Cleveland State University

From the SelectedWorks of Dan Rager

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Igor Stravinsky (Primitivism & Cubism)

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PRIMITIVISM - CUBISM

IGOR STRAVINSKY

&

THE RITE OF SPRING…

(THE MUSIC, THE MAN, THE FORMULITIES & SYMBIOSIS)

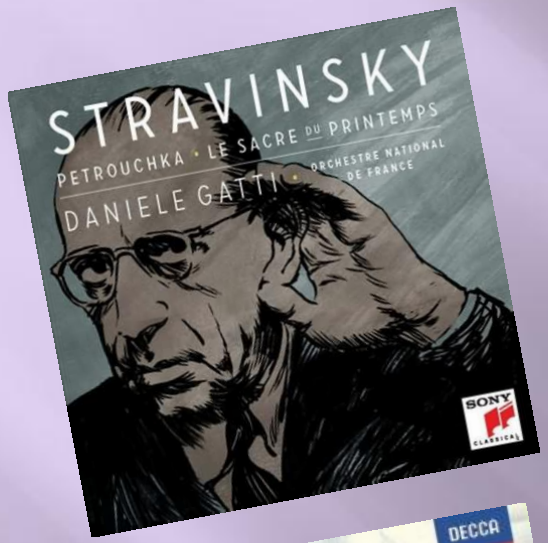
by

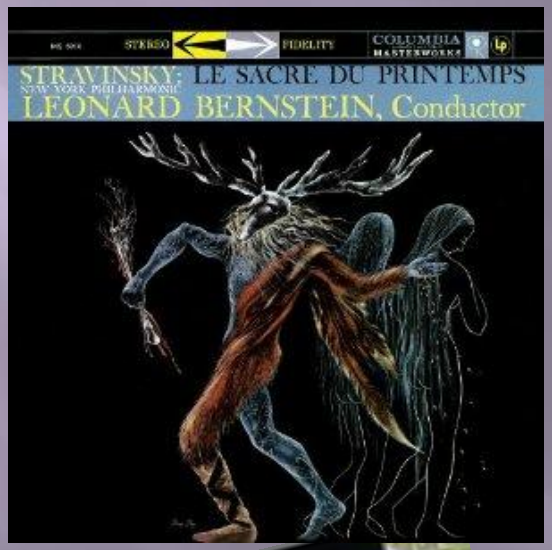
Dr. Dan Rager

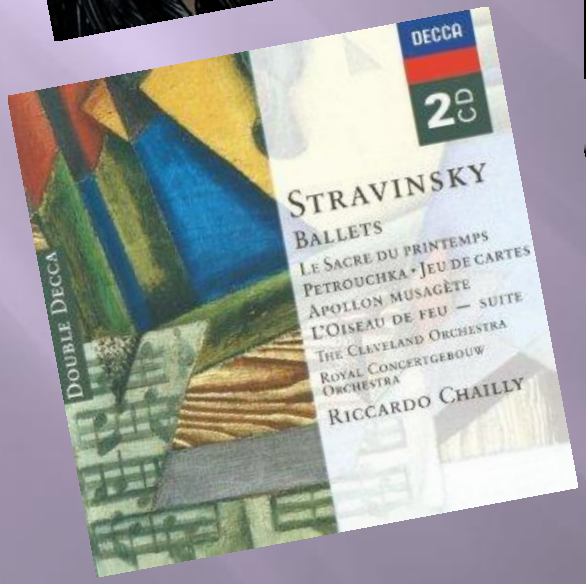
The Rite of Spring

PRIMITIVISM

REVERED RECORDINGS







Primitivism

Primitivism refers to:

- an artistic movement in particular which originated as a reaction to the Enlightenment

- the general tendency to idealize any social behavior judged relatively simple or primitive, whether in the arts, social sciences or elsewhere.

Main Characteristics of Primitivism

- A concern with cultural phenomena of the ideas in European society- particularly sexuality, madness, spiritual punishment, and violence.
- Celebration of the "unconscious”, often with the implication that non-western cultures are more in touch with the unconscious. A concern with drama and symbiosis, often assumed to be "universal."
- Abstraction of the figure, particularly facial and bodily proportions. Inspired by "non-western" arts, particularly African masks. Occidental primitivist artists were inspired by the visual abstraction of African artwork, which tend to favor it over naturalistic representation. This is because many African artworks, regardless of medium, tend to represent objects or ideas rather than depict them.
- Focus on rhythmic and percussive elements, especially in music and ritual performance.

Main Characteristics of Primitivism

- In the U.S., this movement was often associated with African or African Americans- particularly the popularity of Josephine Baker, jazz, and the broad characterization (esp. in France) of Africans as "soul of rhythm."

- Flatness and geometric designs inspired by "non-Western" art forms.

- Application of paint in a rough, manipulated style, so as to connote "rawness."

Cubism

- **Cubism** was a 20th century art movement that revolutionized European painting and sculpture, and inspired related movements in music and literature. It developed as a short but highly significant art movement between about 1907 and 1914 in France.

Cubism

Cubism

- In cubist artworks, objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form — instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

- Often the surfaces intersect at seemingly random angles presenting no coherent sense of depth. The background and object planes interpenetrate one another to create the ambiguous shallow space characteristic of cubism.

Interpretation

“My music is best understood by children and animals. “

Igor Stravinsky

8 Oct. 1961

Early Life

- Born Igor Feodorvich Stravinsky, June 17 1882 near St. Petersburg.
- Father was in St. Petersburg Opera
- Despite his parents' involvement in music, Igor was sent to law school.
- While in law school he befriended the youngest son of Rimsky-Korsakov, who introduced Stravinsky to his father. The older man played a significant role in Stravinsky's early musical formation, helping him find his own special sound technique.

Early Career

- Several works debuted in his early twenties:
  - Symphony in E flat major (1907)
  - Faun and the Shepherdess (1907)
  - Fantastic Scherzo (1909)
  - Fireworks (1909)
- His ballet “The Fire-Bird” established him firmly in the international scene of prominent composers.
- Some of Stravinsky’s fame is due to his producer, Diaghilev, and the Russian Ballet. At that time, Diaghilev represented the artistic *avant-garde* in Russia. Had Stravinsky not caught the attention of such a prominent figure, his career would likely not have taken off so quickly.

The Fire-Bird

- Used a Russian fairy tale as the basis for the story
- Vivid colors, harmonic and rhythmic variety used to create a magical atmosphere
- Orchestral version:
- Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
  Valery Gergiev, conductor
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vch2ZpSYPRQ

- Windorchesra version:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge6P1rlHAvg
- Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra
  Conductor: Frederick Fennell

The Rite of Spring

- First performed in Paris on May 29, 1913, the music Igor Stravinsky created for Vaslav Nijinksy's Rite of Spring ballet, and the choreography itself, provoked a riot among the opening night audience.

Performance: April 24, 2013

- The New England Conservatory Philharmonia lead by Stanford with Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras Hugh Wolff
- Location: Jordan Hall, Boston.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f76eZfI5pOM

Other Important Works

- ***Symphony of Psalms***: “composed to the glory of God”
- ***Petrushka***: considered to be one of the most influential pieces of music from this period
- ***The Soldier’s Tale, Renard, and The Wedding***: written during WWI, all three broke new ground in the way they were arranged on stage
- ***Pucinella***: Stravinsky’s first neo-classical ballet, founded on the work of Pergolesi
- ***Mavra***: in opera-bouffe form and greatly criticized
- ***Oedipus Rex***: written in Latin because the vernacular was unfit to express such exalted thoughts
- ***Apollo Musagetes***: score for strings only, form is arias and ancient dance-measures
- ***Symphonies of Wind Instruments***: dedicated to the memory of
- Claude Debussy

Works Cited

- http://www.classicalnotes.net/classics/rite.html
- Oxford Companion to Music. “Stravinsky, Igor” Oxford Music Online
- Blom, Eric. Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th Edition. New York:St. Martin’s Press, 1954.