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THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA, EUGENE ORMANDY

Conductor

STRAVINSKY: LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS

(THE RITE OF SPRING)

PETROUCHKA SUITE

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RECORDING



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■ *Petrouchka* is Stravinsky's second ballet score and the work in which his individual characteristics as a composer reached full expression. *The Firebird*, composed and produced in 1910, still displays the guiding influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and the Russian national school of music. The fairy tale story plot of *The Firebird*, too, is in the standard tradition of ballet, whereas with *Petrouchka* the radically new approach of the composer is carried over into the plot basis.

However, the work was first conceived as an orchestral piece with piano, a *Konzertstück*. In this work the piano was to play the role of an exasperating prankish fellow who upsets the instruments around him with his annoying and bumptious displays. The nature of this musical element then suggested to Stravinsky the similarly provoking puppet-hero of the Russian fairs that come after Lent, the counterpart of Punch. With this new concept, Stravinsky adapted his score to a portrayal of such a post-Lenten festival, with its organ grinder, magician, dancing bear, nurses, children, coachmen and with the hero of all this, *Petrouchka*.

Stravinsky finished the score of the work in Rome, May 1911. It was produced by Diaghilev in Paris on June 13, 1911 and was an immediate success. As with his other scores for the theater, the *Suite* or concert version has become in the final event the most familiar. In it, several of the elements of the ballet score are omitted.

■ The setting of the ballet is a square in St. Petersburg; the time is winter, 1830. There is a crowd already assembled and prominently in sight is the marionette booth. Some of the merry-makers in the crowd are a bit tipsy, others given to impromptu displays of their own talents and wit. Then a dancer and an organ grinder make their bid for attention. The organ grinder plays the trumpet at the same time he cranks his organ, while the dancer marks the time with a triangle. At the other end of the stage a beautiful music box is going, with still another dancer dancing to it. Then the music dies down and two drummers appear before the little theater and attract the attention of the crowd. On the apron of the theater then appears the old magician.

The old wizard plays his flute. The little curtains open and the crowd sees before it three puppets—the clown, *Petrouchka*, a beautifully costumed Moor, and a fetching ballerina in red pantalets.

The old charlatan animates them with a touch of his flute and, to the astonishment of the crowd, the three begin to dance. This is the famous *Danse Russe*.

In the next scene we see the backstage room assigned to the puppet *Petrouchka*. The door opens and he is kicked in by his brutal master. It is becoming clear that the old wizard has not only animated these dolls mechanically but to *Petrouchka* at least has given aspirations and sensibilities that are completely human. As Rosa Newmarch writes of the clown: "He suffers bitterly from his own grotesqueness and ridiculous appearance, and from the fact that he has been made aware of human joys which are utterly beyond his attainment."

While *Petrouchka* is cursing his fate, the ballerina visits him. He is desperately in love with her but she is only frightened by him and a little amused at his antics. She leaves him and *Petrouchka* despairs. In the next tableau, the music for which is omitted here, *Petrouchka* foolishly tries to interfere with the somewhat more successful romancing of the ballerina by the Moor.

The final scene is in the square again. The carnival is now at its height. Nursemaids frolic; an animal trainer leads in a dancing bear; a drunken merchant accompanied by two gypsy girls amuses himself by throwing bank notes to the crowd. Then the gypsy girls dance while the merchant plays the accordion. The coachmen and grooms have a dance and the nursemaids join in. Masked revelers, one disguised as the Devil, dash in and lead the crowd in a frolic.

Suddenly the merrymaking is brought to a halt by the anguished cries from the puppet's booth. *Petrouchka* emerges, pursued by the Moor who catches him and kills him with a blow of his scimitar. The crowd is stunned in horror but the old magician picks up the limp form of *Petrouchka*, shows that it is only so much wood and straw, and chides the gullible folk. The crowd disperses. The wizard is left alone and suddenly becomes terrified himself. For there on the roof of the puppet booth is the ghost of *Petrouchka* menacing him. The charlatan drops the lifeless figure of the puppet and runs off in terror.

■ *Le Sacre du Printemps* began in the preliminary sketches Stravinsky made for it immediately after finishing *The Firebird*. He wrote in his autobiography: "One day, when I was finishing the last pages of *L'Oiseau de Feu* in St. Petersburg, I

had a fleeting vision which came as a complete surprise . . . I saw in imagination a solemn pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring. Such was the theme of *Le Sacre du Printemps*." Elsewhere Stravinsky has written that the full idea of a work placed in prehistoric Russia was only developed after the initial music had been formulated, "that the idea came from the music and not the music from the idea."

The work was composed in 1912 and 1913, completed March 8, 1913 and premiered in Paris, May 29—the occasion of the most famous 'scandal' in recent music. A year later, April 4, 1914, Pierre Monteux first conducted the concert version. In the ballet version there have been two distinct treatments, the original one with choreography by Nijinsky and a second version prepared by Massine when the ballet was revived in 1921.

The full title is, in English, *The Rite of Spring: Pictures of Pagan Russia, in Two Parts*. Part one—*The Fertility of the Earth*—is composed of smaller sections entitled: Introduction; Dance of The Youths and Maidens; Dance of Abduction; Spring Rounds; Games of the Rival Towns; Entrance of the Celebrant; The Kiss to the Earth; and the Dance to the Earth. Part Two—*The Sacrifice*—includes within it: Introduction (The Pagan Night); Mystic Circle of the Adolescents; Dance to the Glorified One; Evocation of Ancestors; Ritual Performance of the Ancestors; and the final Sacrificial Dance.

■ The Introduction to Part One is intended simply to suggest "the mystery of the physical world in spring." The Dance of the Youths and Maidens is announced by the beginning of the heavy stamping chords with off-beat accents. The Dance of Abduction is apparently a kind of ritual-game of marriage-by-capture. The ceremonial is continued with Spring Rounds and the Games of the Rival Towns.

The Celebrant, who next makes his entrance, is the oldest and sagest member of the tribe. It is his function to consecrate the soil, which is then ceremoniously kissed and danced to. This is the end of the first Part.

The "Pagan Night" Introduction to the second half is described by Edwin Evans as follows: "A deep sadness pervades it, but this sadness is physical, not sentimental . . . It is gloomy with

the oppression of the vast forces of Nature, pitiful with the helplessness of living creatures in their presence."

The section of the Mystic Circle of the Adolescents involves the ritual choosing of the sacrificial victim-to-be, who then becomes the Glorified One of the following section. With the Evocation of the Ancestors the ritual moves swiftly to its climax. Jean Cocteau has described the Ritual Performance of the Ancestors and the Sacrificial Dance in these terms: "The Chosen One . . . is left alone in the forest; the ancestors come out of the shadows like bears and form a circle. Inspired by them, the Chosen One dances in rhythms marked by long syncopations. When she falls dead, the ancestors approach and, picking her up, lift her toward the skies . . ."

In his *Orchestral Music* Lawrence Gilman notes Edwin Evans' description of the work as "Spring stripped of its literary associations and presented bare, with a naked directness that is the secret of the music's compelling force." "He might have gone further," continues Gilman, "and said that if this music is anything, it is a glorification of Spring as the supreme expression of the creative impulse—a primordial Spring, savage, elemental, ruthless. Music has long been in love with death—the greatest music in the world, indeed, is music of the ecstasy of death. Here, for the first time, is music of the ecstasy of birth, music which makes audible that conflict which is forever rending and tearing, not in order to destroy, but in order to emerge. It is not the sound of death battering down and in, but of life hewing and tearing apart, that a new birth may issue out."

■ What *Petrouchka* and the *Rite of Spring* together have meant in the music of this century is expressed in the following statement of Alexandre Tansman, from his *Igor Stravinsky*: "The *Rite* is the end of a direct evolution, started with the *Feu d'Artifice* and continued with the "Danse de Kashtchei" of the *Firebird*, and *Petrouchka*; it is the climax, the résumé, and at the same time, the 'sum' from which a new logical evolution was to start. . . In this regard, the *Rite of Spring* seems to me to be the most significant work of our time; the most pregnant with consequences is still, in my personal opinion, *Petrouchka* which, in a more attractive form, had been the first work to pose the principle of the 'revolutionary reaction' which Igor Stravinsky accomplished in the music of our time."

Notes by Charles Burr

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STRAVINSKY
LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS
(The Rite of Spring)

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EUGENE ORMANDY, Conductor

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COLUMBIA
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STRAVINSKY
PETROUCHKA - Suite
THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
EUGENE ORMANDY, Conductor

ML 5030

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1. I - THE SHROVE-TIDE FAIR
2. II - AT THE HOME OF PETROUCHKA
3. III - GRAND CARNIVAL

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