

BOULEZ 100

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CELEBRATING THE **PIERRE BOULEZ CENTENARY**

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2025

**CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY
CLEVELAND, OH**



Michael Baumgartner, Conference Director
Andrew Rindfleisch, Music Director
Edward Campbell and **Robert Piencikowski**,
Keynote Speakers

In collaboration with
Paul Sacher Foundation
Cleveland Museum of Art
Cleveland Orchestra at the Severance Music Center

Thursday, November 13

9:00am-12:30pm: Performance Presentations, Drinko Recital Hall, Cleveland State University
1:30pm-5:30pm: Paper Presentations, Mather Mansion, Cleveland State University
7:30pm: Screening of *Pierre Boulez—The Path into the Unknown*, School of Film and Media Arts, Cleveland State University

Friday, November 14

9:00am-12:30pm: Paper Presentations, Mather Mansion, Cleveland State University
1:30pm-5:30pm: Paper Presentations, Mather Mansion, Cleveland State University
7:30pm: Concert: Music by Pierre Boulez, Gartner Auditorium at the Cleveland Museum of Art

Saturday, November 15

11:30am-12:30pm: Panel Discussion, Reinberger Chamber Hall at the Severance Music Center
6:00pm: Pierre Boulez Manuscript Display, Grand Foyer at the Severance Music Center
7:30pm: Cleveland Orchestra: Mahler 6th Symphony at the Severance Music Center

Pierre Boulez 100: Conference Program

Morning	Thursday, November 13 ▪ Drinko Hall, CSU
9:00–9:15 AM	<i>Welcome and Conference Introduction</i> ☞ Welcome Greetings by Andrew E. Kersten, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences ☞ Conference Introduction by Michael Baumgartner, Conference Organizer
9:15–11:15 AM	Panel 1 <i>Boulez, the Piano, and Unfinished Works</i> Chair: Michael Baumgartner, Cleveland State University ☞ Geoffrey Burleson: “Perspective, Space, and the Paradox of Precise Aleatory: Earle Brown’s <i>4 Systems</i> and Pierre Boulez’s Third Piano Sonata” (Lecture Recital) ☞ Martin Grabow and Angela Ida de Benedictis: “Facsimile Edition of Boulez’s <i>Notation VIII: ‘Immense Carillon’</i>” (via Zoom) ☞ Benjamin Havey: “Atomic Sonata: Destroying Form in Boulez’s Second Piano Sonata”
11:30 AM–12:30 PM	Lecture Recital <i>Thursday Series</i> ☞ Pierre Boulez: <i>Dialogue de l’ombre double</i> (1985). Version for Solo Saxophone and Live Electronics Andrew Hosler (saxophone) and Dylan Findley (electronics) Lunch Break
Afternoon	Thursday, November 13 ▪ Mather Mansion, CSU
1:30–2:00 PM	<i>New Boulez Publications</i> ☞ Pietro Molteni: Presentation of New Book: <i>Pierre Boulez – Temoignages / Hommages</i>. Rimini: Edizioni Notæ, 2025
2:00–3:00 PM	Keynote <i>Lecture 1</i> Chair: Catherine Losada, University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music ☞ Edward Campbell: “Boulez and Baroque Modernity: Folds, Incisions, and Graceful Ornamentation” Break (Refreshments)
3:30–5:30 PM	Panel 2 <i>Boulez and Colleagues in America</i> Chair: Danielle M. Kuntz, Baldwin Wallace University ☞ Valentina Bensi: “‘Zwei grosse B’: Boulez and Berio Building New

Artistic Paths in North America from the 1950s through the 1970s”
(via Zoom)

- ✧ Colin Tucker: “‘All the Art of the Past Must Be Destroyed’: Temporality, Dispossession, and Racialization in the Discourse of Pierre Boulez and John Cage”
- ✧ Craig Parker: “Boulez and Lawrence Morton: Portrait of a Collaboration”
- ✧ Drake Andersen: “Hearing Pierre Boulez in the Music of Earle Brown: Co-Creative Scenes, 1956–61”

Dinner Break

Evening

Thursday, November 13 ▪ School of Film and Media Arts, CSU

7:30–9:00 PM

Screening *Boulez Depicted in Audiovisual Media*

- ✧ *Pierre Boulez—The Path into the Unknown* (Thomas von Steinaecker, 2025; U.S. Premiere)
- ✧ Excerpts from Conducting Master Class in Paris with Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra (1996)

Morning

Friday, November 14 ▪ Mather Mansion, CSU

9:00–10:30 AM

Panel 3 *Boulez’s Early Works*

Chair: Francesca Brittan, Case Western Reserve University

- ✧ Question and Answer Session with Thomas von Steinaecker (via Zoom)
- ✧ Nicolas Jortie: “The First Version of Pierre Boulez’s *Le visage nuptial* from 1946”
- ✧ Lee Cannon-Brown: “Reorienting Boulez’s Early Thought: Dialogues at Paris’s Periphery”

Break (Refreshments)

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Panel 4 *Boulez’s Later Works*

Chair: Gregory D’Alessio, Cleveland State University

- ✧ Catherine Losada: “Spirals in the Harmonic and Formal Structure of *Répons*”
- ✧ Reed Mullican: “Boulez the (Post-)Minimalist? Problems and Connections between American Minimalism and Boulez’s Late Work”
- ✧ John Bateman: “Real-Time Exchanges: Boulez, IRCAM, and Transatlantic Technology”

Lunch Break

Afternoon	Friday, November 14 ■ Mather Mansion, CSU
1:30–2:30 PM	Keynote <i>Lecture 2</i> Chair: Dragana Stojanović-Novičić, University of Arts in Belgrade ✧ Robert Piencikowski: “Boulez <i>after</i> Boulez” Break (Refreshments)
2:45–4:15 PM	Panel 5 <i>Boulez, New York, and the West Coast</i> Chair: Lena Leson, Oberlin College and Conservatory ✧ Joseph Salem: “Pierre Boulez’s Early West-Coast Connections” ✧ Dragana Stojanović-Novičić: “<i>The New York Times</i> Critics on Pierre Boulez” ✧ Sandrine Coyez: “Pierre Boulez and the New York Philharmonic (1969–1977): Visions, Resonances, Legacy” Break (Refreshments)
4:30–5:30 PM	Panel 6 <i>Boulez and Mallarmé</i> Chair: Drake Andersen, Central Connecticut State University ✧ Sara Stebbins: “Boulez after Mallarmé: Aleatory, History, and Musical Form” ✧ Ivana Petković Lozo: “The Phenomenon of Arabesque and the Open Work: Boulez, Mallarmé, Meillassoux, and American Experimentalism” Dinner Break followed by Travel to the Cleveland Museum of Art
Evening	Friday, November 14 ■ Gartner Auditorium, Cleveland Museum of Art
7:30–9:15 PM	Concert <i>Boulez 100: Celebrating the Pierre Boulez Centenary</i> ✧ <i>Incises for Solo Piano</i>, featuring Shuai Wang ✧ <i>Dérive I</i> for Six Players ✧ <i>Dérive II</i> for Eleven Players The “Boulez 100” Ensemble, conducted by Andrew Rindfleisch
Morning	Saturday, November 15 ■ Reinberger Chamber Hall, Severance Music Center
11:30 AM–12:30 PM	<i>Roundtable Conversation</i> ✧ Chaired by Joseph Salem (Associate Professor of Music, The University of Victoria). With Edward Campbell (Emeritus Professor of Music, The University of Aberdeen), Joela Jones (retired Principal Keyboard of TCO), Catherine Losada (Professor of Music Theory, The

University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music), Donald Miller (retired Percussion of TCO), Yaël Sénamaud (Principal Viola of the South Carolina Philharmonic and the Jackson Symphony Orchestra), and Joshua Smith (current Principal Flute of TCO).

Evening	Saturday, November 15 ■ Severance Music Center
6:00–7:30 PM	<i>Visit to the Boulez Exhibition (Grand Foyer)</i> ✎ followed by Informal Reception (Lotus Club)
7:30–9:30 PM	Concert <i>Cleveland Orchestra (Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Concert Hall)</i> ✎ Geoffrey Gordon: <i>Mad Song</i> (U.S. Premiere) ✎ Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 6, “Tragic” The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Tugan Sokhiev Informal Supper at Brasserie L’Albatros (11401 Bellflower Road, Cleveland)

Abstracts

Morning	Thursday, November 13 ■ Drinko Hall, CSU
Geoffrey Burleson	Perspective, Space, and the Paradox of Precise Aleatory: Earle Brown’s <i>4 Systems</i> and Pierre Boulez’s Third Piano Sonata In the scores for Earle Brown’s <i>4 Systems</i> and Pierre Boulez’s Third Piano Sonata, space, proportion, and other graphic elements are used to communicate fundamental aspects of the works’ execution for the performer, as well as projecting influences from other art forms, including poetry, literature, and kinetic sculpture. Boulez noted that the visual and aesthetic elements of the Third Piano Sonata were inspired by Mallarmé’s <i>Un coup de dés</i> , in part via its liberal use of blank space and multi-directional ordering of passages. With <i>4 Systems</i> , Earle Brown wanted to create a sonic equivalent of abstract expressionist art, with freedom of the score’s orientation inspired by Alexander Calder’s mobiles, providing a fluidity of ordering, thickness, and length of segments within the score. Specificity of notation is by far the most salient difference in compositional approach to each piece. The score of <i>4 Systems</i> contains black blocks, lines of various thickness, and dots on a single large page, with the pianist left to determine how to translate these features via specific notes, sonorities, durations, and dynamics. In the “Constellation-Miroir” movement of Sonata No. 3, Boulez has fragments of music floating within large fields of white space on several pages, referring to some passages as “blocs” (containing larger sonorities) and some as “points” (sparser and more pointillistic), creating a kind of commonality with the differences in object density in <i>4 Systems</i> . However, in Boulez’s work, there is highly specific, complex

notation within each section, with the only variables being tempo, depending on the order of passages chosen by the performer. This creates a kind of paradox: a work that is aleatoric via ordering of musical passages, but with great specificity of notation within each passage.

In this lecture-recital, I will highlight challenges and choices for the performer with these works, including determining ordering of sections, pacing, and projection of continuity and coherence, along with the contextual and aesthetic frameworks I discuss above. I will also have the scores themselves projected during my performance of both Earle Brown's *4 Systems*, and the "Constellation-Miroir" movement of Boulez's Sonata No. 3.

Martin Grabow
Angela Ida de
Benedictis

Facsimile Edition of Boulez's *Notations VIII*: "Immense Carillon"

In view of the fact that *Notations VIII* is perhaps the most ambitious project that Boulez worked on in the last decades of his life, there is great interest on the part of cultural institutions and the public in finding out more about the latest status of work on it. There are even serious intentions, supported by Boulez's heirs, to have the unfinished work completed on the basis of these sketches. Reason enough for Angela Ida de Benedictis and me—initiated by the Paul Sacher Foundation—to prepare the publication of an annotated facsimile edition of *Notations VIII*, which will also include the accompanying sketches in order to create a picture as detailed as possible of the composition planned by Boulez.

Willing to present the whole picture and to make the dimensions of the project *Notations VIII* imaginable, it is necessary to consider the entire body of work surrounding *douze notations pour piano* from 1945. A manuscript copy of *douze notations pour piano* contains various annotations that reflect Boulez's initial thoughts on the planned large orchestral version for *notations 8*. Two early arrangements of the piano piece *notations 8*—such as the first orchestration in *Onze Notations* (1946), or in the radio play music for *Le crépuscule de Yang Kouei-Fei* (1957)—reveal striking continuities that are also significant for the planned large orchestral version. The completed large orchestral versions *Notations I–IV* (1980) and *Notations VII* (1999) ultimately show the context in which *Notations VIII* should be considered: it is precisely here that it becomes clear how far the sketches are from completion.

Benjamin Havey

Atomic Sonata: Destroying Form in Boulez's Second Piano Sonata

Boulez's Second Piano Sonata (1946–48) is an infamous and iconic example of postwar piano music. This work attempts to destroy classical forms, and the first movement targets sonata form. The result is musically powerful and historically influential, although previous accounts of this Sonata assert that the destruction of form is inaudible (e.g. Salem 2023 and Campbell 2010). I argue that Boulez destroys sonata form in the first movement by replacing resolution with thematic fusion. My reading of Boulez's Sonata prioritizes audibility of the form through musical narrative and intertextuality, which challenges assumptions about audibility in postwar modernism. Boulez uses expected conventions of sonatas in the exposition and development. The first theme group is defined by thrashing arpeggios and a short-short-short-long rhythm. This rhythmic cell is an audible connection to Beethoven's "Fate Motif." Boulez emphasized the structural importance of rhythm in this work in his correspondence with John Cage, and Charles Rosen noted both the importance of rhythmic cells and intertextual connections to Beethoven (Op. 106 in particular). The second theme is a chorale, distinguishable through texture and tempo changes. After a brief development that explores the first theme, Boulez eases into the recapitulation. Instead of preparing harmonic resolution, the recapitulation oscillates between the theme groups through breathtaking climaxes.

The final bars replace an expected cadence with a climax that combines both themes by presenting the chorale's texture through the arpeggio's rhythmic cell in retrograde (long-short-short-short). These chords are so widely spaced that they must be rolled by the performer (negating the chorale's texture), but rolling these chords creates additional attacks (negating the rhythmic cells). Boulez fuses the material of the chorale and arpeggios in a manner that rips apart the material.

Like Ravel's *La Valse*, Boulez's Sonata both celebrates and undermines a genre through narrative. My work recontextualizes Boulez's early work as an example of Bloomian "Tessera," where Boulez is emptying himself out of his predecessor's influence through completion and antithesis. This reading also provides clarity for non-specialists to perform or write about this Sonata for general audiences.

**Andrew Hosler
Dylan Findley**

Pierre Boulez's *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (1985) for Saxophone and Electronics

Pierre Boulez's *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (1985) is one of the most significant works written for saxophone and electronics. Originally composed for clarinet and dedicated to Luciano Berio for his sixtieth birthday, the piece premiered on October 28, 1985. Since then, versions have been created for bassoon, flute, recorder, and saxophone—the latter premiered by Vincent David on June 23, 2001. The work reflects Boulez's fascination with layered sound, inspired by Paul Claudel's 1924 play *Le soulier de Satin*, in which two projected shadows merge into a single entity. In *Dialogue de l'ombre double*, the live saxophone engages in a dialogue with a pre-recorded counterpart, creating a dynamic interplay between past and present sounds. This proposal presents a live performance of the work (approximately 30 minutes), followed by a 20-minute discussion with the performers on the interpretative and technical challenges of the piece, particularly regarding electronic elements.

This performance serves to honor Pierre Boulez and Luciano Berio's centenary.

Afternoon

Thursday, November 13 ■ Mather Mansion, CSU

Valentina Bensi

"Zwei grosse B": Boulez and Berio Building New Artistic Paths in North America from the 50s through the 70s

Pierre Boulez (1925–2016) and Luciano Berio (1925–2003) have often been identified as exemplars of "modern parallel lives" (Restagno, 1995). Their shared penchant for *épater les bourgeois* marked them as emblematic figures of the generation that intellectually shaped post–World War II musical Europe. Particularly in their early careers, a strong appeal to science served as a common viaticum for the paths of the "two Bs" (Montecchi, 2004). Their parallel trajectories—as "two double shadows" (Morelli, 2009)—can also be seen in their roles as artist-entrepreneurs who successfully established enduring institutions that significantly influenced the cultural landscape of their time.

Both Boulez and Berio were drawn not only to European artistic currents but also to the allure of the New World. In the 1950s, Boulez toured North America, while Berio, after attending Luigi Dallapiccola's courses at Tanglewood in 1951 and participating in the Darmstadt Summer School—where he met Boulez in 1953—was deeply impressed by the electronic experiments of Ussachevsky and Luening in the United States. Recognizing the transformative potential of new technologies, Berio went on to found the Studio di Fonologia at RAI in Milan and the Tempo Reale center in Florence.

Their shared aspiration to foster a transcultural dialogue between Europe and the

United States led both composers to accept prominent academic and artistic positions in the United States. Boulez lectured at Harvard University in 1963, while Berio served as Professor of Composition at the Juilliard School of Music (1965–71). Boulez was also appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra (1968–72) and Music Director of the New York Philharmonic (1971–77). In 1967, Berio founded the Juilliard Ensemble, which was conducted by Boulez (Henehan, 1971). During this period, Boulez gave numerous concerts and recordings with American orchestras; the clarity and rigor of his performances had a profound influence on subsequent generations of conductors and performers (Adams, 2005). My study highlights the enduring collaboration between Boulez and Berio in North America, as well as their mutual tributes throughout their careers—for example, Boulez conducting Berio’s works; Berio directing the electroacoustic division of IRCAM (1974–80); and Boulez dedicating works to Berio, and vice versa.

Colin Tucker

“All the Art of the Past Must Be Destroyed:” Temporality, Dispossession, and Racialization in the Discourse of Pierre Boulez and John Cage

Pierre Boulez’s polemical public discourse has been widely discussed in non-scholarly settings, and scholars such as Susan McClary and Georgina Born have connected this discourse to issues of institutional power. However, these perspectives have yet to interrogate the composer’s polemics through decolonial frameworks. My paper offers a decolonial perspective on Boulez’s calls for destroying art of the past, by connecting this rhetoric to the composer’s interest in Western anthropology’s dispossessive relations to non-European cultural materials. Specifically, I proceed from decolonial study scholars Denise Ferreira da Silva’s and Ariella Azoulay’s analyses of the racialization of temporality, in order to show how Western modernity inscribes cultural practices as Primitive and Modern in order to justify their dispossession and protection, respectively. I read Boulez’s published correspondence (1954–70) and friendship with André Schaeffner—administrator at the anthropological Musée de l’Homme and participant in colonial expeditions that dispossessed thousands of African cultural “objects”—as indexing the dispossession of cultural materials designated as Primitive. I then position Boulez’s urgent exhortations to destroy “all the art of the past” in relation to anthropology’s dispossessions, in order to show how the composer’s rhetoric is haunted by these actions, and yet re-enacts and attempts to reconcile with them, even while obfuscating their colonial implications. In order to position Boulez in relation to US experimental music, I find that the composer’s attempt to reconcile musical modernism with Western modernity’s violent racialization of temporality aligns closely with the writing of his friend and correspondent John Cage, specifically the *Lecture on Nothing* (1949), while being oriented towards different histories of colonial dispossession. I argue that reading Boulez’s abstract rhetoric of destroying art of the past against his preoccupation with anthropology’s actual dispossession of culture reveals broader political horizons that this rhetoric responds to, reiterates, and obscures. In conclusion, by de-compartmentalizing Boulez’s polemical discourse from his anthropological interests, I open up unprecedented and unsettling perspectives on a canonical figure in musical modernism, in order to activate analytic avenues for disarticulating musical modernism from racial-colonial regimes.

Craig Parker

Boulez and Lawrence Morton: Portrait of a Collaboration

Lawrence Morton (1904–87) was a significant figure in music in Los Angeles from his arrival there in 1940 until his death. Originally a silent movie accompanist and film composer, he became a prolific critic writing on film music and contemporary music. As impresario, Morton was executive director of the Monday Evening

Concerts (1954–71) and director of the Ojai Music Festival (intermittently from the 1950s until the 1980s), as well as curator of music at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

This presentation details the personal and professional Boulez/Morton relationship. Introduced by Stravinsky in the mid-1950s, they remained friends until Morton's death. Morton facilitated Boulez's first U.S. conducting engagement, the American premiere of *Le Marteau sans Maître* on the Monday Evening Concerts in 1957. In 1963, Boulez conducted *Improvisations sur Mallarmé* and played piano on his *Structures, livre I* on an MEC concert. His final appearance during Morton's tenure with MEC was the world premiere of *Éclat* in 1965. Details of the rehearsals for these performances and the works' receptions will be enumerated. Boulez's compositions appeared on nine other concerts during Morton's MEC tenure.

Boulez was music director at Ojai seven times between 1967 and 2003, the first two during Morton's leadership. Special attention will be given to Boulez's 1970 directorship, which featured 19 compositions, none by Americans. This resulted in public outcry from experimentalists such as Lucier, Oliveros, and Riley, followed by Boulez's response, thus somewhat overshadowing Boulez's music making.

Primary source material for this paper are documents in three extensive collections at the UCLA Department of Special Collections: the Lawrence Morton Papers, the Lawrence Morton Collection relating to the Monday Evening Concerts, and the Ojai Festival Collection. In addition to articles on Boulez and reviews of his concerts, these include unpublished correspondence between Boulez and Morton relating to his concert appearances in Southern California as well as more personal matters. Also of significance for this paper are Lawrence Morton's oral history interviews at UCLA and remembrances of the Morton/Boulez collaborations by some of the frequent performers such as bassoonist Don Christlieb and percussionist/composer William Kraft.

Drake Andersen

Hearing Pierre Boulez in the Music of Earle Brown: Co-Creative Scenes, 1956–61

Pierre Boulez served as an important intermediary for generations of American composers seeking to forge connections with musicians and institutions in Europe. Boulez's support for Earle Brown in the 1950s and 1960s was especially pivotal. During this period, Boulez would become integrally involved in Brown's creative output and the scope of his professional opportunities, furnishing letters of introduction, serving as a receptive interlocutor, and even commissioning work from Brown. While Boulez's impact on Brown's music and career is undeniable, it is also difficult to characterize, alternately evoking and evading conventional images of collaboration, competition, and friendship.

In this presentation, I evaluate Boulez's contribution to Brown's music from approximately 1956–61 through a framework I term co-creation. Drawing on insights from recent scholarship in music inflected by actor-network theory (e.g., Piekut 2011; Iverson 2018; and Dohoney 2022), co-creation describes how cultural objects such as musical scores and performances result from intentional and unconscious confluences of dispersed actors, mediations, and practices. This case study traces Boulez's role in Brown's professional progress from his first visit to Europe in 1956 to the triumphant premiere of *Available Forms I* at Darmstadt in 1961.

Among several examples of co-creation to be discussed is Brown's *Pentathis* (1958), a work commissioned by Boulez that represents something of an outlier in Brown's catalog. A fully-notated twelve-tone composition, *Pentathis* is bookended by two more aesthetically radical works—*Four More* (1956), a physically mobile indeterminate score; and the partially graphic score *Hodograph I* (1959). I argue that Boulez can be understood as a co-creator of Brown's composition insofar as Brown, consciously or unconsciously, anticipated Boulez's preferred aesthetic criteria,

including the omission of indeterminate and graphic elements, and the use of serial compositional methods that Brown had otherwise abandoned. Additionally, I draw on Georgina Born's notion of "social aesthetics" to describe how the aesthetic standards of influential figures like Boulez could circulate in the tacit domain to take on regulative force (Born et al. 2017).

Morning

Friday, November 14 ■ Mather Mansion, CSU

Nicolas Jortie

The First Version of Pierre Boulez's *Le visage nuptial* from 1946

In the catalog of Pierre Boulez's works, *Le visage nuptial* (no. 27 of A. Galliari's catalog) occupies a special place for more than one reason. While it took the form of a richly orchestrated cantata from 1951–52 and even more so in the "final" version of 1989, its first version, written very early by a composer aged twenty-one in 1946, presented a very different profile. Another particularity: the ensemble is very limited, including a solo voice (instead of two in later versions), a piano, two Ondes Martenot, and a "drum kit," which brings it surprisingly close to *Le marteau sans maître*, even in the continuities carried from instrument to instrument. We indeed find the same type of continuum, perhaps less subtle than the combination of Marteau, but even more evident: the piano and percussion share the percussive character; the onde and the piano share the keyboard; the onde and the voice share the continuity of the sound emitted. The cycle, apparently written in one go between October and November 1946, is no less ambitious in terms of its composition. We remain fascinated by a work which, although it shares most of its substance with the cycle that remained in the composer's catalogue, gives the feeling of an intention closer to a certain form of expressionism.

On January 14th, with the authorization of Pierre Boulez's estate and under the supervision of the Boulez committee, I edited and conducted the reconstruction of *Le visage nuptial* in its original version at the CNSMDP. This was part of an educational workshop that benefitted from the exceptional commitment of its participants. It was agreed that the goal was not to "reintegrate" these pieces—which the composer had designated as "withdrawn from the catalogue"—but rather to bring new perspective to these works, which already display remarkable musical insight in their composition and carry significant historical weight. They highlight the importance of the Ondes Martenot, a pioneering electronic instrument, and mark Boulez's early discovery of non-European musical traditions, clearly present in this work.

Lee Cannon-
Brown

Reorienting Boulez's Early Thought: Dialogues at Paris's Periphery

Pierre Boulez's early thought is typically situated in relation to New Music's most prominent figures, such as Olivier Messiaen, René Leibowitz, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and John Cage. Yet his ideas also bore the unmistakable trace of a composer at Paris's urban and social periphery: the Russian émigré, Ivan Wyschnegradsky (1893–1979) (Campbell 2013, 70–73). I uncover the events that led Boulez to absorb Wyschnegradsky's ideas about quarter tones and musical space, as he visited the latter in a working-class Russian enclave of Paris's fifteenth arrondissement. By bringing an intercultural and inter-class perspective to these composers' dialogues in the late 1940s and early '50s, I disrupt conceptions—especially in North America—of Boulez as a product of Paris's cultural mainstream. Boulez first encountered Wyschnegradsky through Messiaen. In a 1937 concert review, Messiaen praised the "clarity" of intervals in Wyschnegradsky's music, and in 1938, he composed *Deux monodies* for Ondes Martenot, where he employed a

quarter-tone notation and scale that Wyschnegradsky had described in his 1932 *Manuel de l'harmonie*. Later, Messiaen enlisted Boulez to play piano in concerts of Wyschnegradsky's quarter-tone music, and he recommended that Boulez visit Wyschnegradsky personally to absorb his ideas.

Boulez deepened his relationship to Wyschnegradsky through the New Music patron Pyotr Suvchinsky. Suvchinsky and Wyschnegradsky shared much in common: Both were Russian émigrés in Paris, and both espoused a nationalist ideology known as Eurasianism. Drawing on Russian-language letters between these two men, preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, I uncover how Wyschnegradsky read aloud to Boulez from an unpublished treatise, “La loi de la pansonorité,” and how Boulez attempted to reconcile Wyschnegradsky's ideas with serialism.

Wyschnegradsky ended up informing not only Boulez's quarter-tone music (discussed in Strinz 2016) but also core tenets of Boulez's famous Darmstadt lectures. Boulez never cited Wyschnegradsky, and the two composers eventually broke contact, with Wyschnegradsky remaining an outsider to Paris's New Music scene. Yet Boulez evidently took much from his émigré colleague, as archival documents attest. To understand the full context of Boulez's thought, musicologists must look beyond the cultural and intellectual mainstream, with which Boulez himself outwardly identified.

Catherine Losada

Spirals in the Harmonic and Formal Structure of *Répons*

A landmark work that had instant appeal for audiences in the United States and across the world, Pierre Boulez's *Répons* (1980–82) was written to showcase the technological potential of IRCAM. In a 1985 interview with Josef Häusler, Boulez mentioned that the most important development in *Répons* with respect to his earlier works, was how he was able to incorporate electronics without constraining the energy caused by the unpredictability of live performance. This was one of the most striking and influential features of this work's reception. It was partly achieved by harnessing technology that permitted capturing sounds during live performance and transforming them both in real time (Boulez 1985,8), and according to their inner structure. This aspect of the work, illustrated in the stunning first entrance of the soloists, has received quite a bit of attention in the literature. (Boulez and Gerzso 1988; Nattiez 1987, 2004; Deliège 1998).

Importantly, however, in the same interview, Boulez invokes the tape part from the fourth section and final section of the first version of *Répons*, as an important element in achieving his goal of combining electronics and live performance. He describes it as “a type of background” (p. 7), where “all pitches are fixed to one chord.” (p. 12). In this paper, I will show the exact means through which the tape and concurrent orchestral parts in *Répons* achieve a background pitch organization, which was key to Boulez's goal of creating this dynamic synergy of electronics and live performance. Along the way, this discussion will also clarify the importance of the concept of the spiral to this piece. Clearly embodied at the aesthetic level in the open-ended compositional approach, I will show how it also functions at the technical, pitch generation level and at a larger formal level. Ultimately, I will discuss how the piece builds on aesthetic concepts Boulez started to develop in the late 1950s, which responded to the work of American artists like Alexander Calder. In this way, I will elucidate interesting aspects of its harmonic structure, its overall form, and their relationship to Boulez's broader aesthetic outlook and stylistic development.

Boulez the (Post-)Minimalist? Problems and Connections between American Minimalism and Boulez's Late Work

Boulez criticized American minimalism in his writings and interviews (Boulez 1984, Culshaw 2008). However, I argue that his compositions from the late 70s onward, upon close inspection, share a surprising number of techniques and aesthetics with minimalism and postminimalism, creating an intriguing disconnect between Boulez's apparent point of view and the reality of his compositions. Boulez's interactions with spectralism (Goldman 2010), the influence of Carter, Ligeti, and Nancarrow on Boulez's later rhythmic thought (Albèra 2001, Lin 2012), and minimalism as a reaction against serialism (Bernard 2003, Potter et al. 2013) are well-documented. However, the question of how and to what extent Boulez's late work connects to (post-)minimalism remains to be fully explored.

I argue that Boulez's late work is not only impacted but defined by the presence of minimalism. This manifests in four ways, each of which indicate an aesthetic increasingly oriented toward perception: 1) a fascination with repetitive structures and periodicity, 2) a simplification of the rhythmic vocabulary compared to Boulez's earlier work and his contemporaries, 3) and a greater interest in the stability of pitch centrality and constant pulse.

To demonstrate, I will examine Boulez's writings, situating his work in context (Boulez 1987, 2018). Drawing upon existing analyses (Coult 2013, Goldman 2008, Lin 2012, O'Hagan 2016), I examine some of Boulez's late works – especially *sur Incises*, the orchestral *Notations*, *Dérive 2*, and *Répons*, comparing them to related techniques and textures in works by Reich, Adams, Wolfe, and Eastman.

Throughout, I compare techniques of “looping” (Gann 2017) and phasing in (post-)minimalism with Boulez's own conception and translation of these techniques in his own style. Whether consciously or not, Boulez's late work acts as a qualifying response to minimalism, creating surprising intertextual connections that may challenge our pre-existing conceptions of a supposedly uncompromising modernist.

Real-Time Exchanges: Boulez, IRCAM, and Transatlantic Technology

Pierre Boulez's IRCAM has long been a pivotal site for the intersection of Western art music aesthetics, technology, and *recherche musicale*. Among its key achievements is the development of real-time sound processing, which was used extensively in many of Boulez's electroacoustic works, including *Répons*, *Anthèmes II*, and *...explosante-fixe...*. While much scholarship has focused on the resonant sound worlds and formal organization of Boulez's electroacoustic works, this paper shifts the attention to the cultural and technological exchange between IRCAM and Silicon Valley. Central to this inquiry is IRCAM's adoption of Steve Jobs's NeXT computer as the foundation of its IRCAM Signal Processing Workstation (ISPW), which integrated IRCAM-designed digital signal processing boards into the base architecture of the American-made NeXT computer. This was notably a platform Boulez used for versions of *...explosante-fixe...* and *Anthèmes II*.

I argue that the transatlantic interactions that shaped the creation of the ISPW directly influenced the electroacoustic vocabulary available to Boulez and other IRCAM composers, placing their work within the broader dynamics of globalization. This stands in productive tension with Boulez's own approach to electronics, which often emphasized the autonomy of the musical idea over the technological means of its realization, privileging the future transmission of the work over the ephemeral tools of the moment.

This paper draws on archival research I conducted at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) during the summers of 2024 and 2025, which provided insight into the adoption of the ISPW at IRCAM and its use in Boulez's late compositions. I draw on Jennifer Iverson's methodology in *Electronic Inspirations*, noting its emphasis on the

networked dynamics between people and technology in shaping the avant-garde. By applying this framework to the IRCAM-Silicon Valley dynamic, I situate Boulez and his late compositions within broader cultural dynamics. Ultimately, this paper argues for the importance of analyzing IRCAM and Boulez in terms of networked relations, showing how Boulez's music sheds light on discourses surrounding the impact of technological exchange on late-twentieth-century art music.

Afternoon

Friday, November 14 ■ Mather Mansion, CSU

Joseph Salem

Pierre Boulez's Early West-Coast Connections

Pierre Boulez's early connections with the USA were disproportionately influenced by a small group of supporters in and around Los Angeles. It is still noteworthy that a composer with strong ties to John Cage, Edgard Varèse, and numerous other luminaires based on the East Coast would find strong and consistent support out west. This is particularly true given that Boulez's earliest trips to North America (with the Renaud-Barrault company) were focused on the East coast, and that his later conducting affiliations were also largely focused within the eastern half of the country (New York, Cleveland, and Chicago).

Various records suggest the Boulez's early connections to Los Angeles were in large part due to the consistent advocacy of a core group of individuals—at the time, a degree of support matched only by a few similar advocates in Europe. Starting with the Monday Evening Concerts and continuing with the Ojai Music Festival, Boulez received nearly yearly performances of his works from the mid-1950s through the 1960s—a period during which the performance of his compositions was otherwise most strongly tied to his professional roles across the Atlantic in London, Baden-Baden, Basel, Darmstadt, and Donaueschingen. This culminated in what was likely the intended dedication of one of his most celebrated works—*Éclat*—to Lawrence Morton, a close friend of Boulez's, a member of Stravinsky's and Robert Craft's inner circle, and a professional liaison for the Monday Evening Concerts and the Ojai festival.

In my presentation, I will review some Boulez's connections to Los Angeles during the 1950s and 60s, highlighting evidence of early advocacy for his work as a composer and, later, as a conductor. Throughout, I will suggest Boulez had a particular fondness for visiting southern California that may have caused him to prioritize his work there regardless of financial gain and despite his rising stature as a composer and conductor on the international stage.

Dragana
Stojanović-
Novičić

***The New York Times* Critics on Pierre Boulez**

This paper aims to explain and analyze how music compositions and the conducting career of Pierre Boulez (1925–2016) were interpreted and understood in articles, critics, and reviews written by the music, dance, art, etc. critics at *The New York Times*. We tend to identify a network of qualifications, observations, and assessments regarding Boulez's creative output and conducting style as documented in the newspaper. Our analysis will trace the critics' views of him from the 1950s to the present, compared to narratives from scholarly journal articles and books on Boulez. In the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, Boulez was often under contract as an orchestral conductor, spending significant periods in the United States. His compositions were also performed in the country, leading to ongoing commentary on both his compositional work and conducting achievements. From Boulez's initial encounters with American audiences, critics at *The New York Times* framed their reviews by characterizing him as one of the most significant representatives of

European avant-garde music. Pierre Boulez was observed comparatively with John Cage (1912–92): Cage’s experimental music versus Boulez’s (European) avant-garde approach. The critics employed specific language to emphasize the structural aspects of Boulez’s compositions. At times, their treatment of Boulez may seem clichéd, as he was frequently described as somewhat strict in his artistic concepts, focusing on the solidity and construction of his works. Regarding his conducting, Boulez received praise for his ability to elicit precision from the orchestras he directed. Critics respected him as Leonard Bernstein’s (1918–90) successor at the New York Philharmonic (from 1971), noting his continuation of spatially designed concerts, such as the “Rug Concerts” at Avery Fisher Hall. The critics recognized this spatial approach as a reflection of the Woodstock vibe; a Woodstock took place just two years before Boulez took over this role. Boulez’s death was accompanied by a dignified obituary in *The New York Times*, and to this day, *The New York Times* critics curiously examine his legacy.

Sandrine Coyez

Pierre Boulez and the New York Philharmonic (1969–1977): Visions, Resonances, Legacy

On June 1, 1969, the New York Philharmonic announced the appointment of Pierre Boulez as its Music Director—a prestigious position and arguably the ultimate achievement in a conductor’s career, as described by his predecessor Leonard Bernstein. However, Boulez had a more radical and innovative vision of this role, shaped by the mission he set for himself: to transform and develop the orchestra’s repertoire by redefining its very role in the musical landscape of the twentieth century. Boulez envisioned the orchestra and the concert as active agents in musical evolution, capable of embodying the sonic and aesthetic innovations of their time, which implied a new approach to sound.

During his tenure, the New York Philharmonic regularly served as a testing ground for both sound and social experimentation, familiarizing audiences to musical modernity, sometimes necessitating the deconstruction of formal audience codes. A few weeks after his arrival, on October 1, 1971, Boulez launched the *Prospective Encounters* (October 7–12), a series of concerts that, from 7 p.m. to midnight, featured contemporary American composers, including Mario Davidovsky, George Crumb, Jeffrey Levine, and Sydney Hodkinson.

Then, in 1973, Boulez took his commitment even further by conducting the *Rug Concerts*, where the orchestra performed in unconventional venues free from traditional stages and hierarchical formalities. In these settings, the cosmopolitan and often novice New York audience sat on the floor, discovering the great works of Igor Stravinsky and Anton Webern alongside contemporary pieces by Elliott Carter, experiencing a more intimate musical encounter.

Boulez’s tenure represented a key moment for America’s oldest orchestra and a turning point in approaches to audience development and listening practices, involving a profound reflection on the role of music in society, on how to evolve musical practices and on bringing a wider audience to an understanding of modern music in the United States.

This paper aims to examine Pierre Boulez’s influence on the New York Philharmonic from 1969 to 1977, focusing on his impact both within the institution and on the broader landscape of contemporary music in the United States. It will explore the resonances among archival materials—including written documents, audiovisual recordings, sound sources, and musical works—to analyze the contemporary repertoire programmed, the commissions and premieres, as well as Boulez’s own compositions from the period. The analysis will also consider his interpretive approaches, critical writings, and aesthetic philosophy, alongside the reception by musicians, cultural institutions, and the wider public as reflected in press coverage. Ultimately, it aims to reveal the subtle interactions between Boulez’s multiple roles as composer, conductor, and artistic director within the New York

Philharmonic, exploring their reciprocal influence and the intricate dynamics that shaped the evolution of contemporary music in this unique context.

Sara Stebbins

Boulez after Mallarmé: Aleatory, History, and Musical Form

An early essay by Boulez on the homage paid to Bach in modernist musical discourse concludes with a borrowed line, a historical debt of Boulez's own: "toute pensée émet un coup des dés"—"every thought emits a throw of dice," the final line from Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. Thus, what is essentially an essay on historiography, the reconstitution of musical tradition in the twentieth century, ends with reference to the most emblematic experimental gesture of a poet conventionally thought of as perhaps the highest modernist of the French tradition, whose experiments initiated a radical break with the history of verse.

Examination of Mallarmé's orientation towards the history of his own medium reveals more nuance: in writings on his conception of *vers libre*, he mounts a serious engagement with the history of French poetry, through which his poetics are constituted against the received metric form of the alexandrine. Moreover, Mallarmé's intervention is made specifically by way of the relationship of poetry to music: drawing on the musical avant-garde of his time—particularly the thought of Wagner—Mallarmé envisions a poetic language whose musicality has less straightforwardly to do with meter or rhythm, and more with the expression of an idea, following from Wagner's through-composed settings of his libretti. In what relation does Mallarmé's musicalized poetics stand to Boulez's own conception of experimentalism, and its relationship to chance? This paper brings together two strands of existing scholarship: historical accounts of the development of the concept of aleatory in Euro-American experimentalism as it arose out of twentieth century musical, scientific, and intellectual history; and writings on Boulez's reception of Mallarméan poetics. I argue that an understanding of Boulez's well-documented fascination with Mallarmé illuminates the composer's singular, often contrarian attitude towards the development of aleatory in his time, shedding new light on compositional problems that beset him as well as his contemporaries: the determination of musical form by historical development, on one hand, and by a listener's experience on the other; and how this relationship of form, experience, and history is subtended by that between chance and necessity.

Ivana Petković
Lozo

The Phenomenon of Arabesque and the Open Work: Boulez, Mallarmé, Meillassoux, and American Experimentalism

This paper examines Pierre Boulez's concept of the arabesque in dialogue with the American avant-garde, with a particular focus on notions of open form and indeterminacy as theorized and practiced by John Cage and Morton Feldman. While Boulez's compositions—most notably *Pli selon pli*—embody a meticulous integration of Stéphane Mallarmé's symbolist poetics with a rigorously articulated formal logic, the American composers pursued radically different paths. Their experimental approaches privileged contingency, silence, and fluid form, often in deliberate contrast to Boulez's structural precision and philosophical density.

Drawing upon Quentin Meillassoux's reading of Mallarmé in *The Number and the Siren*, this paper argues that Boulez's deployment of the arabesque—as an aesthetic principle of recursive variation, discontinuity, and suspended teleology—offers a significant conceptual bridge to American explorations of open form. Through the phenomenon of the arabesque, Boulez negotiates between determinacy and indeterminacy. In that space, indeterminacy is folded into compositional intent, positioning his compositions as sites of controlled openness, distinct from yet resonant with Cage's and Feldman's more radical indeterminate practices.

This transatlantic dialogue is contextualized by examining Boulez's correspondence with Cage and his intellectual interactions with Feldman, revealing nuanced influences and oppositions. While Cage sought liberation from structure through chance operations and Feldman embraced forms defined by subtle variations and contemplative openness, Boulez pursued openness within a carefully managed structural framework. The arabesque thus emerges as a central metaphor articulating Boulez's complex relationship with the American avant-garde: neither wholly rejecting nor fully embracing their ideals but rather assimilating them into a distinctly European modernist sensibility. In other words, the arabesque becomes a compositional and philosophical gesture reflecting deeper cultural dialogues about modernity, authorship, and aesthetic autonomy. In Boulez's hands, it traces a vortex of tension between structure and openness, resonating with yet transforming the ethos of American experimentalism. The arabesque thus becomes a figure of thought in motion—one that enacts, rather than resolves, the tensions between constraint and openness across the Atlantic.
