

**Igor
STRAVINSKY**
(1882-1971)

Firebird – Suite (1910; rev. 1945)	
1	Introduction
2	Dance of the Firebird
3	Adagio (Pas de deux)
4	Scherzo
5	Rondo (Khorovod)
6	Infernal Dance
7	Lullaby
8	Final Hymn
	Recorded in Carnegie Hall, New York, 28th January, 1946 • Matrix nos.: XCO-35692 through 35698 (all Take 1) First issued on Columbia 12456-D through 12459-D in album M-653
Petrushka – Suite (1911)	
9	The Magic Trick
10	Russian Dance
11	Petrushka's Room
12	Wet-Nurses' Dance
13	Peasant with Bear
14	Gypsies
15	Dance of the Coachmen
16	Masqueraders
	Recorded in Liederkrantz Hall, New York, 4th April, 1940 • Matrix nos.: XCO-27234-1, 27235-2, 27236-2 and 27237-2 First issued on Columbia 11389-D and 11390-D in album X-177

26:09	The Rite of Spring (1913)	31:21
3:03	Part I	
1:15	17 Introduction	3:02
4:15	18 Dance of the Young Boys and Girls	3:14
2:28	19 Mock Abduction	1:18
4:00	20 Spring Rounds	3:05
4:13	21 Games of the Rival Towns	1:49
3:46	22 Procession of the Wise Elder	0:36
3:09	23 Adoration of the Earth	0:21
	24 Dance of the Earth	1:13
	Part II	
	25 Introduction	3:58
	26 Mystic Circles of the Young Girls	2:53
	27 Glorification of the Chosen One	1:39
	28 Summoning of the Ancients	0:45
	29 Ritual of the Ancients	3:01
16:10	30 Sacrificial Dance	4:32
1:44	Recorded in Liederkrantz Hall, New York, 4th April, 1940 • Matrix nos.: XCO-27226 through 27233 (all Take 1) First issued on Columbia 11367-D through 11370-D in album M-417	
2:21		
3:59		
2:17		
1:07		
0:51		
2:05		
1:46		

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York
Igor Stravinsky

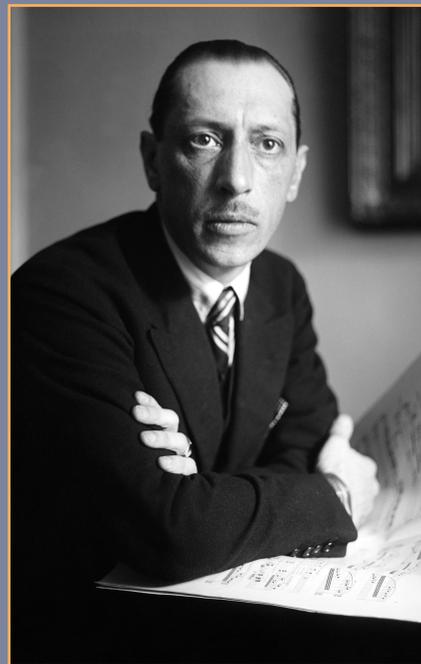
Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn



Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky

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ADD



Igor STRAVINSKY

The Rite of Spring

Firebird – Suite

Petrushka – Suite

**Philharmonic-Symphony
Orchestra of New York**
Igor Stravinsky
(1940 and 1946 recordings)



Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring • Firebird – Suite • Petrushka – Suite

Composers can sometimes take long journeys with their compositions thus arriving at a musical place very different to the one that they started out from. In this respect three composers come to mind – while of course being aware of numerous others – namely Ludwig van Beethoven, Giuseppe Verdi and Michael Tippett. Another composer very definitely in this category of continuous development and diversification is Igor Stravinsky. His stylistic changes were possibly a reflection of his nomadic lifestyle. At various times he lived in France, Switzerland, London and the United States of America – a musical expedition beginning from what might be termed as Russian Romanticism, the long-lived Stravinsky (1882-1971) then voyaged through his neo-classical phase en route to a serial one. Stravinsky's final works can be spare, austere and economic, almost as if he had belatedly discovered the refined aesthetic of Anton Webern, who had died in 1945.

Stravinsky was born near St Petersburg, the third son of Feodor Stravinsky, a bass singer at the Mariinsky (Kirov) Theatre. The young Igor was first of all introduced to the piano, then taking further lessons in music theory – and also studying law – until meeting his most influential contact to date, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), the composer of *Scheherazade* and other popular pieces as well as several operas based on Russian legend and fairy-tale. Lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov, a master orchestrator if offering textbook tutelage, were important and developmental to Stravinsky, who opened his catalogue with a very traditional piece, a *Symphony in E flat*, a work recognisably Russian in the manner of Rimsky-Korsakov and of Borodin.

This release concentrates on three great ballet scores that Stravinsky wrote for the Russian impresario Sergey Diaghilev (1872-1929), the founder of Ballets Russes. All were first heard in Paris. Composed in a concentrated spell of activity, *The Firebird* (first performed in 1910), *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913) all have their genesis in Russian

folklore, yet the music, for all that it has a Russian basis (including the use of folk-song), shows a composer looking ahead in terms of technique and method, displaying himself as a virtuoso of the orchestra in complex music that also retains, in *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* certainly, values for description and accessibility, the orchestra brimful of colour and suggestion. With *The Rite of Spring*, for all that it famously caused a riot – a reaction from the first-night audience that seems to have had as much to do with costuming and choreography to tell a primitive tale as much as Stravinsky's music – it has gone on to become a very popular, much played and recorded piece.

The Firebird brought Stravinsky an immediate international reputation. The choreographer was Michel Fokine, the ballerina taking the rôle of the magical bird was Tamara Karsavina, and – what tends to be overlooked – the conductor was the composer Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937). Stravinsky scored for an extravagantly large orchestra. Similarly *Petrushka*, the puppet who comes to life, came to the dance stage the following year, also stepped-out by Fokine, and Pierre Monteux conducted. Once again Stravinsky did not hold back with using a large orchestra. Two years later – with Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* coming in between (another Diaghilev promotion during this golden age of ballet commissions) – *The Rite of Spring* divided opinion in its depiction of primitivism through music of great rhythmic complexity. Monteux conducted, Nijinsky choreographed, and a seminal work was introduced under very heated circumstances, including the summoning of gendarmes.

This release brings these three ballet scores to aural life under the baton of the composer at a time when the works had been known for thirty years and Stravinsky had revised them. For *The Firebird*, although he had made a *Suite* in 1911 that retained the huge orchestra, he then made a further one in 1919 of slightly different selections and reduced the orchestral apparatus. He went further in this regard, while also varying his choices of movements, in 1945, the version that is

recorded here, albeit without three short interludes. This was an early outing for the 1945 *Firebird Suite*. A sense of menace and gloom informs the opening bars, yet a magical enchantment soon emerges. The composer encourages playing both incisively accented and very expressive; vitality courses through this performance lending a vividness that leaves in no doubt the music's theatrical and fantastical import (the *Infernal Dance* is fully up to speed) and the composer's sophisticated and spectral notation of it. This is Russian romance with a modernist edge. *Petrushka* may be described in similar terms. On this recording the ballet disconcertingly begins in mid-stream, the opening hubbub of a busy Shrovetide Fair omitted. Nevertheless it says much for Stravinsky's skills at suggesting atmosphere and narrative that we are very soon hooked up into this surreal and dark tale. Recorded in 1940, the orchestration heard here is that of the original 1911 version, before Stravinsky reduced it in 1946, which was published the following year. Expression and vitality once again inform Stravinsky's interpretative view of his own music aided by communicative and precise playing from the New York musicians.

Over the years *The Rite of Spring* has become used as a hi-fi spectacular and something of a vehicle for virtuoso conductors and orchestra; the results (however thrilling in visceral terms) can be fast and aggressive in the concert-hall, melodic aspects lost to bludgeoning

ones. It was of course intended to be danced to. A spirit of choreography informs the composer's reading – here given complete – the New York Philharmonic seemingly unfazed by the score's once-notorious demands (and a lack of orchestral slickness on that first night may well have also not shown the piece in the best light, leading Stravinsky to revise the work immediately, the first of several alterations). With the *Dance of the Young Boys and Girls* (track 18), the composer himself finds the ideal tempo, not rushed, allowing point. Tempos are consistently convincing throughout and also making itself evident is the lyrical side of the work as well as its theatrical one, the conflict with nature, the savage unthawing of Winter into Spring into the primitive rituals that ensue, the Elders beckoning a young maiden to dance herself to death at the ballet's close. Stravinsky does not tame his use of dissonance but nor does he highlight it, choosing rather to clarify balance between the sections of the orchestra; and if the sound is understandably limited and cannot always capture the work's dynamic range or its ultimate impact, having the composer giving some idea of the origins of *The Rite of Spring* both in terms of scenario and the music itself is highly instructive and revealing, Stravinsky himself a more experienced conductor than in previous recordings of this music and with a top-notch orchestra able to meet numerous challenges head-on and win.

Colin Anderson

Producer's Note

Igor Stravinsky made three sets of commercial recordings of his three great early ballet scores. The first was made in the late 1920s with rather ragged-sounding French and British ensembles and less conducting experience on the composer's part. The last set was made in stereo in the early 1960s with a pick-up orchestra of Los Angeles musicians at a time when the conductor was at an advanced age. The present series, made midway between the other two, is generally considered his best. It features an ensemble of high quality (Barbirolli's New York Philharmonic), and the composer is on his best podium form.

Mark Obert-Thorn

