (MUSIC 2: BOULEZ - POLYPHONIE X - very brief extract
64 glimpse)

65
66 AB: ...and there's a brief glimpse of an early
67 composition by Pierre Boulez - Polyphonie X for 18
68 players, written in 1950 and 1951.

69
70 Though he accepted a post as the Music Director of
71 the highly experimental Renaud-Barrault Music
72 Theatre Company in 1946, it wasn't until 1954 that
73 Pierre Boulez began to conduct orchestral works.

74
75 His main motivation for so doing was to promote new

76 music. Towards this end, he created the Domaine
77 Musicale concerts in Paris in 1954, which had the
78 unusual mixture of new music and specially curated
79 musical items from the past—works that Boulez felt
80 had relevance to the present.

81
82 His meticulously detailed performances began to
83 attract critical attention and although, as he told
84 us, he had no ambition for a conducting career, by
85 the early 1960s top orchestras and opera houses
86 were approaching him.

87
88 When he came to the New York Philharmonic for the
89 first time in 1969, the Orchestra was already
90 looking for a successor to Leonard Bernstein, and
91 they decided that Pierre Boulez would be their
92 choice. So it was that in 1971 he began a six year
93 Directorship of the New York Philharmonic. For
94 much of that time, his Philharmonic appointment ran
95 simultaneously with his post as the new Music
96 Director of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. All of a
97 sudden, Pierre Boulez was a major international
98 force as a conductor -and, in that capacity, not
99 just a performer:

(INTERVIEW 2) OUT CUE IS: ".....remains one of my goals"

AB: Well that goal *did* cause some controversy but it gave audiences opportunities to hear new music, including new American music, performed as impeccably as anyone anywhere could ever hope to hear it. One such work was the Symphony Of Three Orchestras by Elliot Carter, written for an orchestra divided into three groups sounding simultaneously. The New York Philharmonic and Pierre Boulez introduced this piece to the world in February 1977. Let's listen:

MUSIC 3: CARTER - SYMPHONY OF THREE ORCHESTRAS

AB: That was the Symphony of Three Movements by Elliot Carter. The performance was recorded during the week of the piece's world premiere in February 1977. The New York Philharmonic was led by its then-Music Director Pierre Boulez.

AB: Mr. Boulez's proactive advocacy of new music during

his tenure created some divergence of opinions among concert-goers. Those with more conservative tastes were less than enthusiastic, but many others felt that Boulez was providing a vital service--not only for contemporary composers, but also in attracting new audiences. When he initiated the New York Philharmonic Rug Concerts, in which seats from the orchestra stalls were removed and replaced with red rugs and foam-rubber cushions, large audiences of all ages came to hear performances of a very wide range of music. There were some new works offered, but also some famous classics too, and the first of these Rug Concerts included music by another important composer in the life of Boulez: Stravinsky. We mentioned earlier how Stravinsky's music was one of the vital early influences for Boulez. Stravinsky and Boulez went on to become friends and the older composer held Boulez's performances of his music in high esteem.

With Boulez at the helm, the Philharmonic vividly

151 captured the macabre color of Stravinsky's music
152 perfectly. We can especially hear this in
153 Petrushka—Stravinsky's strange and often violent
154 ghost story about three puppets: Petrushka, the
155 Ballerina and the Moor. Here is the 2nd tableau from
156 the ballet. Pierre Boulez conducts...The New York
157 Philharmonic.

158
159 MUSIC 4: STRAVINSKY PETRUSHKA - 2ND TABLEAU
160

161 AB: "The immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all
162 countries" - that's how Igor Stravinsky described
163 the character of Petrushka, the tragic puppet who
164 is the subject of the ballet of the same name.
165 We've just heard the second tableau, performed by
166 the New York Philharmonic in 1971. The conductor
167 was Pierre Boulez in the first year of his
168 residency as the orchestra's Music Director.

169
170
171
172
173
174
175 AB: Boulez was also highly acclaimed for his

interpretation of the music of Alban Berg. At the time, Berg was still regarded by many audiences and orchestras as being difficult to love. But Boulez brought a new level of clarity to Berg, unveiling a searing sensuousness previously unheard. Thanks to his sensitive ear for balances and sonority, history has judged Boulez as a pioneering advocate for the music of Berg and his brethren in the Second Viennese School. We hear him now with the New York Philharmonic in Berg's Lyric Suite, as recorded in 1974. Embedded in this music are some secret codes of notation relating to the composer and to Hanna Fuchs-Robettin - his mistress. Pierre Boulez conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

MUSIC 5: BERG LYRIC SUITE

AB: From 1974 - that was the Lyric Suite by Alban Berg. Pierre Boulez conducted the New York Philharmonic. One of the strongest influences on Berg was Gustav Mahler, whose music he idolized, and Mahler was a composer that Boulez conducted more and more frequently as time went by.

Being a composer himself, Boulez approached

Mahler's music with a rigorous overview of a given work's compositional form. This attention to the more mathematical elements of music, however, was never sacrificed any consideration of what the work was trying to express:

INTERVIEW 3: OUT CUE IS: "...things which are not related together"

AB: This approach of Boulez was especially important in the vast panoramas that Mahler painted in most of his symphonies. We hear this to great effect in the next music on our program: the third movement from Mahler's Third Symphony as recorded in 1976. Pierre Boulez conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

MUSIC 6: MAHLER - SYMPHONY 3 - MOVEMENT 3

AB: We just heard the third movement from Mahler's great hymn to nature: the Symphony No. 3. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Pierre Boulez in that performance from October, 1976.

Well, in the greatest possible contrast to the music we just heard, we now turn to the music of

Pierre Boulez. In 1974, Mr. Boulez led the Philharmonic in his own hugely demanding work for orchestra and soprano--Pli selon Pli. The work is a portrait of the poet Mallarme and requires both great subtlety and great intellect from the performers. Recorded on March 13, 1986--the 17th anniversary of his Philharmonic debut, this is the second movement from Pli selon Pli by Pierre Boulez. The composer leads the New York Philharmonic. The soprano soloist is Phyllis Bryn-Julson.

MUSIC 7 - BOULEZ - PLI SELON PLI - MOVEMENT 2

AB: *Improvisation 1 sur Mallarme* - the second movement of Pierre Boulez's Pli selon Pli. Phyllis Bryn-Julson was the soloist and and the New York Philharmonic were conducted by the composer.

AB: To say that Mr. Boulez's programming during the course of his tenure was eclectic might be a vast understatement. His repertoire was indeed broad and his indeed outlook on music was also wide-ranging:

INTERVIEW 4 - OUT CUE IS "But not for music so much....." (AMUSING COMMENT, NB)

251
252 AB: During the course of his residency with the New
253 York Philharmonic, Pierre Boulez also grew to
254 become a very highly admired interpreter of Wagner.
255 His relationship to the composer's music grew and
256 evolved, culminating with his performances of
257 Wagner's Ring cycle in the groundbreaking
258 production by Patrice Cherau at Bayreuth in 1976.
259 Boulez had his detractors in this repertoire—there
260 were some who found him too objective and
261 controlled for their taste. But many other people
262 were very impressed with the subtle combination of
263 clarity and warmth he brought to Wagner's
264 orchestral sonority...as well as his flexibility and
265 pacing. We hear those qualities in the last work
266 on our program—the Prelude to Tannhauser. Pierre
267 Boulez conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

268
269 MUSIC 8 - WAGNER TANNHAUSER OVERTURE
270
271
272
273

274 AB: That was the Prelude to Tannhauser by Richard
275 Wagner. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by

276 **Pierre Boulez in that 1973 recording.**

277 **AB: It was announced on January 5, 2016 that Pierre**

278 **Boulez passed away at the age of 90. Fortunately**

279 **for us, his extraordinary artistry lives on through**

280 **the many recordings and fond memories he leaves**

281 **behind. No doubt, his music will also continue to**

282 **be a fixture on concert programs all over the world**

283 **for many decades to come.**

284 **.**

285

286 (MUSIC)

287 (INSERT END CREDITS)

288 (INSERT NATIONAL UNDERWRITING CREDIT #2)