

EIGHTY-SIXTH SEASON

Symphony Center Presents

Sunday, April 30, 2017, at 3:00

Piano Series

LEIF OVE ANDSNES AND MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN**Mozart**

Larghetto and Allegro in E-flat Major for Two Pianos

Stravinsky

Concerto for Two Pianos

Con moto

Notturmo

Quattro variazioni

Preludio e fuga

Debussy*En blanc et noir*

Avec emportement

Lent. sombre

Scherzando

INTERMISSION**Stravinsky***The Rite of Spring*

Part 1: The Adoration of the Earth

Part 2: The Great Sacrifice

Wolfgang Mozart

Born January 27, 1756; Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791; Vienna, Austria

Larghetto and Allegro in E-flat Major for Two Pianos

(Completed by Paul Badura-Skoda)



COMPOSED

ca. 1781–82

When Mozart resigned from his Salzburg post in the musical establishment of Archbishop Colloredo in 1781 to move to Vienna, he anticipated making his living as a

freelance pianist, composer, and teacher. He outlined his plan in a letter to his father in 1782:

I have three pupils now, which brings me in some eighteen ducats a month. I really need only one more, because four pupils are quite enough. With the income, a man can manage in Vienna if he lives quietly and in a retired way; but, of course, if I were to fall ill, I should not make a farthing. I can write, it is true, at least one opera a year, give a concert annually, and have some things engraved and published by subscription. There are other concerts too where one can make money, particularly if one has been living in a place for a long time and has a good reputation.

The pupils, commissions, and concerts did materialize soon after his arrival, and the first years of Mozart's life in Vienna were the happiest and most successful he was to know.

Among the pupils Mozart acquired soon after settling in Vienna was Josepha Auernhammer, daughter of the socially prominent Economic Councilor Johann Michael Auernhammer. Though Josepha proved to be an excellent pianist and a fine student, Mozart painted a most unflattering picture of her in a letter to his father. He labeled her "*ein Scheusel*" (a horror) and continued, "If an artist wished to paint the Devil in a lifelike way, he would be obliged to resort to her face as a model. . . . To see her is enough to make

one blind; a single look is a whole day's punishment. . . . She is the biggest bore I know."

The lady herself harbored no false vanity about her looks, though she was proud of her keyboard skills. "I am not pretty; on the contrary, I am plain," she reportedly told Mozart. "I don't want to marry some clerk with three or four hundred florins, and I have no choice of anyone better. So I prefer to remain as I am, and make a livelihood by my talents."

She underestimated herself. In 1796, she married a prosperous merchant, and was reportedly still giving annual recitals in Vienna as late as 1813. Perhaps Mozart's protests to his puritanical father about Josepha were more subterfuge than substance, after all. It seems that he was visiting the young lady's apartment three or four times a week in 1781, which, to his father's prudish eye, might appear to have been a more rigorous schedule of attention than strictly tutorial duties would demand.

For a concert of his music at the Auernhammer home on November 23, 1781, at which he and Josepha were to be featured in joint performance, Mozart revived his Concerto for Two Pianos (K. 365) from the previous year, and wrote a new Sonata in D major for Two Pianos (K. 448). Though its provenance has never been clearly established, the Larghetto and Allegro in E-flat major for Two Pianos is likely traceable to the same time and circumstance. There is no record of the piece from Mozart's lifetime, but the manuscript is in his hand, and it was discovered among his effects after his death. The opening section is complete, but the Allegro breaks off after the exposition, the music perhaps lost, perhaps never completed.

His widow, Constanza, found the manuscript and was assisted by George Nissen, a Danish diplomat, who helped her organize Mozart's legacy. The prominent Austrian composer, keyboardist, music historian, teacher, and clergyman

Maximilian Stadler also helped Constanza with the estate, and he made a completion of the Allegro. The work in that form came into the library of Archduke Rudolf, Beethoven's pupil and patron, before ending up in the castle library at Kroměříž in Moravia, where it was discovered by the Austrian musicologist Gerhard Croll in the early 1960s and published in the *New Mozart Edition*. The Larghetto and Allegro also has since been completed by fortepianist and Harvard

faculty member Robert Levin, and Austrian pianist and Mozart scholar Paul Badura-Skoda, whose version, published in 1966, is performed this afternoon.

The Larghetto, its first part graceful, the second more shadowed in emotion, provides an introduction to the sonata-form Allegro, which takes a sunny, buoyant idea as its main theme and an elegantly arched, lyrical melody as its subsidiary subject. ■

Igor Stravinsky

Born June 17, 1882; Oranienbaum, Russia

Died April 6, 1971; New York City, New York

Concerto for Two Pianos



COMPOSED

1931, 1934–35

"I began the composition of the Concerto for Two Pianos in 1931," Igor Stravinsky recalled.

The Concerto is symphonic in both volume and proportions, and I think I could have composed it as an orchestral work, especially the Variations movement. But my purpose was otherwise. I needed a solo work for myself and my son, and I wished both to incorporate the orchestra and to do away with it. The Variations were separated from the *Con moto* movement by three years and much change of musical focus. I am very fond of my Fugue, but then, the Concerto is my favorite among my purely instrumental pieces.

Stravinsky is remembered principally as one of the giants of twentieth-century musical composition, but he also was a gifted conductor, lecturer, writer, and pianist for the fifteen years after 1924. He had been well trained in keyboard performance during his student years, and composed at the piano throughout his life. Before and during World War I, he had been so busy with creative

work that his technique had fallen into disrepair. His interest in the piano as a concert instrument was rekindled through his work on the transcription of the Three Movements from *Petrushka* he did for Arthur Rubinstein in 1921 and the clangorous, four-piano tintinnabulations of *Les noces* of 1923. His music was beginning to receive serious critical attention at that time, and he was looking for other ways to publicize himself. To that end, he composed the Concerto for Piano and Winds in 1923–24 and premiered it in Paris in May 1924 with Serge Koussevitzky. He followed that work with a piano sonata for his own appearance at a festival of contemporary music in Donaueschingen in July 1925 and the Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra four years later. For his recital tours with violinist Samuel Dushkin after the successful premiere of the Violin Concerto in October 1931, Stravinsky composed anew the *Duo concertante*, and arranged excerpts for violin and piano from several of his stage works. The Concerto for Two Pianos grew from a similar motivation to perform with his son Soulima.

Stravinsky composed the first movement of the Concerto for Two Pianos in the autumn of 1931, but then put the score aside to work on the *Duo concertante* and the other pieces for Dushkin, and only returned to it in 1934. The piece was finished in November 1935 and premiered by *père* and *fils* Stravinsky at the Salle Gaveau in Paris on November 21. With its lucid textures,

motoric rhythms, and harmonic acerbity, the Concerto for Two Pianos is firmly rooted in the neoclassical idiom Stravinsky espoused between the world wars.

He seldom used traditional sonata form in his instrumental works, but he did create his own analog of it in this opening movement, which presents three motives in the first page—a widely leaping idea in jagged rhythms for the second piano, and ribbons of scales and a smooth, long-note melody for the first piano—that are developed throughout the movement and recapitulated at the end. Stravinsky said that the Notturmo is “not so much night music as after-dinner music.” It seems suspended between wit and sentiment, deliberate in its motion yet

delicate in its elaborate figurations, “a slow movement of exquisite tenderness and feeling,” according to Eric Walter White in his study of the composer.

The *Quattro variazioni* is unusual in that the theme on which it is based does not occur until the following movement as the subject for the fugue that closes the work. (Stravinsky switched the order of these two movements before the score was published to give it a more emphatic ending.) The first two variations are flamboyantly decorative; the last two, built over muscular ostinatos, are propulsive. The closing Fugue, with Stravinsky’s prideful collection of contrapuntal complexities, is introduced by a stern, plain-textured Preludio. ■

Claude Debussy

Born August 2, 1862; Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died March 25, 1918; Paris, France

En blanc et noir



COMPOSED 1915

When the Guns of August thundered across the European continent in 1914 to plunge the world into “the war to end all wars,” Claude Debussy was already

showing signs of the colon cancer that was to take his life four years later. Apprehensive about his health and tormented by the military conflict, he saw his creative production come to a virtual halt. “I should not like that work to be played before the fate of France has been decided, for she can neither laugh nor weep while so many of our men are heroically facing death,” he told his publisher, Jacques Durand, concerning the projected London performance of a new ballet set to his music.

Except for a *Berceuse héroïque* for piano composed “as a tribute of homage to His Majesty King Albert I of Belgium and his soldiers,” Debussy wrote no new music in 1914. At the

end of the year, he undertook the preparation of a new edition of Chopin’s works to help compensate Durand for the regular advances he had been sending. Debussy’s attitude toward the Chopin project was ambivalent. His admiration for the great Polish expatriate was immense, and he noted in the introduction he eventually wrote for the publication how important was Chopin’s achievement, not only as a historical phenomenon and as part of the pianist’s repertory, but also as a continuing influence on contemporary music. However, the conflicting editions and manuscript sources for the compositions promised to tax mightily his skill, patience, and judgment.

Drained of creative energy during that time, however, he resigned himself to the assignment. The death of his mother in March 1915 further deepened his depression. In that same month, though, Debussy appeared in a recital at the Salle Gaveau in Paris with the soprano Ninon Vallin, and that event seems to have kindled a spark that brightened his mood during the following months. He was seized once again with the urge to compose, and he temporarily put aside the Chopin material. “The Muse, which you kindly

believe to be inspiring me at the moment, has taught me to put little faith in her constancy, and I would rather hold her fast than run after her," he explained to Durand about the delay.

With the Germans posing a constant threat to descend on Paris, he eagerly accepted the offer to spend the summer at a friend's seaside chalet in Pourville, near Dieppe. "I have a few ideas at the moment," he wrote in June from Pourville, "and, although they are not worth making a fuss about, I should like to cultivate them." Temporarily freed from the Chopin project and the terror of the war, that summer he completed his first compositions in more than eighteen months: the *Épigraphs antiques* for piano, four hands; the études for solo piano; *En blanc et noir* for two pianos; and the Sonata for Cello and Piano.

Though Debussy claimed that the three "caprices" comprising *En blanc et noir* (In white and black) "derive their color and feeling merely from the sonority of the piano, as Velásquez did from his 'grays,'" this music was indelibly stamped by its wartime composition. The first movement is headed with a quotation from Barbier and Carré's libretto for Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* (They dance, but at home / I must sit alone / This blow and this shame / With bowed head I proclaim); the music, encompassing an ironic boulevardier insouciance and distant echoes of unheeded bugle calls, is, said the composer, an "allusion to the men who . . . stood aside from the macabre dance of the battlefields, thus confessing to some physical defect," as Debussy himself had been forced to do. The movement was dedicated to the noted Russian conductor Serge Koussevitzky, who had invited Debussy to conduct concerts of his own music in Saint Petersburg and Moscow early in 1915.

In his study of Debussy's piano music, British musicologist Frank Dawes wrote that the poignant second movement is "in effect a war scene, though its prevailing somber quality suggests a deserted battlefield strewn with corpses and the carnage of war rather than anything more active." The movement, inscribed with a passage from François Villon's *Ballad Against the Enemies of France*, was dedicated to Lieutenant Jacques Charlot, a nephew of Debussy's publisher, Jacques Durand, who was killed in battle on March 3, 1915. "Its accent," Debussy noted, "was on blackness and tragedy, as in a capriccio by Goya." In the opening section, somber chord progressions, phantom bugle calls, and wisps of a folk-like melody evoke the fallen soldier's death, military service, and civilian life. The music turns ominous, hinting at the pounding machines of war; the Lutheran chorale "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is quoted in a strident harmonic setting to summon images of the German aggressors. The earlier musical elements are recalled, and "a modest carillon rings out a sort of pre-*Marseillaise* at the end," according to the composer.

In its rhythmic and harmonic freedom, the final movement of *En blanc et noir* is one of Debussy's most forward-looking pieces, an intriguing indication of the new stylistic directions his music might have taken had he not died three years later. The movement, apparently free of wartime associations, was dedicated to Igor Stravinsky (with a quotation from a well-known rondel by Charles d'Orléans: "Yver, you are no more than a rogue"), whose work Debussy supported enthusiastically after the young Russian composer arrived in Paris in 1910 to compose *The Firebird*. ■

The Rite of Spring (Scenes of Pagan Russia in Two Parts)



COMPOSED
1911–13

Stravinsky's conception for *The Rite of Spring*, arguably the most influential musical work of the twentieth century, came to him as he was finishing *The Firebird* in

1910. He had a vision of “a solemn pagan rite; wise elders, seated in a circle, watching a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring.” Stravinsky knew that Nicholas Roerich, a friend who was an archaeologist and an authority on the ancient Slavs, would be interested in his idea, and mentioned it to him. The composer also shared his vision with Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes, the company that had commissioned and premiered *The Firebird*.

All three men were excited by the possibilities of the project; Diaghilev promised a production and encouraged Stravinsky to begin work immediately. Having just nearly exhausted himself with the rigors of completing and staging *The Firebird*, Stravinsky decided to compose a *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra as relaxation before undertaking his pagan ballet. The little *Konzertstück*, however, grew into the ballet *Petrushka*, and he could not return to *The Rite* until the summer of 1911.

“What I was trying to convey in *The Rite*,” said Stravinsky, “was the surge of spring, the magnificent upsurge of nature reborn.” Inspired by childhood memories of the coming of spring to Russia (“which seemed to begin in an hour and was like the whole earth cracking,” he remembered), he worked with Roerich to

devise a libretto that would, in Roerich's words, “present a number of scenes of earthly joy and celestial triumph as understood by the ancient Slavs.” Stravinsky labored feverishly on the score throughout the winter of 1911–12, realizing by that time that he was composing an important piece in a startling new style. “I was guided by no system whatever in *The Rite of Spring*,” he wrote. “Very little immediate tradition lies behind it. [Debussy was the only influence he admitted.] I had only my ear to help me. I heard, and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which *The Rite* passed.”

The music seems to have come into being in three versions simultaneously: the full orchestral

THE RITE OF SPRING (SCENES OF PAGAN RUSSIA IN TWO PARTS)

PART 1: THE ADORATION OF THE EARTH

Introduction—
The Augers of Spring—
Dances of the Young Girls—
Mock Abduction—
Spring Round Dances—
Games of the Rival Tribes—
Procession of the Sage—
Adoration of the Earth—
Dance of the Earth

PART 2: THE GREAT SACRIFICE

Introduction—
Mystical Circles of the Young Girls—
Glorification of the Chosen One—
Summoning of the Elders—
Ritual of the Elders—
Sacrificial Dance of the Chosen One

score, and versions for piano solo and piano duet (although arranged for piano four-hands, it is often played on two pianos, as is the case at this afternoon's performance). As with all of Stravinsky's ballets from *The Firebird* through *Agon*, the piano reductions were created specifically for the use of the choreographer and the designer, and subsequently for the dancers' rehearsals, which, in the case of *The Rite of Spring*, stretched to more than 120 sessions. It was the keyboard versions that first stirred reports of the revolutionary nature of this phenomenal creation. The composition of the score was accomplished between the summer of 1911 and November

1912, and Stravinsky allowed Diaghilev and Pierre Monteux, conductor of the premiere, their first taste of the music during the intervening April in Monte Carlo, where the Ballets Russes was giving performances of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*. Monteux recalled:

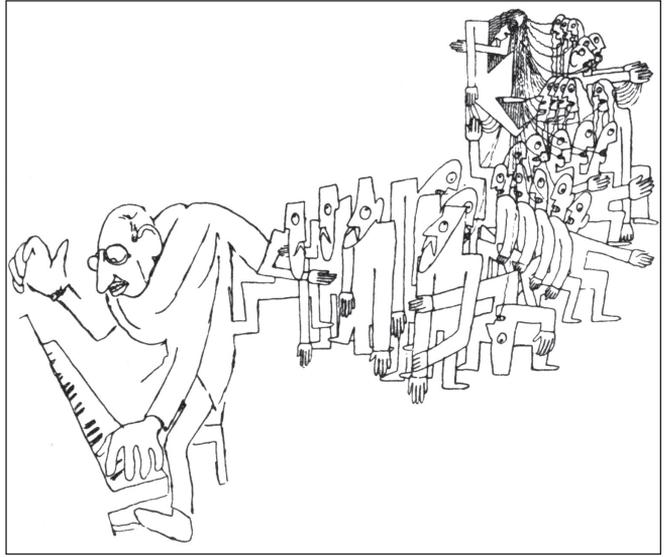
With only Diaghilev and myself as audience, Stravinsky sat down to play a piano

reduction of the score. Before he got very far, I was convinced he was raving mad. Heard this way, without the color of the orchestra, the crudity of the rhythm was emphasized, its stark primitiveness underlined. The very walls resounded as Stravinsky pounded away, occasionally stamping his feet and jumping up and down to accentuate the force of the music. Not that it needed such emphasis.

Another important musician who heard the work at that early stage was Claude Debussy, who played through the sketches with the composer at the home of the critic Louis Laloy later that spring. “Our reading at the piano . . . at Laloy’s home,” Debussy wrote to Stravinsky at the end of 1912, “is always present in my mind. It haunts me like a beautiful nightmare, and I try, in vain, to reinvoke the terrific impression. That is why I wait for the stage performance like a greedy child impatient for promised sweets.” Laloy validated Debussy’s impression: “When they had finished, we were dumbfounded, overwhelmed by this hurricane which had come from the depths of the ages, and which had taken life by its roots.” Maurice Ravel visited Stravinsky early in 1913, and was so impressed after reading through the score that he prophesied a premiere as historically significant as that of *Pelleas and Melisande* in 1902.

Diaghilev chose Nijinsky to do the choreography, and rehearsals for the premiere were begun in Berlin by December 1912. The composer himself supervised many of these sessions, and made an indelible impression on Marie Rambert, one of the ballerinas:

Hearing the music played this way [i.e., too slowly and without rhythmic precision], Stravinsky blazed up, pushed aside the fat German pianist, nicknamed “Kolossal” by Diaghilev, and proceeded to play twice as fast as we had been doing and twice as fast as we could possibly dance. He stamped his feet on the floor and banged his fist on the piano and sang and shouted.



Jean Cocteau’s caricature of Stravinsky playing *The Rite of Spring*, with dancers in the background, 1913

Rehearsals proceeded through the winter and early spring, always to piano accompaniment. Stravinsky polished the piano-duet version sufficiently for the Russischer Musikverlag to begin engraving it in January 1913. It was published in this form several weeks before the opening on May 29. (The full orchestral score was not published until 1921.) It was only on May 26, 1913, just three days before the opening, that *The Rite of Spring* was finally played by a symphony orchestra.

The guests invited to the final dress rehearsal seemed to appreciate the striking modernity of the work, but gave no hint of the donnybrook that roared through the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées at the public premiere on May 29, driven in equal parts by the iconoclastic angular choreography and the revolutionary music. Almost as soon as the curtain rose, a riot broke out. Shouts, catcalls, whistles, even fisticuffs grew so menacing that often the orchestra could not be heard. Diaghilev flashed the house lights on and off in a vain attempt to restore order; Nijinsky, when he was not on stage, pounded wildly on the scenery with his fists to keep the dancers together; Stravinsky ran out of the auditorium (“as angry as I have ever been in my life”) and spent most of the evening backstage pacing in the wings. Somehow Monteux (“cool as a crocodile,”

recalled Stravinsky) guided the performance through to the end.

Puccini thought *The Rite* “might be the creation of a madman,” and the critic of the *New York Sun* nominated the composer as “The Cave Man of Music.” No one could deny, however, the work’s ferocious, overwhelming power; when audiences began to listen to the work on its own, revolutionary terms, they could not help being swept away by its awesome and wonderful maelstrom of exquisitely executed sound. Within a year of its stage premiere, Koussevitzky in Russia and Monteux in Paris had conducted concert performances of *The Rite*, and the true value of the work began to be recognized. A somewhat edited version of the score in Disney’s animated movie of 1940, *Fantasia*, brought the music to a wide audience, and its epochal position in the history of the art was soon acknowledged.

Robert Lawrence, in his classic reference work, *The Victor Book of Ballet*, provided the following summary of the stage action of *The Rite of Spring*:

The plot is of the simplest. Dealing with archaic Russian tribes and their worship of the gods of the harvest and fertility, it falls into two separate yet mutually interdependent parts: “The Adoration of the Earth” and “The Sacrifice.” These primitive peoples assemble for their yearly ceremonies, play their traditional games, and finally select a virgin to be sacrificed to the gods of spring so that the crops and tribes may flourish.

Stravinsky’s score serves at once as accompaniment and excitant for the pagan rites. There is a prelude in which the composer evokes the primitive past when man was in intimate contact with nature. . . . The curtain rises on a savage daylight picture of an

ancient land. Insistent, barbaric rhythms are heard, shifting accent with almost every bar. The first rites of spring are being celebrated, and a group of adolescents appears. They dance until other members of the tribe enter. Then the full round of ceremonies gets under way: A mock abduction—performed with much solemnity—games of the rival tribes, the procession of the Sage, and the thunderous dance of the Earth. The curtain falls, and there is a soft interlude representing the pagan night.

Soon the tribal meeting place is seen again. This time, it is dark, and the adolescents circle mysteriously in preparation for the choice of the virgin to be sacrificed to the gods. Suddenly their dance is interrupted, and one of the girls who has taken part is marked for the tribal offering. The others begin a wild orgy glorifying the Chosen One and—in a barbaric ritual—call on the shades of their ancestors. Finally the supreme moment of the ceremony arrives: the ordeal of the Chosen One, perhaps the longest and most complicated solo in the annals of ballet. It is the maiden’s duty to dance until she perishes from exhaustion. The rhythms of her sacrificial round move relentlessly forward, while a short, stabbing motive is repeated insistently. Throughout the dance, the music keeps gathering power through the element of frenzied repetition until finally it spins like a top on its own axis, and ends with a crash as the Maiden dies. ■

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