

"This seems to me an uncommonly sound performance and a truly brilliant recording, bringing out more of the score than I should have thought possible. I have revelled in it: in the recording, that is. Stravinsky holds it was wrong to consider him a revolutionary. He has been saying so in *Poetics of Music*, the lectures which, rather surprisingly, he was appointed to give at Harvard. He marked Ravel's voice as about the only wise one, concerning the *Rite*: its novelty lay not in the technical apparatus or orchestration, but in "the musical entity." But was it not still revolutionary? Scarcely. It just went farther.

I did not think recording could do so much for him, and be so enjoyable. Late though it is in the day, I could write an essay on the work: yet must not, now. Everything has its background; few compositions have seemed to owe so little to the past. Never was such a riot of rhythm. Sometimes rhythmic life seems drowning in ingenuity, complexity. The leaflet must be referred to for pointers regarding the thirteen sections (first movement, *Fertility of Earth*, seven; second, *Sacrifice*, six). Go primitive, and enjoy the riot-rousing skill of 1913 (Diaghilev's ballet, conducted by Monteux: Nijinsky's choreography). The ideas are trivial: I still mildly resent that. But the thing is full of interest, however you hear it: as a queer upthrust of primitivism; as an intense instigation of balletic ingenuity, in methods since copied *ad nauseum*; as a type of nerve-music that builds up to amazing crescendi beyond anything else I know; as a probably complex manifestation of an exile's thoughts, and perhaps a Russian's frustrations. It could mean many things to different people. To a few it may seem nearly as old-fashioned as the Mendelssohn. Looking on such things now more philosophically, with half a lifetime between, we perhaps tend to be a bit *blasé*. I should like to see what young people, new to it, make of the *Rite*. Does it seem more real, natural, to them than to us oldsters? Do they take to it more easily than we did thirty-five years ago? Do they tend to read into it more than we did? Are they more sympathetic to these ancients, with their pathetic rites and misinterpretations of nature? How does it all strike the young? We ought to have a Gallup poll.

As to the meaning, the labels give the incidents, and we can all use our own brand of imagination to back up the composer's. I wish he had used more and better themes, but perhaps their poverty is part of the depictive scheme. The orchestration is fascinating, and its reproduction on the discs reaches a very high level of finesse and power."

W.R.A., *The Gramophone*, March 1948

These three recordings date from 1946 (*The Rite of Spring*) and 1956 (the *Firebird* and *Nightingale*) – a decade apart yet also a revolution in recording technology apart. In 1946, recordings were cut direct to twelve-inch 78rpm discs for pressing onto noisy shellac, one four-minute side at a time. Ten years later, a reel of tape gave you thirty minutes or so of continuous high-fidelity, low-noise recording, to be pressed ultimately onto the comparatively silent sides of long-playing vinyl records.

This remastering aims to bridge that technological gap as well as modern digital restoration techniques can allow. These recordings share the same orchestra, conductor – and composer, whose style at the time produced works which share many sonic similarities – so my aim should surely be to even out any stark differences in sound. The Decca recording of 1946 had the benefit of their work on "Full Frequency Range Recording" (*ffrr*), leaving the recording's upper end just a tad shy of what would be achieved ten years later by Philips, and in a frequency range few of us can actually hear. The 78rpm sides are inevitably a little noisier – there's only so much digital noise reduction one can apply before it becomes detrimental, but you hardly notice this when the recording gets going – and I've done my best to shave off a tendency to slight overload in the louder sections.

The result, I hope, is a remastering of three recordings which allows all to stand together as equals, and where the vintage sound is no impediment to the enjoyment of some truly remarkable and powerful performances.

Andrew Rose



van beinum

conducts the concertgebouw orchestra

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PASC 688

XR Remastered by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Eduard van BeinumThe Rite of Spring
A Decca recording
11 September 1946Firebird Suite
A Philips recording
6 April 1956Chant du rossignol
A Philips recording
22 May 1956Recordings made in the Grote Zaal,
Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

Total duration: 72:17

STRAVINSKY Firebird Suite (1919 version)

1. Introduction (2:44)
2. L'oiseau de feu et sa danse (*Dance of the Firebird*) (0:15)
3. Variation de l'oiseau de feu (*Variation of the Firebird*) (1:04)
4. Ronde des princesses (*Round Dance of the Princesses*) (4:33)
5. Danse infernale du roi Kastcheï (*Infernal Dance of King Kaschei*) (4:39)
6. Berceuse (3:03)
7. Final (*Finale*) (3:01)

STRAVINSKY The Rite of Spring

8. Part 1: L'Adoration de la Terre - Introduction (3:18)
9. Les Augures printaniers (*Augurs of Spring*) (3:25)
10. Jeu du rapt (*Ritual of Abduction*) (1:20)
11. Rondes printanières (*Spring Rounds*) (3:26)
12. Jeux des cités rivales (*Ritual of the Rival Tribes*) (1:46)
13. Cortège du sage: Le Sage (*Procession of the Sage: The Sage*) (0:39)
14. Embrasse de la terre (*Kiss of the Earth*) (0:21)
15. Danse de la terre (*Dance of the Earth*) (1:07)
16. Part 2: Le Sacrifice - Introduction (4:01)
17. Cercles mystérieux des adolescentes (*Mystic Circles of the Young Girls*) (2:49)
18. Glorification de l'élue (*Glorification of the Chosen One*) (1:35)
19. Evocation des ancêtres (*Evocation of the Ancestors*) (0:48)
20. Action rituelle des ancêtres (*Ritual Action of the Ancestors*) (3:05)
21. Danse sacrée (L'Élue) (*Sacrificial Dance*) (4:54)

STRAVINSKY Chant du rossignol (Poème symphonique)

22. Introduction - La fête au palais de l'empereur de Chine (*The Feast at the Emperor's Palace*) (2:35)
23. Marche chinoise (*Chinese March*) (3:24)
24. Chant du rossignol (*Song of the Nightingale*) (3:22)
25. Jeu du rossignol mécanique (*The Mechanical Nightingale*) (11:03)

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