

## STRAVINSKY AND THE POST-WAR GENERATION IN FRANCE: ASPECTS OF INFLUENCE

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## СТРАВИНСКИ И ПОСЛЕРАТНА ГЕНЕРАЦИЈА У ФРАНЦУСКОЈ: АСПЕКТИ УТИЦАЈА

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Received: 1 March 2023

Accepted: 18 May 2023

Original scientific paper

### АБСТРАКТ

This article explores aspects of Stravinsky's influence on some key composers of the Francophone post-war avant-garde, namely Pierre Boulez, Jean Barraqué, Henri Pousseur and Michel Philippot. While Messiaen, Boulez and Barraqué build on Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations, Pousseur focuses on the sonic complexity of the Russian composer's scores. Boulez and Philippot praise Stravinsky's unique instrumental groupings and later Boulez finds in certain of Stravinsky's scores a renewed source of musical form, as well as the structural coherence afforded by Stravinsky's use of pitch polarity.

KEYWORDS: Igor Stravinsky; influence; reception; French post-war avant-garde; Pierre Boulez.

### АПСТРАКТ

Овај рад истражује аспекте утицаја Стравинског на неке од кључних композитора франкофоне послератне авангарде – Пјера Булеза, Жана Барака, Анрија Пусера и Мишела Филипоа. Док су се Месијан, Булез и Барак ослањали на ритмичке иновације Стравинског, Пусер се фокусирао на звучну

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комплексност партитуре овог руског композитора. Булез и Филипо су хвалили јединствени начин на који је Стравински груписао инструменте, а касни Булез је у неким његовим партитурама пронашао обновљени извор музичке форме, као и структуралне кохеренције коју је Стравински постигао употребом поларитета висине тона.

Кључне речи: Игор Стравински, утицај, рецепција, француска послератна авангарда, Пјер Булез.

## INTRODUCTION

In the opinion of English composer Thomas Adès “for a composer, Stravinsky is like a terminus that you have to go through to get anywhere on the train. There’s no way to avoid him” (Adès 2012, 75). Whatever the accuracy of Adès’s assertion, there is no doubt that Stravinsky’s music and innovations have marked the work of a number of his compositional successors in post-war France. Attracted by Stravinsky’s innovative rhythmic working, Olivier Messiaen first analysed *The Rite of Spring* in 1930 and it was a piece which he analysed often in his class (from 1941 onwards), along with other works by the great Russian master.<sup>2</sup> Pierre Boulez was one of many of Messiaen’s pupils who benefitted from the older composer’s analysis of the piece and he would go on to produce his own analysis of certain rhythmic aspects of *The Rite* in 1953. While the celebrated analyses of *The Rite* by Messiaen (1995) and Boulez<sup>3</sup> are key moments in Stravinsky’s post-war reception in France, the Russian composer was arguably eclipsed in the minds of the immediate post-war generation of serialists by Webern and then Debussy, though his rhythmic experimentation was undoubtedly key in the production of generalised serialism in the early 1950s.

In the course of this article we will trace Stravinsky’s significance for four French composers born in the 1920s, namely Pierre Boulez (1925–2016), Jean Barraqué (1928–1973), Henri Pousseur (1929–2009) and Michel Philippot (1925–1996). The story of Stravinsky’s influence on post-war French music is not straightforward. For some composers, one or more aspects of Stravinsky’s composition became the starting point for an important dimension of their own work. For others it formed a significant backdrop to a personal trajectory. For others again, his aesthetic positions were no more than significant signposts against which they in part defined their own approaches. In what follows I attempt to set out something of Stravinsky’s enduring

2 A version of Messiaen’s analysis of *The Rite of Spring* was published in volume 2 of his seven-volume *Treatise on Rhythm, Colour and Ornithology* [*Traité de rythme, de couleur et d’ornithologie* (1949–1992)], vol 2 (1995, 91–147). Messiaen analyses the sections of *The Rite* – “l’Adoration de la Terre”, “le Sacrifice” and “Danse Sacrale” – primarily in relation to his own interest in “personnages rythmiques”.

3 See Pierre Boulez’s 1953 essay “Stravinsky Remains” (1991, 55–110).

appeal and relevance for these four composers, drawing on composer writings, interviews, musical scores and critical commentary. The article closes with some acknowledgement of Stravinsky's continued importance for some more recent French composers and musicians.

It goes without saying that it would be unwise to accept uncritically the accounts which composers themselves give us of their own compositions, intentions and working methods, since what is said and what is done may not at all coincide. At the same time, the present article is written in the conviction that the wariness this caveat implies in no way nullifies the value of a composer's thoughts as a significant component within the constellation of forces that shapes our approach to and reception of musical compositions.

### PIERRE BOULEZ AND *THE RITE OF SPRING*

From some of his earliest writings such as "Proposals" (1948) (Boulez 1991, 47), "Trajectories: Ravel, Stravinsky, Schoenberg" (1949) (Boulez 1991, 188–208) "Bach's Moment" (1951) (Boulez 1991, 1–14) and "Possibly" (1952) (Boulez 1991, 114), Pierre Boulez defined his own project in sharp distinction to that of the first-generation of modernist composers, criticising uncompromisingly at times aspects of their various approaches. From the start, he recognised the importance of Stravinsky's structural use of rhythm based on dissymmetry and his technique of using rhythmic cells independently of pitch. In equal measure, the young Boulez was critical of Stravinsky's employment of harmony and counterpoint, which was still based on "processes of aggregation round very elementary poles" and which he judged gave "unaccustomed force to the moribund laws of equilibrium" ("Possibly" (1952) in Boulez 1991, 114). Having settled accounts with the recently deceased Schoenberg in "Schoenberg is Dead" (1952) (Boulez 1991, 209–214), Boulez penned an extensive article on Stravinsky – "Stravinsky Remains" (1953) (Boulez 1991, 55–110) in which, in addition to offering a number of personal reflections on the Russian composer's work, he produced a penetrating and often-cited analytical study of certain rhythmic aspects of *The Rite of Spring*. The analysis continues to be of great interest today. In "Stravinsky Remains" Boulez acknowledges that *The Rite of Spring*, *Petrushka*, *Renard*, *Les Noces* and *The Song of the Nightingale* "form a constellation of admitted importance", albeit that *The Rite* is the key work with which Stravinsky is associated (Boulez 1991, 55). He points out something, which may be surprising to us today, namely that despite its greatness and importance, *The Rite* had "had little real influence" up to the 1950s and could be said to be "a work without offspring" (Boulez 1991, 56). While Boulez could find no further possibilities for development in Stravinsky's tonal working, he suggested that the piece's "rhythmic technique ... still remains practically unexplored" (Boulez 1991, 107).

Boulez's positive disposition toward Stravinsky goes only as far as *Les Noces*, after which he finds evidence of "rapid exhaustion" and the weakening of every aspect of the music, even with rhythm (Boulez 1991, 108). An inveterate critic of Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetic and compositions, Boulez was likewise not particularly

enamoured of the Russian composer's late serial works. In his early years Boulez was more concerned with exploring how the rhythmical possibilities inherent within *The Rite* could be united with the complex pitch developments made available by Webern. There is no doubt that the cellular rhythmic aspects of Boulez's early compositions benefitted greatly from the new durational and rhythmic freedom Stravinsky's work suggested and in making duration an equal musical component alongside pitch.

### BOULEZ AND STRAVINSKIAN POLAR NOTES

Stravinsky had drawn attention to his continuing interest in pitch polarities in 1939–1940 in his *Poetics of Music*<sup>4</sup> where he states that, despite moving away from “classic tonality”, he still finds it necessary

to obey ... the axis of our music and to recognize the existence of certain poles of attraction. Diatonic tonality is only one means of orienting music towards these poles. The function of tonality is completely subordinated to the force of attraction of the pole of sonority. All music is nothing more than a succession of impulses that converge towards a definite point of repose (Stravinsky 1974, 35).

In Stravinsky's view, “musical form would be unimaginable in the absence of elements of attraction which make up every musical organism and which are bound up with its psychology”, and he adds that, since all music is “nothing but a succession of impulses and repose, it is easy to see that the drawing together and separation of poles of attraction in a way determine the respiration of music” (1974, 36).

Over time Boulez moves significantly away from his earlier position regarding the employment of polarities as a key coherence-building ingredient within his compositions. From *Le Marteau sans maître* onwards, he begins to centre his compositions upon “a single static controlling harmony” (Gable 1990, 444). While this is not necessarily apparent to listeners in his compositions of the 1950s, it becomes increasingly evident. The progressive simplification of harmonic means in Boulez's compositions is a response to a lack of differentiation within the integral serialist pieces. Despite advocating the avoidance of all intervals which could suggest tonal gravitation, he begins, in the early 1960s, to reintegrate significant pitches or polar centres as a way of enhancing formal and perceptual coherence within his music. It is a device which grows in importance within his work and which features in many pieces. He speaks, for example, of *Improvisation II* from *Pli selon pli* (1957) in which “the vocal line itself is at once syllabic and melismatic around a given note” (Boulez 1976, 95). He likewise draws attention to “the end of the first chapter of the

4 As Valérie Dufour shows, Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music* is the result of a literary collaboration with Pierre Souvchinsky, who sketched a plan for the lectures, and with Alexis Roland-Manuel, who helped Stravinsky write his lectures in French (Dufour 2021, 332–334).

second book of *Structures*" (1961) where there is "polarisation around a B $\flat$  that is repeated three times" (Boulez 1976, 91–92).

In *Eclat* for fifteen instruments (1965), a recurrent C $\sharp$  polar note is played by the bells between figures 14–19, the non-pulsed static section at the centre of the piece. Polar notes differentiated by timbre and register feature prominently in *Répons* (1980–1984) and provide a significant perceptual thread through extended sections of the piece; Boulez at times decorates his static polar notes with appoggiaturas, rapid figures and heterophonies. Polar notes are also found in *Dialogue de l'ombre double* for clarinet and live electronics (1985) where a low D $\sharp$ , for example, returns at the end of each phrase as a fundamental pitch. In *Rituel* (1974–1975) and later in *Memoriale* (1985) (alternatively *Originel* from ...*explosante-fixe*...), which are both derived from the same basic musical materials, Boulez uses the pitch E $\flat$  as a polar centre. As for the other two completed sections of ...*explosante-fixe*..., *Transitoire VII* is centred on A $\flat$  and *Transitoire V* is centred on A $\sharp$ . Much of *Anthèmes* for solo violin (1992) centres around a polar D $\sharp$  and *sur Incises* (1996; 1998) contains a number of polar notes which help to articulate the overall shape of the piece and provide perceptible points of recognition. The use of polar notes is, in other words, an important part of Boulez's compositional practice from the 1960s to the end of his compositional career.

## BOULEZ AND STRAVINSKIAN SECTIONAL FORMS

In 1971 Boulez contributed the outline for a projected aleatoric composition ... *explosante-fixe* ... to a memorial issue of the British periodical *Tempo* in honour of Stravinsky. What was published in *Tempo* was merely the tantalising germ of an aleatoric work with guidance for its elaboration. Over the next two decades Boulez produced a number of versions of parts of the composition, but it was only in the period 1991–1993 that he finalised three sections of the work for MIDI-flute, live electronics and chamber orchestra.

From the mid-1970s onwards many of Boulez's pieces begin to resemble the sectional forms of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, and Stravinskian sonorities are particularly evident in Boulez's *Répons*, ... *explosante-fixe*... and *sur Incises*. In his Collège de France lectures from 1983–1985, Boulez commends the originality of Stravinsky's discourse, which bases musical form on the permutation and return of recognisable sections. He notes in particular how Stravinsky succeeded in *Les Noces* and the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* in transforming the ancient forms of the litany and the verse response couplet into an entirely new concept, in which formal development is paradoxically produced through formal return, in a thematism which is based upon modified repetition (Boulez 2005, 232, 276).

Perhaps thinking more of his own forms, Boulez prefers to describe Stravinsky's sectional forms as constituting "accumulative development", thus avoiding any sense of repetition and, perhaps also, Stravinsky's identity-based aesthetic (Ibid., 236). He speaks of "a kaleidoscopic form where the alternation of accumulative

thematic developments creates the form” (Ibid.). Again, he professes his growing attraction for a formal conception which gives equal status to “return and variation” (Ibid., 318–319). In practical terms he invokes the musico-historical concepts of antiphony, response and sequence, which he believes can be re-employed and re-interpreted more liberally to meet present needs, since they are not inextricably bound to any historical definition or previous use, referring to “allusion” rather than to literal return.

Perhaps the simplest form of accumulative development is the verse-response form of a piece such as *Rituel*, which is made up of fifteen sections, in which the even-numbered are verses and the odd-numbered are responses. In *Original* from ...*explosante-fixe*... Boulez simply alternates two kinds of music, this time a series of six poetic, improvisatory sections, each time punctuated with a cadence. *Transitoire VII* from ...*explosante-fixe*... is clearly sectional in form, but in a much more elaborate way than the two pieces already mentioned. It has ten distinct ideas, which occur variously from one to six times in the course of the movement, as they interlock in a kind of musical chain. Each of the sections in *Transitoire VII* has its own distinctive character and, as Boulez has confirmed in discussion with George Benjamin, the succession of the sections is discontinuous and does not follow any “permutational scheme”.<sup>5</sup>

### JEAN BARRAQUÉ AND STRAVINSKY’S RHYTHMIC CELLS

Despite being unsympathetic for the most part to Stravinsky’s music, Jean Barraqué nevertheless draws attention to certain rhythmic aspects of the elder composer’s work. In the article “Rythme et développement” (1954),<sup>6</sup> among other examples, he considers figures 142–149 of the “Danse sacrée” from *The Rite of Spring*. While, as Laurent Feneyrou notes, Barraqué’s analysis was eclipsed by Boulez’s more thorough exploration of the work in 1953 (Feneyrou 2001, 94), it is nevertheless of historical interest and demonstrates the impact of the analyses by Messiaen and Boulez on their fellow French composers.

Barraqué conducts his analysis in terms of Messiaen’s “personnages rythmiques”. He finds in this section of *The Rite* “a composition established from a cell, or rather from the idea of a cell” and he notes that there is in fact “no variable mother cell”, since the appearances of the cell “are only momentary concretisations of an abstract cell” (Barraqué 2001, 98). He judges that “the logical deduction of these variations produces a real ‘series’ which organises the work in a ‘closed circuit’” (Barraqué 2001, 98). In revealing the work’s “embryonic side” he is nevertheless solicitous that analysis should not call into question its “unique and magnificent aesthetic success” (Ibid., 98).

5 Boulez and Benjamin: BBC Radio Interview, 21 February 1997.

6 “Rythme et développement” was written in 1952 and published in 1954 (Barraqué 2001, 87–114).

Beyond his own analysis, Barraqué, writing in his 1953 “*Démarches musicales du demi-siècle*” (2001, 51–56), proves supportive of Boulez’s contention that the rhythmic structures of *The Rite of Spring* had not yet been assimilated (Ibid., 51), and he later draws attention to Boulez’s analysis of the piece as a model of a certain kind of innovative thinking.<sup>7</sup> Where certain critics reproach Boulez for finding in the score certain “relationships that Stravinsky would not have considered”, Barraqué is in agreement with Boulez’s justification “that this was not the issue, as long as these relationships were, indeed, in the score” (Ibid., 407). His admiration for Boulez’s essay is clear from further references to it in his extended essay on Beethoven (Barraqué 2001, 418; 27), and Paul Griffiths notes a possible allusion to *The Rite* in Barraqué’s *Chant après chant* (a quarter of the way into the work) (2003, 71). While, as noted already, Barraqué was otherwise not greatly enamoured of Stravinsky’s music, he was nevertheless very impressed on hearing *Requiem Canticles* (1966) (according to André Hodeir, cited in Griffiths 2003, 89).

### HENRI POUSSEUR, STRAVINSKY AND SOUND

The Francophone Belgian composer Henri Pousseur makes reference to Stravinsky in a number of places in his writings. In “Structure du nouveau matériau sonore” (1954) he draws attention to Stravinsky’s use of sound clusters which, as he suggests, takes his music into new, indeterminate sonic territory.

The sound clusters in Stravinsky’s early works, from *The Rite of Spring* to the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, show at what point sounds of determined pitch, played simultaneously, can coalesce in impenetrable complexes. If these complexes have only a short duration, not permitting the formation of global periodicities, they can only be integrated in a very rough way into our linear matrix of pitches. In the best cases, one can still determine extreme frequencies, the regions of dominant frequency, and all the rest disappears in a mass phenomenon (Pousseur 2004, 140).

Having identified this phenomenon within Stravinsky’s compositions, Pousseur next tries to explain it, wondering whether this seeming impenetrability lies within the sounds themselves or whether it is due to a theoretical apparatus not up to the job of accounting for them. He questions

can such sound phenomena, which have an immediately explosive effect, be considered compositionally as imprecise? Is it not rather that the means employed in approaching such phenomena are altogether inadequate? Might we judge that some figures are imprecise because they can only be described with difficulty by a network of straight lines? We must not forget that even acousticians – albeit in the context of psycho-physical problems – have abandoned rigid and irremovable [*inamovible*]

7 See his undated essay titled “Beethoven” (Barraqué 2001, 401–579).

harmonic analysis in order to devote themselves to new methods of measurement ... They accept, in line with auditory laws, a certain degree of imprecision regarding the dimension of pitch (Ibid., 140).

Having set out the question of the imprecise sounds of Stravinsky's clusters in the context of post-war psychoacoustics, Pousseur acknowledges that the terms in which he is discussing the aural experience of Stravinsky's compositions do not reflect the Russian composer's own concerns. Drawing close to Boulez's critique he writes that the works in question nevertheless possess unexplored consequences:

Stravinsky himself did not draw from his experience the extreme and only valid consequences. The way he linked these structures to one another, to fixed polar notes, neutralises their explosive force, reduces them to elementary phenomena of a percussive type, the essential function of which is to mark the articulation of time (Pousseur 2004, 140).

For Pousseur, writing in 1966 (in his essay "Calcul et imagination en musique électronique"), Stravinsky's enduring value lies in part in his enrichment of music's sound resources (2004, 181). In 1968 he noted *The Rite's* importance as marking the moment when noise enters into European music, becoming humanised in the sense of being more comprehensible to us (Pousseur 1970, 24). In *Fragments théoriques I sur la musique expérimentale* (1970) he praises those musicians who attempt to open up for us "the totality of the possible sound world", principally Stravinsky who does so through the only medium available to him, namely the classical orchestra (Ibid., 41). With such traditional means Stravinsky is credited with reconstructing "fully-fledged noises, genuine sound complexes which are extremely difficult to fathom" (Ibid., 41). As in his earlier statements, Pousseur continues to think that the overall effect in the case of *The Rite* is somewhat mitigated, since Stravinsky often employs easily appreciable musical material. For example, he uses folkloric sources which are not too far removed from the more familiar sound world of modality and which unfold within "rather strictly limited spaces" (Ibid., 41).

In "Stravinsky by way of Webern: The Consistency of a Syntax", a two-part article from 1972, Pousseur expresses the view that Stravinsky's harmony has hitherto been treated by commentators in "very simplistic, very partial, if not very negative" ways (Pousseur and Clements 1972a, 13). While paying homage to Boulez's "Stravinsky Remains", he notes nevertheless that here as elsewhere Boulez reduces "the incontestable originality of [Stravinsky's] harmony ... to traditional, if not to academic, notions, which ... rob it of its richness and its novelty"<sup>8</sup> (Ibid.). Despite recognising that Boulez's position in "Stravinsky Remains" is a little more nuanced than his previous statements, Pousseur criticises his French colleague's dismissals

8 Pousseur traces Boulez's statements on Stravinsky's harmony in his early writings: "Trajectories" (1949), "Bach's Moment" (1951), "Stravinsky Remains" (1953) and "Tendencies in Recent Music" (1957).



of Stravinsky's harmonic explorations, that they are timid or failed when compared with those of the Second Viennese composers (Ibid., 14). He picks up on the point, noted earlier in this article, that Boulez undervalues Stravinsky's harmony on the basis that it resorts to "powerful attractions around certain poles ... namely, the tonic, the dominant, the subdominant"; that it results in "embroidery on the embroidered chord" and in "superpositions of several modalities on the same polar note" (Boulez, cited in Pousseur and Clements 1972a, 14). Pousseur's critique of Boulez seems prescient given the importance, as we have seen, polar notes came to assume in the latter composer's compositions, especially from the mid-1970s onwards.

Looking more generally at his own compositional orientation in relation to that of Boulez, Pousseur diagnoses that Boulez to this point (1972) is caught between a generalised serialism which extends, on the one hand, the fundamental insights of the Second Viennese composers and which, on the other hand, pays close attention to Debussy's innovations with regard to large-scale form. For Pousseur, these two approaches are difficult to reconcile. On this basis he suggests that Boulez is "still lacking conceptual means, theoretical tools which would permit him to write less arbitrarily, to define Stravinsky's harmonic structures in an *adequate* manner, and thus to discover the extremely *acute*, extremely *modern* coherence and syntactical originality in their constructive power" (Ibid., 15–16). We might say that, in contrast to the continued negation of Boulez's approach to musical composition, Pousseur values highly the synthetic nature of Stravinsky's music and he praises "the extraordinarily premonitory character of Stravinsky's entire work" in this regard (Ibid., 16).<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Pousseur sets out in his article "to submit Stravinsky's harmony, that is his treatment (horizontal as well as vertical) of intervals and groups of intervals, to an examination which will be at least as careful as that with which rhythmic phenomena are treated in *Stravinsky demeure*" (Ibid., 18).

In doing so he looks closely at some Webernian aspects of *Agon* (1957) and more cursorily at *The Rite of Spring*. In the latter case, Pousseur confirms his earlier intimations that within the "Danse sacrale" "we are dealing with 'blocs' of sonority the details of which are difficult to analyze 'by ear' (even if some dominant frequencies emerge) and that we interpret in the direction of *noise*" (Pousseur and Clements 1972b, 140). In "The Consistency of a Syntax", following a period of time when he was opening up his own music to a wider range of possibilities including diatonicism (Ibid., 129), Pousseur decides to explore the details of Stravinsky's harmonic practice. He shows how this aspect of the Russian composer's work, formerly dismissed by Boulez and others as traditional and tame, is "much more loaded with possibilities for the future" than had previously been appreciated (Ibid., 137).<sup>10</sup>

9 Pousseur notes that "Boulez, even today unfortunately, has a tendency to label all this with 'antique dealer's mentality'" (Pousseur and Clements 1972a, 16). For further discussion on the divergence of views between Boulez and Pousseur on the question of negation see Campbell (2010, 38–47).

10 Pousseur refers explicitly here to Boulez's unease with a "series of parallel thirds ... accompanied by an equal parallelism in thirds or sixths in which either the lowest or the highest note has been raised

For Dick Witts, Pousseur's composition *L'Effacement du Prince Igor* (The Obliteration of Prince Igor) (1971), written not long after Stravinsky's death, is "a kind of aural equivalent" to the article "The Consistency of a Syntax" (Witts 1977, 10). Having attacked negative attitudes toward Stravinsky's harmony in the article, *L'Effacement du Prince Igor* is composed for a large orchestra in which the instrumental groups play collectively and homophonically. (Witts 1977, 11) As Witts tells us, Pousseur draws in *L'Effacement* on Webern's *Variations for Orchestra* (1940) and Stravinsky's *Agon* (1956-1957), two works which are already linked since "the Pas-de-deux of *Agon* refers to the thematic row and harmonic procedures of Webern's *Variations*" (Ibid.). For Witts,

Pousseur is attracted to *Agon* because it "takes and gives the measure of (Stravinsky's) past as well as of his future", and converges many seemingly opposed "stylistic stages". Stravinsky convincingly and positively encompasses many varied gestures without loss of structural perspective. *Agon* plays with a polyphony of materials (rendered successively) from Renaissance dance to "Webernised" adagio. In *L'effacement*, Pousseur focuses on Stravinsky's approach to Webern's serial procedures (Ibid.).

As Witts shows, in *L'Effacement* Pousseur draws on the principles Stravinsky derived from Webern's *Variations for Orchestra* for his own *Agon*. He "maintains momentum and coherence" first of all through selecting "strongly mutual elements ... connections and conversions, constructed through interval additions, multiplications, transpositions, inversions, pivotal contact and rationally employed chromatic shifts", employing a "gestural economy" (Ibid., 16). Secondly, he "extracts pitches from the entire vertical gamut he has produced through cyclic propagation" and these produce results in relation to (1) register, whereby "a cycle based on equal divisions of the octave creates pitch duplications at other octave levels", and (2) transposition. For Witts, Pousseur in this piece and at this point in his compositional development "is pushing along the trail of Webern that Stravinsky bestrode" (Ibid., 17).

It is also worth noting that in true Stravinskian fashion many of Pousseur's later pieces allude to significant musical figures from the past including Bach, Dowland, Schoenberg, Schumann and Stravinsky (Nicolson n.d.).

### MICHEL PHILIPPOT: A VIEW FROM THE 1960S

Another composer of note during this period, for whom Stravinsky was an important influence, is Michel Philippot. Philippot published a short book on Stravinsky in 1965 in which he stated of *The Rite of Spring* that, fifty years after it was first written, it has retained its power and "an extraordinary youthful potential" (1965, 12). Like Barraqué and other commentators, Philippot describes Boulez's study of *The Rite* as "magisterial" (Ibid., 114). Possibly drawing close to Pousseur, he finds

a semi-tone" (Pousseur and Clements 1972b, 137).

that Stravinsky transforms the sound of the orchestra as well as that of individual instrumental timbres (Ibid., 109), and he recognises the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* as a product of Stravinsky's research into instrumental colour (Ibid., 73). Regarding the innovative instrumentation of player piano, harmonium, percussion ensemble and two Hungarian cimbaloms, conceived for an earlier realisation of *Les Noces*, Philippot suggests that Stravinsky was an unwitting "precursor in the field of music for tape and traditional instruments" (Ibid., 116). By contrast, he is less impressed by the use of string orchestra in *Apollon musagète*, stating that he deplores in this and other of Stravinsky's works of the period the "unexplained attraction for neutral tones" which is reversed in the later serial works (Ibid., 73). Interestingly Philippot, whose own music has its origins in dodecaphonic premises, finds that Stravinsky in his *Mouvements* for Piano and Orchestra (1958–1959) has "assimilated perfectly" the language of the Second Viennese composers (Ibid., 98), and *Agon* is described as "one of Stravinsky's most brilliant scores" (Ibid., 120). He also remarks on how the entirety of Stravinsky's career attests to his unprecedented capacity "to take up any music and to make it absolutely his own" as he becomes "a gigantic digestive tube through which all music passes" (Ibid., 109). Again, he suggests that Stravinsky "cannot bring himself to give up a kind of 'right to marry' ['droit de cuissage'] regarding all the music that preceded his own" (Ibid., 119).

## EPILOGUE

In this article we have seen how Stravinsky's work has served as an active force for a number of subsequent French composers. The analyses of *The Rite of Spring* produced by Messiaen and Boulez continue to serve as signposts in relation to which several composers situate themselves. In the 1950s French composers pursuing genuinely new music were united in finding that *The Rite* still possessed unexplored possibilities which they could tease out in their own works. For a number of composers, including Messiaen, Boulez and Barraqué, it is Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations that are of greatest importance. Pousseur focuses on the sonic aspects of certain key early works as well as on *Agon*, recognising the sonic complexity of the former and the sophisticated harmonic possibilities of the latter. Philippot praises Stravinsky's unique instrumental groupings and his research into instrumental colour, an insight that is later shared to some degree by the spectral composers and by the Boulez of *Répons, ... explosante-fixe...* and *sur Incises*. The later Boulez finds in *Les Noces* and the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* a renewed source of musical form and he and Pousseur both come to value Stravinsky's use of pitch polarity as a way of structuring compositions and of providing coherence.

To look beyond the composers considered here, it is worth noting that Gilbert Amy's three sacred works form a distinctive Stravinskian moment in his output informed by the Russian composer's *Mass* and the *Symphony of Psalms*. Like Stravinsky, a number of Francophone composers including Pousseur, Amy, Philippe Fenélon, Frédéric Durieux and Thierry Pécou have integrated references to other composers, compositions and historical styles within their compositions, albeit

not always with the radicalness of their great Russian predecessor. While this is not something that can be associated exclusively with Stravinsky, it is arguably the case that no one before him had done anything like this with the radical programmatic intent of his neoclassical compositions, as they work their way through so many key moments of the Western musical past. For other contemporary French composers, such as Philippe Hersant, Laurent Martin and Philippe Hurel, the Stravinskian connections are mostly singular and anecdotal.

Even where Stravinsky is not an immediate reference in terms of composition, his work, as Adès suggests, seems something that has to be negotiated in theoretical terms. Among the composers of *L'Itinéraire*,<sup>11</sup> Hugues Dufourt (b. 1943) returns to Stravinsky in his writings (1993; 2014, 113–120). While distancing the music of the 1970s spectral generation from Stravinsky's rhythmic experiments, since their music "is oriented towards a single pulse", Dufourt recognises Stravinsky as one of those early modernist composers who prepared the way for the "emancipation of timbre" later in the century (1993, 86). Gérard Grisey (1946-1998) acknowledges Stravinsky as an important predecessor in thinking musical time and as the greatest rhythmician of his age (2008, 199). Michaël Levinas (b. 1949) considers *The Rite of Spring* as an exemplary moment in early modernism for its transgressive intent and the way it negotiates musical systems while disrupting them. (2002, 137–138) To this degree, it continues to stand as a model for composers today and Levinas asks "How can we anticipate secret laws like Stravinsky did at the beginning of our century?" (2002, 147).

In his book *Le Compositeur, son oreille et ses machines à écrire: Déconstruire les grammatologies du musical pour mieux les composer*, composer and theoretician Fabien Lévy (b. 1968) undertakes his own analysis of the *Danse sacrée* from *The Rite of Spring*, a work he describes as "enigmatic" (2013, 224). As with earlier generations of French composers, Lévy takes note of the analyses of both Messiaen and Boulez, acknowledging that the work of the former was geared more toward "demonstrating his own techniques of personnages rythmiques", rather than those of Stravinsky (Ibid., 227).<sup>12</sup> Before presenting his own "informational analysis" of Stravinsky's treatment of musical time in the *Danse sacrée*, Lévy acknowledges the continuing importance of Boulez's analysis, while attempting to go beyond any approach which is focused primarily on the notation in the score (Ibid., 232). Lévy recognises that Boulez's analysis is that of a composer who, rather than seeking to produce a historically faithful account of Stravinsky's intentions for the piece, was much more focused on discovering rhythmic tools which he could employ within his own compositions (Ibid., 232). For his own part, Lévy undertakes an informational analysis "not in terms of organised structures" but rather "of perception of irregularity in pointed [fléché], irreversible time" (Ibid., 233). In doing so, he is conscious that

11 *L'Itinéraire* is an ensemble of composers and performers which formed in 1973 around the spectral composers in Paris. <http://litineraire.fr/wp/>, accessed 15 May 2023.

12 As Lévy notes, Messiaen produced a second analysis of *The Rite*, this time based on the analysis of Greek rhythms (Lévy 2013, 228).

his own approach, just like those of Messiaen and Boulez, is limited and a product of its own time and its “obsessions” (Ibid., 238).

Lévy appraises the situation of the composer working since the millennium, noting the differences operative among successive generations of composers. Observing that around forty years separate the generation of Boulez, Stockhausen and Ligeti from that of Stravinsky, Berg and Bartók, and that a similar time-lapse lies between Boulez’s generation and his own, Lévy suggests that “rather than building on a tabula rasa, today’s composers seem to be motivated to some extent to ‘extend’ the work of their elders” (2013, 242). He notes that the generation of composers aged under fifty working in the twenty-first century is producing its own aesthetic, even if it is more clearly in line with references from the past and does not seem to present an easily definable unity [“une unité médiatisable”] (Ibid.). Lévy suggests that he and other composers working in the twenty-first century “have inherited from [their] modernist ‘musical grand-parents’ the desire to construct new grammars and, at the same time, to share with [their] ‘composer-parents’ the dream of elaborating new concepts” (Ibid.).

Some of Stravinsky’s key works are now over 100 years old and, as we move further away from their points of origin in time, it is inevitable that their influence will be all the more mediated. It seems that Stravinsky’s key works, while perhaps not as shocking or surprising as they once were, have not lost anything of their capacity to stimulate and inspire. While a number of his compositions have attained canonical status and are firmly placed in the repertoires of many of the world’s greatest orchestras, ensembles and solo musicians, this does not seem to have diminished their suggestive potential. More than fifty years after his death, Stravinsky, it seems, remains!

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ЕДВАРД КЕМБЕЛ

СТРАВИНСКИ И ПОСЛЕРАТНА ГЕНЕРАЦИЈА У ФРАНЦУСКОЈ: АСПЕКТИ УТИЦАЈА

(РЕЗИМЕ)

У овом чланку истражујемо на које начине је стваралаштво Стравинског инспирисало бројне потоње француске композиторе. Анализа *Посвећења њролећа* коју су начинили Месијан и Булез и даље служи као путоказ у односу на који се позиционира неколико композитора. Током педесетих година прошлог века, француски композитори који су трагали за истински новом музиком били су уједињени у потрази за неистраженим могућностима за које су веровали да постоје у *Посвећењу*, а које би могли да наговесте у својим делима. За одређен број композитора, међу којима су и Месијан, Булез и Барак, највећи значај имале су ритмичке иновације Стравинског. Пусер се фокусирао на звучне аспекте одређених кључних раних дела, као и на *Ајон*, препознајући звучну комплексност у ранијим остварењима и софистициране хармонске могућности каснијег дела. Филипо је хвалио начин на који је Стравински груписао инструменте, као и његово истраживање инструменталне боје, што је увид који су касније у одређеној мери преузели спектрални композитори и Булез у делима *Répons, ... explosante-fixe...* и *sur Incises*. Зрелији Булез је у *Свагби* и *Симфонији за дувачке инструменте* пронашао обновљени извор музичке форме, а он и Пусер су високо вредновали и употребу поларитета висина тонова, који је у циљу структурисања композиција и обезбеђивања кохеренције примењивао Стравински.