

Matt Kline – Conductor, Double Bass

2nd DMA Recital

May 25, 2018 - 7:00 PM CPMC Concert Hall

Le Marteau sans maître

by Pierre Boulez

Avant "l'Artisanat furieux"

Commentaire I de "Bourreaux de solitude"

"L'Artisanat furieux"

Commentaire II de "bourreaux de solitude"

"Bel Édifice et les pressentiments", version première

"Bourreaux de solitude"

Après "l'Artisanat furieux"

Commentaire III de "bourreaux de solitude"

"Bel Édifice et les pressentiments", double

Alice Teyssier - Voice

Michael Matsuno – Flute

Annabelle Terbetski - Viola

Colin McAllister - Guitar

Ryan Nestor - Vibraphone

Dustin Donahue - Xylophone

Sean Dowgray – Percussion

Intermission

Romantic Side-Lights

by Eva-Maria Houben

Erik Carlson - Violin

Plainsound Counterpoint – Five 23-Limit Harmony Intonation Studies ***

by Wolfgang von Schweinitz

Movements from the Houben will be performed before and after each of
the movements from the Von Schweinitz

Text for *Le Marteau sans maître*

Poems by René Char

L'Artisanat furieux

La roulotte rouge au bord du clou
Et cadavre dans le panier
Et chevaux de labours dans le fer à cheval
Je rêve la tête sur la pointe de mon couteau le Pérou.

The Furious Craftsmanship

The red caravan on the edge of the nail
And corpse in the basket
And plowhorses in the horseshoe
I dream the head on the point of my knife Peru.

Bourreaux de solitude

Le pas s'est éloigné le marcheur s'est tu
Sur le cadran de l'Imitation
Le Balancier lance sa charge de granit réflexe.

Hangmen of solitude

The step has gone away, the walker has fallen silent
On the dial of Imitation
The Pendulum throws its instinctive load of granite.

Bel Édifice et les pressentiments

J'écoute marcher dans mes jambes
La mer morte vagues par dessus tête
Enfant la jetée promenade sauvage
Homme l'illusion imitée
Des yeux purs dans les bois
Cherchent en pleurant la tête habitable.

Stately building and presentiments

I hear marching in my legs
The dead sea waves overhead
Child the wild seaside pier
Man the imitated illusion
Pure eyes in the woods
Are searching in tears for a habitable head.

In 1954 Theodor Adorno published *Das Altern der Neuen Musik* which included particularly pointed remarks about the current generation of post war composers. These incendiary statements were mainly critiquing the compositional style of serialism championed by composers associated with the Darmstadt school. In the forward to this text, Adorno specifically mentions *Le Marteau sans maître* by Pierre Boulez as being exempt from this criticism. Adorno clearly heard something in this piece that separated it from other new compositions coming out of Europe in the 1950's. From the very first performance of *Le Marteau*, Pierre Boulez's most iconic work has always been considered one of the most unique and uncompromising works of the 20th century. Many composers shared Adorno's respect of this new work by the young Pierre Boulez. Igor Stravinsky described the music as "a new and

wonderfully supple kind of music" and the composer George Benjamin described the work as "a breakthrough. It is a work in which you can also hear the profound influence of extra-European music, above all from Asia and Africa. This radically alters the sonority and the music's sense of time and direction, as well as its expressive viewpoint and ethos".

My own journey with *Le Marteau* and the music of Pierre Boulez began when I was fifteen years old. I was in a CD shop in Austin, Texas and purchased the Deutsche Grammophon recording of the piece with Boulez conducting Ensemble Intercontemporain. (The cover had a particularly impressive photo of the commanding composer/conductor and at the time this is what sold me.) I remember hearing this music for the very first time and being absolutely baffled by what I was listening to. High modernist music can be challenging for anyone, but as a teenager I was struck by how impenetrable this piece seemed. I listened to the work obsessively over and over again, trying to challenge myself to understand this riddle of a piece. Over time I became in love with this work because it was so completely other from anything else I had in my music library. It is now many years later, and I have had many more experiences with contemporary music. However, at the first rehearsal of this *Le Marteau*, I could not help but think that this work still seems as bizarre and other all of these years later. It has been an absolute joy to bring this masterpiece to life and be a part of a music that is so special.

Movement 1 - Avant "l'Artisanat furieux"

The organization of the movements and instrumentation of *Le Marteau* has many similarities to *Pierrot Lunaire* by Arnold Schoenberg. Each movement has a different combination of instruments and the work has a modular construction around the text. The first movement is an instrumental setting of the text that will be sung in the third movement. The movement is for Flute, Viola, Guitar and Vibraphone. Similar to the very short 7th movement, the opening of this piece jumps out in a fury of energy and then just seems to stop as if it has hit a wall. This movement really highlights the guitar and viola has having the connection of being both a percussive and lyrical instrument.

Movement 2 - Commentaire I de "Bourreaux de solitude"

The 2nd movement is another instrumental commentary and is a prelude to the text that will be sung in movement 6. The first part of the movement has a slow hypnotic texture created by the viola, hand drums and xylophone. These instruments create a soft fragmented dance while the flute seems to improvise above the texture. In the second half of the movement, the flute disappears and the three remaining instruments play very sharp and manic rhythms. Eventually the flute joins again, and brings the music back the mysterious dance from the first half. This movement is for Flute, Viola, Xylophone and percussion.

Movement 3 - "L'Artisanat furieux"

The vocalist finally comes forward in this movement but for now is only in the context of a short duo for flute and voice. For me, this movement is one of the most elegant pieces Boulez ever wrote. He is able to turn the very angular and rigid material from the first movement into extremely lush vocal lines. This movement really highlights Boulez's French sensibility of compositional sound and shows a composer who is indebted to Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen.

Movement 4 - Commentaire II de "bourreaux de solitude"

This movement is the second instrumental commentary on the text that will occur in movement 6. For me, this is by far the most difficult movement to conduct and was a large reason of why I wanted to work on this piece. From the very first bar, the music seems to explode and then just stop. The entire movement is a very complex organization of fermatas. Boulez purposely puts the fermatas in very awkward metric positions in order for the conductor to make specific technical decision. This is not just an exercise in notational complexity however. The result is a type of hyper awareness and subtle freedom of energy that comes from each pause and restart of each phrase. The movement is for Viola, Guitar, Vibraphone, Xylophone and percussion.

Movement 5 - "Bel Édifice et les pressentiments", version première

This might be one of the more strange movements ever written, even in the context of *Le Marteau*. The movement is a setting of the poem "Bel Édifice et les pressentiments" and is scored for Vocalist, Flute and Viola. There is rarely a bar that does not have some kind of extreme change in tempo and the result is a music that never gets settled. There are very strange moments of text setting when the vocalist states "Morte" (death) and the ensemble briefly responds with a jagged, cackling dance.

Movement 6 – "Bourreaux de solitude"

After two instrumental commentaries, the poem "Bourreaux de solitude" is finally presented by the voice. This movement is very slow, and surprisingly sensual harmonies emerge from the texture. For me this movement anticipates the striking transparent orchestration Boulez would achieve in later works such as the orchestral piece *Pli Selon Pli*. This is the first movement where all of the musicians perform together.

Movement 7 - Après "l'Artisanat furieux"

This movement is a short interlude that is also a commentary of the text from the third movement. It is even shorter than the brief first movement and has the effect of an extraneous thought that emerges but disappears quickly. This movement is for Flute, Guitar and Vibraphone.

Movement 8 - Commentaire III de "bourreaux de solitude"

This movement is the third and final commentary of the text from the 6th movement. Structurally this gives the entire piece a beautiful arch because the form of the movement is the inverse of the 2nd movement. (Which is the first commentary of this poem.) Like the 2nd half of the second movement, the piece begins with wild and noisy music in the percussion. The flute is present, but only plays single notes underneath the mallet instruments. This music quickly comes to a stop and the music then moves onto slow floating textures where the flute spins out the harmonies from previous movements. The movement is for Flute, Xylophone, Vibraphone, Percussion.

Movement 9 – "Bel Édifice et les pressentiments", double

The final movement brings the entire ensemble together for some of the most dramatic music Pierre Boulez would ever write. This movement serves as a true conclusion to the composition. The music starts with the vocalist singing freely in a quasi recitative style and a part of the text is present with the Schoenberg inspired technique of Sprechstimme. Eventually the vocalist abandons the text entirely and retreats into the instrumental texture with humming. The piece ends with a very powerful epilogue scored for gongs and flute.