



Concert 1

Monday, 19 October 2015, at 8.00 pm  
Preconcert Talk: Vito Žuraj, at 7.00 pm  
Slovenian Philharmonic, Marjan Kozina Hall

# In the Vortex of Time

**Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)**

Messagesquise (1976/77)  
for solo cello and six cellos

Très lent – Très rapide – Sans tempo,  
libre – Aussi rapide que possible

Jaka Stadler – solo cello  
Nika Brnič – cello I  
Gregor Fele – cello II  
Maruša Bogataj – cello III  
Martin Sikur – cello IV  
Sebastjan Bertonceļj – cello V  
Jošt Kosmač – cello VI

**Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935)**

Toccatina (1986)  
for solo violin

Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke – violin

**Vito Žuraj (b. 1979)**

Contour (2012)  
for wind quintet

**Slovenian premiere**

Slowind

intermission

**Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)**

Bachianas brasileiras No. 5 (1938–1945)  
for soprano and cello ensemble

Aria (Cantilena)  
Dança (Martelo)

Marisol Montalvo – soprano

Cello ensemble

Jaka Stadler  
Nika Brnič  
Gregor Fele  
Maruša Bogataj  
Martin Sikur  
Sebastjan Bertonceļj  
Jošt Kosmač  
Gorazd Strlič

**Gérard Grisey (1949–1998)**

Vortex temporum (1994–96)  
for flute, clarinet, piano, violin, viola  
and cello

Ensemble Tema

Delphine Roche – flute  
Evgeni Orkin – clarinet  
Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke – violin  
Alfonso Noriega Fernández – viola  
Marie Schmit – cello  
Olga Zheltikova – piano

Mindaugas Piečaitis – conductor

## **Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)**

*Messagesquise* (1976/77)  
for solo cello and six cellos

It is fitting that this year's festival should open with the music of the oldest of the composers celebrating an important jubilee. Almost forty years ago, Pierre Boulez wrote *Messagesquise* for the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of his Swiss patron and conductor Paul Sacher (1906–1999), who, by commissioning new works from Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Benjamin Britten, Luciano Berio, Richard Strauss, Hans Werner Henze, Witold Lutosławski, Elliott Carter and many other prominent composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contributed greatly to the development of contemporary music and, even more so, to the affirmation of cultural life in the city of Basel. In honour of their patron's various jubilees, many of these composers dedicated short pieces to Sacher, suitable for performance in chamber concerts.

One of these works is *Messagesquise* for solo cello and six cellos. As a basis for the composition, Boulez used a note series based on Sacher's surname: E-flat (*es* in German), A, C, B-flat (*H* in German), E and D (*re* in French). He composed a four-movement piece with six sequences, each with a different structure: an exposition, three variations, a cadenza and a coda. Somewhat unusually for Boulez, the piece starts with a soft chord, but then develops into a supple, lively and virtuosic composition. The recurring static moments, which reveal the composer's inner world, contrast with Boulez's avoidance of musical emotion.

*Messagesquise* was first performed publicly in the French city of La Rochelle, at the International Meeting of

Contemporary Art, which included the first Mstislav Rostropovich International Competition for Cellists. The soloist was French cellist Pierre Penassou and the cello ensemble was led by Michel Tabachnik.

## **Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935)**

*Toccatina* (1986)  
A study for solo violin

Helmut Lachenmann wrote his *Toccatina* for the volume *Studien zum Spielen Neuer Musik für Violine* edited by Igor Ozim and published by Breitkopf & Härtel. No one could foresee back then that this "Etude for violin solo" would take on an active life of its own. The piece was first seen as a model of new string techniques, as David Alberman explained in his 1998 essay *Beyond the Conventional*, published in the journal *The Strad*. But in the meantime, Lachenmann's *Toccatina*, which truly does abound in unusual techniques, appears increasingly often on the programs of international festivals of contemporary music. This does justice to the work, which is, in effect, a delicate, fragile and introverted recital piece.

Its title contains the word *toccare* (Italian for "to touch"); the composer took this definition literally and transposed it impressively into his piece.

## **Vito Žuraj (b. 1979)**

*Contour* (2012)  
for wind quintet  
**Slovenian premiere**

At the heart of *Contour* lies a series of mosaic-like structures, in which each

of the five instruments contributes to a single overall sound texture. The individual notes serve as “atoms” with an “irregular regularity”, perhaps comparable to ocean waves, all of which may look very much alike, but which in fact all differ subtly from one to the next. Another comparison might be with the silhouette of a mountain range, which, while actually consisting of a mass of different points at varying distances from the viewer, appears from afar to be a single, uninterrupted contour.

The mosaic structures are presented in *Contour* in varying “distances” and perspectives. At the opening, the individual impulses and gestures of each instrument appear sparsely, each able to be heard and savoured for itself. Soon, however, the single events accumulate into a dense flow that draws the listener along irresistibly, while always containing slightly too much information to be entirely comprehensible. Even within the denser ensemble passages, however, there is variation and clarity, with instruments at times splitting off into groups that present a single, audible “contour”. A particularly prominent role is played by the pairing of piccolo and contrabassoon.

Vito Žuraj

### **Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)**

Bachianas brasileiras No. 5 (1938–45)  
for soprano and eight cellos

Heitor Villa-Lobos was certainly the most important figure of music life in Brazil. By means of music as well as his pedagogical expertise, he linked his country with Europe, while also linking

the past with the present. His greatest model was Johann Sebastian Bach, and it is precisely because of his great respect for the Baroque master that Villa-Lobos sought to bring Bach’s music closer to the masses, who did not know or did not understand it, by producing a cycle of nine suites for diverse ensembles. Bearing the common title *Bachianas Brasileiras*, all of these suites represent the composer’s perception of the music of this Baroque genius, whom Villa-Lobos called an “intermediary between human races”.

Villa-Lobos imbued the central message of Bach’s *Dona nobis pacem* with Brazilian folk music, creating a composition that, on the face of it, has little in common with that of Bach. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify Bach’s harmonic language, as well as some of the formal characteristics of his work. Each of the suites comprises an opening ‘Bachian’ movement, such as an *Aria*, *Prelude* or *Fugue*, and a typical Brazilian movement, *Embolada*, *Modinha* or *Ponteio*.

Of all of the *Bachianas*, the fifth – for soprano and cello ensemble – is the best known. In terms of expression, the first movement, *Aria*, is a vocalisation. It contains text from a poem by the Brazilian writer Ruth Valadares Corrêa, who was also a soprano and gave the first performance of the *Aria* herself. The second movement, *Dança (Martelo)*, was written much later, in 1945. Based on a poem by Villa-Lobos’s compatriot, the poet Manuel Bandeira, the song was constructed on the Brazilian rhythm called *embolada*.

### **Gérard Grisey (1949–1998)**

*Vortex temporum* (1994–96)

for flute, clarinet, piano, violin, viola  
and cello

*Vortex Temporum* (*Time Vortex*) is the most significant of the French composer Gérard Grisey's (1946–1998) late compositions. The work is divided into three movements, each dedicated to a fellow composer and contemporary. The first movement is dedicated to the Swiss composer Gérard Zinsstag, the second to Salvatore Sciarrino and the third to Helmut Lachenmann. In a manner appropriately reflecting the aesthetic climate of the twentieth century's closing years, *Vortex Temporum* combines the rigorous structural organisation typical of the more ascetic strains of that century's musical modernism with an effusive quality that seems to revel in the straightforward beauty of timbres and a formal and harmonic language that provides the listener with much that is recognisable and readily comprehensible.

More elusively, the composer ascribes to each movement a particular “time” (perhaps better described as an inner tempo). The first movement is described as being in “human time”, “jubilant [...] the tempo of human respiration”. The second movement, a slow movement, takes place in the enormously protracted “time of the whales”. The third movement is described by Grisey as being in the “time of the insects and the birds”, but is strewn with mementos from the first movement, as well as with slowly pulsating passages moving in seemingly glacial tempo, making such classifications more difficult than in the earlier movements.

The work is based on three different classes of musical material. Aside from the aforementioned “tempi”, there are also three wave-forms (sine, square and sawtooth) that determine melodic contours and larger formal structures, and three spectra (harmonic, harmonic-stretched and harmonic-compressed) that determine the work's harmonic content.

The three main movements are linked by interludes that colour the silence during preparation for the next movement. A postlude of a similar nature concludes the work in utmost calm.

*Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke*

