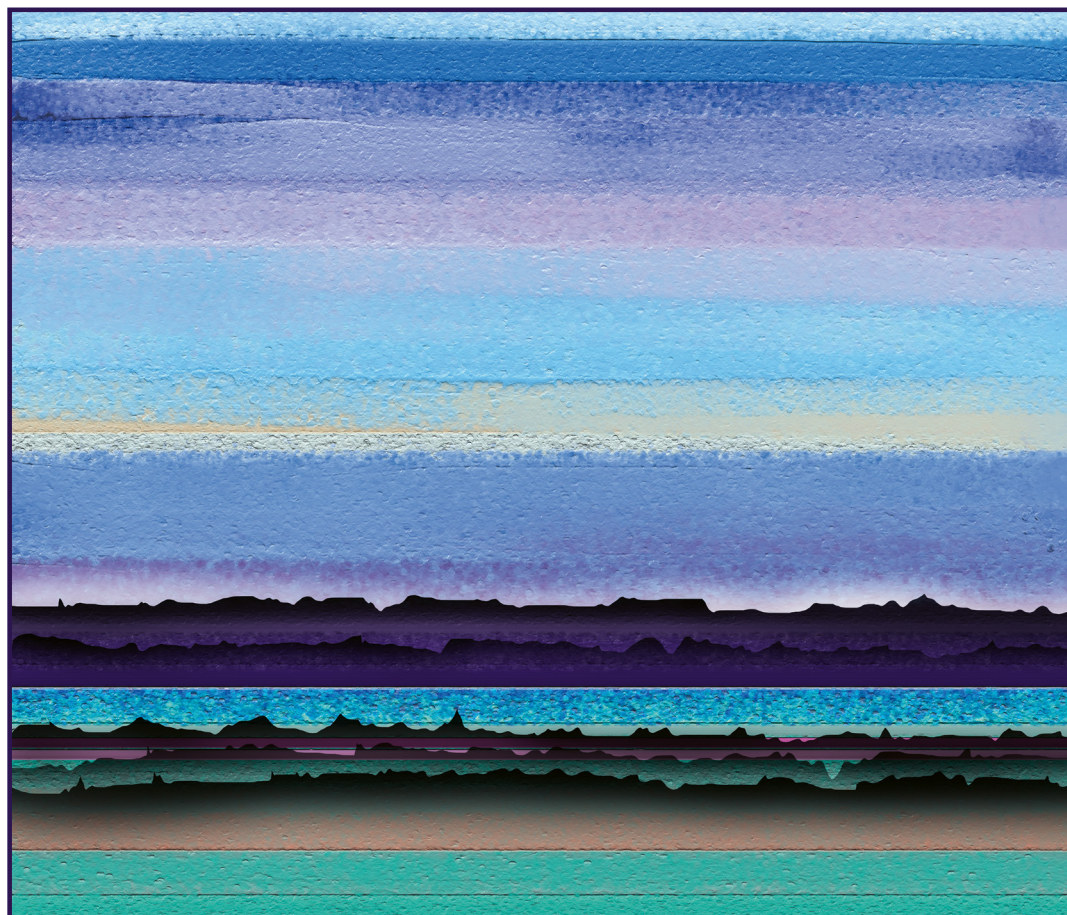




Pierre
BOULEZ
(1925–2016)

Incises

Ralph van Raat, Piano



Pierre BOULEZ (1925–2016)

Incises for piano (2001 version)

Incises was composed after a period of more than 30 years, during which Boulez did not write any works for piano solo. A double commission was the driving force for returning to the instrument: the Umberto Micheli Piano Competition of Milan asked for a short compulsory work to be performed in 1994, and Boulez was committed to write a new work for his friend Paul Sacher's birthday in 1996. The initial version, as performed during the competition, only lasted a few minutes, despite the many notes that the pianist had to play. The notes of the piece were mainly derived from transpositions of the symbolic pitch collection S–A–C–H–E–R (E-flat, A, C, B natural, E and Ré/D).

In 2001, Boulez not only increased the metronome speed of the already fast-paced piece considerably, but he also added another large section, bringing the duration of the

work to about ten minutes. Besides the long 'melodic' lines, after a rather free introduction, the incisive interruptions of short, repeated chords are striking; the title refers to these, as well as to the similarly named rhythmic units of several notes analogous to a motif. Also very striking are the dark and heavy chords in the sections that Boulez had added after 1994. These chords are held by the pianist through the middle pedal. Even the 'melodic' sections have transformed into a frenzy of alternating rubato and strictly timed passages, almost being in a state of delirium. The explanation for this mood change might be attributed to the death of Sacher in 1999: halfway through the work, the character seems, correspondingly, to shift from breath-taking and icy to foreboding, with a grim tolling of bells.

Ralph van Raat

Pierre BOULEZ (1925–2016)
Incises pour piano (version de 2001)

Incises fut composé au bout d'une période de plus de 30 ans durant laquelle Boulez n'écrivit aucune œuvre pour piano seul. C'est une double commande qui le poussa à renouer avec cet instrument : le Concours de piano Umberto Micheli de Milan lui demanda une brève pièce obligatoire destinée à être jouée en 1994, et Boulez s'engagea à écrire une œuvre nouvelle pour l'anniversaire de son ami Paul Sacher en 1996. La version initiale, telle qu'elle fut exécutée dans le cadre du concours, ne durait que quelques minutes, malgré le grand nombre de notes que le ou la pianiste devait jouer. Les notes du morceau étaient principalement dérivées de transpositions de la série de notes symboliques S–A–C–H–E–R (mi bémol, la, ut, si naturel, mi et Ré).

En 2001, non seulement Boulez augmenta considérablement la vitesse métronomique déjà rapide du morceau, mais en outre il y ajouta une autre grande section, portant la durée de l'ensemble à dix minutes environ.

Outre les longues lignes « mélodiques », après une introduction de forme assez libre, les interruptions incisives de brefs accords répétés sont frappantes ; c'est à cela que se réfère le titre, ainsi qu'aux unités rythmiques de plusieurs notes pareillement désignées et apparentées à un motif. Tout aussi frappants sont les sombres et pesants accords des sections que Boulez ajouta après 1994. Ces accords sont soutenus par le pianiste grâce à la pédale centrale. Même les sections « mélodiques » se sont métamorphosées en une frénésie de rubato alterné et de passages rigoureusement minutés, presque en proie au délire. On peut sans doute attribuer l'explication de ce changement de caractère à la mort de Sacher, survenue en 1999 ; c'est ainsi qu'à mi-parcours, l'atmosphère, qui était stupéfiante et glaciale, se fait menaçante, avec un sinistre tintement de cloches.

Ralph van Raat
Traduction par David Ylla-Somers

Ralph van Raat

Ralph van Raat has been fascinated by classical music of the 20th century since the age of 14. Although his repertoire ranges from Bach to Boulez, his primary focus has always been on composers dating from Debussy, Bartók and Ives to present-day masters. His aim is to convince audiences of the immense beauty and diversity of contemporary music through solo recitals, lecture-recitals, concerto performances, album releases and special projects. Van Raat helps audiences identify with modern day composers by adhering to a classical approach: he firmly believes that a strong sense of classical structure as well as a refinement of tone is essential in conveying the logic and poetry of any music. This has not gone unrecognised: he is the recipient of a substantial number of national and international awards, many composers have written solo works for him, and he has performed over 50 piano concertos with orchestras worldwide, such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. His discography comprises over 30 albums. Van Raat is also a frequent speaker and performer on radio and television shows, and teaches at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam when not giving concerts. Van Raat became a Steinway Artist in 2003.

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Photo:
Heather Pinkham

This digital single complements Naxos 8.573894, an album of French piano rarities also performed by Ralph van Raat.

Pierre
BOULEZ
(1925–2016)

French Piano Rarities
(Digital Bonus Track)

1 Incises (1994, rev. 2001)

10:00

Ralph van Raat, Piano

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