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The Alban Berg Quartett plays Boulez' Livre pour quatuor

Pierre Boulez

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Extraordinary digital release for Boulez's anniversary

In celebration of Pierre Boulez's 100th birthday, audite, in co-operation with Lucerne Festival, presents a unique digital release in the 'Historic Performances' series.

At first glance, it seems an unlikely combination: the legendary Alban Berg Quartet performing excerpts from Pierre Boulez' "Livre pour quatuor" – and indeed making its Lucerne Festival debut with this highly complex serial score, which Boulez refined throughout the course of his life.

But this is exactly what happened on 5 September 1983. After Boulez had already appeared in Lucerne as a conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 1975, he now presented himself as a composer in the 'Musica nova' series. In addition to the Third Piano Sonata and the Sonatina for flute and piano (with Aurèle Nicolet and Jürg Wyttenbach), parts Ia and Ib from Boulez' "Livre pour quatuor" were performed. The Alban Berg Quartet, already world-famous at the time, makes its Lucerne Festival debut with these six minutes of music, interpreted with a silvery-warm timbre, expressive yet faithful to the text, vividly moulded, even dramatically heightened – and won Boulez's praise.

Nevertheless, this was the only performance of the "Livre" by the Alban Berg Quartet, which was fortunately recorded by Swiss Radio and Television (SRF). Thus, a musical milestone can be experienced anew more than 40 years later – just in time for the 100th birthday of Pierre Boulez, who maintained a close connection to Lucerne, not least as the founder and longtime director of the Lucerne Festival Academy.