

Pierre Boulez interviewed by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich at Carnegie Hall on May 7, 1999.

Transcript of recorded interview: Pierre Boulez interviewed by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich at Carnegie Hall on May 7, 1999.

From the Library of Congress in Washington, DC

ETZ:

For the record, I'm Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, I have the honor of holding the first Carnegie Hall composers' chair and I'm here today with Pierre Boulez in the archives of Carnegie Hall. It's May the 7th 1999. Here we are. Well, as I told you earlier, many of us are so happy that you're going to be a major presence in New York again, you've been missed for quite a while and I'm particularly happy that you have this association with Carnegie Hall coming up,... it's an honor for all of us. Let's talk a little bit about your background as a composer and where you were born and grew up and just tell us a little bit about yourself.

PB:

Well I will not really say very much about my childhood because I think I was meant to narrate or two have memories of childhood to describe them at least, you should be Proust. I am not Proust and I will not really compete with him, definitely. No, simply, I began to learn music as a child, you know, with a general education so I sang in a choir and then also I learn the piano. That was it, in my family there was no trace of any musical tradition at all. So, well then...

ETZ:

Can you tell us when and where you were born? So...

PB:

Ahh, Do you really find that important? I can..

ETZ:

Yes Yes

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PB:

I can tell you the date, that much more important

ETZ:

March 26

PB:

March 26, 1925, I think that's enough for some, simply that.. Now I would like to

ETZ:

But in France

PB:

Oh in France, yes certainly, I am a French citizen, still, now and what I would like to say that yes, you know because of the religious education that gave me the opportunity to sing in a choir, and maybe I wasn't aware even at this time that it was important to me, but I mean it was very important because I know, I knew first the kind of religious choir literature, and also we sang Gregorian Chant. So I know that quite well so I mean you know because until the age of 15 I was educated like that. So after that or something, at 17, 18 I decided to be a really professional musician. But as you know at this time France was occupied by German forces and then France was divided into 2 parts, north and south. And then I was in the south part, and to go to the North part you had to have a visa, it was rather difficult, you had to justify yourself, and so on and so forth. So finally in March 1943 this division was over, everything was occupied and then it was easier to go to Paris because as a matter of fact, as for the level of education, there was only one national school, which was the Conservatory in Paris. And then I you know if you want to, to study early music you have to go to Paris. Still now, I suppose.

ETZ:

Yes, yes

PB:

But 50 years ago, 55 years ago still more. So I went to Paris I arrived in Paris I am a boy in '43, and I in September of '43 for the season 43-44. And then I had a professor of harmony, because that was my first class, and tried to enter the piano but I mean I was not

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very much interested in going on with the piano lessons, and I was interested especially in writing, in harmony and counterpoint, especially at the very beginning, so the first year was with the teacher was not interesting, so I, you know, I went regularly to concerts of contemporary music and I heard for the start... the big man at this time in Paris was Arthur Honegger. You know the...

ETZ:

Sure

PB:

...composer, and you know I consider this composer the as the n'est plus ultra of modernity at this time. Then I heard once by chance, because I listened to many contemporary concerts, I heard a piece by Messiaen, which was a theme and variations, and he had a kind of sulfurous reputation in the conservatoire as a kind of marginal man, and I suddenly I was struck by that and said I must study with him because certainly he is more interesting. And I went to see him I remember in June 44, to enter his class, because he was a superior... level...in the class of harmony...

ETZ:

Had he just come out of a concentration camp?

PB:

Oh no he was not in a concentration camp, no he was in a prisoner camp, which, which is not very, you know, enjoyable either, but

ETZ:

But not as...

PB:

Not a kind of concentration camp which well. you know, deadly or something. No, he was in a prisoner camp because there were many prisoners, soldiers you know after 1940, I mean after June 1940 was there, and I think he was freed from, from the prisoners camps in 1942 because of the pedagogic activities, you know, he was appointed professor of the conservatoire, and then he was liberated from the prisoner camp for this reason, because education was still a priority, you see, especially musical education. So I, you know worked with him from 1944. And that was suddenly a discovery because then as I mean there

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was somebody who was really a teacher, and not the other one before. And for me, I still remember very vividly his lessons, because generally you know when you were working in harmony, learning harmony, you were a kind of, there was a kind of non-stylistic approach, you know you did kind of academic exercise without any, any relationship to a composer. Well you learn of course to make your junction between a chord on the first degree or the fifth degree or to the fourth degree, but I mean, it was just floating in a kind of no man's land, and then when, with Messiaen on the contrary, he was, for instance, coming to the class with a work, a very precise work. Maybe a cycle of lieder by Schumann, or sonata by Mozart, or a work by Debussy and he was giving us an exercise to do, which he prepared himself in the style of Schumann,

ETZ:

Well that's interesting

PB:

in the style of Debussy, in the style of Wagner. So what you learn in the relationship with is style precise, composer's style. And that was very, very important. And not only that, also, as he was a composer, a very strong composer also, and don't forget he was at this time born in 1908, he was 36, young...man. So fully involved in his class, you know. And he was telling us, you must find you know, if you are given an exercise, you must find a musical idea to give a kind of unity to these exercise, to give some direction to these exercise. And not only just, you know, put a chord on a chord on a chord, but really to make it a small composition. And it was very interesting for me because I discovered really, what was the harmonic language and especially historically and also from the compositional point of view. There is I mean, he was exclusively for these harmony classes, these were technical classes in the conservatoire, but as he was very eager to teach composition, he chose his best students in the conservatoire, and give from time to time, I don't remember now the number of classes he gave, outside of the conservatoire, privately and you know, for nothing, he was very generous with his time. He gave classes of analysis, and I was very, you know, when he called me I remember on the phone and say I would like you to participate to this class and so on, I was very surprised and proud of course because it was, you know I entered his class maybe the end of September or something like that, and the first class he gave outside the conservatoire, composition was in November. So rather immediately after entered this class, and I will always remember that because that, that was really the first class of analysis of composition that I had. And I remember still very vividly the work he analyzed. He analyzed *Ma mère l'oye* by

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Ravel. Which was not especially avant guard piece, even in this period, but you know, he was first. He analyzed first the poetic aspect, the fairy tales, which were the origin of the work by Ravel. And then after he analyzed, of course, I mean how it was composed, the details, and then, he he played the four-hand versions, the original version, with Yvonne Loriod, I remember, and then after that, so he went to the score, orchestral score, and showed us how the transposition was done between the piano version, original one, and the orchestration. And I remember this, I mean, you know, this class he was very generous with his time, it began maybe at the early afternoon, maybe 2 O'clock, I don't remember that precisely, but I mean, we, it was 4 to 6 hours you know, very intense, and we were few, we were only maybe 6 to 8 people, you know, around him like that in a private apartment and I remember still vividly because that was the first contact I had really with composition. And the next time, he analyzed for instance, Petrushka. The original version, also played for piano, 2 hands, you know we were speaking about the story itself, what was the purpose of the story, the cruelty of the story, and so on, you know, and discussed about the theme of the work. And then after that began to play and rhythmical analysis, especially, and after that also the orchestration. So that was really extraordinary for me as I mean, to learn, and I, in a couple of months I learned much more than in the three years before...

ETZ:

Yes

PB:

...certainly, because then it was you know a creative mind at work, and that's why it was very important. And I can, I don't want to, you know, to minimize the function of other people in my development, I learned also very much from the wife of Honegger, as a matter of fact, who learnt to me the counterpoint, you know, and that was very interesting because for me to balance this kind of concentration of the harmonic language with Messiaen, I went to on to the other side of the vocabulary, you know, counterpoint with studying the works of Bach and so on, you know, this baroque period. And that was really for me the right balance between the two. And then...

ETZ:

Excuse me, but we have a picture, this is a later picture of Messiaen...

PB:

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Oh yes, you...much later, yes...

ETZ:

...but I think it's important to introduce this...(to assistant) – Should I put it on the stand?
Assistant: No that's good, that's good.

PB:

I see, when I knew him, at this time, he was 36. Now he's certainly around 80, you know.

ETZ:

Probably yes

PB:

And I knew him yes....no I recognize this picture because I stayed in relation, a relationship with him until, until the very end, you know?

ETZ:

Yeah

ETZ:

You know, I remember when he was here for his last piece with the New York Philharmonic, he sat, he was about 80, I guess at that point. He sat there and signed autographs for young people, for you know just, 'til the last one was signed...very generous.

PB:

Yes, he was always very generous, and I mean he was, he was creative and I think that what I mean, you can really teach composition if you are creative. I don't if, that's another matter, I don't know if composition can be taught.

ETZ:

(in unison w/ P) can be taught.

PB:

...as a matter of fact, but analysis, yes. That's for sure. And he did not really bring his attention, our attention especially on his works. We were asking him to analyze

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some of his works, and he did that I remember he was composing at this time the *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* for piano. And he analyzed the pieces, you know before the first performances it was first performed as far as I remember in March '46, and then as I mean, he explained to us as I mean, how he conceived it, and I remember a piece especially where there is a big fugue...with a lot of inventivity in this fugue, I remember even the title of the piece, *Par Lui tout a été fait*, so I mean you know, the things are sticking in your memory when they are very important, I mean, the other things you forget completely, but the things which are very important you remember, and then the sort of, that was for me decisive influence on my piano writing, for instance..

ETZ:

Mm hmmm

PB:

Definitely. And then as, I mean, after that...

ETZ:

Your first piano sonata was written

PB:

'46

ETZ:

Yeah

PB:

Yes, I'm...I developed very early, as a matter...I find, not my definite style, of course, but I mean, the personality, I mean the shock, I will tell you later maybe, the shock of a lot of discovery at the same time. Because, from '42 when I began really to study music from '42-'44, I was 17, 16-17, all the music which we considered the classical of the 20th century was not performed. Bartók wasn't performed, Stravinsky was barely performed and not the important works, you know I never heard the *Rite of Spring encherie* [?], as we say, "live" you know before 1946. And the Viennese school was never performed during the wartime, Schoenberg because he was Jewish, but I mean also because for aesthetic reasons, these people were completely ignored. So we discovered practically everything, in after the liberation and especially in 45 when the war was over, because can

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you imagine that we could not buy scores even because the scores did not exist, simply that they were out of print. And they were very little paper this time, you know, so it was difficult, I remember having copied myself some of the works of Webern to know them, because it was impossible to get the score. And I discovered not with Messiaen, that I discovered the Viennese school with a man called Leibowitz

ETZ:

René Leibowitz

PB:

René Leibowitz, yes. Was you know, knowledgeable, but terribly academic. And that's really, for me, for instance, I was much more attracted to this kind of vocabulary because it was completely new for me and it was very enticing. But the man was discouraging because that was so academic, so sterile, completely devoid of any kind of invention, that really, you know, after a few months I just stopped, because I say if I continued like that, that was impossible, simply that. And it was provoking rebellion, if I may say so....

ETZ:

[laughter] Which is not a bad thing.

PB:

Which is not a bad thing, finally. But certainly what all....you see when a man is creative, you know, you can be against it, but I mean, it incites you to be creative yourself. He is a man that is not creative, he's just, you know, analyzing and figures and so on....so you are....completely out of air, you don't breath anymore. And therefore, that's a different kind of rebellion, this, I mean...

ETZ:

[laughter]

PB:

...but that certainly, if you, if you are following that you are sterile, absolutely. So therefore us, I mean, I discovered the Viennese school but practically for myself later. There is I mean, you know there was a lot of music which was discovered in the same time, and I think the period or so, you know, Europe began again anew in 1945. And although Paris was not at all practically not bombed, destroyed compared to German cities

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for instance like Berlin or even London. But nevertheless there was an atmosphere of, you know, that was the end of a period that would begin again. And therefore I think we were a generation which was very radical in thinking. From, from this point of view that was not even a personal decision, it was kind of a collective decision. And I can say that's the origin of my, you know, my musical feelings and thinking.

ETZ:

Its very interesting that someone as intellectually competent as Messiaen would begin with the study of the poetic meaning of something. It's quite extraordinary. Now you burst into the international scene very shortly after that. Tell us what happened between the end of your studies in Paris and the, and say Baden-Baden...in 1955 or something.

PB:

Well..Yes '55. Yes, *Le marteau sans maître* was written in 1955. Well you know I was making a living and I had also, quite a luck there. I remember also mean, Honegger, Arthur Honegger was writing incidental music for Jean-Louis Barrault, the famous actor who began his theater company in 1946, and then Barrault needed somebody to be, to care for the incidental musical, and Honegger spoke to Barrault and say well take this young man, he's a student of my wife and I think you will find him interesting...and so I was, you know, in charge of the incidental music with the theater company, with which I worked for 10 years. And it was very interesting retrospectively because it was the best actors in France at this time, and that was interesting for me, that was a completely new world...let's say, world of actors I did not know at all before, and it was interesting for me to see, you know, how a director worked with the actors because I attended some of the rehearsals of course, and my function was to play the incidental music, of course, and arrange the music sometime, and you know, that's like a customized jacket, the jacket was there but there was not the length of the arms and so on...and then what I did after that, and I learned quite a lot from that, of course, from the practical point of view, because that was really the defect in the conservatoire. That's...there was absolutely no junction whatsoever between the class of, we call them in French "writing music," you know, and of performing music. Absolutely no connection at all. It was two separate worlds practically , although in the same buildings, in the same rooms, practically, and therefore I was, I mean, I learned all that so...working in the theater for so long. And I remember there was a piece, especially, I did not learn to conduct opera there, but I mean, there was a piece by Paul Clodel, "Christoph Colomb," and the incidental music was by Darius Milhaud, and that was a very important incidental music and I had to, you know, to have the actors

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sing which was not very easy, certainly because they were not all musically gifted. But I managed and we did the performance like that and you know I learned quite a lot from that, to accompany a text for instance when a text was spoken and to manage that music, you know, fits with the same...in same time. So that was very interesting and I learned quite a lot. And in the same time, you know I was mainly composing of course, because it was a way a making a living because with composition as you know, it is very difficult to make a living, especially at the beginning. So, there was a lot of, because I composed, and I began to know the new generation. Stockhausen came to Paris, also to work with Messiaen, to study with Messiaen, and then I began to have a connection with Germany, and especially with Darmstadt. But very little collections, connections I mean, that was just for a once, and I knew, I knew Stockhausen and progressively I began to know different peoples of different countries because I think that's also a feature of my generation that we were so, you know, barred by the war to be connected with other countries, it was just the country and everybody was at war, so you know that's not really the easiest way to communicate. And then also we were very eager to have contact with other countries you know, and to see what they were doing. In the same generation, for instance, Berio was born the same year as me '25, Nono was born in 1924 I guess, Stockhausen in 1928, Pousser in 1929, that was you know, ah...

ETZ:

A rich...yeah.

PB:

...a generation very close together, you know for, in a very few years, Maderna was a little older, 19 maybe 20, or something like that, or 21, I don't remember exactly, but I mean that was, Anguilen who was recently here, is also the same generation, 1927. So there was a big solidarity between this generation and the...very eager to discover each other, from this point of view. So, there was a, you know, it began a polemic because we were aggressive I must say, honestly said, and why not? And I mean, it brings life, or something, and certainly there were a lot of polemics but about you know general aesthetics, or...but without contact with the works. Or we were producing works. And therefore, with the help of Barrault, I must say, the actor, I could begin a series, very very small at the beginning, a series of concerts with chamber music, essentially, small groups, small choral groups also, and we began really to make for the, really the discovery of the Viennese music especially was very late in France. But not only the one thing, the Viennese music of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, but not only that Mahler was completely

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unknown, for instance, not to speak of Bruckner which was more unknown than Mahler even if possible, and we, I don't begin with Mahler, Wagner because that's an orchestral repertoire but I mean I began to, with all the chamber works.

ETZ:

The Domaine musicale

PB:

Domaine musicale, and that began in '53. I began very early because I am idealistic, fundamentally idealistic, but I think if you have an ideal you have to transmit it. And therefore I began to organize that, and that was not easy, especially I did not want the... state subsidies, it was too complicated, you have to go to the ministry and I did not know anybody, so it was, through a kind of social, at the social level which doesn't exist anymore, there were still people who were very easy with money and who were interested in the arts, so with the help of friends, you know, we we get money enough, that was not really a gigantic operation, but money enough to put together, as I mean, 4 to 6 concerts a season. And first, that's where we began in a very small hall, two hundred or something like that, not even that...handle 80 I guess. But I mean, I prefer a hall of 880, uhh 180 absolutely full than I you have 500 half empty. So we developed progressively, and then as I mean, begins more and more it, it became more and more important, and then as I mean, I had more and more connections with Germany, so from 1955.

ETZ:

Tell us something, some of the repertoire you were presenting in your concerts. And....
[break in tape]

ETZ:

You were gonna give some, an idea of some of the younger composer s you were performing..

PB:

Well first, as I mean, we were doing...

ETZ:

Sorry, Nick (to off camera assistant)

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PB:

...we were playing the works which were not performed before, especially all the small chamber works by Stravinsky, the...they were not many but the chamber works by Bartók, then also I mean, for instance the sonata for violin and piano which were particularly unknown at this time, in France at least, I mean..

ETZ:

Wonderful pieces they're still not played enough, you know...

PB:

No, no that's true, those two violin sonatas are for me two of the most important works by Bartok

ETZ:

...of Bartok, I agree.

PB:

And that's strange that's not very well performed when the quartets, for instance, are really very often performed now. This was sonatas...

ETZ:

And the solo violin sonata seems to be performed much more...

PB:

Yes. Much more, yeah that's true. And then as I mean, we were giving all the....works by the Viennese school which were never performed in France before, for instance the Webern pieces were never performed, we gave them.. most of them for the first time...and even late...

ETZ:

So did you know Webern, had you meet him?

PB:

No no no no

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ETZ:

No?

PB:

No no.

ETZ:

Webern died of like a...

PB:

He died in 1945, I remember it very precisely, you know he died being shot by an American soldier...you know by mistake, so I mean, and he died in September '45. In September 45 we learned to me it was striking to us, because we were very...intensely busy with...discovering this music. Bartok died also in September 45, and Webern died in 1945. No I did not know anybody of this generation because Schoenberg was....

ETZ:

Berg or?

PB:

....still living in

ETZ:

California?

PB:

..in Los Angeles, and then as I mean, died in '51. My first trip to the States is '52, so I could never have meet him. And then as I mean, the...Berg was died, died much earlier in 1935, I was not at all involved in the world of Berg at this time. And the only one of the generation that I knew, two I knew...Stravinsky which I met quite often also between '52 and '67 especially, and then Varèse, when I came to New York I visited him regularly, as I mean, because I liked to speak with him and to be with him. But that's, of this generation, that the two are the only one I have met. The other ones were dead before or if not dead before then I could not come to this country before they died. And then Schoenberg was invited to come to Darmstadt but never made the trip because he was in poor health at

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this time. They published recently the correspondence of Dr. Steinecke, was at the head of Darmstadt and Schoenberg and you see “yes I will try, I will try,” but “I’m not sure” and then finally he never came. On the contrary Varèse came to Darmstadt in the early 50’s I guess, yes. So you know, I’m...I organized this concerts and my ties were with Germany, were more and more, and then I began to have contacts with the...Dr. Strobel, who was the head of the music in Baden-Baden, and he came to see me I don’t remember exactly why he heard, and how he heard about me, and he, that was my first commission ever for the Southwest, so I mean, Südwestfunk. And after that he commissioned a second work a little later....

ETZ:

And this, the first commission was..?

PB:

...was Polyphony X

ETZ:

Ok

PB:

You know, and then as I mean, after that he commissioned a second work which was *Le marteau sans maître* for the IGNM, which was here in this country I-S-C-M, Festival, which was taking place in Baden-Baden in June, 1955. And then [Hans] Rosbaud was conducting, because I must tell you that in between I was conducting the incidental music for the Barrault company, but I never dreamt ever to conduct myself, so I mean, you know, I conducted only, because I was obliged, when I began ...my concerts of *Domaine Musicale*, then I was the cheapest conductor..

ETZ:

[laughter]

PB:

therefore I began to conduct the group. And progressively you know I was involved in, especially, I remember in '56, yes, Rosbaud should have come to Paris to conduct *Le marteau sans maître* with a group of musicians of Baden-Baden. And finally it could not take place, I don’t remember for what reason, but it did not, he cancelled, it was cancelled,

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and I say “why we not...I try myself to, to do it.” So I mean it was very hard, I remember, very hard because to begin to conduct with this type of piece, you know...

ETZ:

That's...

PB:

I was very...inexperienced

ETZ:

Baptism by fire [laughing]

PB:

Yes, exactly. And the musicians were also without any experience of this kind, so at least we were on the same level so there was no difference, and then as I mean, I learned, they learned, we learned together. And I remember, as I mean, the very first performance when we did that, you know rather, a couple of times, I was very happy and we were very happy that we get to the end. Without...catastrophies

ETZ:

Having to stop, yes [laughing]

PB:

Yes, and I remember I was terribly tired at the end of the performance because I was so tense, I was paying attention to every detail, you know, that was really, hard work. And then progressively, you know, I began to work in Germany and I am about in '57, '58 yes? '58 especially Dr. Strobel beg..you know, asked me to conduct you know the pieces we performed for instance in Domaine Musicale but with the musicians of the Südwestfunk. And don't forget that I could barely speak two words of German. So it was also a difficulty and I heard some laughing from time to time because I made mistakes of course, in the language, but I mean, finally I adapted quite quickly. And then in '58, '59 I went to Germany, I went to live in Germany, precisely in Baden-Baden. 'Cause I had contracts with them to be a sort of composer in residence there, to compose for them and in the same time to conduct some concerts. And I learned conducting there, you know, as I remember the first experience I had to conduct, to conduct a very big orchestra that was in one of my works the *Le visage nuptial*, the first version in '57 with

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the orchestra of Cologne, Radio Cologne because at this time the radios in Germany were very open to contemporary music. And they gave you a really good number of rehearsal to prepare. But you know I was completely unexperienced and it went very well with a choir because with a choir they are very nice people, and so on, with the orchestra they were less nice, I must say, and you know it was quite difficult to be on the top of it, so I barely did it so I mean, and from that...this point on I began to say I must really learn it, I must do it, because if I want to obtain what I want, I have to learn this job, really. And practically I had opportunities with the Südwestfunk from '59 on, 58-59, and then, as I mean, I remember a little later Hans Hirschberg was the chief conductor of the radio, and he was very able to do everything you know he was, and not only in the contemporary repertoire, but also in the classical repertoire or the romantic repertoire. And then, he had a very severe operation at one point, and he asked me to replace him in the festival of Aix-en-Provence that was a contemporary program, and I said well I have to accept that as a challenge. You know, if I don't do it then I, you know, I will be done, because this type of opportunity does not come twice. And I learned the program and I remember I forced myself to conduct from memory because I say I must really achieve that, and I conducted exactly the program, because I didn't want to change the program also, I remember there were the three excerpts of Wozzek for instance there were the pieces Opus 6 by Webern, that's the two pieces I remember very vividly, and there was the first performance of Pousseur, because it was a Belgian orchestra so it was Pousseur, Belgian composer, and I think it was a work he chose, I don't remember what. Berliner Konzert [Concerto for Orchestra, Op. 38] by Hindemith which I never performed again, I must say it was not terribly interesting work, but I say I will do it because he had organized this program like that so I will respect the program. And so it went very well and I was happy about the results, but...and in '59 he was preparing the festival of Donaueschingen, he was very eager to conduct all this contemporary music and then, that was the year I was with the ensemble of Domaine musicale, I was invited by Strobel to give a concert of chamber music. I say yes, ok. And then I was in Paris preparing this concert, and then he told me Rosbaud had collapsed, he has you know, a relapse of his of his illness, he was transferred immediately in the clinic of Zurich, "you must come and save the concert" because it was three days before the festival. And I said, but you know, I don't know the scores, "You know, there is no, question, you have to come," and as he was so, you know, generous with me before, I said, and I said also, why not try? And I remember that, you know, that was an old problem, that which was already prepared by Rosbaud before, but I mean there was work by Berio, "Alleluia," there was a work..I don't remember all the works, by Fortner, there were at least four works first performances, where I'd never

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seen the score before, and there was, that I remember very precisely the suite of The Miraculous Mandarin, Bartók, which I had never conducted before....

ETZ:

And which has become a kind of a signature piece, I would say, as a conductor

PB:

Yes and I, you know, I remember especially, you are aware of that, that some pieces especially, in Donaueschingen the orchestra was sitting differently particularly for each piece, so there was a lot of chair moving, furniture moving between each piece and before the Bartók I was so nervous because, you know the piece was known by everybody. And the furniture moving was for me...without end,

ETZ:

Lasted for a year..[laughing]

PB:

And so, I was waiting, waiting, waiting, and finally I jumped like I would dive in hot water, and then, as I mean, through the nervous impulse I think we did quite a stunning performance, because people went crazy suddenly, and that was the evening which began my career as a conductor. Because there were people who were, you know, in Donaueschingen all the people of the German radios out there, there was people from Concertgebouw, and they asked me to replace Rosbaud immediately. So I began a career without willing it even, although I was, you know, excited by it. And so, so it began. And... but I was always, attracted by [?] I must really.... do justice to the music of my century, and the seminal figures of the century, and my generation, and the generation which came later, of course. And therefore, as I mean, I was always committed to that, I did not want to make a career out of a conductor because first I wanted to continue to compose, and not be completely eaten up by conducting, and second being really committed to the music of our century, certainly.

ETZ:

Lets back up a little bit, to the... to 1955, because I remember this is the piece that sort of burst you onto the scene as a composer. I remember hearing a recording of this piece, it couldn't have been 5 or 6 years later, and I mean, this, you suddenly became at a very young age this sort of "white hope" composer of Europe, and your reputation spread quite

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far and wide, I mean I heard this piece in Tallahassee, Florida in about 1960, I think, is that possible?

PB:

It is possible, I think the first recording I did myself that was 56-57, and the first recording which was done in Los Angeles, by musicians in Los Angeles, I think was in 57-58, so well, it is well possible that you heard it, and you know, because the recording, the American recording which was done for CBS as this time, was I think published in 1958-59, something like that. Because I remember I gave the first performance of this piece myself, in 1957 in Los Angeles, there was in Los Angeles, an organization of the type *Domaine musicale*, which, which, what was it called, yes, *Evening on the Roof*. And after it was called *Monday Evening Concerts*. And *Evenings on the Roof* because I think it was in a very small attics of the private person who organized this concert, and that was under his roof, and finally when it was not under his roof anymore, it was in a museum in county museum or in a some halls of this kind, and it was, and it was *Monday evening* each time, so it was *Monday Evening Concerts*. And then it was I remember very well it was '57, because I come, I came to New York with the *Barrault* company still in 1957, and then that was the last time we were giving the "*Christoph Columbe*" by *Claudelle* and the music incidental music by *Milhaud*. And then, as I mean, after that I flew to Los Angeles because I was invited to the performance of this piece. And *Robert Craft* should have conducted but finally the musicians asked me, as I was there, to conduct. And then we worked very hard I remember I stayed something like one week in Los Angeles, and that was my first really close contact with *Stravinsky*, because he was interested to that, and to hear the piece to hear the rehearsal he, he came not to all of the rehearsals, but he came to some of the rehearsals, and followed that, very, very, you know with a great intensity, so he was very interested by the piece.

ETZ:

Yes and I remember being stuck with the fact that *Stravinsky* was, you know, an older man at the time and how he opened himself to the influence of a very young man, and a very young artist. And he spoke about this piece with such a sense of discovery. I wanted to race ahead a little bit here, we have your piece from 1955, then two very important performances of this in *Carnegie Hall*. This is a program from the *New Music Consort* in 1977.

PB:

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Oh yes, with the Oiseaux Exotiques, yea?

ETZ:

Yes.

PB:

And we commissioned this piece for the Domaine musicale, the Oiseaux Exotiques. Yes I commissioned this piece for the the concert [?] in '55, it was the beginning of this concert and as I knew Messiaen, and then Le marteau sans maître yes exactly the same period, and that we performed that in '56, I remember. Yes it...

ETZ:

And then some years later...

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

...here is Arthur Weisberg's group...

PB:

Oh yes, I know him.

ETZ:

...the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble

PB:

Yes yes yes yes, well that's exactly the type of programs we did in this time, you know.

ETZ:

This is an incredibly ambitious program

PB:

Yes its very ambitious

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ETZ:

Marteau and Elliott's double concerto...

PB:

The double concerto

ETZ:

...and the Schoenberg chamber symphony

PB:

First it, it should have been very long [laugh]

ETZ:

[laugh]

PB:

first thing, and second really not easy to hear, so as I mean, for sure, very taxing.

ETZ:

When you see this what do you think? "Hell no, Boulez won't go"? I mean, what is this [laughter]

PB:

Well, I don't know, well that's marketing....phrases, I suppose you know, I'm not responsible for that..

ETZ:

[laughs]...Would you like to talk a little bit about Marteau? Because, its been such a seminal piece for so many people.

PB:

You know, it came...I have always models in front of me, although it does not seem so, but, I mean the model was for me was Pierrot Lunaire. I was very struck by Pierrot Lunaire, by this amount of small pieces but arranged in cycles. And that also in the same

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time I was very fond of the lieder cycle of Webern, the Trakl lieder, which were for me very, very important musically speaking. And also the relationship with the poetry because you know in all the lieder by Webern, that's the best poetry he ever used. Georg Trakl.

ETZ:

Yes

PB:

Wonderful poet in a German language

ETZ:

Died of a suicide very early.

PB:

Yes yes, but really that's one of the most significant poetry of this time, for sure. And then as I mean, I wanted to do something like that cyc...you know, a work which could not compete, but I mean which would be on the same level as Pierrot Lunaire or as this cycle of Webern. And also my desire was, because I just composed the Structures, First Book, which was...maybe the most ascetic work I ever composed, because I was...looking for a new language, and you know I, that, there was a lot of constraints and I felt you know, uneasy with this context although I...

ETZ:

But you imposed them on yourself?

PB:

Yes, exactly. No I...because looked for a language, you know that's like doing a tunnel, you have to go through the mountain, you have to go through a tunnel, and that was a tunnel period, let's say. And then after I said, well you know, I want more freedom, I don't know what...what I have to find a way of being more free, but in the same time I have to retain this discipline, because discipline should not be forgotten but freedom should be there. And then I began, to I say, you know, I would like to write melodic line really, and not a melodic line with just 12 tone 12 tone 12 tone, because you know, Schoenberg has done that. That's not terribly convincing to me. I would like an order to be much more flexible, that you cannot foresee automatically, you know the notes to follow, or not like Schoenberg did, for instance, just repeat the note, because you don't want to always do

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1 to 12, 1 to 12, 1 to 12. And you'll repeat 5 6, 5678, 5678, and this procedures were not appealing to me at all. So therefore I did not..

ETZ:

Maybe you got it out of your system with Structures, also.

PB:

Yes, yes, I was pushing, pushing constantly, and then I said, you know the best thing to try to have this freedom was to try a melodic piece, and therefore I thought of the Pierrot Lunaire, of course, the 7th piece of Pierrot Lunaire, which is for voice and piano, and flute, sorry.

ETZ:

mm hmmm

PB:

And in the Pierrot Lunaire the voice is Sprechstimme, so speaking voice but with pitches, and there is the flute, and I wanted to have really a voice singing and the flute, and therefore I had to write melodic lines, definitely, and the continuity of the melodic line. And therefore I found a system when I had objects that were more complex, you know, of which I call objects really, and then I can describe these objects in any order, the object will be always there. So it gives me the opportunity to have some flexibility, to have objects of 3 units, objects of 5 units, objects of 8 units, and then I... and objects of 1 unit. And the one unit I have two, but objects of 8 units it gives you many possibilities of doing the melodic however you want to have. So, you know I began with this, very carefully with this type of thinking, and then after I developed it more and more. That's the first thing, you know. And the 2nd thing that I wanted to organize cycles, but not like Schoenberg three cycles completely defined and separate, I wanted the cycle to be independent and in the same time to be tied by something. And that's... I achieved that at the end because I composed the 3 cycles separately, and then after, to distribute them I say I have to to this piece first which belong to cycle A, for instance, and the 2nd piece will belong to cycle B, the 3rd piece will belong again to cycle A, then I will introduce cycle C and so on. You know, to have his three things weaved? How you say?

ETZ:

Woven

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PB:

Woven, sorry, Woven together, and the 3rd thing that was important to me was to have a world of sounds which is really different of the classical or the Schoenberg world or even of the Stravinsky world. And I was very fond when I was younger, immediately I was very fond of music which did not belong to Europe. I heard quite a lot of, in museum, there is two museums which are specialized in France, one about more African culture and the other one about more Asian culture. And therefore I heard in these museums there was a collection of recordings, of music of Africa and music of Asia. So heard quite a lot of Balinese music, of Japanese court music, of theater Chinese music. And then in the Musée de l'Homme I knew the man in charge of the musicology there, and I had heard many tapes, original tapes, that he did himself in Africa you know of rituals, of ceremonies, of all kinds of music and this was fascinating to me. Therefore as I mean, I was under this influence and therefore the sound of the work which struck everybody at this time. The vibraphone is not like a jazz instrument, a vibraphone is, you know, a reminder of Bali. The xylophone, the xylorimba, is a reminder of African music, all the percussion is, you know of all countries possible, according to different cycle, the guitar is very close to the koto, Japanese Koto. And remains more typical European the flute, although you know, we find but not the same type of flute that in every...

ETZ:

In every culture...

PB:

...in every country practically. And the instrument, the viola which is more European than all the other instrument of this group. And what I did want to avoid..exoticism, because I find exoticism is, you know, something of the 19 century, kind of parallel to colonialism. You import tea, you put a kimono on your shoulders and you think you are Japanese you know, and it goes deeper than that. For me, which was important to this music that was of course the sound aspect, but also for instance in the music of Japan, the conception of time. In Balinese music that was the rhythmical impulse, not only this kind of regular rhythm as you can hear in Balinese music but the long accelerando they can do on really a long period then suddenly the break the acelerando, they begin again, you know. That's kind of, you have to go really very deep to find a kind of abstract, of what it is exactly and how it comes, and then as I mean, you can use it with your own style and that's no more exoticism, and the combination of Le marteau sans maître is a combination which is, or

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course, unique, as I mean because it doesn't belong to any culture anymore, it belongs to me, you know? And I am very fond of, you know, this kind of combination of...my last work for instance, is for a combination also which is quite exceptional as it were, three pianos, three harps and three percussion, and definite percussion with pitch, pitched percussion. You know and really it gives a world of...you can find the antecedents also...Stravinsky with 4 pianos in Les Noces, Bartok, two pianos and percussion, you know, you can find the previous direction of that, but this type of combination is completely different, and it is of course, it reminds me always on the percussion you find in different type of countries. The harps for instance, for me is related with the music of the Peruvians in the mountains there,

ETZ:

..the Andes, yea

PB:

They have a wonderful way of playing the harp, very strongly, you know not the harp the French style, but on the contrary but with a grip on the instrument which is very hard, and I like that, and you know things like that I import, as I mean, because that's for me that's a sound world which doesn't belong to...directly to our world first, but which now belongs to us, which is implanted in our culture. And I think that's... for me also in the, in the Mallarmé improvisation, especially in the 3rd one, the expansion of time, you know, I would never have heard the Gagaku, I would never have thought of it myself, because that's so against the tradition. In European tradition, you know, you go from one point to another one, and you're trying to fill the time as much as possible. On the contrary for me, as I mean, you have...such...like in the Bali music also at some point, you know in the, in my work called Éclat I use only resonant instruments, and there is no, not anything which is close to a pulse in music, that's just based on the resonance, on the natural resonance of the instrument, and it begins with the mandolin, which is a resonance small like that...

ETZ:

Very, very tiny

PB:

...to the low register of the piano, which has on the contrary an immense resonance, and then as I mean, you can do, all your thinking can be done, just thinking of the...

[break in tape]

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ETZ:

...performance of your music at Carnegie Hall that we have found, is in 1960, New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein conductor, this is from...take a look at this, now you said you weren't here for this performance..

PB:

No. No, no, oh I was I was paired with, paired Pergolesi which was quite, quite unexpected and that at the end yes, I see that. Well this was a very short work as I see, because as, something like 6 minutes

ETZ:

Yeah, the Improvisation.

PB:

Yes, yes

ETZ:

And then the following season, we..for some reason we don't have that program. The following season he did, he programmed number 2.

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

And perhaps you'd tell us a little bit, I know you mean something very special by the word "improvisation," you could say something about the poetry and what the word improvisation, how that resonates with you...

PB:

Yes, well I choose the poems of Malarmé you know they...this work was finally, the title was Pli selon pli because there is a, the title comes from another poetry by Malarmé, yes poem by Malarmé where he describes the city of Bruges with a...in Belgium, which is a very old city you know, 16th century, middle ages, and then as I mean, engulfed with, by the fog and progressively the fog lift up and pli selon pli, fold after fold, you discover the city, you know. And therefore I discovered my work, progressively also, like that it was in the fog,

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where also first, when I began the first improvisation I chose...that's true, you know it was a kind of improvised music because it was very rapidly conceived, and then that was a real improvisation and then after, the more I went into that, the more pseudo-improvised it was. The improvisation does not really belong to the same category then, in the improvisation #2 especially. The word "improvisation" applies to things which can be not improvised but played ad-libitum, you know without pulse. Also they are music with pulse, and there is music, you know like in parentheses you just give a cue, and so on. That was also for me, when I conducted for the first time that was rather difficult because that was the first time. The *Marteau sans maître* is difficult to conduct but everything is written and you have to follow. There's, I mean you have a certain moments, you have to... it's completely free and you then give a cue here, a cue there, as I mean, that's...people should be very much aware also of...that's the...you will give this cue exactly, not in rhythm but I mean, just free. And for me that was the meaning of the improvisation there, and progressively, you know, I went into that, and I...what was fascinating to me in the poetry of Mallarmé was the formal aspect. It was very formal, and I needed also then, as I mean, to make a work especially on the long range, something...a frame of action that, very solid, which was not even given by me but by the poem. You know, because a sonnet, as you know, that's three sonnets which are in the center of this work, and the sonnets are formally constructed that you can derive a musical structure exactly from the poem and therefore that was, for me, interesting.

ETZ:

Mm hmm, you've mentioned the whole thing of time and Eastern and even African music, it seems to me another persistent preoccupation has been with... a literary, you know, sort of opening up of time. Not just Mallarmé but for English speaking people, James Joyce, you know certainly. You want to talk a little bit about that, like you said, instead of going from A to B to C to D and you know, a progressive engine moving along, the notion of even standing in one place in the future might be behind you and the past in front of you and you know this sort of sense of a sort of an omni-location in a way, that you feel in Joyce...

PB:

Yes. I mean, Literature was for me very important because it gave a model, and painting, was giving me...giving me also a lot of inspiration. I'm have spoken quite often about that but I mean I will just...tell it again, here. Especially the classes of Klee in the Bauhaus, because really he, these classes were written by him and you know I read them with great

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difficulty at first because Stockhausen gave me as a gift, gave me this book, and it was in German of course, and my knowledge of German was very shaky at this time. So, I tried to read, but in the same time there was drawings, and illustrations, you know so...I was much more guessing what was there, but you know the drawing were so strong that I guessed more or less right. I guess more than less, and that was very interesting. For instance I took this example many times, it was the one which struck me first. You know he gave to his students, two forces, a circle and a line. And he said, "Do something with this sphere and this line, with this circle and this line" and you know students were giving, you know, a series of circles with lines above and below, and between and so on, or across, or a you know, a kind combination very simple you can do with a circle and a line. And he said "No, you did not understand that really if you want to confront a circle and a line, you have to give them...existence, and what is existence? That is either the line is stronger then the circle or visa versa. If the line is stronger than the circle, the circle will be transformed on the line, transpierced like that, and when the line gets out, it will recover it's own form. On the contrary, if the line, if the circle is stronger than the line, then the line will disperse within the circle and recover outside of the circle." And he give this example and there was a drawing, and after that he did a painting himself, which is still, practically, a lightning through a face, you know you have a face, and a kind of lightening that transpierces the face. And it was so illuminating to me, it's true that you cannot juxtapose things but have to have them interfere, and interfere through definite process. As long as you don't have this kind of vital, organic process, you don't compose, really. And for me that was a big lesson, I must say. Like for instance in Joyce, you know the anecdote of Ulysses, of course that's important in the book. But for me what I can take, that the grammar itself is the source of a chapter, for instance: question/answer. There is a chapter - question/answer, question/answer, question/answer. Another chapter that is just the last chapter, Molly, you know, just one sentence without stopping. And so on and so forth, you know, or for instance the knight in the brothel, you know, the evolution of the British language from Chaucer to now-a-days, you know. There is always a kind of vision which is based on the technique, you know. But the technique is so rich, so richly developed, that you know, it gives really, the weight to a chapter and you never forget that, after that. And that's not systematic, that... the...that's not systematic in the same as you know, that's a skeleton. No, it is very organic and vital and develops itself, and therefore for me, that was one of the main sources of my refecation.

ETZ:

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That's interesting that you've been very involved in recent years with opening up the possible materials from which new forms can emerge. It's interesting to think of that in relation to Joyce.

PB:

Well, I think also of the architecture, very much. You know, in New York or in the states generally you have really exceptional architecture, as I mean, contemporary architecture. And architecture...when you compare for instance the Hôtel Pierre, you know, with this 16th century chapel above, yeah, it's really complicated...incongruous, let's say...

ETZ:

What's it doing up there? [Laughter]

PB:

Yes, what its doing upstairs, there or something, you know, like a, like a caricature. But on the contrary on the instant where people were thinking of the possibilities of material, steel concrete, glass and so on, then suddenly, it was possible for architects to conceive form which would have been totally impossible before. The best example I can think of is the Guggenheim museum, Frank Lloyd Wright, this form could have done, could have been thought and found, of course by a man who was a genius, but also because he had at his disposal, the material for that. And I think that in music, the same, the material and the thinking are one thing, absolutely, and...

ETZ:

It's interesting that now, that in architecture now the computer is playing a more important role, in opening up other possibilities for materials

PB:

Yes yes, you can foresee the architecture much better than before, because you can use with a computer perspective, different perspective. I remember, I have the experience with the pyramid of the Louvre, I knew the man of the Ministerie who was in charge of that, and I get acquainted, I got acquainted with Mr. Pei, you know the architect, and I went to these attillié, to his workshop there, to his attillié, when they were preparing the architecture and nothing was done, still on the site, but they showed me from the interior of the pyramid how you could see the Louvre palace, you know, and it was very interesting to see all the different perspectives, because there was a lot of polemics at this time, "ohh this pyramid"

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and so on and so forth, like always because when you bring something new, you know, the polemics are always there. And he showed me, you know, "I would like you to see really how you will feel in this space," and that was very interesting to me. And now for acoustics you have exactly the same process, because, before I remember when I was with BBC, and that was in 71-72, I wanted the studio where the orchestra was rehearsing improved, because it was really acoustically not good. And we, I went with the manager of the orchestra to the experimental center for acoustics for the BBC, in the suburbs of London. And then they had to build, in this period they had to build a model, you know seven times smaller, and to work with this model and to put a tape seven times quicker to have the same proportion and so on, and you know the result was OK. But I mean when I see when we did the Cité de la Musique in La Villette, all was done by simulation, computer simulation. And then as I mean, you know, that's enormously different, because in a model you have to change that, you have to...piece of wood and piece of this material and so on, and you know it is very tiresome. Here you change a parameter, you say "oh this parameter we can vary," that can you do that? "Yes, of course," then you type a program and then it is there. You know, the facility is enormous. And I find also, I find also because I was involved in the IRCAM, we did a great deal of this study for the La Villette in IRCAM, and also I think, one is asked "do you think electronics will replace an orchestra, or instruments?" Certainly not, because the richness of instrumental sound cannot be a very lightly imitated. On the contrary that is extremely difficult. And synthetic sound can be interesting, but you know, you have to work really very hard to find...of course now with the computer calculations can be very much quicker than before, but I mean anyway.... I think you miss the gesture of the performer especially. And for me, that's a kind of combination between instruments and electronics which give the most interesting results. You know, and you can use it in very different ways, but you have to have the same compositional ideas, you cannot really, just you know, "oh I use the machine,." Of course, I mean to use the machine is very easy sometimes, but the result are not conceived properly, and then you have to have to conceive the expansion of the sound world, generally, and then...bring them under...under the same roof, if I may say so. To invent, specifically for each means, like you invent for violin, you don't invent the same way that you invent for an oboe, or for a trombone. They're not the same thing, as I mean, you don't invent the same. But you also don't need to be, you know, program specialist. That's like, for instance is you want to write a work for orchestra you know that, you don't need to play the oboe or the play violin or to play the piano, or to play all the instruments of the orchestra. You have to know how these instruments are working, and the results. You have to know, for instance, the speed of articulation of an oboe compared to the flute or

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compared to the clarinet; the weight of an instrument; the color of an instrument in different register and so on...you don't need also to have made an oboe by yourself...

ETZ:

or know the fingerings...

PB:

and the fingerings and so on....you need to, to know really how it works and comparatively how it works with the other instruments. And that's the same with electronics, you know and with computer. You, of course you can learn how to use a computer, but you don't, you don't need to...how to make a program. You have to learn how to use a program and to use consequently, and to imagine in function of a program, like imagine in function of a violin or imagine in the function of an orchestra. And as I mean, that is for me the main thing, and I want always...the gesture of the performer to be there. Because I remember myself I did in 58 a work which was not successful at all, as I mean, from the point of view of mixing the two worlds, but also, and I conducted when I was with BBC especially quite a lot of works with electronics and...

ETZ:

and orchestra...

PB:

...and instrument. And the electronics were always on a tape, so you were prisoner...

ETZ:

and you hear "CLICK"

PB:

...oh not only that, but you were prisoner on this tape. That was the least thing then that was to hear this switch, the thing is that you know you were obsessed by synchronization. And, you know when you were want to make a crescendo or a to put an accent, you distort a little bit the values, because that's necessary, that's the gesture. And then "oh I am late, oh no, I am ahead" and so on, and so you were paralyzed, completely. And even if you were doing the work a couple of times, and you were easier with the piece, it was never genuine and natural. You could not do, for instance, the acoustics were different, or so..I take more time...no, because the tape was running, you know. And for me I was cured,

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really, definitely of the tape by that, so I mean...Or you have to have a tape or kind of an automatic program, then which is, that has no relationship with rhythm, you can do, for instance, a kind of backdrop, you know, which I call "wallpaper," as a matter of fact. You know, a thing which appears when you want, but which is transforming, transforming itself automatically. And then as I mean, this background has reason to be there, because for instance it amplifies the harmonic background precisely, or some aspect of the sound and so on. You can use it but then disconnected then, or that's connected in a kind of much more relative way and not directly connected. So, you know you have many, many possibilities, and I think for the future that's something richer.

ETZ:

Oh yes

PB:

Yes, certainly. And either with single instrument or with a group of instruments. I did a work for instance like Répons where you have 6 soloists which are transformed compared to a group which is not transformed at all. I have written also a piece for violin and electronics when you know you have this violin alone and you have all an environment of electronics. I wrote a piece for clarinet and electronics, not transformation, but recorded clarinet which alternates with a clarinet which is playing live, and then as I mean, which is interesting in this case, that the clarinet, you see him always, and when the clarinet is not playing, the light goes down, and you hear the response of the clarinet in all the space. And that's what you can do, you know, that's marvelous to delocalize, let's say, the sound of an instrument but to have it everywhere..

ETZ:

Everywhere...

PB:

...and with a dynamic which was, which is also changed. You have very soft dynamic, very strong dynamic, and on the clarinet in reality has a limit, you know, a physical limit; on the contrary then you can expand also this limit. What I like, you know, using the electronics generally, that's the concept of transgression. To, you transgress the limits of the human being, in a way

ETZ:

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Like the circle and the line?

PB:

Exactly, exactly, you know, you transgress some limit of, some limits of interval for instance, you know if you use, you can arrange on the sound, transformational sound, scales which are very precise, you can never obtain with fingers. But you can listen to them, because your perception and your ear is much more acute than your fingers, you know. And that's all this domain, where we are physical limitation, but not perception limits, which interest me.

ETZ:

Very interesting. Let's reel back a little bit to this first Carnegie Hall performance which was under Leonard Bernstein's general direction, apparently. I have a couple of pictures here from the New York Philharmonic archives, we know that you were...does this look familiar?

PB:

Ah yes, I see that, yes.

ETZ:

Can you get it here, Nick?

Nick: yes

ETZ:

Of course, one wouldn't have known as a 17 year old in France, having to conduct out of some kind of necessity that...or in 1960 when, when the Philharmonic under Bernstein performed a piece by yours in 1961, you probably wouldn't have suspected that you would be Bernstein's successor at the, as music director of the New York Philharmonic. I think these are very nice...

PB:

that's very nice picture, yes...

ETZ:

...nice pictures, yes.

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PB:

No. I never, never thought of it. As I mean, as a matter of fact I was surprised simply that the New York Philharmonic asked me that. You know I have an anecdote to tell you, two anecdotes. I was giving my first series of concerts with the New York Philharmonic in 69... 'cause I was conducting a couple of concerts, I remember in Los Angeles, in Chicago, in Boston and in New York. And then in New York it was an engagement for two weeks, I guess, something like that, you check maybe that's two week, three weeks, I don't remember, something like that, anyway. And I was in, I was also conducting Cleveland in same period. And then as I mean I began to conduct here, must have been March, mid-March, I remember and it was the first of April, '69, 30 years ago, and then I had a telephone call. You know I was in the Essex house. I had telephone call in my room, "oh a Mr. Mosely and Mr. David Keiser" who was president of the board at this time "want to see you...urgently." I said "What is that?"

ETZ:

What did I do?

PB:

No, April fool... I thought it was a joke! First, and when they, you know, I was down to the bar of the Essex house, I remember still, and they proposed to me to be the music director, "would you consider to be the music director?" And I thought it was an April joke, an April fool joke, you know? And that's why it began like that, so... it's funny, you know? [laughs]

ETZ:

[laughing] Oh I love it, that's a, a wonderful story. We have a couple of pictures from the Philharmonic archives that are kind of nice, too, I think....here's...there's a picture of you with the orchestra

PB:

Oh yes, yes, I recognize all the faces.

ETZ:

Yes

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PB:

Yeah.

ETZ:

Here's another one. This is a very nice picture I think...

PB:

Ahh yes.

ETZ:

And then we really are racing ahead but, they also sent us this picture which is quite extraordinary

PB:

Ah yes, yes, yes I remember that, yeah.

ETZ:

This is you with, here's Mario Davidovsky, George Rochberg, and Ulysses Kay, and Lucia Lutoslovsky, and Milton Babbitt...

PB:

Babbitt, yes.

ETZ:

...Aaron Copland

PB:

Aaron Copland, yes.

ETZ:

Here's Roger Sessions, really quite a wonderful collection of American composers.

PB:

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Yes, I think that's, Carlos Mosely organized that...that's, they came to the last concerts, and that's all the American composers I played, I performed during the time I was there.

ETZ:

Very nice, I don't see Elliott in there?

PB:

No he is not there, but I played him. [laughs]

ETZ:

Well that's for sure, that's for sure.

PB:

Yes, maybe he was not in New York at this time, otherwise he would have been there, I suppose. But you know, it was very touching because I remember at the end, there was a kind of speech at the end of the last concert, and...I think I mostly asked the composers who were present in the hall - there of course it was organized, I did not know about it - please stand up. And I saw in all corners of the hall [laughing]...

ETZ:

Oh, how nice.

PB:

...you know, the composer's standing up for that.

ETZ:

I would like to run back also to the first time I heard you conduct was with the BBC orchestra...

PB:

Yes.

ETZ:

...right here...

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PB:

...in 65, yes.

ETZ:

...here in Carnegie Hall.

PB:

Yes.

ETZ:

And here I believe is a, I think this picture I would say that's probably around that vintage, which...you would know better.

PB:

[laughing] must have been, yes, I suppose...Grand gesture. It seemed like I would like to fly.

ETZ:

Well, why not?

PB:

Whoops, excuse me.

ETZ:

Here's two concerts you did with the BBC, do you want to remind yourself of these, or...

PB:

I remember, yes. I remember the concert 'cause there was two of them with the BBC, and I was asked to participate with John Ogdon. Yes I remember very well, yes. And I do not remember exactly of the programs. I remember that was all 20th century.

ETZ:

The first one you'd, you've performed.

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PB:

I performed my own...

ETZ:

Yes!

PB:

...Doubles, yes exactly, and then the Images yes ya ya with Heather Harper. Yes I remember all that.

ETZ:

and, and Webern

PB:

yes, Webern Opus 6.

ETZ:

umm, you'd had had some time since your, your baptism by fire with...

PB:

Yes!

ETZ:

...the Wozzeck

PB:

Yes, well that was, yes, well you know, my conducting career went quite quickly and then surprisingly to me, because I remember, I began to conduct really as I told you, my experience goes back to 58-59, and in 66 I was conducting Parsifal in Bayreuth. And at first I was astonished myself, well you know the things came without my doing anything, as I mean. I conducted some concerts in Munich, I remember, and Karl Amadeus Hartmann, a composer, a German composer was organizing concerts of contemporary music there, and I conducted and, I don't remember, I think I conducted Le martyre de Saint Sébastien by Debussy and other pieces of now-a-day, as I mean. And then as I mean, he spoke with Wieland Wagner, he say "If you are looking for somebody for Parsifal, just ask him."

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And I remember as I mean, at this time Knappstbusch died, and I received a telegram by Wieland Wagner, "Parsifal is an orphan, would you come to Bayreuth?" you know. And I was really, you know hesitating, because I think Parsifal, you know the work of the works, you know the sanctum sanctorum, especially after Knappertsbusch was considered really the keeper of the tradition, I say, and at this period I was really a Darmstadt boy, let's say...still. And I say "what, what I will answer?" and finally I say "you know, that's an opportunity I will never have again, certainly if I refuse today, then as I mean it will be gone." And I was very interested to bring the 20th century to Bayreuth, also, as I mean, to bring a view of Wagner that was not tied to a kind of tradition that was going for years and years. And especially with Wieland Wagner, what he was done already for the stage production in Bayreuth was extremely radical. And therefore I said "why not with me, after all?" And it was very, you know for me a very great challenge. And so I accepted the challenge and then after that, I did the production of Wozzeck in Frankfurt with him, and it was his last production. But I mean...you know I discovered because he had, one of his daughters, Nike Wagner, is doing a book on his father, on her father. And she asked me, you know, do I have a certain correspondence with him? And I say "Yes, certainly" and I looked after the correspondence I had with him, and I find that...after this Parsifal of '66, before he died, because he died in oh, November or something like that and Parsifal was in June-July, something like that, he asked me to conduct in '77, in '67 already, the Ring. I say "I am not prepared for that" I told him, but I mean let me a couple of years and I will do it, and then suddenly he died. But I did the Ring, because his brother, Wolfgang, asked me to do the Ring in the, for the centennial in '76.

ETZ:

That was a Patrice Chéreau...

PB:

That was the Patrice Chéreau production, and he, as me, we had a very hard time.

ETZ:

[laughter]

PB:

Very hard! Because you know his production was really shaking all the old habits and I was also trying to, you know, to give my view of it, no more than that. And therefore it was

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not, the first year, not well accepted at all. You know the first year you have to have very good nerves, to resist this kind of, in some corners, hate.

ETZ:

Really?

PB:

And sick hate, believe me. And then after it...Wolfgang Wagner was very courageous but that has nothing to do with Carnegie unfortunately.

[break in tape]

ETZ:

I vividly would remember those BBC concerts

PB:

Yes, yes

ETZ:

Really, in fact I had a exclamation point, I think in my diary.

PB:

Oh yeah? Yeah

ETZ:

It was the first time I had...heard you conduct and it was first time I heard Jeux. I mean I don't know why...I'd never...

PB:

Well at this time especially it was rarely performed, it is still rarely performed.

ETZ:

Well it's a hard piece, I'm sure...to, to....

PB:

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Well, it's a difficult piece because that's all in finesse and transition and you know, if you don't do it this way then the piece just falls apart, as I mean then you know, the second movement of La Mer is like that also, but less difficult, I'm sure. But I mean it's in this direction whether Debussy's so refined and with small...you know, compartments of organization in the composition, so if you are not a very, very strong hand on it, then as I mean, it's just goes anywhere...nowhere

ETZ:

Loses continuity

PB:

Yes, the continuity which is difficult and to relate to different parts, and especially in Jeux you have to, because there is a continuity in the thematic material, and then you have to really to do that very precisely. I remember I gave, in Carnegie as a matter of fact, I gave a workshop with the Cleveland Orchestra...partly on Jeux and that was very interesting because I did, especially I did, a contrast. I did, I chose two pieces we were performing with the Cleveland Orchestra: Jeux and then Chronochromie by Messiaen. And Jeux you know you have to be all flexibility, all junction between the things, and on the contrary in the Messiaen you have to be very precise rhythmically but giving also the substance to the gesture - that the sound you get from the woodwinds for instance is the right one. So, it was an interesting contrast, and I was not surprised as a matter of fact, that people were finally...this young, this...they were not really, they were...maybe young professionals, let's say. They were finally more at ease with the difficulties of Messiaen...

ETZ:

Messiaen

PB:

...you know a difficulty like to, to jump over...one meter fifty or something like that, than the Debussy which was much more difficult because you cannot explain really. You know the Messiaen you can explain, this piece at least, you can explain then "you have this difficulty, this difficulty, and beat this way and you will get the result." On the contrary in Debussy you can say "well, just listen to it and at this moment that should be slightly rubato at this moment you should go back to tempo, at this moment you should have this line more" and so on and so forth. You know, all, all in a kind of...very...refinement of the

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perception, and you could explain and your explanation don't reach the real core of the thing.

ETZ:

It has to come from here.

PB:

Yes, yes, and the gesture has to convey that, you know, and you have to find the right gesture. Conducting is a very funny business, you know, because conducting is the expression of your body. Really. You know Bernstein was very extrovert and on the contrary Szell did not move almost. I have not seen Reinert, but I mean, Reinert moved still less than Szell, apparently. So then you know, you have certainly a body language which to express yourself. Therefore when I have a workshop like that and I give the indication to a mus...to a, the student who is with me, and I see that he is imitating my gesture I say "no, no, no....you must find your own way of reaching what you want." Because there are two things: precision of course – ensemble – tuning as I mean everything, I mean intonation, everything which is essential. But also you have to convey the phrasing. You have to convey the continuity. You have to think of the long form, especially if you are conducting Mahler, that's not a series of episodes, you have really a construction, and Wagner the same. If you have an act which is, you know like Gotterdammerung, the acts are very long and the scenes are very long, and if you are not building this tension or this, on the contrary the lack of tension, then as I mean, you are in trouble. You have construct and the paradox is: that's... the more you have to study a work the more...intuitive you are. That's very strange. But I mean, you think if you approach a work without too much reflection that it will be really natural, and it will be intuitive. Not at all. The real intuition comes from studying. Because then you don't have to think anymore. Once you have really seen the thing analyzed the thing and looked at it, now you are, you know intuitively where you are. And in the long work that's terribly important. Yes I begin, but where I will go, and then you have to make aware the musicians of it. You know, why I take this tempo at the beginning for instance, because at the end...

ETZ:

Yes.

PB:

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I have that and they want, I want this tempo to relate like the composer wants. If, for instance I take the example of the Alborada del gracioso. Which we performed there. At the beginning I don't take that very quick, because I think of the trumpet with the quick articulation later which can make, if I do that too quick, if I don't change the tempo, the trumpet cannot articulate that quick, and if I want the trumpet, to hear the trumpet right, then I have to change the tempo, which is the wrong thing to do. So at the beginning you have to be aware of that, but once you have done this piece and you know that, you don't think "oh yes I must think of the trumpet." You do. It's...and then the trumpet comes ...yes it is there, you know? And that's all the difference.

ETZ:

It's funny, I've been using a phrase...informed intuition. I think when you're well enough prepared as a composer to then...you trust your instinct, 'cause you know its going to be right for you...

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

It's not just like any old idea, it means you're free to be expressive with it

PB:

Yes. And you intuitively compensate.

ETZ:

Mm hm.

PB:

For instance, if at one point either because of a singer or because of a sonority, you expand a little bit a tempo at one point, you're practically sure that you will go a little quicker later to, you know, to intuitively compensate the broadening of the tempo you have done. And in Chicago for instance, they are taking the timings from the concert, you know the man from the stage, you see...

ETZ:

For the radio

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PB:

...and for the radio and so on. And sometime you don't deviate even by 1 second or you deviate maybe by 5 seconds on a work which is 20 minutes or 25 minutes, and that is extraordinary because you acquire a sense of time that you don't control anymore, I mean rationally. It comes from your perception of the work...

ETZ:

As a whole

PB:

As a whole, yes exactly.

ETZ:

And that you might have been a little faster in this part and a little slower in that part, but...

PB:

Absolutely, you compensate.

ETZ:

But you have this...

PB:

But you have the whole thing.

ETZ:

I'm sitting here with a program of the New York Philharmonic with Pierre Boulez conducting Mahler 7, Mahler 9 I think is on the next page.

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

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What, how do you feel that you have become the Wagner and Mahler conductor? How does this relate to your work? I'm thinking back to the young man after the war, and discovering the Second Viennese school and out to set the world on fire, and here you are some years later, on the other hand, conducting Mahler.

PB:

Traditional music

ETZ:

Yes, yes, very. You know...

PB:

Well I mean, you know...

ETZ:

...and very Romantic music

PB:

Yes, I think first as I mean you enlarge your scope progressively when you are younger, you know, I compare that to a river. At the beginning you are, I don't know how do you say that? In the mountain when...

ETZ:

A rivulet or a stream? A little stream?

PB:

Streams, where...stream and, but very violent, you know it goes down very quickly and with the great violence of the stream but very small. You know? And then progressively you go into the plain as of the...of older age, and then as I mean you have much more water, it seems not to move but your current is much stronger, finally, because the mass of water is more there. I think this comparison because I think that's a real comparison, you know, on the way what you discover – of course, and I mean my education first was of course with the classicals, or with, with Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Brahms, and so on. And then as I mean Debussy and Ravel, it was the extreme at this time, don't forget that's, in my education as a child that was 41-42, you know? So, Debussy, Ravel was the extreme modern at this time, in France especially. And then as I mean the, you must

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consider also that French culture and German culture were not really the best friends for quite a long time, because of the political situation but also because of the point of view. You know, as much as Germany was liked, as German culture was very much liked in France, at the beginning of the 19th century as much after when nationalism came, then as I mean, there was a big gap between the two cultures. And especially in the musical after the war of 1870 especially, you know, it was the point when nationalism was so strong, then French music wanted to be exclusively French. And the the war of 1914-1918 did not arrange anything. Even for instance Debussy was really very nationalistic at the end. He was very sarcastic with German music, and only Ravel was - on the contrary a very, very courageous man - to say that's not a reason, because there are wars, that we cannot consider these artists as really very valuable. You know he was very courageous. And in France between, between the two world wars, I mean the 20's-30's, you know it was kind of a trance... Stravinsky was really the big idol and all what was, what Stravinsky was doing was really the epitome of everything. And then there was a kind of cloud, a complete, a complete cloud on the, on Austrian culture especially. There were some works which were performed as I mean, Music for Strings by Bartok was performed in 1938 as far as I guess. Also I think the Suite of Schoenberg, opus 29 was first time performed in Paris in a very funny way, I don't know...remember the circumstance...and why it was there performed, but apart from that I mean nothing was performed. I remember in my concerts of Domaine Musicale, 1957 I had connection with German, Germany as I told you already. So I had the orchestra of the Südwestfunk invited by the Domaine Musicale. And then I organized a concert with Stravinsky, conducting his own Agon. And then, there was Rosbaud conducting the Pieces, op. 16 by Schoenberg, the Pieces, op. 6 by Webern, original version, and the Berg opuses, 6, op. 6 yes...and I remember very precisely the Berg. I don't remember I, for the other pieces, but this Berg pieces, op. 6 were composed as you remember in 1913-1914. The first performance ever in Paris was 1957. 43 years difference. Wozzeck was performed for the first time in Berlin, 1925 if I remember correctly. There was a one performance in '52 as a guest appearance of the Vienna Opera House with Berg. The first performance in the Opera Garnier, so the Paris opera house with the orchestra of the opera was with me in 1963...

ETZ:

[whispering] oh boy.

PB:

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almost 40 years later. You see. That say the gap that existed between the Austrian music and the French audiences and I don't speak of Webern which, who was never performed before. But I mean, it was, in this concert and you know, as long as I was in France until '58, I had the opportunity to hear only two works by Mahler and not conducted by any French conductor. One was Lied von der Erde with Bruno Walter in '52 and the other one I don't remember exactly maybe '48 or '49, the 4th symphony by Mahler played by a conductor named Paul Kletzki.

ETZ:

Paul Kletzki, yes I played for him...wonderful, had a Swiss roman.

PB:

Yes, exactly, and these were the two only works I heard, no Bruckner whatsoever, and even Messiaen was very close to, very far from that, the the names of Mahler or Bruckner were never mentioned in his class, never mentioned even. Not at all. And I had to...I had a big gap there between Wagner and the Viennese school, there was nothing practically, and they were say "oh Mahler, Bruckner, that's, you know, played very often in Amsterdam, the Dutch people, they like that." And you know, it was just, you know dismissed like that, off hand. The French are very, you know chauvinistic from this point of view, it has to be said. And they think that their culture is really, you know, the culture on the world, and that's a very wrong attitude. And I mean, and during, between the two wars it was this attitude.

ETZ:

It's interesting that you had to go to Germany for your real emergence as a composer, and to the States, for, and England..

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

...to become, you know the...

PB:

conductor

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ETZ:

...the major conductor...

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

To return....

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

...to France in, what your 50s, I guess.

PB:

Yes I was, you know practically absent of France between 1958 and 1977. you know, almost 20 years. And when I came to France I remember having a conversation with President Pompidou. You know he asked me to come, to see him, it was in the end of September '69. And then he asked me, you know "I would like very much you to come back to France because a misunderstanding and that, blah blah blah." So and I say yes, that's I mean, I'm not anti-French at all, you know. I was never proposed very much in France, but I mean, OK. And I told him also you know, "If that's to give me an orchestra, then no. I have London and New York, I don't need, you know a third experience in Paris, that's enough to me. But I would like very much to go back to, you know, the center of my life which is composition..." and, because he told me about his center, you know, the Centre Pompidou, kind of cultural center for modernity especially, and I say "I would like to participate in that." Because, we prepared plans in Germany for the....stiftung, not the Siemens stiftung, the, oh I don't remember, the foundation wanted to do an organization for contemporary...for music, generally, and there was a department for contemporary music, which were foreseen, that right, the Max Planck Institute. And it never came to light. And I under...this plan for you know contemporary music, developing contemporary music which was there and I say "I have a plan, if it can be inserted I would, you know, gratefully do that and it would be interesting for me." And then as I mean, it came that... I began with IRCAM to make the plan for IRCAM. I t was when I was still in NY because I

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began in '70, in '71 to make the plans for IRCAM because construction began in '72. We... the first discussion with architects were in '72. So then also my connection with France was renewed but my conducting career in France is never there practically, or I do conduct especially when Barenboim was at the head of the Orchestre de Paris.

ETZ:

The Opera...

PB:

So I, we are very good friends, and very close friends, and therefore I, you know I played for the orchestra. And then also came and then I conduct especially contemporary pieces, because I founded also, practically a little later, in '76, the Ensemble Intercontemporain, which is an ensemble dedicated to contemporary music.

ETZ:

You want to talk a little bit about the tension or whatever.

PB:

The what?

ETZ:

The tension or the relationship or whatever between conducting and composing?

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

I'm just gonna to pick up a picture of the ensemble. Here's one in, in France I guess, looks like its in their space. And here's one here....that's been, I think only a composer would have thought of that as..

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

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...as being...central, ok, as being central...(aside: If I put it down here, can you get it Nick?)... as being central to the whole mission...

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

...of having this wonderful ensemble that's kind of...

PB:

Yes, completely devoted to that. As I mean, because, you know when I found it the century was already 20...three quarter there. So I said "You know, if we want to found something for the 20th century, that's time to do it." You know? And therefore that was interesting for two reasons: first to have musicians who are really, devoted to that, to this idea, committed to that, also. So that's already a selection, I mean, somebody who is not interested will not audition for us as I mean, that's really already the center of action. And then as I mean, the fact is that, they have the works of the first half of the century like current repertoire. If they do Berg, that's for the orchestra like Brahms, if they do Schoenberg, that's like Beethoven, as I mean. That's exactly the thing which they, you know, we don't need to rehearse very much anymore. When we do the Kammer-symphonie for instance, by Schoenberg you know, I have maybe one and a half rehearsal and everybody knows that, as so, you know, they know for instance they are too loud I deserve to do that, and they know what I mean immediately, you know. And all the repertoire is like that. And they give meaning also. For instance I remember Webern Op. 24 played in 1945. It was dreadful. Nobody knew how to handle this music. And that's not difficult, instrumentally. That's much less difficult then, I don't know, then the last quartet by Beethoven, even. But, you know there were 2 notes, 3 notes, a lot of rests in-between. You know, what does it mean? And they did not feel the continuity of what they were building with single units like that, and now they know and you don't need to say anything, it's still delicate, of course you have to pay attention to intonation, to the level of dynamics you have compared to other instruments, but I mean, they understand what it is.

ETZ:

It's tradition.

PB:

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Yes, the tradi...their tradition. And also, they are works that they know perfectly well. I give an example of mine because I am, of course, directly responsible, but I mean...with *Le marteau sans maître* now, with the same team, we need also one rehearsal to kind of brush up, one and a half rehearsal, that's it. And when I think in '55, you know, there were 30 rehearsal, 40 rehearsals for that. And and now that's there, because the technique has had such an evolution, especially the percussion people, the xylophone and vibraphone part. That's still difficult, but I mean they play it!

ETZ:

They can do anything, yeah.

PB:

They can do it. And you see the evolution, if you write the works, you obtain what you want. You know, practically if that's of course, not crazy. If that's completely crazy then it will never happen. But I mean, if you, if there is a logic into it, and if it is difficult but possible, then as I...it will be done. And for me, as I mean, as a composer I am always enticed, and your were speaking of the age of Stravinsky when I met him, that's true, in '57 he was 75, and I am 74 now, so [laughing] I am very close to the age I, when I knew him. But I am interested also in young composers, because they have not the same point of view.

ETZ:

Yes

PB:

You know people who are 30 now or 25, have not the same background as we had in this time. You know, Webern, well that's, you know, in the complete past, it is not new like it was for us and completely unknown, now we have heard recordings, they've heard that in concert, and that's not important as it is. Maybe Stockhausen is more important, or Berio is more important, as I mean, so they start from a different moment and a different point of view. And therefore it is interesting for me to see what they, this, how they react even, that's interesting. So I am very alert also to what is...and I am very egotistical but when I found the ensemble, now I am no more involved in the administration, we have a music director, we don't...I just look from time to time, how it's going and I conduct them regularly, but I am not, you know, really at the head of it. Because I think....and then I, that's another...I think, a wise tip. When you are older you have to know that other people

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have to come, because if you have a grip constant on an institution, then the institution will grow smaller and smaller and smaller. Because there is an evolution of generations which make necessary for you to supervise but no more to be there constantly, and to give responsibility to other people. You know, I wanted a music director from the beginning, for the ensemble, and when it was time, because of the expansion and it was a bigger business, when before IRCAM, I say it's time now for me to have a new director and I will be just honorary. And that's, that was good, because when the institution is expanding so much you have much more administration to do, and I am not interested in administration. I am interested really in doing things, in giving a purpose, giving them a goal, and then, after that you know, the institution, if any institution is too tired with just one man...

ETZ:

Mmm hmm

PB:

Then the institution will die with this man.

ETZ:

yeah

PB:

And that I did want to avoid

ETZ:

Well its quite a legacy. We have a number of programs here from you conducting the ensemble. Here's an interesting program in '91, and you will be doing, next season. Let's talk a little bit about next season. You'll be doing quite a number of concerts. You want to talk a little bit about the 2000 concept?

PB:

Yes, as I mean, first let's talk about a visit of the Ensemble intercontemporain here. I, we will do especially a workshop with two works by Schonberg. One work which is the Kammer-symphonie, Op. 9, and then the other work which is a Suite for seven instruments, op. 29. And we'll study that with the students here. And we thought about it with the manager of the ensemble, and you know, the people here, the team of the direction of Carnegie, and I think the best, we have found the best way of implying the same time the

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students are musicians. For the Kammer-symphonie there will be always because there are two...three clarinets and two oboes, English horns, etcetera. They will share, you know. The clarinet for instance will be one student, the E-flat clarinet will be one of our players. The bassoon will be one student, the contrabassoon will be one of our people. One of the horn will be a student, one of the, the other horn will be a musician of ours. So they are coached but they learn how to play together, because they will be within a strong structure, they will be safe but in the same time, they have to give, and they have to give on both sides because the coach will be obliged to look, you know, after his, his colleague, his young colleague and the colleague will, you know, observe what the professor does, and they are both...

ETZ:

Well that's the best way to learn, its...absolutely

P; You know, it's the best way to learn. We did that with the Gruppen by Stockhausen when we performed it last spring, as one year ago absolutely. Then as I mean, we were practically not far from half and half, you know, one third to third, lets say. Our musicians were inserted among the orchestras and there were the three dir...music directors of the ensemble intercontemporain. It was David Robertson, Péter Eötvös, and me, you know. And we were each responsible for one of these three orchestras and with our musicians so...you know...close with them. And it gave a performance, really remarkable because you know everybody was trying to do his best, you know. "Oh, I will be criticized by my coach," and the coach says "If I do a gooo...if I goof, you know, the student will say 'oh... he's able also to do a goof.' " You know, and that's became a kind of competition, and challenge which is good. And we do that for the Kammer-symphonie but here for the suite, op. 29, there are only 7 instruments - 3 clarinets, 3 strings and one piano. Then we will do another way, the 1st and the 4th movements which are the most difficult and the longest, as I mean, we'll do with our musicians. The other one will attend, will assist and so on, but they will in concert be performed by our musicians. But the movements 2 and 3, will be performed only with the students, and so you have a different combination. In one kind, homogeneous, homogeneous, in the other kind, on the contrary, mixture. So a mixing of both. So I think that will be interesting. Then I will do also my piece Sur incises for 3 harps...3 pianos, 3 harps and 3 percussion. And different pieces of mine, as I mean, that will include Anthèmes 2 for violin and electronics. Then, as I mean, I come back for a series with the LSO. And it's a kind of anthology, not as I...anthology, which is you know a choice, because in four concerts you cannot give a full dictionary of the composer I like

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very much in the 20th century. But each one of these concerts has a commission by the LSO. I don't remember all the commission now out of my memory..

ETZ:

Kurtág...

PB:

There is a commission by Kurtág, there is a commission by George Benjamin, there is a commission by Olga Neuwirth, and there is a fourth commission, I don't remember right now, my memory is failing me, but anyway. And we asked these four composers to not use the full orchestra because I think, you know the orchestra is a kind of force which is, you know standard. You can have 3 woodwind or 4 woodwinds, you can have 16 violins or 12 violins but I mean that's always the kind of groups. And we asked then in function in the evolution of the music from the beginning of the 20th century, as a matter of fact, to invent some excerpts from the orchestra and to make the accent of a kind of different combination of instrument within the orchestra. Which I find for me is very interesting because notice, for instance, in Schoenberg or in Stravinsky how they tried to get out. The typical example for me is Stravinsky, Symphony of Psalms. You know when you have the woodwinds by five, you have no clarinets, you have 2 pianos, you have one harp, you have no violins, no violas only celli. As I mean, that a very interesting combination...

[break in tape]

ETZ:

This is 1993, Boulez with the Ensemble intercontemporain here at Carnegie Hall. Here's with some of the young conductors workshop. Here's quite an interesting picture by Steve Sherman of Boulez with projected score for the workshop. Here is a program from that. We also have an autograph from a piece on this program, his ...explosante-fixe... and here is the autograph to Carnegie Hall. Can you get this Nick?

N: yes.

ETZ:

Ok...I will tell him what I have done. Let's see, what else....NY Philharmonic. What is this [?] ensemble. These are the master classes. It's nice when you get the whole, the whole room, I was noticing that today. So the buzzer worked?

Woman: Yes, just some----

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ETZ:

It's kind of like elementary school, you know you have to....I was just, in your absence, I, we have some very nice pictures of the Ensemble intercontemporain from '93 and...

PB:

Ohhh, yeah yeah yeah...

ETZ:

and you, your workshop. And this is one of the things that you did and we got Nick to photograph this as...nice autograph.

PB:

Oh yes! Oh yes, that's, that's...

ETZ:

...explosante...

PB:

...explosante-fixe..., yes exactly.

ETZ:

You have the neatest hand....

PB:

[laughs] Well...

ETZ:

Very, very neat. While we're at it, here's a, I think I showed you this earlier, I don't know if this would ever come out, this was...

PB:

Oh yes, that's a relief for me.

ETZ:

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You premiered a piece of mine called "Symposium"

PB:

Yes, yes. In Julliard

ETZ:

Yes, with the Julliard orchestra.

PB:

I remember very well.

ETZ:

And that's me sitting on the podium

PB:

That was our first encounter, absolutely.

ETZ:

That was 1975

PB:

I can't remember the date. I know that was, you know, when I was there. I could not say that was 74, 76.

ETZ:

Well I know exactly what it was. I just want to cover a little bit of this, the bit you were here with the London symphony in 95...

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

...and did three quite extraordinary programs, and this is what you'll be coming back with next season.

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PB:

Yes, yes. So as I say we have commission and...I don't know the results of the commissions, you see because they are not, they are not finished. I hope they will be finished before December because we begin to rehearse in January [laughs]. But certainly, we've asked different nationalities especially you know, that it is not focused on England or France as I mean in this case. But on the contrary, there was, there is a British composer but there are also composers from Austria...

ETZ:

Hungary

PB:

...from Hungary

ETZ:

I think Kurtág is a wonderful composer.

PB:

Yes yes.

ETZ:

Here's another one of these. You mentioned earlier your association with Barenboim, and I want to bring up Pollini, because...

PB:

Yes, certainly

ETZ:

one of the features of next season here at Carnegie Hall, the 1999-2000 season, one of the features is the three of you...

PB:

Yes

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ETZ:

...separately, music of your choice, and of your ideas. And here's a wonderful Pollini-type program from 1993, where he does all the Chopin Etudes.

PB:

Ah, yes

ETZ:

And intermission, and then he does, Liszt and then Boulez Piano sonata #2.

PB:

That's really a demanding program, really.

ETZ:

But the kind of imagination that he has...

PB:

Yes! No, no, no I agree with you....

ETZ:

You know the connection to...

PB:

But I mean as so physically also, that's really very hard, to play all that. But I mean I know Pollini's enormous resources, as I mean, like Barenboim. I like them for that reason. I must say that's their vitality and their imagination. You know, there are not many, many performers or pianists specifically in this case, who have the imagination of Pollini who know that...they don't know only the piano music, but they know really quite a large number of things. Pollini was doing, for instance, a Pollini project in Salzburg, two years ago, and his programs were very inventive, very imaginative. And I remember here, when I saw Judy Tam when we spoke about this project, 2000, we were speaking about the projects of Pollini, precisely as she told me you know "we asked him for ideas and programs, and suddenly maybe the whole year would be full of the project Pollini. And so it was sad, we had to reduce it." But you know it was very enticing to see that. And Barenboim I see, you know in Chicago and in Berlin, as I mean, he has the imagination

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of a real music director. And music director is different from being just, or not just, but a conductor as I mean. Conductor and music director are two functions and that's, like the composer and conductor. We spoke about it.

ETZ:

Mm hmmm.

PB:

And that's true, composers are not necessarily conductors, they can't...

ETZ:

Usually not good conductors, I think.

PB:

Usually not, unfortunately. There are examples I mean...either living or dead as I mean, I read a book on Debussy. Debussy through the people who've known him, you know. And the experience of conducting of Debussy which was related for instance by experiences in London, where he conducted, and in Italy, in Torino where he conducted also - were very distressing because he was not very able to do it. He was on the contrary, he was a very interesting pianist, apparently, but not a virtuoso pianist like Liszt, no no. But I mean, when he played his own piece it was very...interesting as a stylistic approach. Sometimes surprising even for...when we know the music and we go to this performance and when we know this, when we are confronted with performance sometimes people are surprised, as I mean. And in France there is no....after Berlioz, I mean which is, which goes back very far, there is no tradition of a conductor/composer like you have in Germany. Where in Germany also you don't find, you know, the new generation you...Silberman for instance was not a conductor at all. Stockhausen conducts his piece but he is not real conductor. And it goes back or so to Strauss and Mahler, you know the two big figures of equally, equal importance in their time as composers and conductors. And in France I have not really also..many, a lot of competitions, I mean, the younger composers I....I know as I mean, if they do it they do it by necessity much more than by pleasure, and what I did at the beginning as a matter of fact also, I conducted out of necessity and not for any other reason. For me...I would say, I would like to explain the kind of relationship it is. As a composer, you know, I can maybe I suppose so at least...you know that's flattering for myself, but I mean, but as a composer you are more able to look into a score. To know what is important, what is less important. You cannot, you don't hesitate sometime to

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make some correction. I don't say to change the orchestration, but for instance to change some dynamic markings. For instance in the pieces by Berg, Op. 6, there are some miscalculations from the dynamic point of view.

ETZ:

Absolutely.

PB:

You know, and not like Mahler for instance, Mahler even...when the writing is very heavy the dynamic markings are really exceptionally good and goes with the orchestration. In the Berg case that's not the...because for instance the Altenberg Lieder, very well orchestrated, generally right only you have one point in the piece, in the first piece. But the...the third piece especially of Berg is really so thick that you don't know what to do, as I mean, you have to diversify the levels. And then as, as a composer you have more insight into a score. And on the contrary as I mean, myself as a composer what I receive from conducting. That's why for instance, you know I rehearse something and so there I am struck by a detail, and under a pretext or another one, I will take this detail for me to listen how it works, really, the best. And then I will use it after that in one of my compositions. That's like for instance, as I told you, listening to Bali music and taking something really very deep in it and to take it to my own style, my own needs. And that's exactly the same. also for instance as I mean, my Notations. I was you know looking at these pieces, piano pieces, and I made beginning, began the orchestration when I was conducting Wagner. Because you know to study Wagner, the orchestration is so marvelously done and so rich and so inventive, that suddenly I had desire me to also, to you know, to make a kind of orchestration for our time, taking that as a starting point. And...that's, because when you are conducting, you are obliged to look really, the score very close, and therefore as I mean, they influence you not by style, but by all the details you can discover in it. And that's, for me that's a very good lesson. For instance as I mean, when I do the "Barque sue l'océan" which I have done here with the Cleveland Orchestra, I knew for a long time the piano piece, which is pure piano, you know. And when I see how Ravel did the orchestration, that's a marvel of ingenuity and cleverness, as I mean, and metier and skill. So therefore that's interesting to me to look at that, how he did that, how he did that. And you know, sometimes I don't think and suddenly when I'm studying the score I say "Oh that, I did not pay attention enough to that," and then I take that...as a, you know, as a seed, so to speak. And then I put this seed in my music, and then it goes...grows.

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ETZ:

In your way.

PB:

Yes, in my way, yes.

ETZ:

Do you have, as we're kind of winding down to the end of this, do you have any millennium sort of thoughts to share with us about the future of music or where you think music is now, or is going, or...do you think about those kinds of things?

PB:

No. I will tell you as...If I would, if I would be a Jew, it would be the year 5000, I don't know what.

ETZ:

That's true

PB:

If I would be a Muslim it will be something like 1200 or 1300 , I don't remember exactly. In Asia, as I mean, that would be the 10th year of the Japan emperor and so on. These figures don't mean anything to me. I don't see the kind of...you know, excitement about it. Maybe the only excitement that the bug...

ETZ:

Yeah the bug, the Y2K bug

PB:

...exactly because if all computers stop, stop in the same time or hour after hour from Asia to...or from New Zealand to here, then as I mean, I see really a big problem. That's the only excitement I could see right now in the change of figures.

ETZ:

Yeah, yeah I mean,

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PB:

Otherwise it will not change.

ETZ:

But I think a lot of people are sort of taking stock, you know.

PB:

Yes

ETZ:

And, you could go back to, say, you were talking about Pierrot in the early 20's or The Rite of Spring from the teens...a lot of water under the dam to use your image.

PB:

Yes yes yes.

ETZ:

In the 20th century and do you...do you see anything that you want to share with us about where we are now, and where we might be going?

PB:

I think that retrospectively because you have made a retrospective of the 20th century even as artificial as it is, because I think as I mean, you know 1900 was not the date. The date is 1914 really, the change. I think wars are unfortunately much more important than figures of the century. And certainly as I mean, the century in arts generally, in the arts and in literature, but specifically in music, because we are speaking of music, is a very rich century when you see all the main names. If I hear, if I name only the people I like most, you know that's not very much for other people but I mean, if you see well the three Viennese: Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, then you have Stravinsky, then you have Bartok, the you have Varesé, you know that's already quite a lot. Then, you know for me in this a kind of other hierarchy: You have Prokofiev, you have Ives, quite a lot of people, as I mean. That's...therefore as I mean, this...what I establish but for myself, as I mean. I don't say I want to impose this to everybody. That's a kind of hierarchy. I don't, that's....you know, all the composer are like books on the same shelf. Shelf?

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ETZ:

Yeah

PB:

Yeah and you know, you have to establish even for yourself. You establish for yourself but you must be very clear. You know you cannot compare Beethoven with Hummel. You cannot compare, in my opinion Bach with Telemann. There is one who is much stronger than the other one, and who is more seminal, with importance is vital to...and there are some people you know, even if Schoenberg you can criticize some aspects of his work or his thinking, but without Schoenberg the face would have been completely different of the 20th century. I cannot say the same thing about Prokofiev or Hindemith. They are secondary figures certainly with very...let's say legitimate music, but certainly they disappear and you say "Well this may be missing," but I mean that's not missing totally. And therefore I think as I mean, certainly in the second half of the 20th century there will be also this hierarchy, which will establish...That's not for us to establish. That's to the future to establish this kind of hierarchy and to see what succeeded, what did not succeed. I don't speak in terms of having 10,000 people or 2,000 people, but succeeded with a kind of cohesion between the goal, the ideal, and the realization. I think that's all that I can say. I don't like to make predictions. You would have asked me for instance in 1946 what would be the state of music in 1996, 50 years ago. Maybe I would have given an answer then...

ETZ:

[laughs] I love it!

PB:

...but now, no more, certainly.

ETZ:

Tell us what you're working on now

PB:

Well I am working on an expansion of Répons, because you know Répons was composed between '81 and '84. And between '84 and now, the technical of electronics, the technic aspect, the technical aspect of electronics has developed enormously. And I used some developments in ...explosant-fixe... which was performed here, in Anthems 2 which

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will be performed here, and now I want to use these techniques to have a second part of Répons, to...because I...you know, I'm always thinking of that and when I went back in my own archives, I saw a lot of things which were not used at the time, you know. I develop always much more ideas than sometimes I use. And I say "Oh, that's material which I could use now." Therefore I am working on that. And then after I want to finish Notations because poor Daniel Barenboim, and he is waiting for it desperately, 6 years already...

ETZ:

Whoa...that's very patient.

PB:

I am not a good man for commissions, you know because I don't put dates, as I mean, never.

ETZ:

Really?

PB:

No, I find the constraint of a date is, for me, not frightening but paralyzing. You know, I prefer...

ETZ:

That's odd. I find a date, a due date is liberating.

PB:

Really? No, for me it is exactly the contrary

ETZ:

It...

PB:

I don't like to think of a date, generally.

ETZ:

You also tend to go back to pieces and rework them.

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PB:

Yes

ETZ:

And have a sort of living relationship with pieces. That's very interesting.

PB:

Yes, I think that is because I am a performer also. And especially in my performing time I am much more sensitive to that. Because, you know I can write something and think it is right, and you know, if after a few rehearsals and a performance I see that it is not satisfying then I cannot leave it like that. And I have to modify it, and modify it is not only, you know, a kind of detail of orchestration or the instruments better written. No that's not... well it can be that, but I mean it leads to something more, more fundamental as I mean in the conception of the work. Or something, you know, can be plunged[?]. For me as I mean I don't need a lot of ideas. That's the difference for me between when you are very young and you are getting older, maybe you have not this kind of source of imagination which take that and that and that and don't, does not exploit them. Exploit in the best sense, not to just, you know...

ETZ:

Yes

PB:

...being-tied-to-something exploitation. But you don't see the consequences of your ideas when you are very young. You just think immediately and that's a kind of gesture, direct gesture. On the contrary, later as I mean, what I learned really and looking at also works of the past, that's how very little things, which are very specific and chosen with great care then as I mean you can derive, derive, derive, derive, derive, derive.

ETZ:

Mm hmmm

PB:

And I mean, you know, from just a very small ideas I have derived 2 works which are longer and longer each time because I know how to develop the things and to draw

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consequences. And that's for me a very interesting to use a little, a very little material and just to draw consequences which were completely unforeseen to me. You know and that's the very example of Wagner was very revealing to me. When I studied really Wagner not only you know when I was younger in the harmony class, but to see for instance how the ring ideas developed on practically 30 years...not 30 years, 25 years. You have themes which are very benign, you know, in The Rheingold and which become essential in Götterdämmerung and which are developed and are...irrigating all the polyphony. And at the first Wagner certainly did not know what to do with it and discover what to do with it 20 years later. And that's, for me, that's an organic process which is, which is absolutely fascinating.

ETZ:

Yea

PB:

Therefore, two composers which, for me, are the most fascinating from this point of view, three composers I'd like to say, that's: Wagner, Mahler, Berg, in chronological order.

ETZ:

Very interesting. Well Pierre thank you so much for this generous use of your time today. We're gonna have you right on the dot of one so you have a comfortable trip to the airport to go to Paris to work on...

PB:

To work on myself, yes yes [laughs]

ETZ:

...on your compositions, and I wish you wonderful things here at Carnegie Hall as the composers' chair and look forward to many, many more years of your music and your conducting.

PB:

I think I will be able to succeed you in this composer's chair. Well, you were there for three years?

ETZ:

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Four years, actually.

PB:

Four years, even, yes. I will be for one year as I mean, and you know what interests me the most I must say, that's the new hall.

ETZ:

Yes

PB:

That's for me that's the big project and that was the legacy of Judith and..

ETZ:

That's one of her main legacies, I think.

PB:

Really, I would like to, you know, promote that, and to have a kind of permanent relationship between two chairs [laughs]

ETZ:

[laughs]

PB:

One chair in Paris, you know with the Cité de la musique, which Judy visited as I mean. I was with her doing that, and the junction with this new stage of Carnegie. So I hope that you, you know, that you don't mind that I (argue about) your chair in the future.

ETZ:

I hope that I got it warm for you, if that's.... [laughs]

PB:

[laughs]

ETZ:

Thank you very much.

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PB:

Ok.

PB:

[kisses] I hope to see you, even if you are not anymore in the chair...

ETZ:

Oh yes...

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