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## Pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard plays American premiere

Harrison Birtwistle's new piano concerto "Responses," will be given its American premiere next Thursday with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

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Marco Borggreve  
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The old joke about world premieres of classical music is that they're also world finales. So often a piece gets commissioned, rehearsed, performed – and then forgotten.

Not so with Harrison Birtwistle's new piano concerto "Responses," which will be given its American premiere next Thursday with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Thanks to pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, that is.

"We have the right strategy for a new piece," the French pianist says. "We tried to make it so the piece has a structured life, with several great orchestras and conductors in on the commission. We have to make sure that we are not just tourists with new music, to organize it so the pieces get a huge

... all when it comes to new ... e works of the 80-year-old ... ed the four-way ... "I call it the four

... d in Germany in October, ... ducting Aimard and the ... ony. Conductor Peter ... rtugal in November, with ... do Porto Casa. The ... rchestra performed ... Responses" in December, with conductor Vladimir Jurowski, and Aimard and Jurowski will present the American premiere next week.

Birtwistle will travel to Boston for the performances, Aimard says. The British composer – "a real hero in his country," as Aimard puts it –



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truly is one of a kind. His music, tuneful but shifting, almost restless in its proliferation of ideas, can be a challenge.

A task that Aimard welcomes. "If you play the works of a composer for the first time, it's like reading a new book in a foreign language," he says. "But if you've read 10 books, the 11th is not so hard. I've played lots of his music, I've taught his pieces, I've programmed it in my own festivals. It's a musical language that I understand.

"What's hard is how to deliver the sense of the music," he says. "It's a big piece of art. It's an exceptional piece compositionally, and all the professionals around me, the conductors and the orchestras, have reacted the same way. The audiences, too.

"If I play it with enough drive, and the right articulation, and give each of the bars the right gestures, the audience will be convinced."

Aimard says he will play with the score. "I almost never play from memory with new music," he says. "If you're playing a piece where the interpretation is the focus, then fine. But what's important here is the music, not the interpreter. It's not a circus. I'm focused on the musical content."

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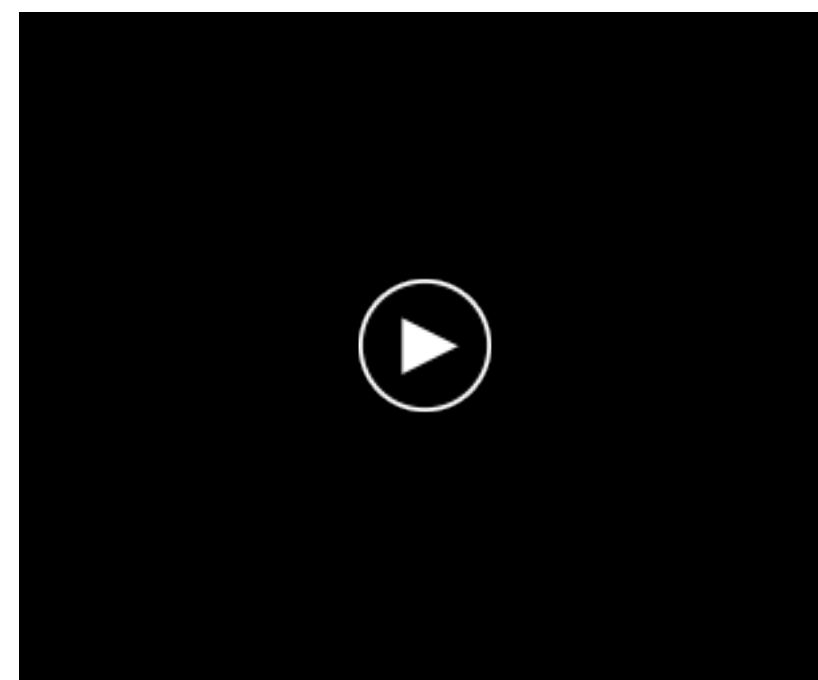
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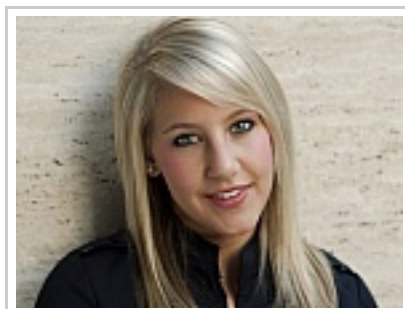
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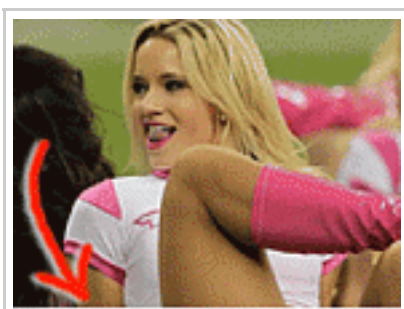
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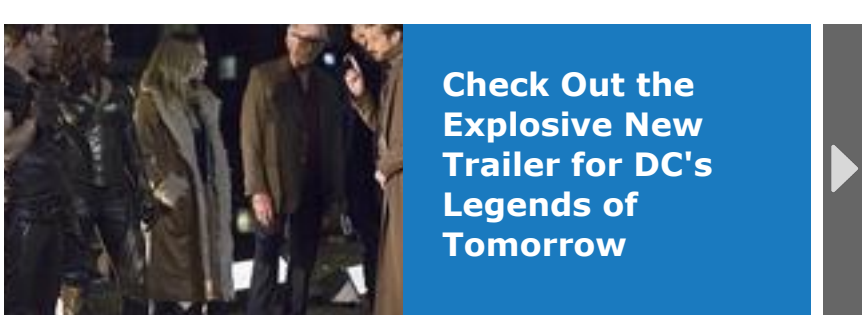
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