

# Strategies for Performing Pierre Boulez's *Douze Notations*

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## Abstract

*Douze Notations pour piano* (1945) was Pierre Boulez's (1925–2016) first published piano work. Throughout the piece, the number 12 is significant: there are 12 movements, each with 12 measures, and the piece makes intermittent use of 12-tone techniques. Boulez's precise attention to detail is apparent on every page of the score. When learning to perform this demanding composition, the pianist must confront several challenges: absence of meters, constantly changing measure length, complexity of textural layers, and quick contrasts in texture, dynamics, articulation and rhythm. I offer practical strategies for approaching rhythmic groupings and subdivisions, patterns and ostinatos, and other characteristic features. I propose re-notations as a tool for learning selected movements. The interpretive strategies offered in this paper not only help pianists to master the difficulties of *Douze Notations*, but they may also be applied to other challenging repertoire.

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