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Stravinsky

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The Rite of Spring • The Firebird

Producer's Note

Igor Stravinsky's career as a recording artist began in 1925 with a series of acoustic piano solo sides for American Brunswick which were never released. His first issued records were made by Columbia in London, a Petrushka Suite recorded in June of 1928. Five months later, Columbia's French affiliate recorded the Firebird Suite presented here, with an uncredited ensemble believed to be the Walther Straram Concerts Orchestra. Stravinsky chose to record the 1911 version with the addition of the Berceuse and Finale from 1919 (although the bridge linking them is missing), as well as interpolating the trombone glissandi from the 1919 version in the Infernal Dance. The present composite version gives a more fully rounded picture of the action of the ballet and the fairy-tale aspects of the plot.

While the Firebird Suite and even the complete Petrushka had already been recorded more than once before Stravinsky made his own versions, The Rite of Spring had a longer gramophonic gestation. The first attempt was in April, 1927, when Leopold Stokowski set down the first three sides of an aborted complete recording with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Extant test pressings suggest the ensemble had not played the piece for awhile, as the execution is uncharacteristically scrappy. Sixteen months later, portions of the work were set down during an August, 1928 rehearsal with Eugene Goossens leading the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra as part of a balance test that eventually saw publication on CD.

Finally, the first two complete recordings of the work were made in Paris in 1929. Pierre Monteux, the conductor of the 1913 première, recorded it for French HMV in January (on Pristine PASC 219), while the composer set down his version for French Columbia that November. In the meantime, Stokowski had begun his issued recording in September, 1929, although it would not be completed until the following March. These three would become the only recordings of the work through the end of the 1930s.

While Stravinsky's ensemble is less precise, and his direction is less assured, than in his 1940 remake with the New York Philharmonic, the recording affords a valuable glimpse of how the composer approached this epoch-making work a mere sixteen years after its première, before familiarity and rising orchestral standards smoothed out the rawness experienced by the outraged opening night audience in Paris a century ago.

The sources for the transfers were first edition American Columbia "Viva-Tonal" pressings. Pitch fluctuations inherent in the original recordings have been corrected in this edition.

Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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The Rite of Spring The Firebird His first recordings



Columbia studio recordings, 1928/29

Obert-Thorn

Stravinsky First Recordings

The Rite of Spring (*Le sacre du printemps*)

Part 1: The Adoration of the Earth

- [1] 1. Introduction (3:06)
- [2] 2. Augurs of Spring – Dance of the Adolescents (3:34)
- [3] 3. Ritual of Abduction (1:09)
- [4] 4. Spring Rounds (2:44)
- [5] 5. Games of the Rival Towns (1:49)
- [6] 6. Procession of the Sage – The Sage (0:54)
- [7] 7. Dance of the Earth (1:10)

Part 2: The Sacrifice

- [8] 8. Introduction (3:29)
- [9] 9. Mystic Circles of the Young Girls (3:10)
- [10] 10. Glorification of the Chosen One (1:52)
- [11] 11. Summoning of the Ancients (0:53)
- [12] 12. Ritual of the Ancients (3:25)
- [13] 13. Sacrificial Dance: the Chosen One (5:06)

The Firebird (*L'oiseau de feu*) – Suite (augmented 1911 version)

- [14] 1. Introduction and Kashchei's Enchanted Garden (4:40)
- [15] 2. Appearance of the Firebird pursued by Ivan Tsarevich (1:01)
- [16] 3. Dance of the Firebird (1:18)
- [17] 4. Supplication of the Firebird (3:57)
- [18] 5. Game of the Princesses with the Golden Apples (2:41)
- [19] 6. Round Dance of the Princesses (3:55)
- [20] 7. Infernal Dance of all Kashchei's Subjects (3:47)
- [21] 8. Lullaby of the Firebird (Berceuse) (3:36)
- [22] 9. Finale (3:20)

Walther Straram Concerts Orchestra Igor Stravinsky

Producer & Audio Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a 1930
photograph of **Igor Stravinsky**

The Rite of Spring

Recorded 7 – 10 May, 1929 in the Théâtre des
Champs-Élysées, Paris
Matrix nos.: WLX 1027-1, 1028-1, 1029-3, 1030-
3, 1031-2, 1032-1, 1033-2, 1034-2, 1035-1 and
1036-1
First issued on French Columbia D 15213
through 15217

The Firebird

Recorded 8 – 10 and 12 November, 1928 in the
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris
Matrix nos.: WLX 611-2, 612-2, 619-1, 620-1,
624-2, 625-1, 621-1 and 623-3
First issued on French Columbia D 15122
through 15125

Additional pitch stabilisation: Andrew Rose

Total duration: **60:36**

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