

Rituel in memoriam Bruno Maderna

Pierre Boulez: Rituel in memoriam Bruno Maderna for orchestra in 8 groups

for orchestra in 8 groups | 27'

4 4 5 4 - 6 4 4 0 - perc(9), alto sax, vln(6), vla(2), vc(2)

world première: 02.04.1975, Royal Festival Hall, London; BBC Symphony
Orchestra, cond. Pierre Boulez

The French word rituel denotes the course of a religious cult and, when associated with music, the appropriate coordination of sonic and verbal expressive media. The title was chosen to lend significance to the funeral ceremony dedicated to the memory of Bruno Maderna, the Italian composer and conductor who died on 13 November 1973. Boulez' own words preceding his composition give a good indication:

In constant alternation:

As it were, the psalm verses and responsories of an imaginary ceremony.

[The] ceremony is one of remembrance: thus the many repetitions of similar formulae in which, however, contours and perspectives transform.

It is a ceremony of expiration, a ritual of disappearance and survival; that is how the images of musical remembrance leave their imprint – simultaneously present and absent, in an intermediate realm □

Pierre Boulez

It is difficult to say whether the return to many organising elements of music such as those practised here are exclusively contextual with the title and the programme Boulez formulated (i.e. whether it is ephemeral), or whether the French composer is now definitively reconnecting with the through-constructed works of his youth after a long period. At all events, it is not only the large formal disposition which is precisely organised in this work; the small-scale contexts are likewise ordered. This through-structuring is most distinct in the temporal dimension, subdivided by many percussion instruments (gongs, tam-tam, small temple bells and the like, including an especially salient Indian tabla drum), also used in the music of their land of origin to mark rhythms irregular and, for Western ears, very complex.

Another characteristic feature of this work is the parallel flux of differing temporal currents of varying consistencies. This rhythmic heterophony, which entails blurring of the previously calculated simultaneity of the voices and consequentially that the voices often do not close their section together, is perhaps comprehensible as the enduring outcome of the composer's personal involvement with random manipulations.



(Wiener Konzerthaus, 3.12.1976, programme)